The cultural identity of Education students from East Jerusalem studying in an Israeli College in West Jerusalem

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East Jerusalem, culture, identity, teacher trainees

Abstract

This research focused on the cultural identity of Arab teacher trainees from East Jerusalem studying in a Jewish college in West Jerusalem. Such studies have not been conducted previously. Ten life stories of students were analyzed, and central themes identified. Narratives revealed that beyond their studies as teacher trainees in West Jerusalem, students also underwent personal changes and shifting attitudes towards the Jewish "other". They distinguished between the "establishment" (perceived as "the enemy") and individuals (often regarded as close acquaintances, even friends). They viewed study in the Israeli education system to be superior to Arab schools and institutions, and important to their professional advancement.

Introduction

This research focuses on the cultural identity of Arab teacher trainees from East Jerusalem studying in a Jewish college in West Jerusalem. This is a unique situation and a unique study, especially considering the Arab teacher trainees' limited previous exposure since this course of study was essentially for many of them, their initial exposure to the "other", Jewish culture.

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To understand it, I must describe the history of the city and its particular education system. In the theoretical background I will deal with the meaning of cultural identity as it stems from the literature on this subject.

Theoretical Background

A brief history of East Jerusalem

Jerusalem was under the control of the Ottoman Empire until 1920, then throughout 1920-1948 it was governed by the British Mandate, a period in which the city enjoyed tremendous development and became a central and important hub (Abbasi, 2013). With the end of the war in 1948, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. East Jerusalem remained part of Jordan and underwent a process of stagnation and deterioration. Consequently, stronger and more affluent families left the city and moved elsewhere (Abbasi, 2013).

At the conclusion of the war in 1967, the State of Israel unified both parts of the city. East Jerusalem inhabitants received permanent resident status and Israeli ID cards. They could participate in municipal elections, received social benefits, move freely around the country, and had open access to the labor market. However, they were not given Israeli passports and therefore require a transit pass to travel or return from abroad, and they cannot vote for the Knesset (Israeli parliament) (Ramon & Lehrs, 2014).

Cohen (2008) notes that following 1967, the Palestinian Jerusalemites had no elected leadership. This void was initially filled by the prominent figure of Faisal Al-Husseini from the PLO. In 1987, the First Intifada (uprising) broke out. Years later, after failed attempts to establish peace, the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the death of Faisal Husseini in 2001 created circumstances that led to the lack of a clear political agenda and source of authority that could unify these city residents. Palestinian institutions were weakened, and most parties collapsed. This was a society without leadership or any plan of action. According to Cohen (2008), this political passivity became a prime characteristic of East Jerusalem, and most city residents avoided any attempt to influence the Palestinian Authority's actions. The situation further deteriorated with the construction of the Separation Barrier (Karni, 2015), making East Jerusalem—previously a district center providing services and employment—into a marginal

area on the city's outskirts. Alyan, Sela and Pomeranz (2012) maintain that the Separation Barrier prompted a wave of urban immigration from the suburbs into the city, further increasing its population density and hiking up housing and rent costs. The Barrier exacerbated the sense of alienation felt by East Jerusalem Arabs from the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel alike, a fact that prominently marked their unique status (Ramon & Lehrs, 2014).

Hason (2012) points out that relations between Jews and Arabs in the city have shifted in recent years and now seem to be on a collision course—combining an increased frequency of violence on the one hand, and yet a deepening of the Israelization process of East Jerusalem Palestinians, on the other. This duality is particularly evident in education, as more young Palestinians aspire to study in Israeli academic institutions and sit for the Israeli matriculation exams rather than for those of the Palestinian Authority. Hason adds that this change also stems from practical reasons, such as hopes for better employment opportunities, or avoidance of the difficulties entailed in attempting to study in Palestinian universities. Nevertheless, this process may result in a profound change on the identity of East Jerusalem Palestinians. Such a change may then generate far-reaching political ramifications. Hason (2012) and Karni (2015) further demonstrate the point by noting that 320,000 Arab Jerusalem residents have applied for full Israeli citizenship, a step beyond the mere resident status they currently hold. Thus, myriad historical and current changes have produced seemingly contradictory and inscrutable trends that impact the identity and the influences framing the identity of this specific population. All the students interviewed for this study are East Jerusalem residents, an integral part of the city's new composition.

The East Jerusalem education system

In 1964, the textbooks used in East Jerusalem schools were provided to them by Jordan; these teaching materials were designed to blur Palestinian identity as much as possible (Abbasi, 2013). In September of 1967, when the State of Israel attempted to open the new school year with Israeli curricula in East Jerusalem, Arab principals, teachers and parents flatly refused to comply. Instead, they began a strike that lasted two years, until finally the Israeli government ceded the point to allow Arab schools to teach the curricula approved by Jordan. This lasted until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s, when the Authority took

control of school curricula. This victory was considered an important milestone in preserving the Palestinian identity of the city's Arab population (Hason, 2012).

Since 1967, East Jerusalem schools have been funded and managed by the Israeli government, yet the syllabi and academic standards are set by Palestinians (Yair & Alayan, 2009). Over the years, the Palestinian curricula was augmented with Hebrew and civics studies but requires no mandatory external testing (Alian & Abu Hassin, 2012). Ramon and Lehrs (2014) remark that a large percentage of pupils are politically opposed to studying Hebrew, and when Hebrew classes are taught, the quality of teaching is poor, as many teachers are not trained to teach this subject.

Recently, this curriculum has been the topic of public debate, with some parents demanding that the Israeli syllabus be permitted so that Arab children may become accustomed and be better prepared for Israeli universities and the local job market. Others in Palestinian society and the PA oppose any change on the grounds that this constitutes an acknowledgement of the Israeli occupation and debasement of East Jerusalem Palestinian identity. The Jerusalem Municipality is cautiously trying to promote a more favorable attitude among residents to Israeli course outlines, but the political sensitivity of the matter makes this difficult. Pupils may now opt for an Israeli program in five schools, and two new schools will soon also implement this policy (Ramon & Lehrs, 2014).

This argument is marked by a dramatic increase in the number of Palestinian pupils completing Israeli matriculation exams and applying for Israeli universities. Most do so after completing supplementary courses. There is also an increase in the number of East Jerusalem students now attending the Hebrew University and various Israeli colleges in and beyond the city limits. The last reform requires that school and kindergarten teachers complete Israeli degrees, and hundreds have been forced to retrain in Israeli institutions. The decision to study in Israeli education institutions is motivated by expediency, as Palestinian matriculation and West Bank degrees are not accepted in Israel (Hason, 2012).

In this research, I interviewed East Jerusalem Arab students who transferred to an Israeli college in West Jerusalem. These students are part of the new approach that views study in Israel as the entrance ticket to employment and a better standard of living.

Culture

According to Geertz (1973), culture is the social legacy that individuals inherit from their group through outlook, feelings, and beliefs, as well as a mechanism for determining normative standards of behavior. Fisk (1998) adds that culture is a set of beliefs and an ethical orientation that influences habits, norms, practices, and social institutions. Also, Calderon (2000), discussing the diversity of Israeli cultures, notes that Israeli culture is also a kind of religion or sense of belonging to the same place of residence.

In this study, I incorporate the definitions of culture put forth by Geertz (1973), Fisk (1998) and Calderon (2000), defining culture as a set of beliefs and values, a social legacy, and also the behaviors typical of people sharing the same place of residence.

Young (2004) maintains that culture directly influences individual behavior, preserving rules vital to the development and continuity of interpersonal relations and methods of coping with difficulties. The potency of any culture is particularly powerful when its members are not exposed to alternative cultures. Once exposed, this potency inevitably begins to wane. Young also notes that while individual behavior may be directly impacted by culture, one cannot ignore the strength of individualism that leads people to conduct themselves in a manner suited to their personal goals.

Every individual undergoes changes that lead them to choose behaviors motivated by self-interest. At times, these may be understood, and at times not, by the surrounding culture. Cultural identity may shift according to life circumstances in one's environment.

Identity

Erikson (1968) defined identity as the integration of childhood associations with experimentations and specialties that develop throughout life. The collection of identities

each person encapsulates is both a discrete and objective entity, and a subjective and internal sensation that includes self-knowledge and understanding of one's goals.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a special case in which social identity reflects traits shared by the individual and others, such as group belonging, along with the values and emotions this belonging generates (Singel, 1994).

Schwartz, Unger, Zamboonga and, Szapocznik (2010) noted that cultural identity is evident in the use of language, social ties, habits, values, and beliefs linked to a particular group and identification with it. Sagi (2008) also points to the connections between culture and identity. In her view, culture directs the categories of consciousness through which humans perceive their existence in the world and events in their lives. People always live and function within the cultural associations formulating their awareness, and thus their identity develops. This view is based on that of Taylor (1967), who stressed the importance of the other in identity-creating processes. Man is perceptive, but perception is shaped by culture, and humans employ it when choosing the cultural content that will then articulate their identity. However, such perceptive abilities also mean that humans play an active role in consolidating identity. Individuals are directly impacted by culture and environment, so that any exposure to other cultures unavoidably influences their own culture and identity. In ther words, it is impossible to separate between culture and identity, as these two entities are inextricably and reciprocally linked .

The focus of this study is based on definitions presented by Singel (1994) and Schwartz et al. (2010). I extend these to further define cultural identity as a reflection of social, cultural and religious characteristics influenced by the exposure and manner of exposure to other cultures.

As individuals are directly influenced by their culture and environment, exposure to new cultures provokes a cultural change whereby people come to internalize the fact that it is possible to incorporate and adopt alternative cultural content. This then propels changes in their own culture and identity. Such changes should lead to additional changes in cultural identity, encouraging new behaviors appropriate to personal goals, such as acquiring a

language, selecting social ties, and adopting certain habits or lifestyles choices different from those they acquired originally.

This study deals in the cultural identity of teacher trainees from East Jerusalem studying in West Jerusalem as reflected in their life stories.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study was based on a qualitative narrative research and thematic analysis of life stories selected as the best suited approach.

Study population

The study population included ten teacher trainees in their third or fourth year of academic tracks in an Israeli institution located in West Jerusalem. Six women and four men were interviewed, all residents of East Jerusalem who live within the confines of the Separation Barrier. Aged 24-40, all attended East Jerusalem schools. One interviewee completed her schooling independently, and another attended a matriculation preparation course. Nine completed the *Tawjihi* (the Jordanian Secondary Education Certificate after completing 12 years of schooling), and one woman completed Israeli matriculation exams. All underwent some process before attending college, and so that none of them continued to pursue an academic degree immediately after high school at the age of 18 . Some worked, some learned Hebrew, or prepared for the psychometric entrance exam, and others attended other institutions.

The majority of interviewees completed an academic preparatory course (in Israeli colleges and universities) to better their chances of being accepted to teacher training study tracks. Eight attend a separate track for Arabic speakers, meeting with Jewish students in college and during mixed classes taught by one Arabic speaker and one Hebrew speaker. Two interviewees study in the regular (Jewish) track, meeting with Jews all the time, cooperating on assignments and exchanging ideas.

For some interviewees, starting their studies in an Israeli institution also marked their very first significant encounter with Jews, while others were already familiar with Jews from previous employment experience.

Method

Interviewees were selected through consultation with their lecturers or from personal knowledge (convenience sampling), and each was interviewed twice in Arabic. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. All second interviews were conducted only after the first interviews had been transcribed and reviewed, as the latter were designed to garner additional information and clarify issues left unresolved. After completing both sets of interviews, common categories were identified, a thematic analysis of content was performed, and then certain quotes were selected for translation from Arabic to English. Following this, semantic analysis was conducted, whereby select words were identified as significant for further analysis.

Findings

The ten life stories revealed 3 central themes that appear in one way or another among all interviewees:

1. The academic institution as a place of change

The majority of interviews (7) included references to the academic institution as a place of change, helping individuals become more independent and responsible, improving adaptability and self-regulation. It is possible some experienced such changes simply through personal growth. For others, this transition from the small environment of home and family into the larger world, full of people and exposure to diverse cultures, was a chance to experiment with new and unfamiliar endeavors, enabling them to better understand themselves—particularly when meeting those different from them.

> **Amal:** *"My personality developed a great deal in college…relying on myself, being responsible…this helped a lot, gave me experience, prepared me…it*

shows that I took many good things, in every respect, from the college experience."

Noel: *"I already know how to handle myself better with everything going on around me, I went through a change in the way I manage people, and I developed in every respect. Mentally, I have changed enormously since starting my studies until now, in how I think about events…I have a problem with emotional regulation, I tend to be nervous, and I have learned to control myself…"*

College life enhanced their life experience and ability to communicate with Jews—a change that stems from daily exposure to a different and previously unfamiliar culture.

Amal: *"I am more independent, tend to mix more with others, especially in a mixed institution with Jews and Arabs. And over time, you find that this is good, that you are living through this experience. I have frequent contact with Jews, students and faculty…these relationships have developed in various directions, such as joint projects together…had you met me before, and compared me then and now, you would say I wasn't the same woman."*

Most interviewees spoke of their growing sense of courage thanks to the college experience, a new and starkly different environment from their life at home. The unknown and unfamiliar world beyond home initially seemed frightening, but when given the opportunity to overcome this fear, their situation improved.

Nardin: *"I was very shy before, and today I'm not shy at all. I'm brave. I used to be afraid to try new things, I was always nervous, and someone had to stay with me."*

Hamed: *"At first, I suffered from anxiety and didn't know what to do."*

Salma: *"I feel that now I am bolder, stronger. At first, I was afraid, but not anymore. Today I dare more…so I am stronger."*

Among teacher trainees, attending college increased self-confidence and their ability to improve their life. Exposure to positive events and success in various assignments during studies contributed to self-confidence and self-image, and generated self-belief and self-efficacy.

> **Amal:** *"I don't want to allow myself to be controlled by others. That's what it is, I now know better, know what's right or wrong, and know how to choose, decide, and know what I want."*
>
> **Noel:** *"My entire life before starting college…I felt like someone living for others, for the home, my husband, and the children. When I started my degree, I went through a major change in my life."*
>
> **Lena:** *"When I started here, I had no self-confidence. Today I am happy and confident that I am on the way to good things in my life. And I am glad and pleased, having seen here that my studies have changed me for the better, been better for my kids, even improved my relations with other people…had I stayed at home, I wouldn't have learned anything…I can now see a whole world I would never have seen otherwise."*

The transition from neighborhood and home life to an academic institution brought about many changes in these students – in their personalities, measure of independence, self-confidence, and issues relating to their experience with previously unfamiliar matters.

2. Relations with Jews

A distinction between two types of relations with the Jews of Jerusalem is evident in the interviews—private vs. public. The majority of interviews included positive attitudes toward Jews met by the students during schooling. The mental shift regarding daily interaction with Jews is clearly apparent. Arab students began consolidating more moderate stances toward others, seeing more commonalities between the two groups. They understood that a broad range of variations in Israeli society can exist and began believing that there are Jews they can communicate with, making peaceful coexistence possible.

Laviv: *"I don't recall any discrimination between Jews and Arabs at college…I was shocked at first to see how the Jewish lecturers behave, their openness, the fact that I became friends with a lot of the students with me, surprised initially by the way we are comfortable with each other. There was a joint project we did here, and I had a lot of positive interaction with them [Jews] and it was really nice…it was the first time I experienced anything like that, a very good experience, particularly the conversations and discussions. I think this is healthy, especially in an education framework and not just casual chatting…at first, I assumed that 80% of Jews are racists because that's how it seems when you view Jerusalem, but when you meet them, meet the people, this view changes. I began judging people based on how they behave."*

Amal: *"Over time, I started talking to them, participated in group assignment discussions, and when we worked in pairs this opened up possibilities of talking…. Outside is one world, while in school there is another, and even though there are many problems still in the world outside, I am fine, I feel I have changed a great deal. In the past I got the impression from my environment that the Jews were bad, they are our enemies, and we shouldn't be in contact with them, but today I think differently…today I consider how people treat me, do they respect me, so that if you are respectful, so will I be…we have problems and they have problems…that's how I see the situation…"*

Salma: *"In the past, I didn't have any contact with Jews, but then I started college and met Jews every day. And when I saw how nice they were I changed my mind. They are people, just like me, they have their own lives and want to be happy…there was one class…Arab and Jewish students together…it felt good, we had fun, I learned a lot about them, they learned about us. I understood things different from what we know politically, and I saw that Jews are the same as us, trying to live their lives. Not like the soldiers and police and the whole security situation, but the opposite – just people, each doing their own thing."*

Interviews revealed that students differentiated between events that occur outside college life and the associations consolidated within it. Attending college and occasionally completing

joint study assignments allowed them to get closer to Jews, to separate between students studying with them, people they can communicate with directly, to the general stance they associate with Zionism and racism, a fact they believe cannot be ignored.

> **Nardin:** *"This attitude towards Jews has two sides – one, that I respect the students as people, respect them culturally and also religiously because our religion dictates that we honor anyone we encounter…especially when they are not fighting us, although if they do fight us then my view will change…I will respect them, but they will always remain those that took over my land and homeland, and I will never live peacefully with them. It's fine that we live together and accept each other, but that's not the point. The bottom line is that they are our enemies, taking our homeland and country, and the college should be ours eventually."*
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> **Lena:** *"There are feelings of hatred, hatred of the fact that we are a people under occupation and are looked down on…but there are also wonderful people who conduct themselves honorably, and anyone who respects me, I will respect them too."*

Evidently, students underwent a process of acceptance, concurrent with their inner conflicts, in their attitude to individual Jews encountered privately, particularly in relations established in academic institutions (as such ties outside such institutions are rare). This contrasted with attitudes towards the general Jewish public in Jerusalem and relations between the two population groups. They went through a significant transformation, but still struggle to accept Jewish society as a whole.

3. The motivation to study in an Israeli college

Most interviewees indicated a desire to attend a recognized college as a motivating factor in choosing an Israeli institution, i.e., colleges recognized by the Israeli Education Ministry. Graduates of these institutions are assured Ministry placements in schools, where the monthly salary provides a decent living.

> **Amir:** *"I want to study in a recognized institution. If I attend Abu Dis (in the PA), then I can only teach in the West Bank, and the salary there isn't enough for rent here, so the West Bank isn't even a possibility. I want a job here in Jerusalem, so I don't have to make do with minimum wages, make up the diplomas, so if I complete a degree in special education in (Palestinian) Bethlehem – that's four years, then another extra two years in Al-Qasemi or in Sakhnin (Arab colleges in Israel), at a cost of 40,000 shekels. So, four years here is equivalent to two years there."*
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> **Lena:** *"I could have learned best in an Arab university… But I want something official…So I decided to study at the Jewish college. And we started hearing that the East Jerusalem University is not recognized, and they won't give jobs to their graduates. In municipal schools they require making up academic points, especially when I worked for a short period and they only paid me 1500 shekels. You want to study so that leaving home is worth it, not go to the trouble for 1500-2000 shekels. And graduates of recognized colleges get good salaries. What's the alternative – finish school so that then they say I have to do all that work – why go through the hassle?"*

Clearly, most interviewees chose an Israeli institution with the goal of securing a position that provides decent wages in East Jerusalem. They did not address curricula, or the specific advantages of an Israeli academic college. It seems they are still in the first stage of exposure and internalization of the benefits of such exposure. Their current goals are to "survive" this new reality, meaning deal with the initial need, and only then perhaps begin considering more complex needs, such as academic and scholastic benefits. One student, attending a mixed class with Jews, did remark on certain other advantages.

> **Amal:** *"From the teachers I learn about different opinions and strategic thinking, friends teach me about cooperation, helping out and discussing projects."*

Another important point relates to remarks made by married female interviewees, convinced their children should study for Israeli high school diplomas—not Palestinian exams. They

believe that an Israeli diploma will benefit their children's lives, opening up more opportunities in the future.

> **Salma:** *"My son wants a bagrut (Israeli diploma), and so do I...especially as we live in Jerusalem and it would be useful if he wanted to attend the Hebrew University later.*
>
> **Lena:** *"I asked around to see which school in East Jerusalem teaches bagrut, and then transferred my daughter there...everyone around me, family and friends, all started asking why a bagrut, why study with the Jews? Even teachers in the school started asking why I transferred her. I don't want her to continue the Tawjihi, I want her to do the bagrut and then go to the Hebrew University – and why not? I said that the bagrut is a safer option, we live with them, everything of theirs is recognized...so I don't understand why people stay to make a point...this diploma is not only recognized among the Jews, but also in the PA and around the world. So why make a narrow choice when I can expand my options and choose better? Of course, they are Jews and our enemies, but if this is useful to me, why not seize this opportunity with both hands?"*
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> **Noel:** *"I want my daughters to study in an established and recognized institution, so that anywhere she applies for work later, she'll be accepted with open arms. This is the way to guarantee her future."*

Two interviewees explained why most Arabs still apply for Palestinian diplomas.

> **Amir:** *"Not enough schools that teach bagrut – that's the big obstacle in this matter...it's well-known that Jews do bagrut and Arabs do Tawjihi, but we don't have schools that prepare for the bagrut ...."*
>
> **Amal:** *"We did what everyone in my family did, including my brothers, cousins, everyone - the Tawjihi exams. They also described the bagrut as something scary, all those study units ... I really don't know how they differ, but the norm for us is to do the Tawjihi. I don't know enough about the bagrut...anyone wanting to do it has to attend some college or drive to Beit Safafa. For us it's just the regular Tawjihi, so why look for something different...and it all depends*

> *on the environment you come from, so that if you make a recommendation, you need to be knowledgeable about it, especially the social aspect… I myself don't fully understand the bagrut… I'm not conversant enough, and I won't recommend something I am unfamiliar with, something I haven't experienced. They would be like guinea pigs trying something new; this is simply not familiar enough."*

As evident in the interviews, study in a recognized Israeli institution has become an important point for East Jerusalem residents. It saves the necessity of having to redo courses, allows graduates to find work closer to home, and provides better long-term income prospects. This message is conveyed strictly to close family and their own children, never as a recommendation to pupils or the general public. Interviewees explained they only spoke of this motivation privately because they lacked the confidence and knowhow to discuss Israeli matriculation exams ("bagrut"). Also, the scarcity of Arab schools preparing for bagrut matriculation lowers the awareness and desire to complete these exams, along with lessening the ability to impact others. Interviewees do not feel personally secure enough to openly promote a view that may be considered a betrayal of Palestinian identity, meaning submission to the "occupier" identity.

This is yet another example of the juxtaposition between individual identity and family identity—the desire to survive, succeed, and live well clashing with institutional demands. This gap correlates with the hesitation and misgivings regarding Israelis—individual Jews contrasted with the Jewish establishment. Private considerations push for good relations with the Israeli education system, while more general considerations still exist and are impossible to ignore. Balancing the two requires sensitivity and a great deal of courage and strength. One must first grapple with the changes on a personal level, then with family members, and finally with society. This change has the power to instigate other changes—cultural, social, and political.

The personal change undergone by teacher trainees is noticeable, constituting a preliminary and initial shift. It has the potential to expand to a far more general change, a fact supported by other interviewee remarks. The intensity of critique expressed by those already critical of

the Palestinian matriculation system is likely to increase over time and with greater exposure to the Israeli "bagrut" system, as more and more comparisons between the two systems arise.

Discussion

This current study focused on teacher education students from East Jerusalem studying in an Israeli academic institution. Having grown up in the midst of many changes and tense relations between East Jerusalem Arabs and the Israeli establishment, recent years seem to have pushed these conflicts to a contradictory path.

Study in Israeli institutions has a general impact on the sense of security and self-efficacy among students. The motivation to attend such institutions is essentially practical, but results in many changes, some due purely to the academic experience and some from the "encounter with the enemy". It prompts a more critical view of Arab society, and perhaps personalizes a view of Jews as individuals and not an enemy group that should be hated.

When reviewing the definitions of Fisk (1998) and Geertz (1973), as initially presented in this article, it is evident that teacher trainees were provided a social legacy, meaning a set of beliefs and mechanisms determining normative standards of behavior from their own group. Nevertheless, they were affected by their exposure to others (Young-ok, 2004) and underwent a shift in attitude – from an ingrained opposition to the "enemy" to a view that (partially) prompts a desire to become incorporated into the new society. The primary motivation for this assimilation was survival, a need to study that would enable finding suitable employment and a means to live with dignity. However, over time this exposure also prompted an unconscious process of change in cultural identity, now influenced by the "conqueror" culture with which they had previously been averse to affiliating.

This change may be explained using the contact hypothesis first introduced by Allport (1954), whereby contact between groups reduces mutual stereotypes and develops a friendlier attitude to others. When an individual of one group encounters an individual from another, the attitude shift manifests on two levels: first, negative stereotypes towards the specific

"other" are lessened, and second – this improved attitude is then generalized to the collective "other".

Allport's theory is further supported by Berry (1997) and his description of immigrant identity. Berry proposed a two-dimensional model of cultural change, one that balances the adoption of new identities and preservation of original identities; this model of multiculturalism ensures mutual respect within society where all stand to benefit. In another of Berry's works (2006) he clearly points to the positive correlation between adoption of multicultural stances and psychological, social, and cultural adaptation. That is to say that skills developed by teacher trainees may facilitate them maintaining cultural identity while also being open to accepting beneficial elements from new cultures.

The attitude of incorporation proposed by Berry (1997) suggests that multiple positive identities allow access to various cultural, value-driven, and social sources, possibly easing the difficulties of transitioning from one culture to the next by relying on two cultural systems. This provides a broader and more supportive foundation for individual adaptation (Horenczyk, 2004). Arab students experienced a similar process, as their exposure to different cultural and ethical norms opened the door for new attitudes and adoption of certain new elements while still preserving their own culture of origin.

Findings of this study demonstrate significant changes associated with this first level of the process; students underwent deep changes in their attitude toward others, specifically Jews. Regarding the second level, the impact of exposure was far more complex, as negative stances towards Jews collectively remained, while new assessment of their own group began surfacing, along with recognition of certain advantages in others, such as education and language.

One could say these trainees learned to distinguish between the Israeli establishment (authorities), perceived as the "enemy", and individuals, now regarded as people and even friends. Moreover, they even found some positive elements within the establishment they agreed with. They understood that Israeli society is incredibly diverse and began believing that it is possible to communicate and coexist peacefully with certain Jews. Current study findings

only partially support the Allport contact hypothesis, as these students do not exhibit the significant second-level change in attitude toward the collective "other", meaning an improved generalized stance towards Jews, and could not put aside what they viewed as Zionism and racism. They struggled to separate or ignore events happening around them. This distinction appears in their choice of phrasing, such as referencing *Jews* instead of *Israelis*, allowing them to differentiate between the "conquering" power (Israelis), meaning the group/establishment, and private individuals (Jews) they encountered.

Research literature that addresses contact between groups includes several relevant findings. Some claim that a significant proportion of group interactions are based on power struggles, and frequently on avoidance of reciprocal openness (Peri, 2007). Others, such as Pettigrew and Tropp (2000), demonstrate that contact minimizes hostility and prejudice between rival groups. Moreover, daily contact between groups can lead to interpersonal relationships, increased compassion, closeness, and even mutual empathy (Bohmertoo & Demaris, 2015). Forbes (2004) then extends Allport's work to distinguish between the two levels of influence— personal vs. collective attitudes, with almost overwhelming evidence suggesting a positive correlation between contact and reduction of personal bias. Contrastingly, it was found that changed attitudes towards the collective "other" improved only with certain optimal conditions governing this contact.

Regarding current study findings, it seems that optimal conditions do exist within the college setting, but not outside of it. Thus, students of East Jerusalem separate between events of college life and external events. Within the college, they agree to certain general principles important to them personally, despite being associated with the Israeli establishment, such as an explicit preference for the Israeli education system and yet, unwillingness to openly express that preference among the general Arab public of East Jerusalem. Hogg and Vaughan (2005) note that while collaborative learning experiences enable students to alter negative stances and stereotypes towards the collective "other", establish relations of closeness and friendship, and help identify personal and group similarities, such experiences are not sufficient for creating true changes in the education field.

Moreover, the marked differences for Arab boys and girls inevitably impacts their personal experience of college life. Findings indicate a far more profound personal impact on female students, stemming first from the fact that for years Arab girls from East Jerusalem were not allowed to attend college. This signifies an important shift in the status of Arab women, previously confined to the home, delegated to clean, cook, and care for the family. Leaving home to attend college requires the support of the woman's family so that it may to continue to function in her absence. Thus, personal development for female students appears to be more dramatic, as they began their path to higher education from a sheltered and dependent position. Through their college experiences, Arab women gain a sense of independence, erudition, and a clarity regarding life choice more beneficial to them and their families. Over time, they begin to believe in their abilities.

Finally, the choice to study in an Israeli institution is primarily practical in nature. The difficult political reality of Israel cannot be ignored, and tensions exist between the two groups that undermines the willingness of any side to be exposed. The physical proximity of Arab and Jewish students during their studies is therefore insufficient to induce a true and unmediated understanding of the "other," such as one than spans religion, customs, music, history, and much more. Study findings reflect this superficiality during contact in college.

Exposure to the "other" culture has contributed indirectly to myriad social and cultural changes in Jerusalemite society. The government policy implemented in East Jerusalem in recent years, encouraging the inclusion of Arabs and providing the means for various social improvements, seems to be bearing fruit. This is evident in the growing numbers of Arab pupils applying for "bagrut" exams, and the increased numbers of Arab students attending Israeli colleges and universities. Ramon & Lehrs (2014) noted that the issue of Arab children completing Israeli schooling had become a hot debate topic. Some Arab parents had made the demand that their children be allowed to complete the Israeli curricula to improve their chances to someday attend university and find employment in the Israeli market. Today, Arab schoolchildren may choose an Israeli curriculum in five East Jerusalem schools, and two additional schools will soon offer this option.

Does this desire to become integrated in the Israeli education system mark the transition to assimilation in an alien culture—or is it merely the aspiration of East Jerusalem Arabs to improve their lot, and provide a better education for their children? The answer to this question becomes increasingly urgent to resolve with the progressive weakening of the Palestinian education system, and the unknown political future of Jerusalem.

The students interviewed for this study underwent significant changes, reflected in their attitudes, stances, and associations. Should such changes become the majority view, Jerusalem would inevitably have to likewise change. East Jerusalem students embody the early buds of this possible change, the opening move forward in this process.

Recommendations

Several colleges and universities in Israel provide separate study tracks for Arab and Jewish students. These institutions invest many efforts in creating an egalitarian and accepting atmosphere. However, I propose that exposure to other cultures should be proactively pursued, with joint activities, workshops, seminars, and social events to increase familiarity between the two groups.

I further propose an increase in the number of communal classes held for Arab and Jewish teacher trainees, exposing them to each other's cultures. Such daily interaction may lead to interpersonal relations, compassion, closeness, and even empathy (Bohmert & Demaris, 2015). Studies show that differing groups studying side by side is not enough to generate true closeness. This can only be generated through deliberate efforts to promote familiarity between groups, such as collaborative projects and communal study (Paul Benyamin and Hadj Yehiya, 2019). Colleges and universities would have to support and endorse such efforts.

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