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Collective identity and readiness for social relations with Jews among Palestinian Arab students at the David Yellin Teacher Training College in Israel

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This paper argues that the two national components of identity among Palestinian Arab students in Israel—the Arab component and the Palestinian component—are strong, while the civil Israeli component is very weak. This paper also argues that although social relations between Arab students and Jewish students are very limited, the readiness of Arab students for professional and social relations with Jewish students is greater than the perceived readiness of Jewish students for social relations with Arab students. Correlation coefficients between collective identity and readiness for social relations with Jews reveal that there is no connection between the components of collective identity of Arab students and their familiarity with Jewish students and readiness to have professional and social relations with them.

Introduction

This article deals with Palestinian student teachers in Israel. It explores their feelings towards the diverse circles of belonging in order to understand their collective identity and their readiness to make friends with Jewish student cohorts at the David Yellin College of Education in Jerusalem.

Identity

One of the most accepted definitions of identity is that proposed by Miller (1963, 1983) who defines the term as a set of observable and inferable attributes that

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identifies a person to him and to others. He differentiates between objective public identity, that is, the person as seen by others; subjective public identity, the person's perception of how others see him/her; and self-identity, the person as he sees him/herself.

Rosenberg (1965) distinguishes between the core and the sub-identities in self-identity. The core, whose attributes are to be found in interaction with all the elements outside of it, organizes identity. The attributes usually consolidate at an early stage in the individual's life and are hard to change. Sub-identities refer to the social roles and to the individual's group belonging. Belonging to a group can focus around several elements: physical-hereditary attributes, religion, language, culture and national origin. Each of these can afford a focus for formulating collective identity: civil identity (state), local identity (place of residence), family or *Hamula* (clan or extended family) identity, national identity, religious identity and professional identity.

Stephan and Stephan (1996) differentiate between two types of main identity: personal identity—composed of those aspects of the self, based on individual attributes such as personality characteristics and social identity—composed of those aspects of the self, based on group membership. Stephan and Stephan (1996) assert that a negative connection exists between personal and social identity. If people emphasize themselves as unique individuals, they do not usually stress their group belonging and *vice versa* (Stephan and Stephan, 1990, p. 90).

The development of identity within the Palestinian

The Palestinians in Israel are a unique national minority. This is a former majority that became a minority in its own land overnight (Morris, 1991, p. 397–399; Cohen, 2000, p. 35). In contrast to many minorities around the world, this is not a minority of immigrants but an indigenous minority, a minority of natives. Furthermore, the Palestinians in Israel are citizens of a country that is at conflict with its own people, with the Palestinian people and with its own nation, the Arab nation. The government and the Jewish majority in Israel refer to the Palestinian minority as if it was a hostile minority or a 'fifth column'. A third attribute is that the Palestinians in Israel are citizens of a State that defines itself as the State of the Jews and not as the State of all its citizens. A discriminatory policy of deprivation in almost all domains is thus enforced against them. These and other attributes aggravate the problems of the identity of this national minority.

The collective identity of the Palestinians in Israel comprises several main components or circles: Israeli, Palestinian, Arab and Islamic. Palestinians in Israel see their identity as comprised primarily of these four aspects, as one mixture, or as a delicate balance between them, or as one circle displacing another circle. This creates an ongoing crisis of identity, constantly changing with the changing conditions.

The relative importance of the components of identity is not fixed and may change from time to time. The following text is a description of the development of the collective identity of the Palestinian minority in Israel after 1948. Mi'ari (1986, 1992)

and later Amara and Kabhaa (1996) have observed three stages in the development of the collective identity of Palestinians in Israel.

The first period: 1948–1967

After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Palestinians lived there as an isolated national minority, separated physically, socially and culturally from the Arab world surrounding them and from the other sectors of the Palestinian people scattered in other countries. They lived in the new State without any national leadership since all the social elites (political, economic, educational and religious), who had been concentrated in the cities, left the country during the 1948 War of Independence. Thus the Palestinians in Israel found themselves a weak national minority, strangers in their own country and isolated from the rest of the Arab nation and the Palestinian people (Mi'ari, 1992, p. 42). In their study on the identity of Palestinians in Israel prior to, and following, the Six Day War in 1967, Peres and Yuval-Davis (1969) found that the order of identities could previously be ranked (from strongest to weakest) as Israeli, Israeli-Arab, Arab and lastly Palestinian.

The second period: 1967–1973

Alongside the prominence of the Israeli, or the Israeli-Arab, component of the collective identity of Palestinians in Israel during the first period, the Arab nationalist element began to strengthen towards its end thanks to the intensification of the Arab national movement. This, together with the awakening of Palestinian national identity and the weakening of Israeli identity amongst Palestinians in Israel occurred for two main reasons: the abolition of the military government in 1966 and the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967 (Mi'ari, 1992). Peres and Yuval-Davis (1969) also found that the order of identities amongst Palestinians after the war altered to become (from strongest to weakest) Arab, Israeli-Arab, Palestinian and finally, Israeli.

The third period: after 1973

After the October 1973 war, a new stage began in the intensification of Palestinian identity. Mi'ari (1986, 1992) avers that this identity, that was dormant during the first period and that began to awaken during the second, deepened during this period. At the same time, Israeli identity weakened as a result of outside developments (that are not directly connected to Palestinians in Israel) and other internal developments in the structure of Arab society in Israel (Al Haj, 2000, p. 15).

The Palestinization process intensified during the 1980s. Smooha's studies (in Reches, 1993, p. 85) indicated that the percentage of respondents who defined themselves as Palestinians, as Arab-Palestinians, as Palestinians in Israel or as Palestinian Arabs in Israel increased from 33% in 1976, to 56% in 1985 and 1988.

A study by Mi'ari (1992) conducted during the first *Intifada* amongst Palestinian high school students in Israel found that 66% of those questioned defined themselves as Palestinian or Palestinian-Arab, and only 15% defined themselves as Israeli, as Israeli Arab or as Israeli Palestinian. Furthermore, 14% defined themselves as Arab and 5% gave a different answer (Mi'ari, 1992). In reply to the question regarding each component of identity (whether it strengthened, weakened or remained the same during the *Intifada*), most respondents (83%) estimated that their Palestinian identity strengthened during that period whilst a majority of 52% thought their Arab identity strengthened. In contrast, most participants (71%) believed that their Israeli-Arab identity weakened during the *Intifada*.

The intensification of Palestinian identity in Israel has continued in recent years. Rouhana (1997) finds that the Arabs in Israel share with the Palestinians in the occupied territories the sense of belonging and the sentimental (emotional) connection as people, as well as political attitudes.

Conflict—a crisis of identity and methods of coping

The unique historical situation in which the Palestinian minority in Israel found itself resulted in the development of a problem of balancing conflicting forces. Palestinians in Israel retained the conflict between the two components of their identity—the Israeli and the Palestinian-Arab—for a long time, while applying diverse mechanisms to solve it. Two main mechanisms—the compartmentalization mechanism and the mechanism of the dual marginality—are emphasized in the relevant literature.

The compartmentalization mechanism

This mechanism is proposed by Peres and Yuval-Davis (1968), according to which the collective ideological level and the pragmatic individual level are separate. The first level deals with supreme Arab national values. The second deals with daily behavioural norms, in which the importance of the individual's interest in exploiting the existing State resources to his own personal ends is prominent, ignoring the inner feeling associated with the ideological and collective identity. Compartmentalization created conflicting pressures and feelings of discomfort. This sometimes reached real emotional suffering. Since Palestinians in Israel have no real possibility of rescinding the contradictions between the components of their identity, the tendency was to spurn the fervent hopes for an outside saviour who would come soon, alter the situation and break down the barriers (the demarcations) between national ideology and daily life. They therefore tended to express nationalist, and sometimes extreme, attitudes in informal encounters (at the homes of friends and acquaintances). In daily life they tended to pretend and avoided expressing any nationalist views, constantly exploring where their interests lay, prepared to express the opinions of the establishment and behave in a loyal fashion.

The dual marginality mechanism

Suliman (1999) proposes a dual marginality mechanism as a way in which the Palestinian in Israel can solve the identity crisis resulting from the conflict between the Palestinian-Arab and the Israeli components. Being marginal to the two identities (the nationalist and the civilian) the Palestinian minority can combine these two conflicting identities. The marginality of Palestinians as citizens lies in the definition of Israel as the State of the Jews, denying them the right to civil equality.

The reasons underlying the marginality of the Palestinian identity are less clear although they may be partially associated with the ongoing separation of this minority from the other Palestinians and Arabs. The Israeli Palestinians dual marginality is an internalized identity and affords a core for a collective identity lacking inner consistency (Suliman, 1999, p. 181).

The Arab education system

Examination of the learning goals and programs for Arab education shows there is no consideration of the needs of Arab education. The national and cultural uniqueness of the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel is ignored. Findings of studies by Al Haj (1996), Meri'i (1986), Mi'ari (1975) and Peres *et al.* (1968) on the subject lead to the clear conclusion that the goals of education for Arabs are intended to create a submissive Arab, who is ready to accept a status of inferiority *vis-à-vis* the superiority of the Jews, who lack any Palestinian Arab identity.

Arab teachers have not received legitimacy to develop their own and their students national identity, and neither were they trained for this. On the other hand, they have not been convinced of the Ministry of Education's real beliefs and intentions.

Readiness to maintain social relationships with the other

Multiple researchers (see Hofman, 1972, 1982; Smootha & Hofman, 1976/1977; Smootha, 1984; Deutsch & Kehat, 1986; Hofman & Najjar, 1986; Yuchtman-Yaar & Inbar, 1986; Yogev *et al.*, 1991) ascertain that the Palestinians in Israel are more prepared to have social relationships with Jews than the reverse. Thus, for example, a study by Hofman and Najjar (1986) on Arab and Jewish high school students found considerable differences between the Jewish and the Arab respondents in their active readiness for interethnic contact. (They believe the opportunity exists to meet members of the other people, to try to nurture proper relationships with members of the other people, in the belief that it is hard to live in the country without proper relationships with members of the other people and try not to distance themselves from such people.) The differences in passive readiness were less clear (Hofman & Najjar, 1986, p. 106–107). The study conducted by Deutsch and Kehat (1986) on the social relationships between Jews and Arabs in a mixed neighbourhood found that the Arabs exhibited greater readiness for

close relationships with the Jews than did the Jews with Arabs (visiting each others' homes, playing with children, close neighbourly relationships and cooperation among neighbours).

These and other studies have also found that the Palestinians in Israel are aware of this asymmetry in the relationships between themselves and the Jews (Mi'ari, 1981, p. 174). Such asymmetry would seem to characterize many minority-majority relationships in the world, in which members of the minority gain, or feel they gain, more than members of the majority, from contact with the other (Mi'ari, 1989, p. 239). This explanation is compatible with the explanation of 'asymmetrical dependency' proposed by Hofman and Najar (1986), according to which the more dependent group (usually the minority group), 'Will be motivated to review the rival's intentions, to clarify its attitudes, to know what are the attributes that afford them their preferences, and to come close to them in order to participate in their success more than the dominant group' (Hofman & Najar, 1986, p. 104).

Comparing the readiness for contact with the other over a period of time indicates a drop in this readiness particularly amongst Arabs (Hofman & Najar, 1986, p. 110). Mi'ari's study (1989, p. 242) also shows a similar trend.

Several studies deal with the link between the collective identity of Arabs in Israel and their readiness to have social relations with Jews. In a study of Arab high school and college students, Hofman (1982, p. 737) discovers that the more Israeli and less Palestinian the Israeli Arabs feel, the more ready they will be to have social connections with Jews. The Israeli and the Palestinian identities, believes Hofman (1982), have contradictory effects on the readiness of Arabs to develop social relationships with Jews. Another study conducted by Yogev *et al.* (1991), of Arab seventh grade students, notes an indirect effect of their collective identity on their readiness to have social contact with Jews (a coefficient of 0.11). This readiness is mainly affected by two factors: the perception of relative deprivation and a stereotypical attitude towards Jews. Arab students, who feel less deprived and who have positive stereotypes of Jews, want to be more in contact with Jews than others. These two factors are influenced by the students collective identity. The Israeli identity weakens the feeling of relative deprivation and strengthens the positive stereotypes of Jews, while the Palestinian identity intensifies the feeling of relative deprivation and reinforces the negative stereotypes of the Jews (Yogev *et al.*, 1991, pp. 558–559).

Research by Mi'ari (1983, 1989, 1998) on the relationship between the collective identity of Arabs in Israel and their readiness for contact with Jews offers different findings. His 1976 study of Arab university graduates reveals that the graduates who identify as Palestinians and those who identify as Israelis do not differ significantly in their readiness to have contact with Jews. (They in fact do not differ in the value of the index comprised of readiness to make friends with Jews, to work with them in the same office and to be their neighbours.) He notes that the most important variables that predict the readiness for contact with Jews were having Jewish friends and traditional identities, that is, the religious, the local and the *Hamula* identity (Mi'ari,

1983, pp. 188–189). Another study conducted by Mi'ari (1992) of Arab high school students observes that students identifying themselves as Palestinians and those who identify as Israelis differ little in their readiness to have close relations with Jews (to marry and to live near each other), but they differ significantly in their readiness to have less intimate relations with Jews. Arab students who identify as Palestinians are less ready to befriend Jews and to share an office with them than students who identify as Israelis (Mi'ari, 1989, p. 244). A separate study by Mi'ari (1998) of students at the Birzeit University (almost all of whom are residents of the West Bank and Gaza) also find that the collective identity of students is not significantly connected to their readiness to have contact with Israeli Jews. This means that students who define themselves as Palestinians, or as Arabs, or as Muslims do not differ significantly in their (usually relatively low) readiness to make friends with Israeli Jews (Mi'ari, 1998, pp. 62–65).

These diverse findings indicate the need to study, again, the relationship between collective identity and the readiness for interethnic contact.

The research question

The current study explores the collective identity of Arab students at the David Yellin College of Education and their social relationships with the Jewish students there. It tries particularly to answer the following questions:

How do Arab students define their identity? What importance do they allocate to each component of identity, particularly to the Palestinian national and the Israeli civil components?

Do the Arab students maintain social relations with the Jewish students? Are they interested in such relations? Do they believe that Jewish students are interested in maintaining social relations with the Arab students?

Are the collective identity of the Arab students and their desire to have social relations with Jews influenced by gender?

Is there a relationship between the Arab students collective identity and the existence (or desire to maintain) social relations with Jews?

The research population and sample

The research population comprised students registered on the track of Special Education in Arab Society at the David Yellin College of Education. This population numbered 350 students in the 2002/2003 academic year, most of whom were Palestinians, citizens of the State of Israel, with a minority of Palestinian students from East Jerusalem.

The questionnaires were distributed to students on the above track by pedagogic instructors during 13 didactic courses (out of a total of 15 courses). Some 250 students registered for these lectures, 167 of whom completed the questionnaire.

Gathering the data

The data were gathered from a questionnaire comprising closed questions. These included background questions and questions regarding collective identity, and social relations between Arab and Jewish students. The questionnaire was distributed by the instructors in the classrooms and completed by the students prior to their collection by the instructors. The data were gathered during June 2003, the last month in the 2002/2003 academic year.

Measurement

The two main variables in this study were the collective identity and social relations with the other.

The collective identity variable, comprising several components (or sub-identities), was measured through the following questions:

- To what degree do you feel you belong to your *Hamula*?
- To what degree do you feel you belong to your place of residence (town or village)?
- To what degree do you feel Muslim, Christian or Druze?
- To what degree do you feel Arab?
- To what degree do you feel Israeli?
- To what degree do you feel Palestinian?

The students' replies to these questions were ranked according to four categories: very little, somewhat, considerably and greatly. Since the students could identify simultaneously with several groups, they were also asked about the most important component (or most important sub-identity) in their collective identity.

Maintaining social relations with the other is divided in fact into three variables: actually having social relations with Jewish students; the desire to have social relations with Jewish students; and the perception of the desire of the Jewish students to have social relations with Arab students. Maintaining social relations with Jews was measured using the two following questions:

- Do you know Jewish students with whom you sit and talk? How many?
- Do you have Jewish friends whom you visit and who visit you? How many?

The desire to have social relations with Jewish students was measured using the two following questions:

- Would you like to develop professional social relations with Jewish students at the College?

- Would you like to have Jewish friends whom you would visit and who would visit you?

The answers to these two questions were ranked according to four categories: disinterested, somewhat interested, interested and greatly interested.

The perception of the desire of the Jewish students to have social relations with the Arab students was also measured using the two following questions:

- Do you think Jewish students would like to develop professional relations with Arab students like yourself?

Do you think Jewish students would like to have Arab friends like yourself, visit you and you visit them?

The answers to these two questions were also ranked according to the four criteria of disinterested, somewhat interested, interested and greatly interested.

Results

Collective identity

Table 1 indicates that the most common identity amongst the students was the Arab identity (91% feel considerably or greatly feel that they are Arab). Thereafter, in order, were the traditional identities, that is, the *Hamula* and religious identities (83%) local identity (84%), Palestinian identity (76%) and finally Israeli identity (18%). In general, one may claim that most students felt they were Arab-Palestinian, and at the same time felt they belonged to the traditional frameworks (religion, *Hamula* and to their place of residence). In contrast, only a small minority of students felt Israeli.

Since people can identify with several groups simultaneously, the students were asked about their most important identity. Table 2 presents the distribution of the respondents by the identity most important to them. It shows that the Arab and the Palestinian identities were the two most important identities (28% and 27% respectively), followed by religious identity (18%). Only a small minority (5%) noted their Israeli identity as being the most important.

These findings are compatible with the findings of previous studies regarding the dominance of two identities (Arab and Palestinian) and the weakening of Israeli identity amongst the Palestinians in Israel since the 1970s (Rouhana, 1982, 1997; Mi'ari, 1992; Reches, 1993; Suliman, 1999). With the intensification of the national identity of Palestinians in Israel, traditional (religious, *Hamula* and the local) identities also became prominent.

Table 1. Arab students feeling of belonging to diverse groups (%)

	Very little	Somewhat	Considerably	Very much	Total %	No.	Considerably or very much
Feeling belonging to a <i>Hamula</i>	5.1	11.4	33.5	50.0	100	176	83.5
Feeling belonging to a place of residence (town or village)	3.4	14.1	33.3	49.2	100	177	82.5
Feeling Muslim, Christian or Druze	8.7	7.5	25.4	58.4	100	173	83.8
Feeling Arab	2.9	5.7	18.4	73.0	100	174	91.4
Feeling Israeli	49.4	32.8	13.2	4.6	100	174	17.8
Feeling Palestinian	9.8	14.4	28.2	47.7	100	174	75.9

Table 2. Arab students and their most important identity (%)

Identity	%
<i>Hamula</i> identity	8.4
Local identity (place of residence)	7.2
Religious identity	18.1
Arab identity	27.7
Israeli identity	4.8
Palestinian identity	27.1
Arab-Palestinian identity	4.2
Another combination (excluding the Israeli identity)	2.4
Total (%)	100
Number	166*

Note: * The number of questionnaires returned varied.

The mutual relations among the various identities are presented in Table 3. As expected, there were strong positive connections between the three traditional identities. This means that a respondent who identified with one traditional group tended to identify with other traditional groups. The table also shows that while Arab identity was positively related to traditional identities, nationalist Palestinian identity was not significantly related to them. One may conclude from this finding that the respondents who identified as Palestinians were usually less traditional (that

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients between the diverse identities of Arab students, and between them and the contact and desire for contact with the other

	<i>Hamula</i> identity	Local identity	Religious identity	Arab identity	Israeli identity	Palestinian identity
<i>Hamula</i> identity	1.00					
Local identity	**0.60	1.00				
Religious identity	**0.26	**0.38	1.00			
Arab identity	**0.32	**0.21	*0.28	1.00		
Israeli identity	0.09	*0.17	0.11	0.01	1.00	
Palestinian identity	0.11	0.05	0.12	**0.45	**−0.28	1.00
Know Jewish students	−0.01	0.07	0.03	0.02	−0.03	0.02
Have Jewish friends	0.06	0.07	0.05	*−0.19	0.12	*−0.17
Want professional relations with Jews	−0.14	−0.08	−0.06	−0.07	0.00	0.00
Think Jews want professional relations with Arabs	0.11	**0.20	0.06	−0.01	−0.01	0.04
Want Jewish friends	−0.06	−0.05	0.04	−0.01	−0.05	0.01
Think Jews want to have Arab friends	0.08	0.06	0.06	−0.02	0.03	

Notes: * Coefficient is significant at 0.01 level or less.

** Coefficient is significant at 0.05 level or less.

is identified less with their traditional groups) than those who identified as Arabs. This can be explained by the fact that Arab identity, like traditional identities, is mainly a cultural identity and is thus able to adapt to the existing political situation (such as being a citizen of the Jewish State of Israel) while the Palestinian identity is a relatively new national identity striving to change the existing political situation.

Israeli identity is also not correlated with the two traditional identities—the *Hamula* identity and religious identity—but is positively correlated (although weak) with local identity. Hence respondents who identified as Israelis usually identified with their place of residence. This is compatible with the fact that Israeli identity is a civil-geographical identity associated with one's place of residence in Israel. As for the relationships between three identities—Arab, Palestinian and Israeli—Table 3 shows a positive correlation between Arab identity and Palestinian identity. In other words, a respondent who identifies as being Arab also tends to identify as Palestinian, and *vice versa*. On the other hand, Israeli identity is not found to be correlated with Arab identity, but is negatively correlated with Palestinian identity. Respondents who identify themselves as Israeli thus do not usually identify as Palestinians, and *vice versa*. The negative correlation between Israeli identity and Palestinian identity can be explained by the fact that the former identity accepts the existing political situation, while the second strives to change it. This finding is compatible with Suliman's (1999) claim that these two identities are contradictory and polar.

Contact with the other

Table 4 shows that 39% of the respondents know (at least one) Jewish student and only 5% of them have Jewish friends (at least one). This finding implies that social contact between Arab and Jewish students at the College is rather limited. One may assume that the escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the time contributed to this finding.

Table 4. Actual and desired contact with Jewish students, and perception of interest among Jewish students to have contact with Arab students, (percentage)

Contact and desire to have contact with the other	%
Know (at least one) Jewish student	38.7
Have (at least one) Jewish friend	4.8
Would like to develop professional relations with Jewish students*	50.0
Think that Jewish students would like to develop professional relations with Arabs**	25.6
Would like to have Jewish friends*	32.2
Think Jewish students would like to have Arab friends**	14.0

Notes: * The percentage of students whose response was 'want' or 'greatly want'. The remaining students replied 'do not want' or are 'not very interested'.

** The percentage of students who replied 'want' or 'greatly want'. The remaining students replied 'do not want' or 'not very interested'.

We found that about half the Arab students (50%) would have liked to develop professional relations with Jewish students, and a third (32%) would have liked to have Jewish friends. This readiness to have relations with Jews was greater than the perceived readiness of Jewish students to have relations with Arabs. Table 4 indicates that 26% of the respondents believed that Jewish students would have liked to develop professional relations with the Arabs, but only 14% thought that Jewish students would have liked to have Arab friends. These findings are compatible with the findings of previous studies (Hofman and Najjar, 1986; Mi'ari, 1989). The growth of the right wing in Jewish society in Israel, the increased politicization amongst Israel's Palestinian citizens, as well as the outbreak of the two *Intifadas* in the West Bank and in the Gaza strip, seem to have contributed their share to the drop in readiness of Palestinians in Israel to develop social relations with the Jews. At the same time, one should not forget that these and other factors also contributed their share to the decline in the readiness of Jews to have contact with Arabs, which, according to the research mentioned above, was far lower than that of Palestinians in Israel to be in contact with Jews.

Collective identity and contact with the other

The lower part of Table 3 presents correlation coefficients for the components of collective identity and types of contact with the other that can be classified according to three categories: actual contact, the desire of Arabs to be in contact with Jews and the perception of the desire of Jews to be in contact with Arabs. We find that the collective identity of Arab students was not correlated with knowing Jewish students, but was correlated with having social relations with them (and mutual visits). The two identities—the Arab and the Palestinian—were correlated negatively with the existence of friendships between Arabs and Jews. This means that students who identified as Arabs and as Palestinians tended not to have personal friendships with Jews. In contrast, Israeli identity was correlated positively but not significantly with social relations with Jews. In simple words, and despite our reservations regarding this finding due to the low percentage of those who had Jewish friends (5% of the respondents had at least one Jewish friend), we maintain that (the few) students who identified as Israeli tended to have more personal friendships with Jews than those who identified as Arabs or as Palestinians. Concurrently, differences were not found between the various identities at the less intimate level of contact, that is, knowing Jewish students and sitting and talking to them.

With regard to readiness to have contact with Jews, no significant relationship was found between the components of identity and this readiness. This means that students who identified as Israeli and those who identified as Palestinian and as Arab, did not differ in their desire to have Jewish friends and maintain professional relations with Jews. This finding contradicts those of Hofman (1982) who asserts that the more Israeli and the less Palestinian an Arab in Israel feels, the greater will be his/her readiness to have social relations with Jews. This finding is more compatible with those of Mi'ari (1983) and of Yogev *et al.* (1991) regarding the lack of

relationship, or at least the lack of a direct relationship, between the collective identity and readiness to be in contact with Jews.

Examination of the perception of the readiness of Jews to be in contact with Arabs found that the components of the collective identity of the Arab students were not correlated with their perception of the desire of the Jewish students to be friends with Arabs. Apart from local identity, these components were also not correlated with the perception of the desire of Jewish students to have professional relations with Arabs. This means that students who identified as Israeli, as Palestinian, as Arab, Muslim or Christian did not differ in their perception of the desire of Jews to be in contact with Arabs.

Only local identity had a positive correlation with the perception of the desire of the Jews to have professional relations with Arabs (a coefficient of 0.20). Students who identified with their places of residence assessed more positively than others the desire of the Jewish students to have professional relations with Arabs. One of the explanations for this finding may lie in the naïve and rosy perception of College life, of Jews and of the complexity of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict amongst some of the Arab students at the College, as described in Diab’s (2002) study. This study deals with the personal and professional identity of Arab student teachers in the first year of their training at the David Yellin College of Education. It found that first-year Arab students arrived at the College from their warm, protective parental home, and their first real encounter with the outside world usually occurred at the College. The local identity was strong for these students who defined themselves in terms of belonging to a village and to the place of residence. During the educational intervention described by Diab (2002), self-awareness amongst these student teachers expanded, and their social and national awareness was strengthened.

Collective identity and contact with the other by gender

Table 5 presents the collective sub-identities and contact with the other by gender. It shows that there were no significant differences between males and females in collective identity, but significant differences existed between them with respect to contact with the other. Males tended more than the females to develop social relations with Jewish male students. Thus, for example, 55% of the males, compared to 34% of the females, knew Jewish students, sat with them and talked to them. The males were also more interested in developing professional and personal relations with Jewish students than the female students. For example, 65% of the males—compared to 45% of the females—expressed willingness to develop professional relations with Jews. Differences also existed (although not significantly) in attitudes towards Jewish students. Males assessed more positively the desire on the part of Jewish students to develop professional and personal relations with Arabs. For example, 21% of males and 12% of females thought that Jewish students wanted to make friends with Arabs. These differences can be explained by the fact that females in Arab society are usually more traditional than males due to their home education. (This study found, for example, that 39% of females were religious compared to 26% of the males.) Another

Table 5. Collective identities of Arab students and their desire for contact with the other, by gender (percentage)

	Males	Females	Significance
<i>Collective identity*</i>			
<i>Hamula</i>	84.1	83.3	0.91
Local	84.1	82.0	0.76
Religious	86.4	82.9	0.60
Arab	90.9	91.5	0.90
Israeli	13.6	19.2	0.40
Palestinian	81.4	74.0	0.33
<i>Contact with the other</i>			
Know Jewish students (at least one)	55.0	33.6	0.02
Have Jewish friends (at least one)	15.0	1.6	0
Want to develop professional relations with Jews**	65.1	45.0	0.02
Want to have Jewish friends**	31.8	23.4	0.27
Think that Jews want to develop professional relations with Arabs***	55.8	24.8	0
Think that Jews would like to have Arab friends***	20.5	11.7	0.15

Notes: *The percentage of respondents replying 'considerably' or 'greatly' (belonging to a *Hamula*, place of residence, Muslim, or Christian, Arab, Israeli and Palestinian). The others responded 'very little' or 'somewhat'.

**The percentage of respondents who replied 'want' or 'greatly want'. The others responded 'very little' or 'somewhat'.

***The percentage of respondents who replied 'want' or 'greatly want'. The others responded 'very little' or 'not particularly'.

explanation lies in the fact that more than 95% of the Jewish students at the College were female and, thus, the male Arabs were naturally attracted to the Jewish females and were interested in developing relations with them.

Summary and discussion

This study aimed to explore the collective identity of Arab students at the David Yellin College of Education and their readiness for contact with Jewish students. As expected, it revealed that the two national components of identity—the Arab component and the Palestinian component—were strong, while the civil and Israeli components were weak. This finding is compatible with the findings of previous studies regarding the intensification of Palestinian identity and the weakening of Israeli identity among the Palestinians in Israel during the past 30 years (Rouhana, 1982, 1997; Mi'ari, 1992; Reches, 1993; Suliman, 1999).

Israeli identity is negatively correlated with Palestinian identity, but is not correlated with Arab identity. In other words, students who identified as Israeli (there were few) tended not to identify as Palestinians, and students who did identify as Palestinians tended not to identify as Israelis. The negative relationship (or contradiction)

between the two identities can be explained by the different attitude of each identity towards the existing political situation (including one's attitude towards Israel as a Jewish state and not as a State for all its citizens). An Israeli identity accepts this situation, while a Palestinian identity strives to change it (for example, by establishing a Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel, awarding Palestinians in Israel equal rights and making the country a State for all citizens).

Our findings are not compatible with Smootha's belief that a new Palestinian–Israeli identity is growing among Arabs in Israel (Smootha, 1988, 1992, 1994). It seems that such a new identity can only develop after solving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and granting equal rights to the Palestinians in Israel. Only then will the contradictions and tensions between these two components vanish.

Another explanation for this contradiction relates to the young age of the students interviewed (aged 20–21 on average). These students were not yet fully integrated into Israeli society and for most College was the first place for real encounters with the 'Jewish other' after having left home (Diab, 2002). However, our study showed that there was only limited contact between Arab and Jewish students at the College.

The readiness of Arab students to be in contact with the Jewish students was modest, although greater than the perceived readiness of Jewish students to be in contact with the Arab students. These findings are compatible with those of earlier studies regarding the decline in readiness of Arabs and Jews in Israel to be in contact with each other (Hofman and Najjar, 1986; Mi'ari, 1989). The increased politicization of the Palestinians in Israel, the strengthening of the extreme right among the Jewish population and the outbreak of the two *Intifadas* in the conquered Palestinian territories seem to have contributed their share to this decline.

Investigation of the relationships between collective identity and contact with the other indicates that the Arab and the Palestinian identity are negatively correlated with having social relations with Jews. However, we have reservations regarding this finding since only 5% of those interviewed said they had at least one Jewish friend, while 95% said they did not even have one Jewish friend at the College. Furthermore, the components of collective identity of the Arab students were not correlated with their familiarity with Jewish students and their readiness to have professional or social relations with them. This finding regarding the absence of a relationship between collective identity and readiness to have social relations with Jews contradicts Hofman's findings (1982), and is more compatible with those of Mi'ari (1983) and of Yogev *et al.* (1991).

Several points should be emphasized as a consequence of the findings of this study: Arab identity is extremely prominent. This finding can be explained as follows: Arab identity was considered in the recent past as the broad identity that strives to realize Arab unity. In recent years, it has been perceived as a cultural identity. In contrast, Palestinian identity is distinctly nationalistic, manifesting the feeling of partnership with the Arab people and identification with its national aspirations. Hence, one may assume that some of the Arab students chose not to identify as Palestinians but as Arabs, since the Palestinian identity is perceived by most Jews as threatening, while the Arab identity is seen as neutral or less threatening.

Another explanation for the prominence of the Arab identity lies in the Arab students having yet to clearly state their real national identity. Due to the constant fear in which they live, they chose the compartmentalization mechanism proposed by Peres and Yuval-Davis (1968) in order to settle the crisis of identity from which they suffer. Outwardly they use the term Arab, acceptable to the Jewish ear, while at the ideological level they feel they belong to the Palestinian people and deeply identify with it.

The dominance of the national, Arab-Palestinian identity and the marginality of the Israeli identity amongst the Arab College students testify to the failure of the education system in dealing with education for Arabs. This system strove to create an Israeli Arab, alienated from his national and historical uniqueness. In addition to the fact that this objective cannot be educationally justified and is in our view unethical, the findings of this study demonstrate that the opposite occurs in reality. Hence the recommendation to adapt the curricula in Arab schools to the needs of its Arab student and their unique cultural situation.

The restricted social contact between Arab and Jewish students at the College implies that the College administration needs to re-examine the number, quality and effectiveness of the programs in which both Arab and Jewish students are enrolled. Similarly, we are convinced that the College, as an institution for higher education whose gates are open to Palestinian students in Israel, must improve the learning atmosphere and create real opportunities for contact between Arab and Jewish students. Ongoing social contact and dialogue are likely to reduce the alienation and weaken the prejudice between people of the two communities in Israel. Such authentic dialogue is unique and critical for education for peace against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the ambition to create a living space and better communications (Salomon, 2002).

In conclusion, we recommend conducting a similar study on the identity of Jewish students and on their attitude to the 'Arab other' at the College. Working towards improving Jewish-Arab relationships demands that all those in positions of responsibility first recognize the existing intergroup attitudes in these complex relationships.

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