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Religion and Anti-Immigration Sentiments in Context: Field Studies in Jerusalem

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ABSTRACT

Political and social changes in the past decade have rendered questions about religion and immigration more salient than ever. However, we know very little about the potential impact of religion as it operates in the real world on attitudes toward immigrants. In this investigation, we tested whether and how contextual religious cues in the public sphere might affect tolerance toward immigrants. In two studies, we compared the effects of a religious and a secular context (Study 1: religious location; Study 2: religious attire) on attitudes toward Jewish immigrants (i.e., a religious ingroup) and non-Jewish immigrants (i.e., a religious outgroup). Across studies, contextual religious cues predicted ingroup favoritism, as expressed by less social rejection toward religious ingroups and less support for anti-immigration policies affecting religious ingroups. However, contextual religious cues were unrelated to anti-immigration attitudes toward religious outgroups. In Study 2, these patterns were moderated by participants' religiosity, such that they were found among more (but not fewer) religious participants. These findings extend prior laboratory findings and shed light on how religion influences attitudes toward immigration in rich and complex real environments.

The record influx of immigrants to Western countries has raised questions about current and future immigration policies, even in countries that have not traditionally been challenged by the international movements of people (Eddy & Bilefsky, 2015; Nordland, 2015). Concerns involving religious identity lie at the heart of contemporary debates relating to immigration. The limited experimental literature suggests that religious cues can influence attitudes toward immigrants (Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, & Courtemanche, 2015), but existing research has primarily been conducted in highly controlled lab settings using carefully selected religious cues. In the real world, however, religious cues are diverse, and we know very little regarding whether and how they influence people as they move through rich, complex, and varied public spaces. Moreover, whereas some studies associate religiosity with positive attitudes toward immigrants (Boomgaarden & Freire, 2009; Knoll, 2009; Lubbers, Coenders, & Scheepers, 2006), others associate religiosity with antipathy toward immigrants (McDaniel, Nooruddin, & Shortle, 2011; Scheepers, Gijsbert, & Hello, 2002), and additional research has shown that different aspects of religion can have contradictory effects on attitudes toward immigrants (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015). These inconsistent findings suggest that religious cues in the real world may have a range of potential effects on attitudes toward immigrants.

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Divergent effects of religious cues on attitudes toward immigrants

Religion has the potential to either inflame or attenuate anti-immigration sentiments. Previous research has found that different aspects of religiosity are differentially associated with attitudes toward immigration. On one hand, religion serves as a social identity that differentiates between ingroups and outgroups (Tajfel, 1981). As such, religious social identity may increase negative attitudes toward immigrants. Indeed, a vast literature indicates that individuals with higher self-identified religiousness are more racially prejudiced (Allport, 1954; Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010) and that they endorse more anti-immigration sentiments (McDaniel et al., 2011).

On the other hand, religious teachings emphasize empathy, benevolence, and compassion toward the foreigner and the weak (Knoll, 2009; Norenzayan, 2013). As such, religious belief may be expected to increase positive attitudes toward immigrants. Indeed, some correlational work shows that religiosity is associated with pro-immigration attitudes (Boomgaarden & Freire, 2009; Lubbers et al., 2006). Using experimental procedures, Ben-Nun Bloom et al. (2015) directly examined these mixed patterns among American Catholics, Turkish Muslims, and Israeli Jews. They primed religious belief and religious social identity by manipulating the order of questionnaires (Study 1) and by using a scrambled sentences task (Study 2) and then assessed attitudes toward immigrants. As predicted by social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1981), they found that priming religious participants' social identity increased their negative attitudes toward immigrants. However, in line with the observation that religious teachings encourage empathy and compassion toward foreigners, they found that priming religious belief and religious compassion decreased negative attitudes toward immigrants. Still, consistent with SIT, religious belief engendered welcoming attitudes only toward immigrants who were members of the ingroup by virtue of sharing with participants a common religious identity or ethnicity.

It is not yet clear, however, whether the divergent attitudes toward immigrants that were found in survey and experimental research reflect how religious cues operate in the real world. First, contextual religious cues in the stimulus-rich public sphere may not be salient enough (Higgins, 1996) and therefore may fail to prime the relevant schemas. Furthermore, even if those cues are salient enough, they may undergo habituation given their ubiquity (Henson & Rugg, 2003) and therefore may not prime the relevant schemas. Second, even if contextual religious cues affect attitudes toward immigrants, the direction of the effect is unclear. On one hand, such cues may lead to more negative attitudes toward immigrants, in line with the effect of religious social identity. On the other hand, they may lead to more positive attitudes toward immigrants, in line with the effect of religious belief (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015). Another possibility is that these opposite effects would cancel each other out, as a contextual cue may activate various conflicting facets of religiosity.

The divergent effects of religious social identity and religious belief found by Ben-Nun Bloom et al. (2015) were obtained for different types of immigrants. In particular, religious social identity led to more negative attitudes toward immigrants from religious outgroups (such as non-Jewish African immigrants to Israel), whereas religious belief led to more positive attitudes toward immigrants from religious ingroups (such as Jewish Ethiopian immigrants to Israel).

Such moderation by immigration type—religious ingroup or outgroup—coincides with the current literature, which shows that immigration attitudes are responsive to group cues such as indications of race and ethnicity (e.g., Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008), religion (e.g., Fetzer & Soper, 2005), and country of origin (e.g., Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, & Lahav, 2015; Gorodzeisky, 2011). Scriptural interpretations pertaining to immigrants are similarly split with regard to a differential treatment of different types of immigrants. Thus, within the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is disagreement regarding whether the biblical call to care for foreigners should apply exclusively to newcomers from one's religious ingroup or to immigrants from all religious groups (e.g., Maimonides, the 12th-century commentator, in *Hilchot De'ot*, 6:4; Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, the 11th-century commentator, in *Exodus* 22:20, NIV). Likewise, the effect of contextual religious cues may vary by type of immigrant. Thus, contextual religious cues may affect one, both, or neither type of immigrants.

Religious cues in the public sphere

The public sphere is filled with contextual cues that may increase the accessibility of schemas in the mind (Higgins, 1996) and thereby affect thought and behavior (e.g., voting; Berger, Meredith, & Wheeler, 2008). The public sphere is also filled with contextual cues that are religious, including religious attire, houses of assembly and prayer, and holy sites. Such contextual religious cues may function as religious primes (Shariff, Willard, Andersen, & Norenzayan, 2016), which may in turn shape attitudes toward immigrants. Indeed, previous research has found that images of religious cues influence attitudes toward people in need, including immigrants and the homeless (Pichon & Saroglou, 2009). Moreover, the effect of priming religion in the laboratory has resulted in similar effects when using contextual religious cues. For example, religious primes increased outgroup bias in laboratory studies (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2010), and contextual religious cues led to similar results, with participants being more biased when in the proximity of a religious structure relative to a nonreligious structure (LaBouff, Rowatt, Johnson, & Finkle, 2012). Similarly, religious priming increased pro-social behavior in economic games (Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2011; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007), and contextual religious cues led to similar results, with participants being more cooperative when playing economic games in a house of prayer than in a neutral setting (Ahmed & Salas, 2013; Xygalatas, 2012).

Nevertheless, the work on contextual religious cues has not been applied to immigration attitudes, and the work on religiosity and immigration has not been conducted with contextual stimuli. To our knowledge, no study to date has investigated the potential effect of contextual religious cues on immigration attitudes. The present work fills this gap.

The present investigation

The present investigation is the first to test whether and how real-world religious cues in the public sphere affect attitudes toward immigrants. We tested the external validity of prior research into how religion affects individuals' attitudes toward immigrants who are from the same and different religious affiliation as themselves to establish whether contextual religious cues in the public sphere affect anti-immigration attitudes. We examined whether the overall effect of contextual religious cues is positive (H1a), negative (H1b), or contingent on the type of immigrant (H1c).

In addition, we tested whether potential effects depend on how religious the individuals are. Level of religiosity may reflect individuals' degree of group identification, such that strong identifiers with a religious group may be more responsive to contextual religious cues. Some findings, though, indicate that religious cues affect attitudes and behaviors independent of one's religiosity (e.g., Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008), suggesting that the mere knowledge of the relationship between religion and the target attitude suffices to produce the anticipated priming effect (H2a). However, a meta-analysis found that religious priming generally does not affect nonreligious and low-religious participants (Shariff et al., 2016). Therefore, contextual religious cues may affect more religious participants to a greater degree than less religious participants (H2b).

To assess contextual religious cues in the public sphere, we targeted cues that occur naturally in the real world. In Study 1, we focused on religious versus nonreligious locations. In particular, passersby in Jerusalem were asked to complete a short survey on attitudes toward Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants in a public location—either in front of a holy site or in front of a religiously neutral site. In Study 2, we focused on religious attire. Passersby in Jerusalem were asked to complete a short survey on attitudes toward Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants, with the experimenter dressed as either an ultra-Orthodox woman (modest shirt, skirt, hair covering) or a secular woman (jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt, and her hair down). For both studies, we report how we determined the sample size, as well as all data, measures, and conditions we excluded (if any).

Study 1

Study 1 investigated the potential effect of contextual religious cues on different types of immigrants.

Method

Participants

Participants were 60 Jewish passersby in Jerusalem—34 men and 26 women, 18 to 70 years of age ($M = 30.65$, $SD = 13.12$).¹

Materials and procedure

Participants were approached either at a religious location (i.e., the Western Wall plaza) or at a nonreligious location (i.e., Jerusalem's Zion Square) and asked to participate in a poll. A woman and a man in their mid-20s served as the experimenters in both locations. They were both wearing jeans, a dark T-shirt, and closed shoes (i.e., “neutral” secular clothes). Each of the experimenters handed out questionnaires between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. in each of the two locations on two consecutive workdays in mid-May. The experimenters sought to approach both men and women of varying ages and varying levels of religiosity in each condition and did not approach people who appeared to be tourists or non-Jewish. Besides those guidelines, there was no conscience attempt at randomization. Participants (18+ years of age) first signed a consent form and then completed some demographic measures, the anti-immigration sentiment batteries, and finally the level of religiosity scale. The survey typically took 4–5 min to complete. No conditions or data were excluded.

Measures

Anti-immigration sentiments. The questionnaire included two scales to measure immigration attitudes. The first scale, Preferences for Social Distance, included two items: the extent to which respondents would mind an immigrant (a) being appointed as their boss and (b) marrying a relative, from 1 (*does not bother me at all*) to 10 (*bothers me a lot*), $\alpha = .713$. The second scale, Influence of Immigrants on Their Society, also included two items: the extent to which respondents believed immigrants contributed to or impaired their society's (a) culture and (b) national values, from 1 (*contributed a great deal*) to 10 (*impaired a great deal*), $\alpha = .894$. Both measures were based on the immigration attitudes module of the European Social Survey, with higher scores reflecting greater anti-immigration sentiment. To measure *type of immigrant*, each of the two measures of anti-immigration sentiments were presented separately (with the order randomized) for two types of immigrants: (a) same-religion (Jewish) immigrants, and (b) religious-minority immigrants (non-Jewish).

Religiosity. Religiosity was measured using four items pertaining to participants' religious social behavior²: attending religious services, engaging in other religious activities, possessing a religious network, and possessing a religious social identity (as in Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015; Vishkin, Ben-Nun Bloom, & Tamir, 2018; $\alpha = .787$).³

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic statistics for the conditions. The t tests revealed a significant difference between the level of religiosity at the religious and nonreligious locations, such that participants in the religious location were more religious, on average ($p = .007$), indicating a selection

¹The sample size (i.e., 30 per cell) was set before any data were collected. We did not conduct a priori power analyses in Study 1 but instead relied on a rule of thumb for 30 participants per cell for detecting a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988), based on the effect size reported by a recent meta-analysis for contextual religious primes ($d = 0.49$; Shariff et al., 2016).

²This scale was originally used as a measure of religious identity, with the assumption that “participation in organized religious communities, places of worship, and social networks ... enable individuals to claim group membership” (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015, p. 2).

³Other measures included in the questionnaire were education, religious belief, income, immigration attitudes toward specific groups of immigrants (from USSR, Ethiopia). We also asked for religious denomination (all participants indicated that they were Jewish).

Table 1. Demographic statistics (Study 1 and Study 2).

		Total sample			Secular context			Religious context			<i>t</i> test by condition	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>		
Study 1	Religiosity	4.560	1.576	58	3.991	1.189	28	5.092	1.721	30	−2.814	.007
	Age (years)	30.650	13.175	60	30.033	11.932	30	31.267	14.491	30	−0.360	.720
	Gender (1 = male)	56.7%	0.500	60	50.0%	0.509	30	63.3%	0.490	30	−1.034	.305
	Ideology (7 = left)	2.917	1.467	60	3.100	1.561	30	2.733	1.388	30	0.961	.340
	Born in Israel (1 = yes)	95.0%	0.220	60	90.0%	0.305	30	100%	0	30	−1.795	.078
Study 2	Religiosity	4.591	1.473	124	4.710	1.466	62	4.472	1.483	62	0.898	.371
	Age groups (categories)	3.048	1.647	124	3.000	1.659	62	3.097	1.647	62	−0.326	.745
	Gender (1 = male)	49.2%	0.502	124	51.6%	0.504	62	46.8%	0.503	62	0.535	.594
	Ideology (7 = left)	3.427	2.299	124	3.177	2.214	62	3.677	2.373	62	−1.213	.228
	Born in Israel (1 = yes)	66.1%	0.475	124	54.8%	0.502	62	77.4%	0.422	62	−2.713	.008

effect. Still, participants in the two locations did not significantly differ in age, gender, whether they were born in Israel, or political ideology.

We first examined the simple means of anti-immigration sentiments by the context (secular vs. religious, between-subjects) and type of immigrants (non-Jewish vs. Jewish, within-subjects). The mean responses of anti-immigration sentiments in Study 1 were contingent upon the context and the type of immigrant, consistent with H1c. Anti-immigration sentiments against non-Jewish immigrants were stronger in the religious context (social distance, $M = 6.73$; impair culture, $M = 6.70$) than in the secular context (social distance, $M = 6.10$; impair culture, $M = 6.05$). In contrast, anti-immigration sentiments against Jewish immigrants were weaker in the religious context (social distance, $M = 2.18$; impair culture, $M = 3.18$) than in the secular context (social distance, $M = 3.38$; impair culture, $M = 3.88$; see Figure A1 in the online appendix).

To simultaneously examine the within-subject factor (repeated observations for immigration attitudes toward different types of immigrants) and the between-subjects variance (religious vs. nonreligious context), we analyzed the data using multilevel modeling for repeated measures (MLM-RM).⁴ Table 2 presents the results for these tests. We predicted each anti-immigration sentiment (social distance and effects on society) based on (a) contextual religion and type of immigrant (Model 1), (b) adding their cross-level interaction (Model 2), and (c) adding their three-way interaction with level of religiosity (Model 3). The models controlled for background variables by including them as covariates (religiosity, political ideology, age, gender, and being a native). Continuous measures were mean-centered.

Results in Model 1 indicate that, for both measures of anti-immigration sentiments, the religious context had no main effect, at a 95% confidence level ($p_{\text{social-distance}} = .082$, $p_{\text{impaired-culture}} = .310$). The type of immigrant was significantly related to anti-immigration sentiments, such that responding about Jewish (relative to non-Jewish) immigrants decreased participants' social rejection of immigrants by 40% of its possible range ($p < .001$) and their view that immigrants impair the local culture by 31% of the range ($p < .001$).

Model 2 tested whether the effect of religious context was contingent upon the type of immigrant. Consistent with H1c, results show a cross-level interaction between religious context and type of immigrant for both dependent variables ($p = .020$ for social distance preferences and $p = .040$ for cultural threat). As depicted in Figure I, for both social distance preferences and influence of immigrants on society, the religious context was associated with more positive attitudes toward religious-ingroup immigrants (i.e., Jewish), relative to the nonreligious context. The simple effects of contextual religion on attitudes toward Jewish immigrants were significant in both models ($p_{\text{social-distance}} = .008$ and $p_{\text{impaired-culture}} = .040$), but had no effect on outgroup immigrants (i.e., non-Jews).⁵

⁴MLM-RM is capable of handling hierarchically structured data that violate the assumption of independence and allows simultaneous estimation of effects of predictors from different levels. Further, MLM-RM is more flexible than conventional RM-ANOVA, as it is robust against violations of sphericity, homoscedasticity, and missing data (Hoffman & Rovine, 2007).

⁵The simple effects of type of immigrants were significant at the .001 level in both models.

Table 2. Context, type of immigrants and anti-immigration attitudes (Study 1).

	Social distance preferences			Immigrants impair culture		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Context (0 = secular, 1 = religious)	−0.953 (0.547)	0.82 (0.691)	.968	−0.418 (0.411)	0.332 (0.545)	−0.087 (0.537)
Type of immigrants (0 = non-Jewish, 1 = Jewish)	−3.603 (0.441)	−2.589 (0.607)	.000	−2.793 (0.371)	−2.018 (0.525)	−2.493 (0.541)
Type of Immigrants × Context	—	−1.961 (.844)	.020	—	−1.499 (.730)	−0.567 (.438)
Context × Religiosity	—	—	(.809)	—	—	(.731)
Type of Immigrants × Religiosity	—	—	0.133 (0.460)	—	—	0.244 (0.363)
Context × Type of Immigrants × Religiosity	—	—	−1.050 (0.461)	—	—	−0.835 (0.416)
Religiosity	—	—	0.050 (0.554)	—	—	−0.025 (0.500)
Age	0.066 (0.182)	0.066 (0.182)	.719	−0.016 (0.137)	−0.016 (0.135)	0.239 (0.307)
Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	0.015 (0.021)	0.015 (0.021)	.472	0.006 (0.016)	0.006 (0.015)	0.005 (0.015)
Ideology (left)	0.222 (0.528)	0.222 (0.528)	.674	0.056 (0.397)	0.056 (0.390)	0.075 (0.377)
Born in Israel (0 = no, 1 = yes)	−0.761 (0.184)	−0.761 (0.184)	.000	−0.585 (0.139)	−0.585 (0.136)	−0.586 (0.131)
Intercept	1.110 (1.220)	1.110 (1.220)	.363	1.632 (0.917)	1.632 (0.901)	1.697 (0.872)
Variance components	5.778 (1.208)	5.271 (1.226)	.000	4.985 (0.912)	4.598 (0.916)	4.675 (0.907)
Random intercept	0.719 (0.840)	0.959 (0.813)	1.500 (0.755)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.143 (0.453)
variance	5.637*** (1.047)	5.157*** (0.958)	4.053*** (0.753)	4.001*** (0.525)	3.861*** (0.507)	3.305*** (0.614)
N Level-1/Level-2	116/58	116/58	116/58	116/58	116/58	116/58
Log likelihood	−271.491	−268.910	−261.835	−245.019	−242.950	−236.349
Wald χ^2	$\chi^2(7) = 89.1***$	$\chi^2(8) = 100.7***$	$\chi^2(11) = 138.1***$	$\chi^2(7) = 79.6***$	$\chi^2(8) = 86.7***$	$\chi^2(11) = 113.5***$

Note. Table entries are estimated parameters (with standard error in parentheses) of multilevel modeling.

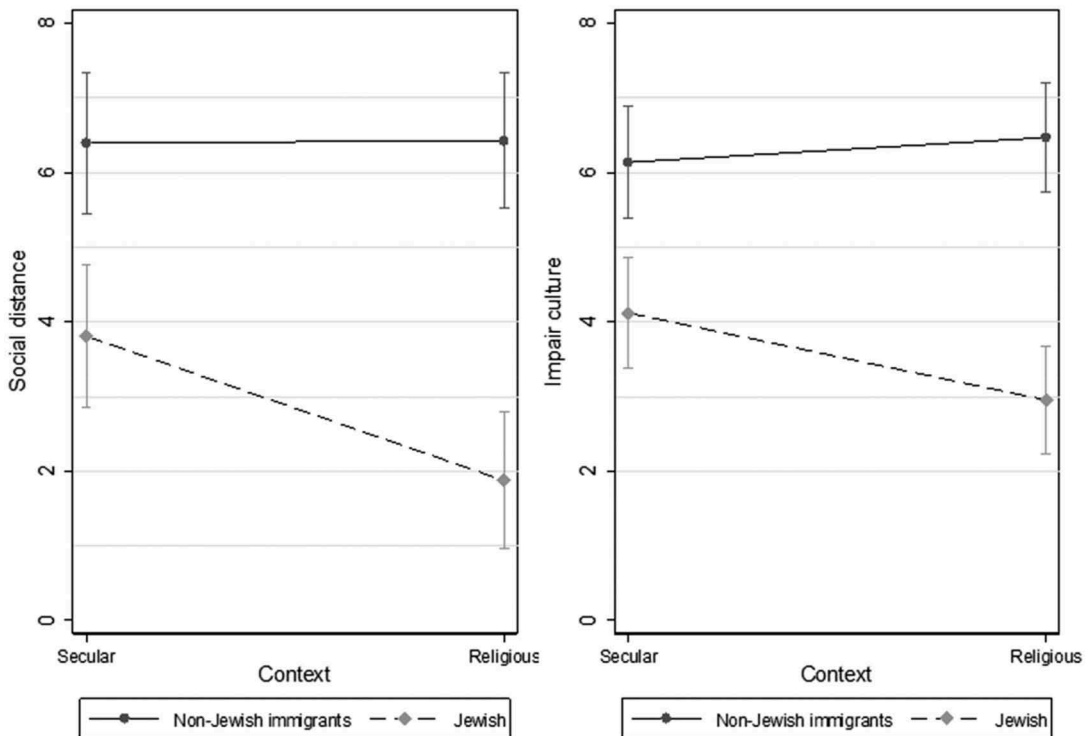


Figure 1. The interactive effect of context and type of immigrants (Study 1).

The three-way interaction of religious context, type of immigrant, and level of religiosity was not significant in either model ($p_{\text{social-distance}} = .929$ and $p_{\text{impair-culture}} = .961$; see Model 3), consistent with H2a. However, this is potentially because of the overlap between location and religiosity. A two-way interaction emerged between type of immigrant and level of religiosity ($p < .001$ in both models), such that the more religious participants were, the more their attitudes depended on the type of immigrants, showing ingroup favoritism, but there was no significant difference by type of immigrants among participants low in religiosity.

Robust analysis

Given the small sample size, we reran an uncontrolled version of the models, including only (a) the two conditions, (b) their interaction, and (c) their interaction with religiosity, using both MLM-RM (see the online appendix, Table A1) and repeated-measure analysis of variance (ANOVA; see the online appendix, Table A1.b). As in the original controlled models, (a) there was no main effect for the context; (b) the p values for the two-way interactions between the context and type of immigrants changed from $p = .020$ to $p = .030$ and $p = .038$ for social distance preferences and from $p = .040$ to $p = .066$ and $p = .076$ for the view that immigrants impair the local culture, in the MLM and repeated-measure ANOVA models, respectively (in accord with H1c); and (c) there was no three-way interaction with religiosity (as per H2a).

Exploration of the residuals in Study 1 revealed (a) a normal distribution of the residuals of *influence of immigrants on their society* (Shapiro–Wilk test: $p > .05$), with 0% severe or mild outliers (i.e., no residuals more than 1.5 interquartile range away from the nearer quartile) and (b) a slight non-normality of the residuals in the *preferences for social distance* outcome variable in a Shapiro–Wilk test ($p < .05$), with no mild (1.5–3 interquartile range away from the nearer quartile) or severe (more than 3 interquartile range away from the nearer quartile) outliers in the low or high bounds.

We reran the social distance models using bootstrapped standard error (500 repetitions). We found that (a) the negative main effect for the context became statistically significant (changed from $p = .082$ to $p = .029$), (b) the p value for the two-way interactions between the context and type of immigrants changed from $p = .020$ to $p = .032$, and (c) there was again no three-way interaction with religiosity (see the online appendix Table A5 for models).⁶

Discussion

The results of Study 1 suggest that among Israeli Jews, religious context is associated with greater acceptance of immigrants who are religiously similar but that the same cues do not affect attitudes toward immigrants who are religiously different, thus supporting hypothesis H1c. This effect did not depend on participants' level of religiosity, thus supporting H2a. These results indicate that a religious location was a salient contextual religious cue. However, the quasi-experimental design afforded potential differences between the populace of passersby in the two environments. In particular, participants in the religious context were more religious than those in the secular location, although the two conditions did not systematically differ in age, gender, political ideology, or whether the participant was foreign born. It is important to note that such a selection effect is typical in naturalistic contextual studies, whereby participants are approached in, rather than randomly assigned to, a religious or secular context. Still, given that this overlap between location and religiosity may conceal a systematic moderation by religiosity, further scrutiny in Study 2 was warranted.

Study 2

The results of Study 1 lend tentative support to the hypothesis that contextual religious cues, as they appear naturally in the real world, may affect attitudes toward immigrants. This effect varied as a function of immigrants' religious affiliation—as a member of either an ingroup or outgroup religion. Contextual cues may increase tolerance for religious ingroups but perhaps not influence attitudes toward religious outgroups. Study 2 was designed to replicate these effects while increasing the sample size, adding random assignment to a contextual religious cue, and further testing the potential moderating role of religiosity.

Whereas religiosity was confounded with the contextual cues in Study 1, this was not the case in Study 2. Study 2 was conducted in a single location, and we manipulated contextual religious cues by having experimenters wear either religious or secular attire. Further, given that the level of religiosity systematically differed between the religious locations in Study 1, we were interested in examining whether religious cues operate independently of, or are contingent upon, participants' level of religiosity. This was done by testing a three-way interaction between contextual religious cue, type of immigrants, and level of religiosity.

Method

Participants

Participants were 124 Jewish passersby in Jerusalem—61 men and 63 women; 25 of them were 18–21 years old, and 5 were older (45–50; $M_{\text{age}} = 3.05$, $SD = 1.65$). Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.⁷

Materials and procedure

Participants were approached at a religiously neutral location that was held constant (i.e., downtown Jerusalem by the light rail at Jaffa Road), and contextual religion was primed by way of the

⁶In addition, we conducted a post hoc analysis, isolating the social distance preferences for the two types of social interactions: symbolically threatening interactions (having an immigrant as a relative) and more economically threatening interactions (having an immigrant as a boss). Models are presented in the online Appendix B.

⁷The sample size of 60 per call was set before any data were collected.

experimenter's attire. Thus, half of the participants were approached by the experimenter when she was wearing jeans and a T-shirt and half when she was dressed as an ultra-orthodox Jew. The experiment was conducted over 4½ weeks in June 2015 during afternoon hours. During the experiment, the experimenter's attire was systematically alternated (e.g., first and third Mondays dressed in secular clothing, second and fourth Mondays in religious clothing). No more than 30 participants were recruited in each of the six data collection sessions. Participants first signed a consent form and then completed the survey. No conditions or data were excluded.

Measures

The first dependent variable was a single item measuring *support for anti-immigration policy* ("Do you think that the number of immigrants of the [same/different] religious group from most Israelis (i.e., [Jews/non-Jews]) who are permitted to come and live here should be increased or decreased?"), scored from 1 (*increased by much*) to 5 (*decreased by much*). The second was the Social Distance scale used in Study 1 (1–10; $\alpha = .874$). Level of religiosity and background variables were measured as in Study 1, with the exception of age, which was measured in age categories (1 = 18–21, 2 = 22–25, 3 = 26–30, 4 = 31–35, 5 = 36–40, etc., in increments of 5 years).⁸

Results

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics by condition. The *t* tests indicated that the two experimental conditions did not significantly differ in religiosity, age, gender, or political ideology (but they did differ in percentage of natives).

We first examined the means by context (secular vs. religious) and type of immigrants (non-Jewish vs. Jewish). Anti-immigration attitudes were not affected by the context with regard to non-Jewish immigrants (4.10 vs. 4.02), but the religious context was associated with ingroup favoritism with regard to Jewish immigrants ($M = 2.34$ in the secular context vs. 1.63 in the religious context). However, social distance preferences for both types of immigrants were attenuated by the religious context (non-Jewish immigrants: $M = 6.44$; Jewish immigrants: $M = 1.44$) relative to the secular context (non-Jewish immigrants: $M = 7.15$; Jewish immigrants: $M = 1.69$; see Figure A2 in the online appendix).

Next, Table 3 presents the tests of the hypotheses. Data were again analyzed using MLM-RM. As in Study 1, we predicted each anti-immigration sentiment based on (a) contextual religion and type of immigrant (Model 1), (b) adding their cross-level interaction (Model 2), and (c) adding a three-way interaction with level of religiosity (Model 3). As before, we controlled for political ideology, age, gender, and being a native. Starting with our hypothesis concerning the effect of contextual cues, as shown in Model 1 in Table 3, the context manipulation negatively predicted support for anti-immigration policy ($p = .026$) and had a similar yet statistically insignificant negative trend with respect to social distance preferences ($p = .099$). This partially supports the view that religious cues are prosocial and generally reduce anti-immigration sentiment (H1a). As expected, the type of immigrants had a major effect on anti-immigration sentiments, with non-Jewish immigrants being rejected to a greater extent ($p < .001$ in both models).

Supporting the hypothesis regarding a differential effect of the contextual cue by type of immigrants (H1c), Model 2 shows that the contextual cues significantly and negatively interacted to affect participants' support for anti-immigration policy ($p = .029$). The religious context manipulation decreased support for anti-immigration policy toward religious ingroup (i.e., Jewish) immigrants ($p = .002$ for the simple effect of contextual religion), replicating the results of Study 1 regarding the ingroup favoritism effect of contextual religious cues, and did not affect the social

⁸Other measures included in the questionnaire: education and religious belief. We also asked for religious denomination (all participants indicated that they were Jewish).

Table 3. Context, type of immigrant, religiosity, and anti-immigration attitudes (Study 2).

	Support for anti-immigration policy						Social distance preferences					
	Model 1	p	Model 2	p	Model 3	p	Model 1	p	Model 2	p	Model 3	p
Context (0 = secular, 1 = religious)	-0.338 (0.152)	.026	-0.024 (0.209)	.910	-0.033 (0.206)	.874	-0.414 (0.250)	.099	-0.644 (0.346)	.063	-0.618 (0.344)	.072
Type of immigrants (0 = non-Jewish, 1 = Jewish)	-2.073 (0.146)	.000	-1.758 (0.204)	.000	-1.791 (0.202)	.000	-5.230 (0.240)	.000	-5.460 (0.339)	.000	-5.472 (0.337)	.000
Type of Immigrants × Context	—	—	-0.629 (0.289)	.029	-0.619 (0.286)	.030	—	—	0.460 (0.479)	.338	0.417 (0.476)	.382
Context × Religiosity	—	—	—	—	0.128 (0.140)	.359	—	—	—	—	0.392 (0.233)	.093
Type of Immigrants × Religiosity	—	—	—	—	0.274 (0.138)	.048	—	—	—	—	0.102 (0.231)	.659
Context × Type of Immigrants × Religiosity	—	—	—	—	-0.464 (0.195)	.017	—	—	—	—	-0.564 (0.325)	.083
Religiosity	0.068 (0.051)	.188	0.068 (0.051)	.184	-0.020 (0.098)	.838	0.019 (0.085)	.827	0.019 (0.085)	.827	-0.085 (0.163)	.604
Age	0.083 (0.045)	.065	0.083 (0.044)	.063	0.083 (0.044)	.059	-0.169 (0.074)	.022	-0.169 (0.074)	.022	-0.169 (0.073)	.020
Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	-0.071 (0.148)	.632	-0.071 (0.147)	.629	-0.094 (0.146)	.522	-0.339 (0.244)	.165	-0.339 (0.244)	.164	-0.315 (0.244)	.197
Ideology (left)	-0.096 (0.033)	.003	-0.096 (0.032)	.003	-0.100 (0.032)	.002	-0.169 (0.054)	.002	-0.169 (0.054)	.002	-0.164 (0.054)	.002
Born in Israel (0 = no, 1 = yes)	-0.021 (0.160)	.898	-0.021 (0.159)	.897	0.001 (0.158)	.993	0.101 (0.264)	.703	0.101 (0.264)	.703	0.078 (0.264)	.769
Intercept	4.274 (0.173)	.000	4.117 (0.186)	.000	4.126 (0.183)	.000	7.097 (0.284)	.000	7.212 (0.308)	.000	7.226 (0.306)	.000
Variance components												
Random intercept variance	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	
Residual variance	1.317*** (0.118)		1.292*** (0.116)		1.257*** (0.113)		3.575*** (0.321)		3.562*** (0.320)		3.495*** (0.314)	
N Level-1/Level-2	248/124		248/124		248/124		248/124		248/124		248/124	
Log likelihood	-386.1		-383.7		-380.3		-509.9		-509.4		-507.1	
Wald χ^2	$\chi^2(7) = 224.9***$		$\chi^2(8) = 233.9***$		$\chi^2(11) = 247.4***$		$\chi^2(7) = 495.9***$		$\chi^2(8) = 498.7***$		$\chi^2(11) = 512.9***$	

Note. Table entries are estimated parameters (with standard error in parentheses) of multilevel modeling.

rejection of religiously different (i.e., non-Jewish) immigrants ($p = .910$). This two-way interaction, however, did not emerge for social distance preferences ($p = .338$).

Next, we tested whether this interaction was moderated by level of religiosity. Model 3 and Figure II show a significant three-way interaction between context, type of immigrants, and religiosity for support of anti-immigration policy ($p = .017$). Consistent with H2b, this result indicates that the two-way interaction reported previously between contextual cue and type of immigrants emerged when religiosity was high ($b = -1.737, p = .002$ when religiosity was set to maximum; $b = -1.301, p = .002$ when it was 1 *SD* above the mean), but not when religiosity was low ($b = 0.873, p = .216$ when religiosity was set to minimum; $b = 0.063, p = .879$ when it was 1 *SD* below the mean). At the maximum level of religiosity, the simple effect of the contextual religious cue was significant for ingroup immigrants ($b = -1.461, p < .001$) but not for outgroup immigrants ($b = 0.276, p = .498$). Thus, the ingroup favoritism effect of contextual religious cues that emerged in Study 1 appeared only as religiosity increased.

Furthermore, with regard to preferences for social distance, the three-way interaction with religiosity did not reach significance ($p = .083$). Nevertheless, we chose to examine it to identify any emerging trends. The direction of the effects in this interaction is similar to those reported for support of anti-immigration policy, with the religious context manipulation decreasing anti-immigration sentiments toward religious-ingroup immigrants among the more religious participants, but the opposite trend emerged among the less religious (see Figure II). The simple two-way interaction had a p value of .058 when religiosity was low ($b = 2.229, p = .058$ when religiosity was set to minimum; $b = 1.246, p = .072$ when it was 1 *SD* below the mean) and of .316 when religiosity was high ($b = -0.941, p = .316$ when religiosity was set to maximum; $b = -0.412, p = .551$ when it was 1 *SD* above the mean). The only statistically significant simple effect of the contextual religious cue was for outgroup immigrants among participants low in religiosity ($b = -1.878, p = .026$). This suggests that for participants with low levels of religiosity, exposure to the contextual cue increased social acceptance of non-Jewish immigrants.

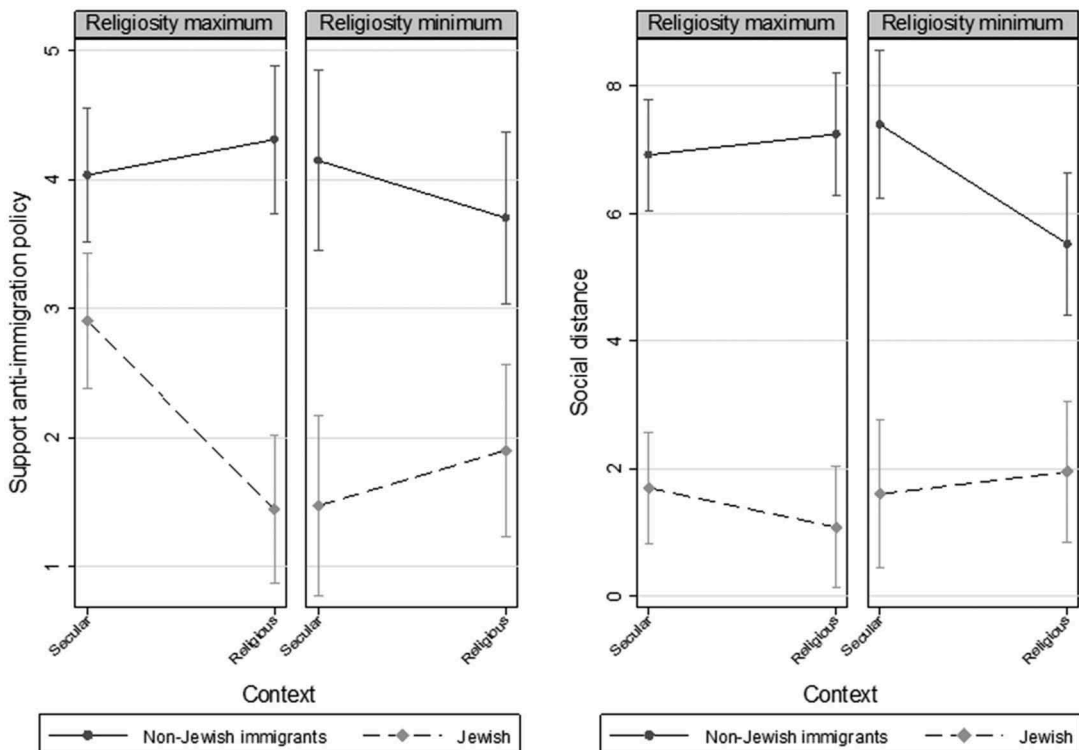


Figure 2. The interactive effect of context and type of immigrant, with religiosity at maximum and minimum levels (Study 2).

Robust analysis

As in Study 1, we reran an uncontrolled version of the models (see the online appendix, Tables A2 and A2.b). Results from the original controlled models were replicated such that, using both MLM and repeated measure ANOVA, (a) there was a significant main effect of the context in support for anti-immigration policy and a trend in the same direction for social distance preferences, partly supporting H1a; (b) again, the two-way interaction between the context and type of immigrants emerged in support for anti-immigration policy, but not in social distance preferences, partly supporting H1c; and (c) with respect to the three-way interaction with religiosity, the p value changed from $p = .017$ to $p = .020$ and $p = .026$ for support for anti-immigration policy and from .083 to .090 and 0.098 for social distance preferences in the uncontrolled MLM and ANOVA models, respectively, supporting H2b.

Looking at the residuals, we found (a) a normal distribution of the residuals in support for anti-immigration policy (Shapiro–Wilk test: $p > .05$), with no severe or mild outliers, and (b) non-normality of the residuals in the preferences for social distance outcome variable in a Shapiro–Wilk test ($p < .05$), with no severe outliers and only some mild outliers in the lower bound (5.24% mild outliers in the lower bound and 0.4% in the higher bound within the inner fences). We thus reran the social distance models using bootstrapped standard error (500 repetitions). Results did not change substantively: (a) The main effect for the context changed from $p = .099$ to $p = .055$, (b) the two-way interaction between the context and type of immigrant was again insignificant, and (c) the p value of the three-way interaction with religiosity changed from .083 to .128 (see the online appendix Table A6 for models).

Discussion

In Study 2, contextual religious cues generally reduced anti-immigration sentiments toward ingroup immigrants but did not affect sentiments toward outgroup immigrants, supporting H1c. Next, the interactive effect of religious context and type of immigrants was moderated by participants' religiosity, such that the religious context led to more positive immigration attitudes toward ingroups (but not outgroups)—but this only among more religious participants, thus supporting H2b. The strength of religiosity may intensify the effect of contextual religious cues because the schemas associated with religion are more developed and more accessible for the devout (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013). Moderation by participants' religiosity was obtained only in Study 2, for two possible reasons. First, Study 1 had less power than Study 2. Second, the mean differences in religiosity between the two locations in Study 2 may have obscured the interactive effect of religiosity.

An exception to the effect of contextual religious cues decreasing anti-immigration attitudes toward religious ingroups was a boomerang effect in one of the two dependent variables in Study 2. Namely, exposure to the religious cue increased social acceptance—but not the policy attitudes—of non-Jewish immigrants among participants low in religiosity. This finding is consistent with the notion that nonreligious natives are more averse to religious immigrants than they are to non-religious immigrants (Anderson & Antalíková, 2014). In the present context, this may have been due to the perceived incursion of the experimenter, whose appearance was religious. In a city partially characterized by tension between the secular and the ultraorthodox residents (Shelef, 2010), the religious attire may have primed a feeling of threat among participants low in religiosity (Giannakakis & Fritsche, 2011).⁹ In general, the results for principled political attitudes toward anti-immigration policy were cleaner than results in the personal preferences domain (i.e., social distance

⁹The religious and secular Jewish populations in Jerusalem suffer from tension and conflict, such that the secular residents often accuse the religious residents for invading secular neighborhoods and public spaces (Shelef, 2010). The two groups fiercely struggle over the nature of the city—whether to open stores and maintain cultural events on the Sabbath, allocating public spaces to parks versus religious facilities, funding religious versus orthodox education, and so on. An indication to this explanation is that a similar three-way interaction for social distance emerges with political ideology ($p_{\text{social-distance}} = .047$; $p_{\text{impair-culture}} = .114$), such that supporters of the political center and left-wing react to the religious dressing with a boomerang effect (the negative effect of the religious cue for non-Jewish immigrants is statistically significant starting from ideology [left] > 3.5).

preferences), thus pointing to the potential complexity and multidimensionality of the anti-immigration belief system.

General discussion

In the context of this discussion regarding the impact of religious cues, it is important to recall that the majority of countries in the West and former Soviet bloc support a single religion (Fox, 2015, p. 207). In these and other countries, majority-religion cues are ubiquitous in the public sphere; they are entrenched in architecture, art, symbols, clothing, and sounds. It is thus incumbent on social scientists to examine how such contextual religious cues affect the prioritization of ingroups and the acceptance of outgroups, particularly in the welcoming of immigrants.

Our investigation is the first to test whether and how contextual religious cues in the public sphere affect attitudes toward immigrants. By doing so, our study extends the external validity of prior research on religion and immigration and complements the literature on contextual religious cues by applying it to immigration attitudes. In two studies, we compared the effects of “situated” religious cues to a secular context (Study 1: religious location; Study 2: religious attire) on attitudes toward Jewish immigrants (i.e., a religious ingroup) and toward non-Jewish immigrants (i.e., a religious outgroup). On the basis of three measures of anti-immigration sentiments, we found that two contextual religious cues in noisy real-world settings were associated with decreased anti-immigration attitudes toward members of religious ingroups and that these cues mostly had no effect on attitudes toward religious outgroups. In Study 2, the ingroup favoritism effect of the contextual cue was moderated by participants’ religiosity, such that these effects were found among more (but not less) religious participants. These findings extend prior laboratory findings and shed light on how religion influences attitudes toward immigration in complex real-world environments.

Theoretical and pragmatic implications

These findings provide a number of practical and theoretical insights. First, whereas previous studies using contextual religious cues used highly salient cues, such as presence in a house of prayer (Ahmed & Salas, 2008; Xygalatas, 2012), the present findings reveal that contextual religious cues in the public sphere are salient enough to affect attitudes toward immigrants. An implication for the religious priming literature is that experimental priming procedures that investigate the effect of religion on attitudes toward immigrants reflect processes that might occur in the real world. With regard to the practical implications of this result, the effect of the location and type of religious contextual cues on intergroup relations may inform decisions regarding urban development, particularly in highly diverse, migration-accepting neighborhoods.

In addition, whereas most empirical studies in the psychology of religion have been run on Christian samples, in Western nations, and often among college students (Leach & Sato, 2013), the present study examined the effect of religious priming in a unique context, in terms of both location (Jerusalem) and religious affiliation (Jews), in a nonstudent population. Moreover, the topic of focus was the pressing social issue of immigration sentiment, which is currently understudied in the context of religious priming. Given that the present findings align with previous findings in the literature, the results of this study may be generalizable across religious groups and national contexts.

Next, this study dovetails with theological debates regarding welcoming strangers. The exact scriptural interpretation of the “foreigner dwelling in one’s midst” (*ger*), whom the Judeo-Christian creed repeatedly warns not to mistreat,¹⁰ is disputed with regard to whether such foreigners are limited to one’s religious ingroup or whether they also include members of religious outgroups. Some sources interpret *ger* as referring to foreigners in general (e.g., Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, the

¹⁰The exhortation to care for the foreigner dwelling in one’s midst (*ger*) appears numerous times in the five books of Moses (e.g., “You shall neither mistreat a stranger [*ger*] nor oppress him, for you were strangers [*gers*] in the land of Egypt”, Exodus 22:20; “And if a stranger [*ger*] dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him”, Leviticus 19:33; NKJV).

11th-century commentator; NKJV), whereas others interpret the term *ger* as referring more narrowly to converts (e.g., Maimonides, the 12th-century commentator, in Hilchot De'ot, 6:4). Our results suggest that, in effect, religion is tied to favoritism of one's ingroup rather than to nonselective compassion toward all immigrants (Brewer, 1999), even if religion does not necessarily lead to prejudice toward members of religious outgroups, as some seminal works predict (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Thus, religious context promotes inclusiveness toward a *ger* from one's circle of religious kin.

Theoretically, our finding that contextual religious cues led to more positive attitudes toward immigrants of the religious ingroup, but typically did not affect attitudes toward immigrants from a religious outgroup, is in line with the finding that religion increases positive feelings toward the disadvantaged (e.g., Knoll, 2009; Lubbers et al., 2006). This result mirrors the effect of priming religious belief (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015) and is arguably the result of breeding compassion toward the unfortunate and of values like solidarity and charity (Knoll, 2009; McDaniel et al., 2011). The present findings are also consistent with predictions of SIT, because religious cues led only to more positive attitudes toward immigrants of the religious ingroup. Future research can examine whether contextual religious cues are indeed more likely to prime certain aspects of religion more than others.

Finally, a recent cultural evolutionary theory of religion posits that prosocial religions developed because of their ability to facilitate cooperation among coreligionists who were strangers (Norenzayan, 2013; Norenzayan et al., 2016). In line with this idea, the present finding demonstrates that contextual religious cues in the public sphere are sufficient to activate the acceptance of immigrant coreligionists and thereby facilitate cooperation with one's circle of religious kin.

Limitations and future directions

The present investigation has a number of strengths. Two types of ecologically valid contextual religious primes yielded mostly consistent results on attitudes toward immigrants from members of both an ingroup and outgroup. These results are theoretically consistent with SIT, as well as with one of the accounts of priming religion (religious belief; Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015). These effects were obtained when controlling for various demographic variables, including age, gender, political ideology, country of birth, and religiosity. Moreover, the samples were non-Christian, in contrast to most of the work in the psychology of religion (Leach & Sato, 2013), and the participants consisted of nonstudent civilians.

Still, our study is limited in several ways. First, we examined a single national and religious context—Jews in Israel. Certain elements of this context are unique, such as the encouragement of Jewish migration to Israel throughout the history of the modern state of Israel, as codified in the Law of Return. Therefore, the role that contextual religious cues may play in promoting positive attitudes toward immigrants from the religious ingroup may be unique to the present context. Future studies should examine whether contextual religious cues play a similar role in other national and religious contexts. The relationship between different contextual religious cues and attitudes toward immigrants (or other groups deemed unlikeable) in a cross-cultural framework is an interesting one—but one that we leave for future studies.

We examined the influence of two types of majority-religion contextual cues—religious location and religious attire—on immigration attitudes. Nonetheless, other contextual religious cues may have different effects. First, more diverse cues, such as public prayers, public symbols, and religious sounds, could be investigated by future studies. Second, we focused on the effect of majority-religion cues, although minority-religion cues abound in the public sphere, both in Israel and in other countries that are accepting of immigrants. The backlash in many European settings to Muslim cues in the public sphere, such as the burka and minarets, likely reflects negative attitudes toward these symbols. As such, the contextual religious cues of immigrant groups may influence attitudes toward immigrants differently than contextual religious cues belonging to the majority group. Therefore,

future research should examine the difference in the effect of religious cues when they are primed in majority versus minority contexts, and particularly the effect of contextual Muslim cues on anti-immigration attitudes.

In Study 1, the religious location was confounded by participants' level of religiosity, as indicated by the association between the religious location and the level of participants' religiosity. This suggests that religiosity may be an alternative explanation to, or a potential moderator of, the effect of contextual religion. Results from Study 2 support the latter possibility, that religiosity moderates the effect of contextual religion, thus showing that the effect of contextual religious cues on immigration attitudes increases with the level of devoutness. We conjectured that religious individuals are more receptive of contextual religious cues because their level of religiosity reflects degree of group identification. Future studies can directly examine the mechanism underlying the moderating role of religiosity. A further limitation is that Study 1 consisted of a relatively small sample, suggesting that it was underpowered to detect moderation by religiosity.¹¹ We hope that our results will inform a priori power analyses in future contextual studies.

Finally, the present study examined only self-reported attitudes using survey items. Whereas the current literature acknowledges the importance of public opinion polls on immigration due to their concrete effect on policy making (Lahav, 2004), the association between anti-immigrant attitudes and the likelihood of engaging in anti-immigrant behavior, such as political participation (e.g., voting, demonstrations) and behavioral markers of intolerance, social distance, and cooperation, may be tenuous, as are many attitude-behavior links (Wicker, 1969). Future research should examine whether contextual religious cues influence such behaviors.

Conclusion

Our study demonstrates how immigration attitudes are formed in a complicated social context, shaped not just by characteristics of political issues and personal preferences but also by the tangible context. We show that religious contexts provide an influential informational environment, particularly for the devout. In this regard, our results also alleviate concerns about the supposed overt antisocial effect of public religious cues, at least in majority contexts. Our findings instead suggest that religious cues play a role in ingroup favoritism but not in outgroup derogation (Brewer, 1999). Future studies should thus consider the context, the type of immigrant, and level of religiosity when examining the link between religion and immigration attitudes.

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¹¹It is possible that our studies were powered just enough to detect statistically significant two-way interactions in Study 1, a statistically significant three-way interaction in Study 2, and another three-way interaction, which produced a *p* value just below the acceptable confidence level.

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