

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Territorial ownership perceptions and reconciliation in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: A person-centred approach

Kaja Warnke<sup>1</sup>  | Borja Martinović<sup>1</sup>  | Nimrod Rosler<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands

<sup>2</sup>Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

## Correspondence

Kaja Warnke, Utrecht University, Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science, European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER), Padualaan 14, 3584 CH Utrecht, the Netherlands.  
Email: [k.warnke@uu.nl](mailto:k.warnke@uu.nl)

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## Abstract

We investigate land ownership claims and reconciliation-related outcomes in the intractable Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Using a person-centred approach and drawing on survey data of Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, we (1) identify profiles with differing ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions, (2) examine how profile membership depends on group identifications and the endorsement of ownership principles, and (3) assess how reconciliation intentions and support for concrete territorial conflict solutions differ across the profiles. The majority of the Jews (87%) perceived exclusive ingroup ownership of the contested land, whereas 13% perceived shared Jewish and Palestinian ownership. In contrast, most of the Palestinians perceived moderate levels of shared ownership (43%) followed by ingroup ownership (36%), but we also identified profiles with high levels of shared ownership (11%) and exclusive outgroup ownership (10%). We conclude that Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel have different understandings of land ownership. Complex patterns of endorsing various ownership principles and levels of group identifications explained profile membership, mostly in line with our expectations. Importantly, the profiles differed in attitudes towards concrete territorial solutions and intergroup reconciliation, attesting to the relevance of examining ownership perceptions in conflict regions from a person-centred approach.

## KEYWORDS

collective psychological ownership, group identifications, Israeli–Palestinian conflict, ownership principles, person-centred approach, reconciliation

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Land ownership claims are central in territorial conflicts, such as the one between Israelis and Palestinians, and are therefore a key issue in their peaceful resolution. This conflict is considered territorial as it concerns the contested land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (Gelvin et al., 2021). Even though both groups involved tend to perceive the disputed land as belonging to their ingroup members, they may also to some extent consider the rival out-

group as entitled to the land (Storz et al., 2021). Several recent studies have examined the role of ownership perceptions in reconciliation (e.g., Storz et al., 2020) and territorial compensation (Nooitgedagt et al., 2021). However, little is known about how members of the groups in question combine ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions, and how different configurations of ownership perceptions relate to reconciliation.

Our study contributes to this emerging literature in three ways. First, instead of considering ingroup and outgroup ownership as

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independent predictors of intergroup attitudes, we employ a person-centred approach to identify profiles of people with different combinations of ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions. To date, only one study used this approach in the relatively peaceful context of New Zealand (Nooitgedagt et al., 2022). However, perceptions of territorial ownership vary across contexts and by understanding how configurations of ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions are organized in *territorial conflicts*, the present study advances theoretical understandings of collective ownership. Importantly, we employ for the first time a comparative perspective, considering both Jewish Israelis and the understudied group of Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI). The latter is of special interest to the study of reconciliation processes since they have a complex identity of being part of the Palestinian people while being Israeli citizens at the same time.

Second, we investigate what characterizes people belonging to different ownership profiles by looking at the endorsement of ownership principles and levels of group identification. Land ownership tends to be inferred from general principles that people may endorse to differing extents (Verkuyten & Martinović, 2017). They may see the first inhabitants as owners (autochthony), those who worked the land (investment), those whose identity was shaped by the land (formation), or those who were promised the land by God (God-given). So far, the God-given principle has not been studied in relation to ownership, but it might be particularly relevant in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which is deeply ingrained in religion (Gelvin et al., 2021). Furthermore, collective ownership presupposes a collective group identity (Pierce & Jussila, 2010). We will therefore examine how levels of national, ethnic, and religious identification differ across ownership profiles. By doing so, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the arguments underpinning land entitlement perceptions in conflict settings.

Third, we examine how ownership perceptions matter for outcomes related to peacebuilding (Bar-Tal et al., 2013) by examining how people in the different profiles vary in their support for concrete territorial solutions and in their willingness to reconcile. A sustainable resolution of the conflict not only requires agreements on land divisions among the groups, but also the willingness to engage in improving interpersonal relations with the adversary, which is referred to as reconciliation (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004). To answer these questions, we make use of newly collected data from diverse samples of 511 Jewish Israelis and 602 Palestinian Citizens of Israel.

## 2 | RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is widely considered ‘intractable’ (Bar-Tal et al., 2022), as it has been taking place for several generations and is characterized by existential threats to the safety of both groups. Since our study will deal with the territorial aspect of the conflict, its perception and meaning by the two parties, we will briefly provide relevant background information.

At the end of the 19th century, members of the Zionist movement started immigrating and settling the land between the Jordan River and

the Mediterranean Sea that they considered their ancestral land (the ‘land of Israel’) to create a Jewish homeland (for reviews of the conflict, see for example Morris et al., 2011). The land was known as Palestine, and its Arab population wanted to maintain the Muslim character and their status as inhabitants (Bisharat et al., 1993). With the end of the British Mandate, the United Nations general assembly adopted in 1947 the partition plan for the creation of a Jewish state and an Arab state in Palestine. Followed by Israel’s independence in 1948, the plan was rejected by Arab leaders. Armed conflicts between Jewish and Palestinian communities broke out, later escalating to the first Israeli–Arab inter-state war, and caused a mass exodus of Palestinians referred to by Palestinians as *Al-Nakba*, that is, ‘the catastrophe’ (Bisharat et al., 1993; Mi’ari et al., 2009). Overall, the Palestinian identity is strongly tied to the division of land (Amara et al., 2002). The Zionist ideology, tying the Jewish national identity to the land of Israel, is still hegemonic among Jews in Israel (Bar-Tal et al., 2022).

The present study considers Israeli Jews (referred to as ‘Jews’ in this article) and Palestinian citizens of Israel (referred to as ‘PCI’, approximately 20% of the Israeli population). PCI hold a special status within the conflict as a sub-group of Arab-Palestinians. They are citizens of Israel, even though they are mainly excluded from the Jewish national collective (see work by Smootha et al., 1997, 2020 on ethnic democracies), but also subject to Palestinian independence aspirations (Amara & Schnell et al., 2004). With regard to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and reconciliation, PCI are a population of special interest since they have been consistently found to hold attitudes supporting a peaceful solution to the conflict (Rosler & Yakter, 2022) and strong intentions to socially integrate with Jewish Israelis (Hermann et al., 2022).

The current study was carried out in November 2021, with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in a prolonged stalemate since the collapse of the last round of negotiations between the parties in 2014. The present stalemate period, taking place under an ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, is characterized by fluctuating levels of violence, ranging from sporadic violent attacks taking place in Israel and the West Bank to intense and violent hostilities between Israel and Hamas-ruled Gaza. The last major round of violence took place half a year before the study was conducted, and included violence that originated in Jerusalem and spread to clashes between Jews and Arabs inside Israel and between Hamas in Gaza and Israel. Only a month later, a new coalition was created that included for the first time in Israel’s history an Arab party. However, trends in Israeli public opinion regarding the conflict seemed to remain steady in response to these complex developments (Rosler & Yakter, 2023; Shikaki et al., 2023).

## 3 | THEORY

### 3.1 | Collective psychological ownership

Psychological ownership, broadly defined as a person’s sense of owning a place, an object, or an idea (Pierce et al., 2001), is intuitive and can be unrelated to legal ownership (Merrill et al., 1998; Snare et al., 1972). Ownership is determined, marked, and defended by different guiding

principles already young children have a sense of (Nancekivell et al., 2013). Ownership furthermore entails a bundle of rights, such as the rights of usage, transfer, and exclusion (Merrill et al., 1998; Snare et al., 1972).

Ownership can also be experienced on behalf of one's group, which is referred to as *collective psychological ownership* (Pierce & Jussila, 2010; Verkuyten & Martinović, 2017). It is based on the idea that a sense of 'us' can extend to a sense of 'ours'. Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) proposes that through the process of depersonalization, the individual self ('I') redefines itself in terms of a collective identity ('we'). Collective identities, including their attached norms and values, become the reference point for behaviour and identification—it is about 'our' interests, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, and thereby 'our' organization, neighbourhood, or country (Verkuyten & Martinović, 2017).

Recent research in multi-ethnic regions shows that perceiving one's group to own the territory has consequences for interethnic relations. Most of this research focused on ingroup ownership perceptions and found these to be associated with less openness towards newcomers in one's neighbourhood (Toruńczyk-Ruiz & Martinović, 2020), more negative attitudes towards immigrants in Europe (Brylka et al., 2015; Nijs et al., 2021), and lower support for compensating indigenous people in settler societies (Nooitgedagt et al., 2021). In conflict regions (Kosovo, Cyprus, and Israel), higher ingroup ownership perceptions were associated with less forgiveness and less willingness to reconcile (Storz et al., 2020). Next to a sense of ingroup ownership, people can also recognize other groups as owners, which is referred to as outgroup ownership perceptions (Nooitge et al., 2021; Selvanathan et al., 2021). Even in active territorial conflict regions, where high levels of ingroup ownership are the default, some people in addition also recognize outgroup ownership (albeit to a lesser extent) and thus have a sense of shared ownership of the land (Storz et al., 2021).

### 3.2 | A person-centred approach to ownership perceptions

The research cited above predominantly used a variable-centred approach to ownership perceptions, by considering them as independent predictors of intergroup relations. While this approach allows us to assess differences between individuals, it is unable to examine the cases in which people's simultaneous perceptions of ingroup and outgroup ownership differ. The present study employs a person-centred approach (Osborne & Sibley et al., 2017), which involves a different way of conceptualizing latent attitudes and feelings—it focuses on how their configurations are organized within subgroups of individuals, which, in this case, gives insights into profiles of people who hold similar perceptions of collective ownership. A major strength of this approach is its lower sensitivity to multicollinearity (Spurk et al., 2020), allowing us to jointly investigate multiple items without losing their specificity. This means for the present study that we can, after examining the different combinations of ownership perceptions for both Jews

and PCI (profiles), examine the correlates of profile membership (ownership principles and group identifications) as well as whether people in different profiles hold different opinions about reconciliation. Altogether, this approach allows us to draw a more nuanced picture of Jews' and PCI's heterogeneous understanding of ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions and therewith advances our theoretical knowledge of ownership perceptions in conflict settings.

The only study to date using a person-centred approach to ownership was conducted in the relatively peaceful context of New Zealand, from the perspective of European New Zealanders and about indigenous groups (Nooitgedagt et al., 2022). Four profiles were detected: 'ingroup ownership', 'outgroup ownership', 'shared ownership', and 'no ownership'. In conflict settings, both the 'outgroup ownership' and the 'no ownership' profiles seem unlikely as the contested land is central to the conflict and collective identities (Bar-Tal et al., 2012). For both Jews and PCI, we, therefore, expect to find two ownership profiles: *high ingroup but low outgroup ownership ('Ingroup Ownership Profile')* and *high ingroup and moderate outgroup ownership ('Shared Ownership Profile')* (H1). To better understand what characterizes participants in the ownership profiles, we consider ownership principles and group identifications as correlates of profile membership.

### 3.3 | Ownership principles

Territorial ownership claims are inferred from and legitimized by general guiding principles (autochthony, investment, formation, and God-given) that people endorse to differing degrees (Verkuyten & Martinović, 2017).

The *autochthony principle* (see 'first possession principle' in political theory (Murphy et al., 1990), 'terra nullius' in international law) refers to land rights because of first occupancy. It is based on the idea that the first occupants did not displace anyone to take possession of the land. Both groups in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict construct competing narratives that legitimize them as first residents. The Palestinian narrative begins in the latter half of the 19th century when the territory was mainly inhabited by Arabs for generations (Gelvin et al., 2021). The Jewish narrative begins about 3000 years before, dating back to ancient Hebrews inhabiting the land.

The *God-given principle* represents the belief that a land was divinely promised to a certain group, which entitles them to inhabit it. This is a central claim for the legitimacy of Israel—the contested land is understood as the 'promised land' for Jews (Gelvin et al., 2021). However, the land is also of religious importance for Palestinians, as it is home to holy sites of their denominations. Religion is a bright boundary between the groups. It implies the ultimate truth, and if one's religion is considered true, any other is by default heresy. We consider the autochthony and God-given principle to be exclusive and therefore expect that *Jews and PCI in the 'Ingroup Ownership Profile' will be characterized by higher levels of support for the autochthony (H2a) and God-given principle (H2b) than those in the 'Shared Ownership Profile'*.

According to the *investment principle*, those who cultivate the land are considered its rightful owners—as one owns the labour of one's

body, one thus has the moral right to also own its results (Beggan & Brown, 1994; Day et al., 1966). Israeli officials used this principle by referring to a 19th-century law of the Ottoman Empire, stating that land can be appropriated by a state when it has not been cultivated for a long time (Bisharat et al., 1993). However, the Palestinian population already worked most of the arable land (Stein et al., 1984), which contributed to their perceived entitlement to it.

The *formation principle* refers to the meaning of territory for a group identity (Murphy et al., 1990). The early experiences of Jews on the contested land can be considered formative in their collective identity as these made them who they are today. But the territory is also central to the Palestinian collective identity, which is strongly tied to their 'homeland' (Pinson et al., 2008). The investment and formation principle can be considered more inclusive and we accordingly expect that *Jews and PCI in the 'Ingroup Ownership Profile' will be characterized by lower levels of support for the investment (H2c) and formation principle (H2d) than those in the 'Shared Ownership Profile'.*

### 3.4 | Group identifications

Collective ownership perceptions presuppose identification with a group (Pierce & Jussila, 2010). Group identification is the degree to which people see themselves as group members, which involves both the valuing of and emotional attachment to the group (Hewstone et al., 2012). Identification establishes the subjective link between the individual and the collective, and the group forms the basis for thinking, feeling, and acting (Verkuyten et al., 2018). Since different group identities are relevant to Jews and PCI, we discuss group identification separately for these two groups.

**Jews.** We differentiate between three group identifications central to Israel's Jewish population (Smootha et al., 2010). *National identity* refers to identification with Israel as a *Jewish* state, based on the Zionist perception of Israel as the national home for Jews. Israeli Jews easily identify with the national symbols and characteristics of the state that are Jewish in nature, for example, its flag, anthem, and national holidays. *Ethnic identity* refers to identification with the Jewish people worldwide as an ethnic group. It is based on shared perceptions of having been persecuted, particularly during the Holocaust. This is a strong bonding element between Jews worldwide and is connected to a sense of victimhood (Friedman et al., 2005). Importantly, perceived ingroup victimhood is related to weaker shared ownership claims (Storz et al., 2022). Lastly, *religious identity* refers to being adherent to Judaism. The 'land of Israel' was promised to Jews according to the Old Testament, and its territory is therefore considered sacred with the religious commandment to control and settle it (Reiter et al., 2010). To all three group identifications, this territory is central. Therefore, we expect that *Jews in the 'Ingroup Ownership Profile' will be characterized by a stronger national (H3a), ethnic (H3b) and religious identity (H3c) than those in the 'Shared Ownership Profile'.*

**PCI.** We consider three group identifications important to PCI's self-identification (Smootha et al., 2010). *National identity* refers to being Arab-Palestinian, predominantly relating to a shared historical experience

and struggle for national independence in Palestine. It also includes sharing a common language, history, and culture with the Arab world at large (Mi'ari et al., 2009). *Religious identity* pertains to identification with different denominations. While most of the PCI are Muslim (80%), around 11% are Druze<sup>1</sup> and 9% are Christian (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Importantly, despite the religious diversity within the Palestinian population, Palestinians do not adhere to Judaism, which adds a religious aspect to the conflict between the two groups. Moreover, many Palestinian Muslims perceive Palestine as a holy land or Waqf (pious endowment) that is not allowed to be shared with others (Reiter et al., 2010). *Civic identity* refers to identification as an Israeli citizen. Even though the Palestinian minority in Israel is in a socially and politically disadvantaged position compared to Jewish Israelis, they have equal status as citizens *de jure* (Pinson et al., 2008) and most of them wish to integrate into Israeli society and be part of it (Hermann et al., 2022).

The struggle for national independence in Palestine is central to PCI's national identity, and the religious identity adds the sacred aspect to the territory and willingness to sacrifice in order to defend it. At the same time, the civic identity marks an inclusive sense of belonging to Israel. We therefore expect that *PCI in the 'Ingroup Ownership Profile' will be characterized by a stronger national (H4a) and religious identity (H4b), and a weaker civic identity (H4c) than those in the 'Shared Ownership Profile'.*

### 3.5 | Ownership profiles, conflict resolution, and reconciliation

Building stable and enduring peace is a multifaceted and complex process. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict involves agreements on political questions about the division of resources and rights. We deem ownership perceptions important to consider, as the 'territorial question' is central to the resolution of this conflict (Rouhana, 2004), that is, how the contested land should be divided among the groups. Those who consider the land as only belonging to their group might feel exclusively entitled to decide about its future. Conversely, shared ownership perceptions are associated with support for joint decision-making to resolve territorial disputes (Storz et al., 2021). Hence, we expect that *those in the 'Ingroup Ownership Profile' will be more in favour of solutions reaffirming ingroup rights over the land (H5a), and less supportive of solutions that grant such rights both to the ingroup and outgroup (H5b) than those in the 'Shared Ownership Profile'.*

A sustainable solution requires societal support. This involves reconciliation, that is, changes in attitudes, beliefs, and emotions towards the conflict and the adversary (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004). Recent research showed that perceptions of ingroup ownership are related to exclusionary reactions towards the outgroup (Storz et al., 2020), whereas shared ownership perceptions were related to more political

<sup>1</sup> Druze are an ethnoreligious group predominantly living in countries of the Levant. They are adherents to Druzism, a monotheistic -esoteric religion that contains elements from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and various philosophies.



compromise (Storz et al., 2021). We, therefore, expect that *reconciliation intentions are lower in the 'Ingroup Ownership Profile' than in the 'Shared Ownership Profile' (H5c).*

## 4 | METHOD

### 4.1 | Data and participants

This study draws on data collected in November 2021 as part of the Peace Index Survey. This is an ongoing research project of Tel Aviv University monitoring public sentiments on the conflict since 1994 and previous rounds have been used for scholarly publications (e.g., Hermann & Yuchtman-Yaar, 2002; Rosler et al., 2022). Jewish participants in this round were randomly sampled from a panel according to a quota aiming for a group resembling Israel's Jewish population in terms of gender, age, religiosity, education, and region of residence. For the present study, PCI, that is, the minority group, were oversampled according to the same criteria, resulting in a sample resembling Israel's Palestinian population in terms of gender, age, education, and region of residence, but not exactly representative in terms of religion (ca. 18% Christians in the sample, compared to 11% of the Palestinian population; ca. 9% Druze in the sample, compared to 11% in the Palestinian population).<sup>2</sup> After giving informed consent before the study participation, respondents completed an online survey in Hebrew or Arabic, and answering each question was required to complete the survey. In this round of the Peace Index Survey, we included items measuring ownership perceptions, group identifications, and ownership principles. The dataset contained 511 Jewish Israelis and 602 Palestinian Citizens of Israel. See Table 1 for the demographic breakdown of the sample.

### 4.2 | Measures

*Ingroup ownership perceptions* and *outgroup ownership perceptions* were measured with three questions adapted from previous studies (Nooitgedagt et al., 2021; Storz et al., 2021): 'How much does this land belong to [Jews/Palestinians]?', 'To what extent can [Jews/Palestinians] be seen as the rightful owner of this land?' and 'How much can [Jews/Palestinians] claim this land for themselves?', with the respective ingroup as the first answer option. Answers ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). It was indicated that giving the same score to both groups meant that the land was seen as belonging equally to both.

The four ownership principles (*autochthony*, *investment*, *formation*, *God-given*)<sup>3</sup> were each captured using two items from previous studies

(Martinović & Verkuyten, 2013; Nooitgedagt et al., 2021) that pertained in a more general way to territorial ownership. The items for the four principles were: 'A territory primarily belongs to the group [that inhabited it first/that put most effort into developing it/whose culture is most connected to it/that was predestined to inhabit it]' and '[We were here first/We have invested in this territory/This territory is central to our identity/This territory was given to us by God]' is a good reason for determining which group owns the territory'. Answers ranged from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). A four-factor solution for all items was supported<sup>4</sup> and we therefore computed mean scores for each principle (correlations (all  $ps < .001$ )—Jews:  $r_{\text{autho}} = .72$ ,  $r_{\text{invest}} = .82$ ,  $r_{\text{form}} = .75$ ,  $r_{\text{god-given}} = .38$ ; PCI:  $r_{\text{autho}} = .68$ ,  $r_{\text{invest}} = .78$ ,  $r_{\text{form}} = .57$ ,  $r_{\text{god-given}} = .43$ ).

The different group identifications for Jews (*national*, *ethnic*, and *religious*) were measured with two items each, namely '[Being Israeli/My Jewish origin/Judaism] is an important part of me' and 'I strongly identify [as an Israeli/with other people with Jewish ancestry/with Jews as a religious group]'. The different group identifications for PCI (*national*, *civic*, and *religious*) were measured with the items '[Being Arab-Palestinian/Being Israeli/Belonging to Islam/Christianity/Druzism] is an important part of my identity' and 'I strongly identify [as an Arab-Palestinian/as an Israeli/with Muslims-Christians-Druze as a religious group]'. Answers ranged from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Since a three-factor solution fitted the data well,<sup>5</sup> mean scores for each of the different group identifications were included in the analyses (correlations (all  $ps < .001$ ) Jews:  $r_{\text{national}} = .88$ ;  $r_{\text{ethnic}} = .78$ ;  $r_{\text{religious}} = .80$ ; PCI:  $r_{\text{national}} = .89$ ;  $r_{\text{civic}} = .86$ ;  $r_{\text{religious}} = .91$ ).

Support for different *territorial solutions* was assessed with four regularly asked Peace Index items. Participants indicated the extent to which they opposed or supported (1) 'The creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel', (2) 'The creation of a binational state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea with full and equal rights for Jews and Palestinians', (3) 'Annexation of the occupied territories and the creation of one state under Israeli rule with limited rights for Palestinians', and (4) 'Continuing the existing situation'. Answers ranged from 1 (very much oppose) to 4 (very much support) and the answer category 'Don't know' was coded as missing.

*Reconciliation intentions* were measured with two items used in previous research (Storz et al., 2021): 'I am willing to promote good relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinians' and 'I am willing to participate in a workshop that brings Israeli Jews and Palestinians together'. Participants indicated their level of agreement on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). We used the mean score in the analyses (Jews  $r = .662$ ,  $p < .001$ , PCI  $r = .830$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

<sup>2</sup> Initially, we aimed to have the same number of participants for each group (N~500). Due to a sampling error, the PCI sample contained only few participants older than 40 years, and predominantly women. To balance this out, 100 additional participants were contacted, resulting in a larger sample of PCI than Jews. We employed weights for age and gender for all analyses, as provided by the Peace Index Team.

<sup>3</sup> As we are the first to test the God-given principle, we designed its measures in alignment with the other principles.

<sup>4</sup> Fit indices for the four factor solution (CFA in Mplus): Jews-RMSEA = .055, CFI = .980, TLI = .961, SRMR = .033; PCI - RMSEA = .045, CFI = .965, TLI = .930, SRMR = .045

<sup>5</sup> Fit indices for the three factor solution (CFA in Mplus): Jews-RMSEA = .100, CFI = .966, TLI = .914, SRMR = .021; PCI - RMSEA = .095, CFI = .969, TLI = .922, SRMR = .036

**TABLE 1** Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

Continuous variables	Jews		PCI	
	M	SD	M	SD
Age <sup>a</sup>	40.26	15.59	37.84	14.05
Categorical variables	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Female	252	49.3	297	49.4
Religious self-identification				
Secular Jew	223	43.6	–	–
Traditional, not religious Jew	119	23.3	–	–
Traditional religious Jew	60	11.7	–	–
Religious Jew	61	11.9	–	–
Ultra-Orthodox Jew	48	9.4	–	–
Arab-Muslim	–	–	429	71.3
Arab-Christian	–	–	107	17.7
Druze	–	–	66	11.0
Education				
Elementary school or less	6	1.2	6	1.0
High school, no diploma	35	6.8	94	15.6
High school, with diploma	129	25.2	127	21.1
Secondary school, no college degree	131	25.6	115	19.1
Undergraduate degree	144	28.2	196	32.6
Master's degree or higher	66	12.9	64	10.7

Note:  $N_{\text{Jews}} = 511$ ,  $N_{\text{PCI}} = 602$ .

Abbreviation: PCI, Palestinian citizens of Israel.

<sup>a</sup>The range was 18–70 years for Jews and 18–69 years for PCI.

### 4.3 | Analysis

We prepared the variables in SPSS and then analysed the data in Mplus (Version 7.3, Muthén & Muthén, 2017). First, we ran the measurement model with Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) for the latent constructs *ingroup ownership* and *outgroup ownership*, and tested for measurement invariance. Model fit was assessed using Schreiber's (2008) cut-off criteria for fit indices (acceptable fit when Satorra-Bentler scaled  $\chi^2$  ( $p$ ) > .05, RMSEA < .06, CFI and TLI  $\geq$  .90, SRMR  $\leq$  .08). Second, we performed a Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) based on the two latent variables *ingroup* and *outgroup ownership* for Jews and PCI separately, following the approach of Nooitgedagt and colleagues (2022). Different profile solutions were estimated and the decision for the most suitable one was based on model fit (lowest AIC and BIC; LMR and BLRT < .05), entropy values (values > .8 representing high quality of classification), membership distribution in the profiles (> 5%), and theoretical plausibility (Osborne & Sibley, 2017). Third, we assessed correlates of profile membership (i.e., ownership principles and group identifications) in a multinomial logistic regression, allowing us to investigate the likelihood of being in a profile relative to a reference profile, without the correlates influencing the profile estimation (Nooitgedagt et al., 2022). We choose this approach as it allows us to obtain the net effects of the different characteristics while controlling for the effect of other somewhat related predictors. Lastly, equality

tests of means across the profiles were employed to examine reconciliation intentions and support for land divisions across profiles, to validate the relevance of profiles in relation to the conflict at hand. To take the non-normal distributions of the study variables into account, we used the MLR estimator for all analyses (Muthén & Muthén, 2017).

## 5 | RESULTS

### 5.1 | Measurement model

**Jews.** A reflexive two-factor model (see Model B in Table S1 in the supplementary materials) fitted the data significantly better than a model in which all six ownership items loaded on one factor only (Model A). However, the overall model fit was not satisfying. The highest modification index suggested freeing the covariance between the second items of both factors for Jews, that is, 'To what extent can [Jews/Palestinians] be seen as the rightful owner of the land?'. We considered executing this modification appropriate, as the contested ownership of the land is perceived existential to the endeavour of the only Jewish state worldwide, therewith contributing to perceptions of the conflict as a zero-sum game more so for Jews than for Palestinians (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). The model with the freed covariance (Model C) fitted the

data overall very well and significantly better than the model without (Model B). Scale reliability of both factors was high (ingroup ownership  $\rho = .879$ , outgroup ownership  $\rho = .897$ ) and standardized factor loadings (all  $.747 < \lambda < .994$ ) and explained variances (all  $.558 < R^2 < .988$ ) indicated that the latent factors were reflected sufficiently by the items (Kline et al., 2015)

**PCI.** A reflexive two-factor (see Table S1 in the supplementary materials, Model B) fitted the data significantly better than a model in which all six ownership items loaded on one factor only (Model A). Model fit was overall good and no further modifications were needed, which supports our interpretation of the necessity to do so only for Jews. Scale reliability of both factors was high (ingroup ownership  $\rho = .909$ , outgroup ownership  $\rho = .873$ ) and standardized factor loadings (all  $.752 < \lambda < .950$ ) and explained variances of observed items (all  $.565 < R^2 < .903$ ) indicated that the latent factors were reflected sufficiently by the items (Kline et al., 2015). We used these two latent factors to obtain the latent profiles.

**Measurement Invariance.** To make meaningful comparisons of ownership perceptions between Jews and PCI, we tested for measurement invariance using the forward strategy for configural, metric, and scalar invariance (Kline et al., 2015). Model fit of the configural model, which assumed the two-factor structure of Model B (including the modification for Jews) and estimated all parameters freely, was excellent. This means that qualitative comparisons of ingroup and outgroup ownership can be made between the groups. Model fit decreased significantly in the metric model, in which loadings of both groups were constrained to be equal. None of the suggested model modifications were theoretically plausible and we therefore concluded the absence of metric invariance, which means that PCI and Jews responded structurally differently to the ownership items, and neither the factor loadings nor the means of the latent variables can be compared. We therefore proceeded with separate analyses for the two groups.

## 5.2 | Descriptive findings

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the main constructs, as well as Wald tests against the midpoint of the scales. Most notably, Jews perceived strong ingroup ownership ( $M = 6.41$ ), and low outgroup ownership ( $M = 2.33$ ). Also for PCI, ingroup ownership perceptions were higher ( $M = 4.90$ ) than outgroup ownership perceptions ( $M = 3.74$ ). Overall, the bivariate correlations between the study variables (see Table S2 in the supplementary materials) were in the expected direction.

## 5.3 | Latent profile analysis: Ownership profiles

**Jews.** The two, three, and four-profile solutions had a similarly good fit to the data (Table 3) and we therefore based our decision on the meaningfulness of the findings. The two-profile solution identified a group with high ingroup but low outgroup ownership perceptions (87%, *Ingroup Ownership Profile*), and a group with moderate levels of

both ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions (13%, *Shared Ownership Profile*).<sup>6</sup> The interpretability of the findings did not improve in the models with more than two profiles, as the main response patterns only became more nuanced (see Table S3 and Figure S1.1 in the supplementary materials). More precisely, we continuously identified the *Ingroup Ownership* and *Shared Ownership Profile* and additionally detected profiles that scored higher on ingroup than outgroup ownership. Because the two-profile solution has the highest parsimonious interpretability and we do not have theoretical reasons to differentiate between profiles with different levels of ingroup ownership perceptions, we deem it the most suitable representation of Jewish ownership perceptions.

**PCI.** Similar to the analyses of the Jewish participants, multiple solutions (three, four, and five profiles) fitted the data well and there was no clearly best-fitting model based on the presented indices (Table 3, also see Table S3 and Figure S1.2 in the supplementary materials). The two-profile solution identified a group with high ingroup but low outgroup ownership perceptions (54%, *Ingroup Ownership Profile*), and a subgroup with moderate levels of both ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions (46%, *Moderate Shared Ownership Profile*). Adding a third profile reduced the share of respondents falling into the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* (47%) and the *Moderate Ownership Profile* (42.5%), and furthermore identified a group with low levels of ingroup and moderate outgroup ownership (10.5%, *Outgroup Ownership Profile*). In the four-profile solution, a profile characterized by high levels of both ingroup and outgroup ownership split off the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* (11.5%, *High Shared Ownership Profile*). Adding a fifth profile split the *Outgroup Ownership Profile* (5.6%), and a new profile characterized by low levels of ingroup and outgroup ownership (4.8%, *No Ownership Profile*) was identified. Here, we consider the four-profile solution most meaningful because every profile showed a qualitatively distinct response pattern to the previous model and was populated by a sufficient number of participants ( $> 5\%$ ). The four-profile solution detected a group with high ingroup ownership perceptions (*Ingroup Ownership Profile*, 35.7%), and a group that perceived both Jews and Palestinians to equally but moderately own it (*Moderate Shared Ownership Profile*, 42.5%). Additionally, we found a group with very high shared ownership perceptions (*High Shared Ownership Profile*, 11.5%) and a group that perceived outgroup ownership (*Outgroup Ownership Profile*, 10.3%).

For Jews, we found the expected two profiles: one characterized by high ingroup, but low outgroup ownership perceptions, and one characterized by high levels of ingroup and moderate levels of outgroup ownership (H1). For the PCI, more profiles were identified and fitted the data better than a two-profile solution. Therefore, H1 was not supported for PCI (see Table 4 for an overview of all hypotheses). Nevertheless, the majority of PCI in the four-profile solution were in the two expected profiles. In the following, we test our hypotheses for the PCI by comparing the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* to the *Moderate Shared Ownership Profile* and the *High Shared Ownership Profile*; however, in

<sup>6</sup> The means of ingroup and outgroup ownership in this profile were significantly higher than the midpoint to the scale. However, we refer to them as 'moderate' because of the highly skewed distribution of the ownership variables: more extreme levels of ownership are the default in this conflict context, and compared to that, these means appear 'moderate'.

**TABLE 2** Descriptive statistics: Means, standard deviations and Wald tests of the main variables (Jews and PCI).

	Jews				PCI			
	M	SD	Wald test <sup>a</sup>	N	M	SD	Wald test	N
Ingroup ownership	6.42	1.01	2915.97 (1)***	511	4.90	1.83	51.83 (1)***	602
Outgroup ownership	2.33	1.45	674.30 (1)***	511	3.74	1.63	6.00 (1)*	602
Autochthony	3.73	1.56	14.84 (1)***	511	4.38	1.51	14.08 (1)***	602
Investment	4.11	1.61	2.29 (1)	511	3.49	1.54	25.16 (1)***	602
Formation	4.17	1.58	6.25 (1)*	511	4.13	1.48	1.86 (1)	602
God-given	4.18	1.54	7.24 (1)**	511	3.67	1.39	16.44 (1)***	602
National identity	6.04	1.26	1346.01 (1)***	511	4.84	1.89	49.62 (1)***	602
Ethnic identity/Civic identity <sup>b</sup>	5.95	1.33	1090.24 (1)***	511	4.37	1.81	9.40 (1)**	602
Religious identity	5.21	1.74	246.97 (1)***	511	5.58	1.64	236.69 (1)***	602
Reconciliation intentions	4.34	1.68	93.25 (1)***	511	5.01	1.59	100.39 (1)***	602
Indep. Palestinian state	2.03	1.04	100.80 (1)***	480	3.17	0.89	114.88 (1)***	454
Binational state	1.64	0.86	489.21 (1)***	478	2.74	1.11	7.23 (1)**	442
Annexation	2.21	1.05	34.74 (1)***	462	1.72	0.97	114.05 (1)***	463
Continuing	2.29	0.93	23.99 (1)***	451	1.87	0.95	81.95 (1)***	478

Note:  $N_{\text{Jews}} = 511$ ,  $N_{\text{PCI}} = 602$ . Answers for ownership perceptions range from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much) and for principles, identifications and personal reconciliation from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Answers for territorial solutions range from 1 (very much support) to 4 (very much oppose). Abbreviation: PCI, Palestinian citizens of Israel.

<sup>a</sup>Wald tests were used to assess significant differences between the mean and the midpoint of the scale for each construct.

<sup>b</sup>Ethnic identity refers to the Jewish participants and civic identity to the Palestinian participants.

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$

**TABLE 3** Latent profile analysis: model fit statistics and profile membership distribution.

Number of profiles	AIC	BIC	aBIC	Entropy	LMR		BLRT <sup>a</sup>			Profile membership distribution <sup>b</sup>					
					value	p	value	df	p	1	2	3	4	5	6
Jews															
2	8279.31	8359.80	8299.49	0.976	338.96	.240	-4303.72	2	<.001	.87	.13				
3	8048.52	8141.72	8071.90	0.972	219.21	.651	-4120.66	2	<.001	.73	.09	.18			
4	7831.53	7937.44	7858.08	0.993	206.44	.031	-4002.26	2	<.001	.71	.07	.16	.06		
5	7278.60	7397.21	7308.34	1.000	516.47	.889	-3890.24	2	<.001	.75	.07	.10	.06	.02	
6	6703.20	6834.53	6736.13	1.000	512.46	.240	-3597.38	2	<.001	.75	.07	.11	.06	.01	.00
PCI															
2	12671.07	12750.28	12693.13	0.797	80.59	.484	-	-	-	.53	.47				
3	12352.70	12445.10	12378.43	0.986	300.87	.240	-	-	-	.47	.43	.10			
4	12229.59	12335.20	12259.00	0.946	119.75	.707	-	-	-	.36	.43	.10	.11		
5	12094.11	12212.92	12127.20	0.959	131.22	.778	-	-	-	.35	.43	.06	.11	.05	
6	11980.34	12112.40	12017.16	0.958	111.04	.240	-	-	-	.23	.41	.06	.09	.05	.16

Note:  $N_{\text{Jews}} = 511$ ,  $N_{\text{PCI}} = 602$ .

Abbreviations: aBIC, sample-size adjusted BIC; AIC, Akaike information criteria; BIC, Bayesian information criteria; BLRT, bootstrapped likelihood ratio test; LMR, Lo-Mendell-Rubin test.

<sup>a</sup>BLRT could not be estimated for PCI, because it is not available in Mplus with TYPE = MIXTURE, which we needed to apply weights.

<sup>b</sup>Profile membership distribution was based on the exported profiles (exported to obtain mean scores). The numbers refer to the profiles that were estimated in each step of the Latent Profile Analysis, its values the share of respondents falling into each profile.



**TABLE 4** Overview of the hypotheses.

No.	Hypothesis	Jews	PCI
1	We expect two ownership profiles: one characterized by high ingroup but low outgroup ownership ( <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> ) and one characterized by high ingroup and moderate outgroup ownership ( <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> ).	Supported	Rejected
2a	Jews and PCI in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> will be characterized by higher levels of support for the autochthony principle than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	Rejected	Rejected
2b	Jews and PCI in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> will be characterized by higher levels of support for the God-given principle than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	Supported	Rejected
2c	Jews and PCI in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> will be characterized by lower levels of support for the investment principle than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	Rejected	Supported
2d	Jews and PCI in the ' <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> ' will be characterized by lower levels of support for the formation principle than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	Supported	Rejected
3a,b,c	Jews in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> will be characterized by a stronger national (H3a), ethnic (H3b) and religious identity (H3c) than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	3a rejected 3b supported 3c supported	n.a.
4a,b,c	PCI in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> will be characterized by a stronger national (H4a) and religious identity (H4b), and a weaker civic identity (H4c) than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	n.a.	4a supported 4b rejected 4c supported
5a,b	Those in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> will be more in favour of solutions reaffirming ingroup rights over the land (H5a), and less supportive of solutions that grant such rights both to the ingroup and outgroup (H5b) than those in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> .	5a supported 5b supported	5a rejected 5b rejected
5c	Reconciliation intentions are lower in the <i>Ingroup Ownership Profile</i> than in the <i>Shared Ownership Profile</i> (H5c).	Supported	Rejected

Note: n.a. = not applicable.

Abbreviation: PCI, Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Tables 3 and 5 we also present the results for the remaining profile comparisons, for the sake of completion.

#### 5.4 | Correlates of profile membership: Ownership principles and group identifications

**Jews.** The *Ingroup Ownership Profile* was characterized by stronger endorsement of the God-given and investment principle and weaker endorsement of the formation principle, compared to the *Shared Ownership Profile* (Table 5), thus supporting H2b and H2d, respectively. Unexpectedly, the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* was also correlated with stronger endorsement of the investment principle when compared to the *Shared Ownership Profile*, therefore not supporting H2c. In line with H3b and 3c, those in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* were furthermore characterized by higher ethnic and religious identification. Furthermore, since the two profiles did not differ in terms of the autochthony principle and national identification, H2a and H3a were rejected (see Table 4).

**PCI.** The *Ingroup Ownership Profile* was, compared to the *Moderate Shared Ownership Profile*, characterized by weaker endorsement of the investment and God-given principles, higher national, and lower civic

identification (Table 5). Compared to the *High Shared Ownership Profile*, *Ingroup Ownership* was again characterized by lower civic identification, but no differences were found for the other group identifications and ownership principles. Overall, these findings were in line with H2c, H4a, and H4c, respectively (see Table 4). We found no differences in the autochthony and formation principle, and thus reject H2a and H2d. We furthermore fail to confirm H2b and H4b, as an opposite effect for the God-given principle (weaker, not stronger, in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* than in the *Moderate Ownership Profile*) and no effect for religious identification were found.

Additionally, we found that the *Moderate Shared Profile* was, compared to the *Outgroup Ownership Profile*, characterized by higher national identification. Furthermore, the *Moderate Shared Profile* was, compared to the *High Shared Profile*, marked by lower endorsement of the autochthony principle and weaker national identification. The *Outgroup Ownership Profile* was, compared to the *High Shared Profile*, characterized by lower levels of endorsement of the autochthony principle and weaker national and religious identification. Compared to the *Ingroup Ownership Profile*, it was furthermore marked by stronger civic identification but weaker religious and national identification. Although we did not anticipate the *Outgroup Ownership Profile*, the findings on how people in this profile differ from those in the other

TABLE 5 Results of the multinomial regression analysis predicting the likelihood of belonging to a given profile relative to the reference profile—Jews and PCI.

	'Ingroup Ownership' as reference profile				'High Shared Ownership' as reference profile				'Mod. Shared Ownership' as reference profile			
	B	SE	p	OR	B	SE	p	OR	B	SE	p	OR
<b>Jews</b>												
<i>Shared ownership profile</i>												
Autochthony	−0.05	.12	.693	0.95	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Investment	−0.24	.11	.039	0.79	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Formation	0.30	.15	.040	1.35	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
God-given	−0.43	.19	.020	0.65	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
National identity	−0.28	.16	.074	0.76	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Eth. identity	−0.45	.20	.027	0.64	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Religious identity	−0.31	.15	.037	0.73	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
<b>PCI</b>												
<i>Outgroup ownership profile</i>												
Autochthony	−0.38	.26	.147	0.69	−0.69	.22	.001	0.50	−0.03	.14	.839	0.97
Investment	0.48	.28	.093	1.61	0.14	.21	.488	1.15	0.00	.16	.991	0.99
Formation	−0.33	.30	.274	0.72	0.10	.24	.682	1.10	0.08	.19	.668	1.08
God-given	0.44	.23	.062	1.55	0.19	.25	.448	1.21	−0.05	.17	.789	0.96
National identity	−1.08	.23	<.001	0.34	−0.73	.17	<.001	0.48	−0.39	.13	.003	0.68
Civic identity	0.78	.21	<.001	2.18	0.20	.23	.376	1.22	0.22	.19	.244	1.25
Religious identity	−0.39	.18	.029	0.67	−0.39	.19	.042	0.68	−0.19	.14	.168	0.83
<i>Moderate shared ownership profile</i>												
Autochthony	−0.35	.21	.103	0.71	−0.67	.18	<.001	0.51	−	−	−	−
Investment	0.48	.24	.048	1.61	0.15	.15	.329	1.16	−	−	−	−
Formation	−0.41	.27	.123	0.66	0.02	.18	.924	1.02	−	−	−	−
God-given	0.48	.18	.009	1.62	0.23	.21	.270	1.26	−	−	−	−
National identity	−0.69	.19	.000	0.50	−0.34	.12	.004	0.71	−	−	−	−
Civic identity	0.56	.11	<.001	1.75	−0.02	.15	.901	0.98	−	−	−	−
Religious identity	−0.21	.13	.121	0.81	−0.20	.16	.207	0.82	−	−	−	−
<i>High shared ownership profile</i>												
Autochthony	0.32	.25	.195	1.38	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Investment	0.33	.28	.282	1.39	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Formation	−0.43	.32	.177	0.65	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
God-given	0.25	.27	.357	1.28	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
National identity	−0.35	.21	.099	0.70	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Civic identity	0.58	.16	<.001	1.78	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Religious identity	−0.01	.20	.964	0.99	−	−	−	−	−	−	−	−

Note:  $N_{\text{Jews}} = 511$ ,  $N_{\text{PCI}} = 602$ . 2-tailed p-values. OR = Odds ratios.

profiles in terms of identifications and principles seem theoretically meaningful.<sup>7</sup>

## 5.5 | Territorial solutions and reconciliation intentions across profiles

**Jews.** With regard to territorial solutions to the conflict, Jews in the *Shared Ownership Profile* were significantly more supportive of solutions that granted Palestinians land and rights than those in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* (Figure 1; see also Table S4 in the supplementary materials). Particularly, this pertained to support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel and support for the formation of a binational state with equal rights for both groups. Therewith, H5a is supported (see Table 4). Conversely, participants in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* were significantly more supportive of the annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories to one state under Israeli rule with limited rights for Palestinians and of continuing the existing solution than those in the *Shared Ownership Profile*. These findings support H5b. In line with H5c, Jews in the *Shared Ownership Profile* were significantly more willing to reconcile than those in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* (Figure 2).

**PCI.** We expected PCI in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* to be more in favour of solutions reaffirming ingroup rights over the land (H5a), and less supportive of solutions that grant such rights both to the ingroup and to the outgroup (H5b) than those in the *Shared Ownership Profile*. Support for the solutions that granted Palestinians land and rights (i.e., formation of an independent Palestinian state and creation of a binational state) was overall strong and did not differ between the profiles (Figure 1, see also Table S4 in the supplementary materials). We found that PCI in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* opposed the Israeli annexation of the occupied territories more strongly than those in the *Moderate Shared Profile* and the *Outgroup Ownership Profile*. Support for continuing the existing situation was strongest in the *Outgroup Ownership Profile* and significantly higher than in the other profiles. On the basis of these findings, we fail to confirm H5a and H5b.<sup>8</sup>

We expected a lower willingness to reconcile in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* than in the *Shared Ownership Profile* (H5c). As shown in Figure 2, we found no statistically significant differences between the

*Ingroup Ownership Profile* and the *Moderate Shared Profile* and the *High Shared Profile*, respectively, and therefore reject H5c (see Table 4). Furthermore, participants in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* and the *High Shared Profile* were more willing to reconcile than those in the *Outgroup Ownership Profile*, and PCI in the *High Shared Profile* showed higher reconciliation intentions than those in the *Moderate Shared Profile*.

## 6 | DISCUSSION

Territorial ownership claims are central to many interethnic conflicts and yet the role of ownership perceptions has hardly been studied in the literature on reconciliation and conflict resolution. In the present study, we examined different understandings of ownership in the context of the intractable Israel–Palestinian conflict from a person-centred approach, by identifying response patterns of ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions of both Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel. With this research we (1) advance theoretical understanding of ownership perceptions in conflicts by investigating groups (profiles) with different levels of both ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions, (2) assess how ownership principles and group identifications relate to profile membership, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the arguments underpinning land entitlements, and (3) examine how support for reconciliation and territorial solutions differs across the profiles, thereby exploring how ownership matters to outcomes related to conflict resolution. The present study is the first that takes the minority perspective in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on ownership perceptions into account, which allowed us to investigate differences in ownership perceptions between groups with unequal power status.

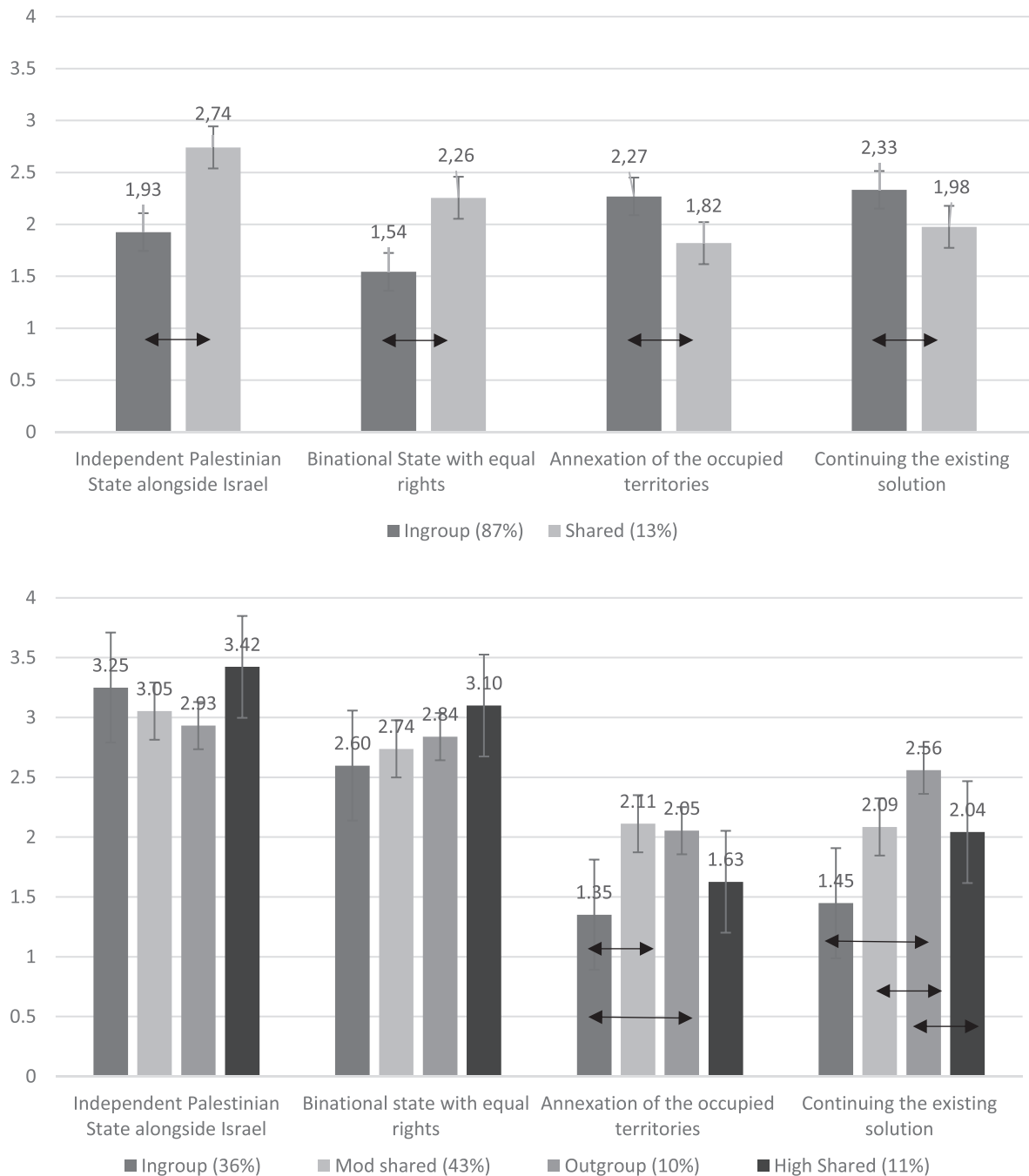
### 6.1 | Ownership profiles

For the Jewish participants, we identified two ownership profiles. The majority (87%) fell into the *Ingroup Ownership Profile*, which was characterized by high perceptions of Jewish ownership of the contested land, and low perceptions of Palestinian ownership. The *Shared Ownership Profile* was remarkably smaller (13%). These findings are in line with our expectations and previous research on ownership perceptions in conflict settings (Storz et al., 2021, Storz et al., 2022), and testify to the dominance of ingroup ownership perceptions in a territorial conflict.

We identified four different patterns of ownership perceptions for PCI. Similar to Jews and in line with our expectations, we identified a group who strongly believed that only their ingroup owned the contested land (*Ingroup Ownership Profile*, 36%) and a bigger group that perceived both Jews and Palestinians to equally but moderately own it, (43%, *Moderate Shared Ownership Profile*). Additionally, two unexpected response patterns were found: a group with very high shared ownership perceptions (11%) and a group that perceived outgroup ownership (10%). Especially the last profile is surprising for a minority group in this context, which has been dominated by territorial disputes for decades (Gelvin et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is notable that the

<sup>7</sup> The advantage of a multinomial regression analysis is that we can control for other characteristics when estimating the effect of the characteristic we are interested in, thereby obtaining net effects, just like in more commonly used linear multivariate regressions. However, we also report equality tests of means across profiles for the principles and identities in the supplementary material (see Table S5 for the tests and Figures S2.1 and S2.2 for the means across profiles for Jews and PCI, respectively). We further explored the profiles by looking at demographic predictors of profile membership. It has been found that in the UK, the Netherlands, and Australia, men, lower educated, and more right-wing individuals held stronger ingroup ownership perceptions (Straver et al., 2023). We wanted to see whether these patterns can also be found in the conflict setting of the present study. Findings from a multinomial regression (Table S6 in the supplementary materials) show that Jewish participants in the ingroup-ownership profile were more right-wing oriented than those in the shared-ownership profile, and there was a tendency for lower educated to fall in the ingroup-ownership profile. For PCI, participants in the ingroup-ownership profile were more likely to be men, lower educated, and oriented to the political right. These findings are in line with the results from Straver and colleagues (2023).

<sup>8</sup> Note that the survey did not include solutions favouring Palestinian rights over Jewish. This is because the Peace Index is carried out in Israel where Jews are the majority, and therefore usually constitute the majority of the sample as well.

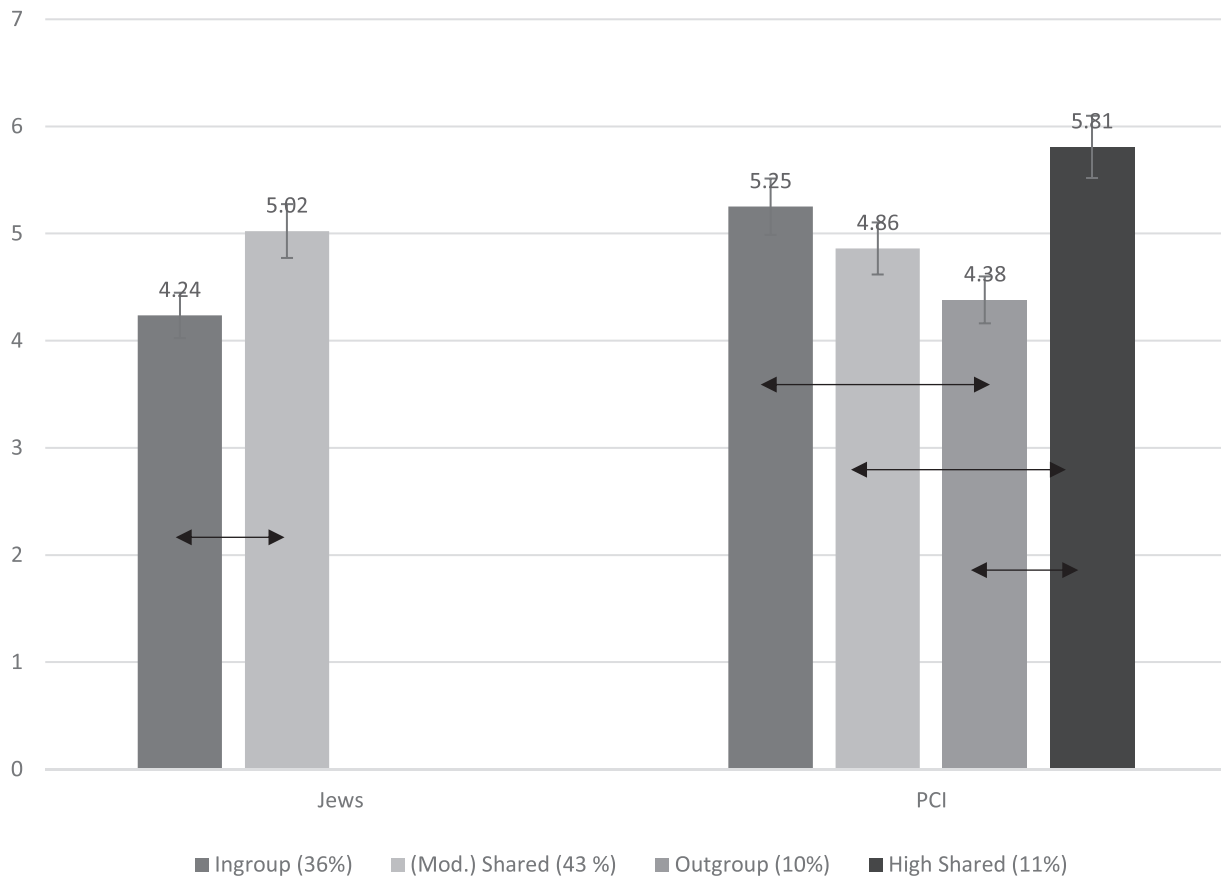


**FIGURE 1** Mean levels of territorial solutions items—Jews (upper part) and Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI) (lower part). Note.  $N_{\text{Jews}} = 511$ .  $N_{\text{PCI}} = 602$ . Answers ranged from 1 (very much oppose) to 4 (very much support). The arrows indicate significant differences between the mean scores ( $\Delta\text{Chi}^2$  (1df) =  $p < .05$ ), see Table S4 in the supplementary materials for the chi-square difference statistics.

majority of Palestinians perceived shared ownership. This may be related to their unique position as *both* Israeli citizens and part of the Palestinian people.

Altogether, the person-centred approach allowed us to examine nuances in combinations of ownership perceptions that a variable-centred approach would have been unable to detect. Interestingly, our findings within the context of a territorial conflict differ from those in settler societies. Nootgedagt and colleagues (2022) studied ownership profiles in New Zealand, from the perspective of European New

Zealanders and in relation to Māori land ownership. Most of the European New Zealanders fell into the *Shared Ownership Profile* (about 76%), followed by groups that perceived *no ownership* (about 9%, note that we identified a similar group in the five-profile solution, see Table S3 and Figure S1.2 in the supplementary materials), *ingroup ownership* (about 8%) and *outgroup ownership* (about 7%). While many of these profiles were also found in the analyses for PCI, they were differently populated. In general, more Jews and PCI than European New Zealanders fell in the *ingroup ownership* profile, while the *shared ownership*



**FIGURE 2** Mean levels of items measuring willingness to reconcile—Jews. Note.  $N_{\text{Jews}} = 511$ .  $N_{\text{PCI}} = 602$ . Answers ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The arrows indicate significant differences between the mean scores ( $\Delta\text{Chi}^2$  (1df) =  $p < .05$ ), see Table S4 in the supplementary materials for the chi-square difference statistics.

profile was more populated for New Zealanders than Jews and PCI. This shows that while similar combinations of ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions can be found in differing settings, the characteristic of the context—peaceful versus ongoing violent conflict—determines its share of the group.

## 6.2 | Ownership principles and group identifications

We considered four principles from which territorial ownership claims in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict could be inferred. As expected, our findings show that the belief that Israel is the promised land for Jews (Gelvin et al., 2021) still pertains in the present society and correlates with land ownership claims of Jews. However, PCI who endorsed this principle were more likely to fall into the *Moderate Shared* rather than *Ingroup Ownership Profile*. This may indicate that the God-given principle is not as exclusive as we anticipated, especially among disadvantaged minority groups.

Against our expectations, not shared but ingroup ownership perceptions were more likely for Jews with stronger beliefs that those who worked the land are its rightful owners (investment principle). We presumed that both Palestinian and Jewish cultivation of the land would be

recognized and motivate shared ownership, and while we found this for PCI, the findings for Jews suggest that they consider only themselves as those who made the land what it is today. This perception stands in line with the hegemonic Jewish–Israeli ethos of conflict, which claims that the Arab inhabitants of the land left it neglected and desolated, and only the Jewish pioneers started cultivating and developing the natural resources of the territory (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). Furthermore, this perception perhaps also ties back to Knesset laws in 1948 (Exploitation of Uncultivated Lands Regulation), which prevented Palestinians from accessing their land and empowered the expropriation of Arab-owned land that was deemed ‘uncultivated’, therewith allowing only Jews to work the land (Bisharat et al., 1993; Mehozay et al., 2012).

However, similar results were found in New Zealand (Nooitgedagt et al., 2022), where European New Zealanders in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* were characterized by stronger endorsement of the investment principle compared to all other profiles. This suggests that the more powerful group in both contexts justifies exclusive ownership based on their investment in the land. In line with our expectations, Jews who recognized the importance of the contested land for a group’s identity (formation principle) were more likely to perceive shared land ownership. This finding could indicate changes within the Jewish–Israeli ethos of conflict that in some of its previous versions negated any



historical ties of the Palestinians to the land (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). Interestingly, endorsement of the formation principle was unrelated to any ownership profile for PCI.

Lastly, believing that first occupants are the rightful land owners (autochthony principle) was unrelated to profile membership for Jews. This may indicate once more some changes that the hegemonic and exclusive Jewish-Israeli ethos went through, moving towards a higher willingness to acknowledge the complex history of the land and its indigenous population (Oren et al., 2015). For PCI, a strong endorsement of autochthony beliefs characterized participants in the high shared ownership profile, suggesting that some PCI recognize both themselves and Jews as long-term occupants of the land (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). This finding is surprising, as we anticipated the autochthony principle to be exclusive. Previous research in settler societies found that settlers' endorsement of the autochthony principle was associated with perceiving the indigenous outgroup as owners, and in turn stronger support for compensations (Nooitgedagt et al., 2021). In Western Europe, autochthony beliefs were associated with outgroup prejudice (Martinović & Verkuyten, 2013). We add to this literature that autochthony beliefs in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seem unrelated to land ownership perceptions of the majority group but are associated with inclusive and even *shared* land ownership perceptions for the minority group. The growing body of autochthony research would benefit from a more systematic investigation of how these beliefs operate across groups and contexts.

Furthermore, we considered the role of group identifications for ownership perceptions. Stronger identification with the Jewish people (ethnic identity) and adherence to Judaism (religious identity) were characteristics of Jewish participants in the ingroup ownership profile. This illustrates not only the expected religious importance of the land for adherents of Judaism but also how the need for a Jewish homeland still pertains for those who strongly identify with other people of Jewish origin (Friedman et al., 2005). A stronger sense of being an Israeli citizen (national identity) was, net of ethnic and religious identification, unrelated to any ownership profile.

For PCI, higher identifications as Israeli citizens (civic identity) were associated with a greater chance to perceive shared compared to ingroup ownership. This finding highlights the importance of an Israeli identity that includes *both* Jews and PCI for shared ownership perceptions. Stronger national identifiers (Arab-Palestinians) were the least likely to perceive outgroup ownership. As PCI's national identity is largely linked to the territory (Amara et al., 2002), it seems plausible that we find high national identifiers perceiving themselves (at least to an extent) as exclusive owners of the land. Lastly, PCI both in the *Ingroup Ownership* and in the *High Shared Profiles* were characterized by stronger religious identifications compared to those in the *Outgroup Ownership Profile*, which suggests that higher religious identification, even though characteristic of PCI in the ingroup ownership profile, is not necessarily a barrier to perceptions of shared ownership. This finding reflects contemporary politics in Israel: the first party that ever represented PCI in a governing coalition is the religious, Muslim party 'Ra'am'.

### 6.3 | Territorial solutions and reconciliation

When it comes to concrete political solutions to the conflict, that is, land divisions, Jews were overall not very supportive of division granting land and rights to Palestinians. As expected, this was more strongly pronounced for those in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile*—they opposed the formation of an independent Palestinian state and the creation of a binational state more strongly and were more supportive of the annexation of the occupied territories and a continuation of the current situation—characterized by ongoing military occupation—than those in the *Shared Ownership Profile*. A similar pattern was found for European New Zealanders: those in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile* were less supportive of territorial compensation than those in the *Shared Ownership Profile* (Nooitgedagt et al., 2022).

PCI across all profiles overall strongly supported the formation of an independent Palestinian state and the creation of a binational state to similarly high levels. Beyond our expectations, which were related to the *Ingroup Ownership* and *Shared Ownership Profiles*, we found that support for the continuation of the existing situation was higher for PCI in the *Outgroup Ownership Profile* than for those in the *Ingroup Ownership Profile*. Those in the *Moderate Shared Profile* and the *Outgroup Ownership Profile* even agreed to the annexation of the occupied territories. These findings suggest that in both profiles with low and moderate ingroup ownership perceptions (i.e., *Outgroup Ownership Profile* and *Moderate Ownership Profile*), acceptance of the status quo is more pronounced than aspirations for equal (territorial and political) rights. This could be understood in light of system justification theory (Jost et al., 2004), according to which low-status groups tend to rationalize the existing social order that privileges the outgroup at the expense of the ingroup. It should also be noted that participants in these profiles were characterized by lower national identification, which may explain why they do not pursue Palestinian sovereignty aspirations.

In the current situation of ongoing violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including violent clashes between Jews and PCI taking place recently inside Israel, the levels of above-mid-point willingness to reconcile in both groups gives some hope regarding intergroup relations. While we expected and found that shared ownership perceptions were related to a stronger willingness to reconcile among Jews, reconciliation intentions of PCI were highest for those who perceived high shared ownership but surprisingly also for those in the ingroup ownership profile. This suggests that, for the minority group, it is not per se people with a perception of shared ownership that are more willing to reconcile, but what matters is the *level* at which *ingroup* ownership is perceived. People with either only high ingroup ownership perceptions or high levels of combined ingroup and outgroup ownership perceptions are characterized by an elevated willingness to reconcile with the rival. Nevertheless, our findings attest to the importance of perceived *shared* ownership for reconciliation from the majority group perspective, which is in line with research on shared ownership and reconciliation in Kosovo (Storz et al., 2021).

The discrepancy between moderate reconciliation intentions but low support for structural change (i.e., conciliatory solutions

granting Palestinians land and rights) that we found for Jews could be explained with previous research on reconciliation in asymmetric conflicts. According to Rouhana (2004), reconciliation in such conflicts requires a major restructuring of the social and political status quo. Shnabel and colleagues (2015) argue that there is a difference between well-intended, but unsubstantial reconciliation gestures and genuine support for structural change. Policies that would improve the position and rights of the disadvantaged group can threaten the favourable position of majority group members (Ellemers et al., 1993) while reconciling on the level of interpersonal relations does not influence existing power hierarchies.

## 6.4 | Limitations and future directions

It is important to keep the following limitations of this study in mind. First, even though we examined ownership from the perspective of two groups, we did not have data on Palestinians who are not citizens of Israel and it remains an open question whether the findings about PCI would also generalize to other Palestinians. PCI are a unique subgroup of the Palestinian population and might be considered in a better position than Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza or Palestinian refugees. Since the role of the whole Palestinian population is central to the resolution of the conflict (see 'Palestinian refugee question', Bocco et al., 2009) as well as to reconciliation efforts, we consider it important for future research to also examine ownership perceptions of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank as well as the diaspora. In addition, the sample of PCIs was somewhat biased in terms of religion, and we did not delve into the role of religious affiliation. Future studies could focus on ownership perceptions among religious subgroups of Palestinians and their consequences by using larger samples of these subgroups. Moreover, we focused on one conflict setting only, and future studies could examine understandings of territorial ownership from a person-centred approach among conflicted groups in other parts of the world.

Second, our findings regarding the number and type of ownership profiles attest to different understandings of ownership among Jews and Palestinians. This pertains to deeper questions: What does collective land ownership *mean* to both groups? Are these questions understood in a normative way, that is, who *should* own the land, or rather as a de-facto question, that is, who *is* (currently) owning the land? It may be the case that PCI in the *Outgroup Ownership Profile* understood ownership in the latter way—the contested land currently mostly falls into the internationally recognized borders of Israel and could be understood as 'owned' by Jews, regardless of Palestinians having a sense that it *should* belong to them. These speculations open avenues for future research but also raise questions about the applicability of the ownership measures to various contexts and groups. Future research could extend the current measures to distinguish between normative and factual understandings of ownership and validate these measures in different conflict settings.

Additionally, to gain more insights into 'who' the owners are (Straver et al., 2023) it would be interesting to investigate how different

attitudes and individual characteristics influence profile membership beyond those tested in this study (i.e., group identification and ownership principles, as well as the demographics—age, gender, education, and political orientation reported in the additional analyses, see footnote 7). For instance, still unexplored personality characteristics such as openness to experience or socio-ideological attitudes such as social dominance orientation (SDO) that are relevant predictors of intergroup relations (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Turner et al., 2014) could also matter for profile membership, with individuals high on openness being more represented in the shared and those high on SDO in the ingroup ownership profile. Since ownership is about entitlements and control over resources, SDO might be a particularly relevant characteristic to consider in future research on territorial ownership perceptions.

## 7 | CONCLUSION

In the present study, using a person-centred approach, we have identified complex patterns of ownership perceptions of both the majority and the minority group in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Our findings show that understandings of territorial ownership differ not only *between* but also *among* Jews and Palestinians. Furthermore, we have shown that people in different profiles are characterized by different levels of group identification and endorsement of various ownership principles. Importantly, they also report different opinions about reconciliation and conflict resolution. We conclude that territorial ownership perceptions (this land is 'ours' vs. 'theirs' vs. 'shared') are an understudied yet relevant concept that can inform research and policy directed at peacebuilding in complex conflicts.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author designed the study, conducted the analyses and drafted the article. The remaining authors were involved in the study design and theorizing, and critically reviewed and edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data and syntax are available online, on Open Science Framework ([https://osf.io/zuh2g/?view\\_only=4e066364745e4321861531db6ef0f8b0](https://osf.io/zuh2g/?view_only=4e066364745e4321861531db6ef0f8b0)).

### ETHICS APPROVAL

This research has been approved by the Ethics Committees of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University (clearance

number: FETC 21-0523). All participants gave their informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study.

## ORCID

Kaja Warnke  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2274-5746>

Borja Martinović  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3043-9068>

Nimrod Rosler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5316-9828>

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