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Bargaining with the system: A mixed-methods study of Arab teachers in Israel

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ABSTRACT

Research on minority-majority relations usually focuses on the impact of the hegemony on everyday life. In this study we chose to focus on the way minority teachers bargain with the power relations within their work environment as a microcosm of their strategies in the social arena in general. 163 Arab-Israeli secondary-school teachers completed an online questionnaire and were matched with 163 Jewish teachers according to demographic variables. 25 of the 163 teachers completed the optional open-ended question that comprised the data for the qualitative analysis. In the quantitative analysis, we found that Arab teachers showed less knowledge of the Ministry of Education guidelines regarding teachers' freedom of speech, conducted fewer discussions of Controversial Public Issues (CPI) and rated the importance of their role as promoting active citizenship lower than their Jewish counterparts. In the qualitative analysis, three main strategies Arab teachers use emerged: 'evasion', 'toning down' and 'promoting a shared society'. Arab teachers negotiate between their needs for self-preservation, and their national and professional identities in an implicit cost-benefit assessment. This analysis coincides with Kandiyoti's (1988) model of women's bargaining with the patriarchy, corresponding to Arab teachers as a governed minority group that negotiates with the hegemony. In each strategy, there is a different balance between the personal benefits, the risks involved, and the community interests one has in mind. The research sheds light on the precarious position of Arab teachers in Israel, and the flexibility that they are pressed to employ in order to muddle through.

Introduction

Minority teachers have been the topic of ample research in the past few decades on their role in heterogeneous, multilingual classrooms as well as investigations of the teachers' experience (e.g., Choi et al., 2016; Lengyel & Rosen, 2015). Many researchers have noted the tension between minority teachers' wish to be professional vis a vis the expectation that they will use their multi-cultural assets in schools (Rosen, Jacob, & Panagiotopoulou, 2018; Mantel, 2018). However, research done in Europe and North America is in a vastly different context than in Israel. The Israeli education system is mostly segregated, especially when it comes to Jews and Arabs. In the vast majority of cases, Arab teachers teach in Arab schools and Jewish teachers teach in Jewish schools. Moreover, as of July 2018, Hebrew is the only official language, after many years that it has been the dominant language in the power relations (Knesset, 2018). Accordingly, Jewish students learn only in Hebrew, while Arab students learn in both Hebrew and Arabic.

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Jewish-Arab relations in Israel

Israel is characterized by several social and political divisions, with the main one being between the Jewish majority and the Israeli–Palestinian minority (Paul-Binyamin & Reingold, 2014). The relationships between the two populations are complex due to the longstanding armed conflict between Israel and many Arab states, and the occupied territories, where the Palestinians seek independence. In contrast, the Israeli Palestinians are formally equal-rights-citizens holding Israeli passports. The tension between Israeli Arabs and Jews is predominantly around equality, given the discrepancy that exists between the state's declared goal to create equal opportunities and the reality of inequality (Cohen, 2017). Israeli society is in a constant state of alertness to security issues, and does not always distinguish between tensions with Arab states, with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and Israeli–Palestinian citizens. The Israeli educational system tries to isolate itself from the political reality (Avnon, 2013), and its historical division into four branches (Jewish secular, Jewish religious, Arab, and Jewish ultra-orthodox) serves this purpose.

Multicultural and political educational aspects of teacher training in Israel

As a multicultural and sectoral society (Smootha, 2010), Israeli society is becoming increasingly divided (Mautner, 2008), and as an agent of social change, the educational system struggles to sufficiently address this issue (Avnon, 2013). The multicultural approach receives only minor attention in current teacher training programs, and is almost entirely absent in political education training programs. Some stress the importance of addressing politics in formal education as part of the process of cultivating good citizenship in a democratic country (Lamm, 2000). According to this view, political issues should be explored while maintaining balance and objectivity, and in the classroom, political discussions should be directed towards promoting students' political literacy, and exploring opposable views. This approach suggests that part of teacher's role is to provide students with opportunities to discuss current issues while presenting various views, and creating a class climate that enables forming an independent view. The teacher should also allow members of different groups to tell their own story, encourage discussions on identity, and reduce differences. The goal is to establish a clear distinction between an educational and a political view; between a purely professional view that promotes discussing controversial public issues (CPI) and a left-right political argument.

Research has shown that conducting discussions on CPI promotes democratic values (Hess, 2009), content comprehension (Brookfield & Preskill, 2012), interest in politics (McAvoy & Hess, 2013), tolerance for minorities (Bekerman & Cohen, 2017), and active citizenship (Lin, Lawrence, Snow, & Taylor, 2016). Accordingly, Naveh (2015) calls for reviving political education and awareness in Israel, which in his view suffer from a national preference, resulting in a formal education system devoid of any political ideological content, leaving it to be addressed by informal education programs and youth organizations. Consequently, a generation completely lacking in political orientation is emerging. Superficially exposed to negative aspects of political culture, these young individuals are often reluctant to engage in political issues, and treat politics with contempt.

Teacher training institutes in Israel are defined as primarily aimed at equipping prospective teachers with pedagogy knowledge while placing emphasis on a high level of professionalism and responsibility for students' achievements (Paul-Binyamin & Reingold, 2014). Findings from Gilday-Weizman's (2007) study suggest that teacher training programs in Israel fail to adequately prepare prospective teachers for handling the present social situation. Paul-Binyamin, Reingold and Gilday-Weizman all suggest that such training should broaden prospective teachers' views on divisions within Israeli society, Israeli democracy and the challenges it faces, on the interactions between different groups, and on majority-minority relations. Pre-service teachers, who make up the future generation of education in Israel, should develop an understanding of their role as educators, rather than their limited role as teachers of a certain subject. As such, the teacher training process should involve acquiring further knowledge by becoming acquainted with different sectors of society, both theoretically and by interpersonal experience (Paul-Binyamin & Reingold, 2014).

Arab teachers in Israel

Israel has been established as a Jewish state, and the definition of its citizens is based on civil rights directly derived from an ethnic-religious identity. Since the first days of Israel's establishment, citizens have been divided into two main population categories: 'Jews' and 'non-Jews', the 'non-Jews' category primarily referring to the Arab citizens of Israel (Haidar, 2005).

Arab society in Israel is highly culturally diverse, divided by ideological, geographical, tribal, ethnical, social and status factors (Totry, 2008). Each of the main groups comprising the Arab minority in Israel – Muslim, Christian, and Druze – is affected by inner processes of modernization, external processes relating to Jewish society, Jewish-Arab relations, and the social context of the group within the community. A longitudinal examination has found an increase in the number of Israeli Arab students admitted to higher education institutes, and an improvement in Israeli Arab women's status (Al-Hajj, 2002).

Segregation has been maintained between the two populations along the years, with the marginality of Israeli Arabs expressed on almost every civil and public level (Shapira, 2006). Data collected over the years have indicated a disparity in budgets, development in educational programs and content representing Arab culture and identity, and an underrepresentation of Israeli Arabs in planning, supervision, and management roles (Addi-Raccah, 2006). A hierarchal, authoritative relationship exists between the Jewish and Arab education systems, thereby allowing the Jewish education system institutional control over the Arab education system – control over educational programs, resources, and professional appointments (Shapira, 2006).

For many years, being accepted as an Arab teacher in the Israeli educational system involved the investigation and approval of the Israel Security Agency (the Shin Bet), which meant that politically active educators have been disqualified, regardless of their skills and education. Until recently, promotion to managerial or supervisory roles was possible only after a thorough security check. In

many ways, the educational system functions as a regulatory instrument, perpetuating the current situation (Abu-Saad, 2005; Al-Haj, 2002).

Furthermore, discussing current issues or any other topic considered nationally 'sensitive' in the classroom was prohibited until the early 1980's, while a demand for education reinforcing the country's legitimacy and ideology was promoted. Such policies have contributed to the cultivation of a 'culture of silence' among Arab teachers, who consequently lost credibility, and were perceived by their students as servants of the system. In the community, teachers were expected to become a part of local leadership, and educate the young generation in the spirit of national pride based on Arab national and cultural values. The educational system, however, expected Arab teachers to suppress all national tendencies among students, and to educate them in the spirit of Israeli citizenship, while renouncing their own nationality (Al-Haj, 1995).

As a result, Arab teachers have found themselves caught between contradictory expectations; between the formal definition of a teacher as a representative of governmental institutions, and the Arab population's social definition of the teacher as a social-educational leader. The gap between these two views has created continued pressure which hinders teachers' social and self-image, and increases occupational burnout. Arab teachers therefore often find themselves torn between their professional aspirations requiring them to placate the formal system, and their perception of their role as nationally significant, following the expectations of Arab society (Al-Haj, 1995).

Arab teachers in Jewish high schools

The vast majority of Israeli Arab teachers teach in the Arab educational system, with only few integrated in the Jewish national education system. Arab teachers reported applying for roles in Jewish schools randomly, rather than by formal positioning (Hisherik, Wertheim, & Haimoff-Ayali, 2010). Most Arab teachers in Jewish high schools teach Arabic, while significantly fewer teachers teach subjects such as English or science (Hisherik et al., 2010). Studies conducted by social organizations promoting Jewish-Arab coexistence have found that integration of Arab teachers in Jewish schools was followed by a decrease in alienation between the populations, higher satisfaction, and have even suggested that a shift in social consciousness has occurred (Aggbaryyah, Barak, & Avivi-Weisblatt, 2014; Schild, Bar-Asulin, & Lotan, 2011). One study has indicated that social relationships between Arab teachers and their Jewish colleagues went beyond the workplace, unlike social relationships of Arab employees and their Jewish colleagues in other fields (such as the high tech industry), where relationships tend to remain work-related (Aggbaryyah et al., 2014). Bendas-Jacob and Makhoul (2013) found that two thirds of school principals felt Arab teachers were well integrated in school, the vast majority of teachers felt the Arab teachers were accepted by students and staff, and 24% indicated they had developed a personal relationship with them.

Minorities' coping strategies

This paper focuses on strategies employed by minorities to deal with their complex relationships with the dominant culture. The literature tends to view this relationship from the majority's point of view. For example, Berry (1992, 1997) examined the mutual relations between minority groups and a dominant environment, and proposed two models of a multicultural society. The first model was that of a society comprised of a dominant group and marginalized minority groups; the second model presented a society made of a patchwork of multiple ethno-cultural groups, which preserved their sense of cultural identity, and at the same time remained an active part of the joint social fabric. While Berry's analysis focused on the way the majority dictated the social structure, the decisions that minorities made could be extracted from the model as well.

According to Berry's model (1992, 1997), minority groups may use four different strategies for cultural preservation and intercultural engagement: *Assimilation*, in which an immigrant group adopts the dominant culture; *Separation*, in which the immigrant group preserves its original culture while rejecting the dominant culture; *Integration*, where the culture of origin is preserved while engaging with the dominant culture on a daily basis; and *Marginalization*, where minorities do not uphold their cultural legacy, maintain few social connections, and adopt a minor part of the dominant culture's values. This model indicates that social power relations are retained, and therefore force the minority groups to choose between adapting to the dominant culture's social values and remaining in the social margins.

Conformity is a common minority strategy, and may stem from various factors. Facing a dominant group, individual fears of disobeying cultural norms may result in social sanctions, and often create a conflict between the need for justice and the need for acceptance (Asch, 1951).

Another theoretical framework that is relevant to understanding minorities' strategies is Kelman's (1958) explanation of individuals' motivation for conformity. Kelman presented three social influence processes by which individuals, including members of minority groups, express the same attitude, but its quality and origins are not necessarily similar. In the first process, *Compliance*, the individual displays conformable attitudes to satisfy others who are able to grant or withhold rewards. The individual's conformable behavior depends on the presence of a source of social supervision, and would be entirely different in its absence. In the second process, *Identification*, the individual adopts an attitude as an expression of affection and admiration. The identifying individual automatically changes his or her attitude to match that of an admired other, and is therefore completely dependent on the other, and requires no social supervision. In the third process, *Internalization*, the individual adopts an attitude that concurs with his or her own values. The internalized attitude is dissociated from its social source and becomes an inseparable part of the individual's identity. Identifying an influence process is significant since it emphasizes the heterogeneity of its source, reflecting different aspects of social influence.

A recent study (Halabi, 2017) focused on Israeli Arab students in a multicultural, inclusion-oriented teacher education college, and found an expression of the first process of social influence, compliance. Prospective Arab teachers stated that they were satisfied with the way they were personally and socially treated in the college. At the same time they also indicated that they felt they had to consciously refrain from expressing their national identity, which was different than that of their Jewish students and colleagues. In essence, these students are trading the partial renouncement of their identity for socio-personal well-being. They fear risking the socio-personal comfort zone they have established by confronting it with external reality, and therefore choose to leave their national identity outside of it.

Another theoretical framework this paper employs is feminist bargaining theory (Kandiyoti, 1988) claiming that minorities (e.g., women in Kandiyoti's original paper) do not passively accept the majority's social control and use bargaining strategies to achieve maximum benefits alongside contesting the constraints placed upon them. According to bargaining theory, minorities play along with the power relations, and even cloud their identity in the public sphere, in order to profit in the long term (Gerami & Lehnerer, 2001). In Israel, most teachers are women, and thus minority teachers are at a disadvantage in terms of both their nationality and their gender.

The main question in this research is how Arab teachers in Israel handle the controversial issue of Jewish-Arab relations in class, and how they differ from Jewish teachers. We examined several teacher attitudes: pluralism (general and in education), how supported they felt and their self-efficacy in conducting CPI, the extent to which they felt civic education was part of their role and their knowledge of the ministry of education guidelines regarding their freedom of speech in class. We approached the teachers' reports from two directions. In the quantitative section, three dependent variables were measured. First, we directly asked teachers about the different practices they employed when a CPI surfaces in class (reported classroom discussions), what approach they took (endorsed discussions index), and how many CPI discussions they conducted within the past month (reported frequency of discussions). Second, we used the qualitative data to indirectly deduce about the strategies Arab teachers employed vis-a-vis their unique position of representing both the minority (as an Arab) and the establishment (as a teacher) using Kandiyoti's (1988) feminist bargaining theory.

Methodology

This mixed methods study sampled data from a larger study of 1625 secondary school teachers in Israel about their handling of the controversial issue of Jewish-Arab relations in the classroom (Gindi & Erlich Ron, 2018). The questionnaire was posted online and teachers were approached using teachers' email distribution lists containing about 60,000 teachers. The questionnaire included 40 multiple-choice questions and a single optional qualitative question. The quantitative results are presented first, followed by the results of the qualitative investigation.

Quantitative methodology

In the quantitative section, we used 163 questionnaires completed by Arab teachers. Table 1 presents the questionnaire domains and sample items. The first six variables were the independent variables and the last two were the independent variables along with reported frequency of discussions within the last month.

Since the sample of Arab teachers is considerably smaller than the sample of Jewish teachers, and significantly different on most variables, we sought to use a matched samples design. Originally, we extracted random samples of 163 subjects from the 1461 Jewish teachers. But these samples turned out to be repeatedly different from the Arab teachers' sample on the covariates and consequently on the dependent variables that involved the number and quality of discussions. Therefore, we used propensity score matching (PSM) (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983). This method finds, for each Arab teacher in the sample, a Jewish teacher who looks most similar on the basis of the different covariates. The technique offers an alternative identification strategy to determine the conditional difference in Arab/Jewish teachers' characteristics. Preliminary analyses were performed to examine which covariates had an impact on the dependent variables. The teachers were matched by the four covariates that were found to impact the dependent variables: gender,

Table 1
Questionnaire domains and sample items.

Domain	Sample item
Pluralistic attitudes toward Arab-Jewish relations	<i>The equality of rights of the Arab population in Israel must be protected</i>
Attitudes toward Arab-Jewish pluralism in education	<i>It is important that Arab teachers teach in Jewish schools</i>
Role perception	<i>Part of the teacher's role is to educate for political consciousness</i>
Feeling supported	<i>I have faith in the support of students' parents in case there is a complaint against me about holding a political/social discussion in class</i>
Self-efficacy to conduct discussions	<i>I have the tools and skills to manage a classroom discussion about Jews and Arabs in Israel</i>
Reported classroom discussions	<i>I have the necessary knowledge on the conflict to conduct a discussion on Jewish-Arab relations in the classroom</i>
Knowledge of ministry guidelines	<i>The ministry of education policy regarding political discussions is: A. political discussions are allowed, but the teacher must not express his personal opinion (wrong answer)</i>
Endorsed discussions index	<i>When a debate on relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel comes up in class, I allow students to express their feelings</i>

Table 2
Sample characteristics (N = 326).

Variable	Overall sample (N = 1625)	Arab teachers (N = 163)	Jewish teachers (N = 163)	Statistical test and level of significance
Categorical variables n, (%)				
Gender				$\chi^2_{(1)} = 1.27; p = 0.26$
Male	589, (37%)	98, (61%)	109, (67%)	
Female	1023, (63%)	63, (39%)	54, (33%)	
District				Fischer's exact ₍₅₎ = 52.80; $p = 0.000$
Center	381, (24%)	9, (6%)	0, (0%)	
Tel Aviv	259, (16%)	2, (1%)	0, (0%)	
Jerusalem	249, (16%)	10, (6%)	0, (0%)	
North	282, (18%)	95, (58%)	89, (55%)	
South	208, (13%)	13, (8%)	0, (0%)	
Haifa	197, (12%)	34, (21%)	74, (45%)	
Administrative roles				$\chi^2_{(1)} = 0.62; p = 0.43$
Yes	833, (51%)	99, (61%)	92, (56%)	
No	792, (49%)	64, (39%)	71, (44%)	
Professional development				$\chi^2_{(1)} = 2.08; p = 0.15$
Yes	268, (17%)	49, (30%)	62, (38%)	
No	1315, (83%)	112, (70%)	101, (62%)	

administrative role, district, and professional development. Each teacher was assigned a propensity score according to the characteristics of Arab teachers, and the 163 Jewish teachers who had the highest propensity scores were selected. The matching procedures produced two sub-groups of 163 participants each. Table 1 presents the matched samples characteristics.

As Table 2 shows, the matched samples were similar on all covariates except for district. Two districts were paramount. The Northern and Haifa districts included 292 of the 326 teachers in our matched samples. Accordingly, we sought to examine whether the differences between these two districts were relevant for the dependent variables in the sample. We conducted a multiple independent samples *t*-test and non-parametric tests (according to the nature of the variables) comparing teachers from the Northern district and teachers from the Haifa district. No significant differences were found on any of the dependent or independent variables. We thus concluded that the samples were comparable.

Quantitative results

We compared the matched samples on the various dependent and independent variables. As Table 3 shows, Arab teachers exhibited more pluralism than Jewish teachers, both in general and in education. Cohen's *d* analysis (Cohen, 1988) showed that the effect size for the gap in general pluralism was large, while the difference in pluralism in education was small. Jewish teachers saw civic education as part of their role more than Arab teachers did, and exhibited more willingness to conduct CPIs, with a small effect size according to Cohen's *d* on both accounts.

We examined the differences between the two sub-groups on their reported frequency of discussions using the Mann-Whitney *U* test, since the variable was on an ordinal scale. The test showed higher ranking for Jewish teachers (mean rank: 174.52) compared with Arab teachers (152.48), and this difference was found to be significant ($Z = -2.29, p = .022$).

As Table 4 shows, teachers in Israel are relatively unaware of the official guidelines regarding their freedom of speech in the classroom. Moreover, a higher percentage of Jewish teachers knew the guidelines compared with their Arab colleagues, and this difference was significant $\chi^2_{(1)} = 6.42; p = .01$.

Finally, we examined the way teachers ranked their different roles. Table 5 reveals significant differences on four of the teachers' roles, with Jewish teachers' scores being higher on all four. Considering the relative ranking of roles for all teachers, it is evident that

Table 3
Comparisons between Jewish and Arab teachers on the dependent and independent variables.

Scale	Arab (N = 157–163)		Jewish (N = 156–163)		<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Jewish-Arab pluralism	5.00	0.68	4.32	1.06	−6.85***	0.76
Pluralism in education	4.78	0.71	4.48	1.06	−2.98*	0.33
Feeling supported	3.48	1.30	3.26	1.13	−1.65	
Self-efficacy	4.34	0.90	4.40	0.94	−.54	
Civic education as part of the teacher's role	4.51	1.05	4.96	1.02	3.99***	−0.43
Reported classroom discussions	4.30	0.78	4.63	0.80	3.78***	−0.42
Endorsed discussions index	2.12	1.22	2.16	1.09	−.34	

Note: Ratings are on a 6-point Likert scale; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Arab and Jewish teachers' knowledge of the Ministry of Education guidelines regarding freedom of speech (by ethnicity).

	Knowledge of Ministry of Education Guidelines N, (%)	
	Yes	No
Jewish teachers	52, (31.9)	111, (68.1)
Arab teachers	32, (19.6)	131, (80.4)

Table 5
Means and Standard Deviations for Arab and Jewish teachers' scores on the different teacher roles.

Scale	Jewish teachers (N = 163)		Arab teachers (N = 163)		Z
	M	SD	M	SD	
It is not my role to lead classroom discussions on political-social issues that can arouse controversy (reverse item)	4.98	1.41	4.45	1.48	-3.92***
Part of the teacher's role is to encourage active citizenship and critical thinking	5.29	1.06	4.88	1.19	-3.77***
Part of the teacher's role is to encourage political consciousness	4.60	1.50	4.21	1.59	-2.82**
Part of the teacher's role is to set boundaries and foster self-discipline	5.44	1.01	5.27	0.87	-3.11**
Part of the teacher's role is to help students regulate their emotions	5.30	1.02	5.20	1.03	-1.31
Part of the teacher's role is to encourage academic excellence and achievement	5.11	1.13	5.25	0.96	-0.79
Part of the teacher's role is to educate for consensual values	5.16	1.16	5.25	1.03	-0.42

Note: Ratings are on a 6-point Likert scale; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

teachers see their role primarily in setting boundaries and containing students' emotions, while civic and political roles were ranked last. A marked difference between Arab and Jewish teachers' ranking can be seen in the relative positions of "active citizenship and critical thinking" and "educate for consensual values" on the other hand. Jewish teachers ranked the former third and the latter fourth, while Arab teachers ranked them second and fifth respectively.

Qualitative methodology

The qualitative part used as data 25 teachers' answers to a single qualitative question asking them to describe a significant event in which they dealt with a controversial topic related to Jewish-Arab relations in the classroom and to describe it briefly. It should be noted that only 15.3% of the Arab teachers who completed the quantitative questionnaire answered the qualitative question and that data was not available as to whether the teachers taught Jewish, Arab or mixed population of students. The teachers' answers were uploaded to a qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti, version 7.5.6.) and analyzed according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) theme analysis. The authors first read all the material several times and immersed themselves in the data. Next, the authors started generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and revising themes, and refining themes and subthemes. In order to enhance internal coherence and consistency, the authors used a constant comparative approach.

Qualitative results

Reading the teachers' responses brought to the surface the conflict they were facing when a controversial topic emerged in the classroom and the different ways they coped with this demanding situation. As Fig. 1 demonstrates, three main strategies Arab teachers use vis-a-vis controversial issues emerged from the qualitative analysis: evasion, toning down, and promoting a shared society. We now expand on each theme and the subthemes that comprised each theme.

Evasion

Teachers' descriptions revealed that they often evaded discussions either directly (e.g. "I never open such discussions") or indirectly. For example, one teacher explained that there was no room for such discussions due to the extensive workload: "There are a lot of educational materials that need to be covered and hardly any time to hold such discussions". Another teacher explained her evasion by the Ministry of Education's obscurity regarding its regulations: "The ministry should explain better and in writing the limits of personal freedom. Learn the regulations better. Not to fall into a trap after 8 years of (academic) study."

Teachers described how they evaded discourse and turn to their role as disciplinarians, for example:

I don't remember the incident precisely, but in general, one of the students said some nasty word about Jews and shouted without me opening the subject for discussion... I felt she was influenced by prejudice, that her thoughts were emotional and shallow. Maybe she said it to stand out. This was a student with low achievements. I immediately interrupted her and explained that one needs to think through before talking and speak nicely, and she continued to talk back at me; so I sent her out of the classroom and spoke to the grade level coordinator about her.

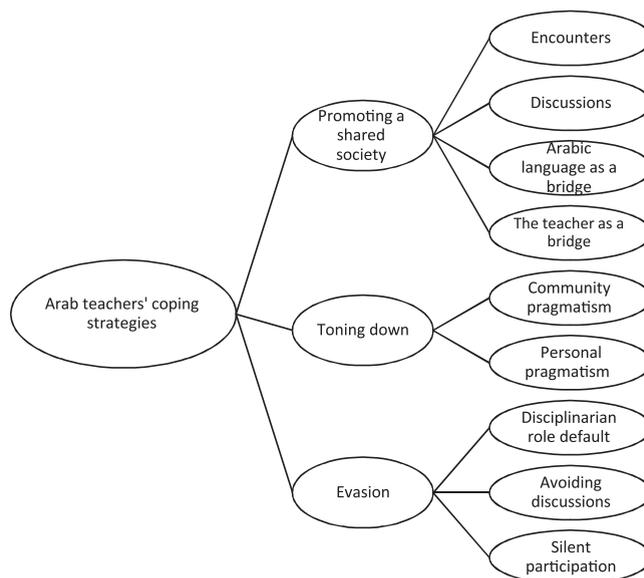


Fig. 1. Central themes in the qualitative analysis.

Another subtheme that emerged within the evasion theme was ‘silent participation’. Teachers reported events that took place in their classroom without any response or comment from them. For example: “A few months ago, an article was published in *Al-Itihad* that municipal commissioners wanted to examine identification cards of those who wish to visit public playgrounds in order to prevent Arabs from getting in...” The teacher chose not to discuss the topic but did not interfere either. Another teacher, who teaches at a Jewish school, shared her view of a complex situation: “In a classroom election campaign simulation, an extreme Jewish party got 30% of the votes, and actually the racist component was decisive...” Being an Arab teacher in a Jewish school under these circumstances is even more challenging than in the previous example, and in this case too, the teacher did not report a discussion. Teachers using the strategy of evasion, whether by silencing discussions or by not responding and letting students’ comments resonate, all chose not to respond to students’ statements, and not to use the discussion for its educational benefits.

Toning down

The second strategy that was identified involved taking the role of soother/moderator. Teachers presented a pragmatic approach, with some of the teachers focusing on community pragmatism and others on personal pragmatism. The next quotation represents community pragmatism as the teacher recommends avoiding violence as an interest common to the Arab community in Israel:

We, the Israeli society in general, and the Arab society in particular, naturally often discuss political/social controversial topics. We live in a (politically) explosive geographical region, saturated with controversy... As a result, it is not uncommon to argue and negotiate tough issues... Due to the recent violent events in our “special” country, a few days ago I had a fierce argument with a group of 12th grade students. Extreme opinions were voiced about Israel and the Israeli authorities that discriminate against Arabs... It wasn’t easy for me, to say it mildly. I empathized with the students and tried to contain their feelings, but I made sure to balance their opinions and to outline balanced and moderate political opinions and succeeded (I hope) to convince them that violence would lead to further violence and brutality, and distance us (especially us Arabs) from a satisfying solution... I gave examples from local and global history... I know how to approach students in this sensitive time in their life; I speak to their hearts and expertly calm them down...

The following quotation provides further evidence of the use of community pragmatism to tone students down:

Violent events transpired recently between the *Bnei Sakhnin* football club and the *Beitar Jerusalem* football club. Most students thought that Jews were violent and impossible to get along with. After the discussion, most of the students were convinced that it was (just) one case; we need to live together, to help the state and community...

Both quotations reveal trained and seasoned teachers who used a broader view of the situation to achieve balance and to soothe students’ feelings.

Other teachers toned discussions down out of personal pragmatism emphasizing the future personal benefits for students, for example:

When I was teaching at *Abu Gosh* Arab school, I had difficulty teaching the Hebrew language because students saw it as the enemy’s language. Therefore, it was my duty, like a psychologist to persuade them to study the language and its importance to their future. It is also important to learn a language in general to know how to cope in life and human relationships.

All the teachers who used the toning down strategy did so out of pragmatic rather than principles-related motivations. The teachers used a utilitarian approach openly with the students, whether it was at a personal or a community level.

Promoting a shared society

Few teachers reported an active strategy of promoting a shared society vis-a-vis their complex situation. The first subtheme that emerged involved using the Arabic language as a bridge between Jews and Arabs. For example, this teacher finds the Arabic language as a foundation for co-existence:

I usually teach a mixed population and also conduct Jewish-Arab encounters, and therefore face situations where an Arab student speaks, and the Jewish student thinks that it is bad or against him. I find myself bridging the two sides and explaining that “if I don’t understand the other side, it doesn’t mean that he or she is against me”. I encourage the understanding of the Arabic language, which is a preliminary process for peace, understanding and co-existence.

Teachers themselves serve as bridge between Arabs and Jews. In the next quotation, it can be seen how the teacher enters an explosive situation and contributes beyond her duty’s requirements to the cause she believes in:

After several terrorist attacks in the country, especially in Afula, we encountered a wave of disobedience from 8th grade students who refused to be given a vaccination by an Arab religious nurse who wears a head scarf. I was therefore asked to enter the classroom to help change their mind. I managed to persuade all of them, and even escorted them to the nurse to be vaccinated... except for one student who refused to get vaccinated, and asked that my husband or my sister to do it, because both of them are physicians and she trusts and knows me.

The next subtheme that comprised the advancement of shared society involved encounters. These encounters are not without their challenges. For example, one teacher described how her initiative was nipped in the bud: “I offered the students to coordinate a meeting with Jewish students at *Givaat Haviva* and most of them refused.” In another example, a student quit the process half way:

I was present at an Arab-Jewish encounter in *Givaat Haviva*. After one or two inter-team workshops, a Jewish student left his team and did not want to proceed. He claimed that these sorts of meetings were against the education that he had received at home. His teachers tried to persuade him, did not succeed, and he went home.

The next description shows the volatility of Jewish-Arab encounters and the skills teachers are required to have in order to manage such complex situations. In the following quotation the encounter was on the verge of termination when effective management turned it from confrontation to dialogue.

During the last war between Israel and Gaza... we had a meeting in a Jewish school (about) a shared life, and the students and I faced a dilemma. As the homeroom teacher, I had to stand in front of a group of Jewish and Arab students and explain why this had happened and what Arab Palestinians were fighting the Jews about. The truth is it wasn’t easy, because I heard extreme and sharp opinions from the Jewish students... I had to silence my students to prevent an uncontrollable situation. But at the end, we managed to calm both sides down in different ways by preparing the students for a play that would exhibit the situation that existed at the time. The presenters were Arab and Jewish and some of the Jewish students depicted Arab characters and vice versa...

Another subtheme of promoting a shared society involved discussions in different arenas. There were teachers who reported being in dialogue with colleagues, but doing so selectively: “... I hold discussions with specific teachers in order to avoid a flare-up... especially with those who follow the rules of a civilized objective discussion that does not veer off the tracks and become emotional...” One teacher described a class discussion around a then current event, and reported great interest by the students:

I conducted a class discussion on the Dawabsheh¹ family case. We tried to focus not on what happened, but on what could be the motives for this event and how it could be prevented on both sides. It was a bit shallow, but the students really wanted to talk about it...

Unexpectedly, several descriptions of discussions by Arab Druze raised issues of identity within the Jewish state

Fierce argument among students: Student 1: “With all the things Arab terrorists are doing, I’m not willing to say that I am Arab, it doesn’t promote me anywhere to belong to this group, I am a Druze living in the state of Israel”. Arab student: “You speak Arabic, your mother tongue is Arabic, it won’t help you, you’re an Arab, and there’s no shame in being an Arab, not everyone are terrorists. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) causes trouble to the Arabs in (occupied) territories too, and that’s why they’re disgruntled and react this way...”

Another example of a classroom discussion among the Druze population can be seen in the following quotation.

A student with a very negative opinion about Druze enlisting into the IDF, (stemming) from a personal experience, where his brother served and claimed he did not receive equal opportunity, and received a disrespectful attitude from Israeli society in

¹ This refers to the Duma village arson attack in July 2015, which resulted in the loss of life of three the family members; 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh and his parents.

entertainment establishments and in public places. There was a discussion about the impact of an abusive personal experience on our attitudes. I enabled other students to express different cases in which their brothers or relatives had a significant service in the IDF and received favorable treatment from the Jewish society.

Both descriptions present actual classroom discussions that allowed students to present their positions relatively freely, and conduct a dialogue with the teacher and other students.

In conclusion, within the scope of this theme, teachers described different situations in which they took the initiative to promote a shared society between Jews and Arabs. The teachers' descriptions on this subject are rich and present a positive moral stance toward Jewish-Arab relations and the use of varied strategies to achieve this goal.

Discussion

In this paper, we sought to turn the spotlight from the research emphasis on majority-minority dynamics (Berry, 1992, 1997) to the manner in which individuals belonging to a minority bargain with the conflicting demands of the majority and minority groups in an attempt to meet these demands, on the one hand, and to promote personal goals, on the other. For this purpose, we used *Kandiyoti's theory of bargaining* (1988), who emphasized how women find the way to survive and even to develop within the rules dictated by the patriarchy. Similarly, we found different strategies of Arab teachers in Israel who do not submissively accept panoptic supervision (Foucault, 1977), and use bargaining strategies to achieve maximum personal gains. The teachers seek to self-preserve and reduce possible sources of danger alongside making the most of the opportunities they have within the unequal power relations in Israel.

The study's findings indicate in different ways how the Arab teachers cope with controversial issues in the classroom regarding Jewish-Arab relations. There is considerable evidence of Arab teachers' concern regarding conducting discussions on controversial issues. The quantitative findings show that Arab teachers know less about the Ministry of Education's guidelines regarding teachers' freedom of expression, conduct fewer discussions, and do not see their role as developing students' political consciousness or encouraging active citizenship. Arab teachers' apprehension explains the gap between their attitudes towards CPI and their pluralistic approach, which was higher than that of Jewish teachers. This gap is validated by the qualitative findings that indicate dominant strategies of 'evasion' and 'toning down' among Arab teachers.

A salient expression of Arab teachers' bargaining strategy can be seen in the findings regarding the strategies of 'evasion' and 'toning down'. Similar to *Kelman's* (1958) work, these strategies exemplify how different confirmative behaviors can stem from different motivations. Arab teachers guard themselves and refrain from entering situations that may endanger their status. Even among teachers who chose evasion, some chose 'silent participation' in which they provided a platform for anti-establishment statements, without responding, perhaps out of self-preservation. Teachers also chose a strategy of 'toning down' the motives of which are pragmatic and not value-oriented, characteristic of weakened populations seeking to mediate between the global political power relations and the localized cases that they need to overcome in their daily lives. The Arab teachers explain to their students that the pragmatic approach will help at the community level and / or on a personal level. No teacher expressed fundamental solidarity with the establishment.

Beyond the dominance of the passive approaches (toning down and evasion) among the 25 teachers who answered the qualitative question, one must remember the low response rate to the questionnaire in general and to the qualitative question in particular. This may be another expression of the Arab teachers' fear as a minority of the system's repercussions, which many researchers have written about before (e.g., *Al-Haj*, 1995; *Halabi*, 2017). In addition, there were a high proportion of men among the teachers who answered the qualitative question, and this finding emphasizes the dual marginality of Arab teachers in Israel who are both Arab and predominantly women, making it even more difficult for them to take a risk and voice their opinions (*Zoabi & Anson*, 2017).

A minority of teachers used the strategy of promoting a shared society through meetings, discussions, the Arabic language as a bridge, and serving as bridges themselves. The qualitative findings indicate the explosiveness of these strategies, so that teachers' fears and withdrawal to passive strategies can be understood. Teachers who used this strategy were motivated by principles. The bargaining method these teachers use does not accept the existing power relations in a passive manner, and deliberately attempts to change them. This finding is a specific example of the 'promoting-deliberation practices' *Cohen* (2017) referred to in the general context of political education in a classroom in Israel.

A surprising finding in this study was the frequency, freedom and depth of discussions among Druze students. Moreover, the reports were about fierce discussions with blatant doubts that these students expressed about their identity as Arabs vis-à-vis the Jewish state. Druze teachers and students may feel more confident in their status and are therefore able to conduct discussions more freely and report them less reservedly.

The findings indicate the complex position of Arab teachers in Israel. The strategies revealed in the study attest to multiple bargaining: Arab teachers, who have internalized power relations in Israeli society and feel under constant scrutiny of their functioning and loyalty in society in general and in organizations in particular, bargain with both Jewish hegemony and with the teaching profession. Through everyday practices, they manage to maneuver in a complex situation, challenging but not breaking the existing social order and contributing to the change in social dynamics.

This study contributes to enrich the literature on minority teachers while exhibiting the unique features of conflict areas. The dissonance between teachers' wish to be professional and the expectation that they will use their heritage to connect with the students has been the topic of many studies (*Rosen et al.*, 2018; *Mantel*, 2018). We complement this tension with the contradictory expectations of minority teachers' from their community and from the establishment and suggest that this be further examined in other

contexts. Understanding the different forces that act upon teachers may help uncover the way they bargain with system and navigate their way.

Declarations of interest

None.

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