Does teaching on the "Other" side create a change

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Palestinian teachers feel satisfied and have strong sense of self-efficacy.
- They have good relationships with colleagues, principals, students, and parents.
- They were able to alter prejudiced opinions & to promote mutual understanding.
- Acculturation relates to integration, adopting new culture & retaining heritage.
- Their ethnic identity is ignored during Memorial Day ceremonies/Memory of Nakba.

ARTICLE INFO

1. Introduction

This study seeks to add to our understanding of the induction experiences of minority teachers in general, the processes and mechanisms that come into play when they work at majority schools, particularly those which facilitate accommodation processes and promote self-efficacy of indigenous minority teachers in conflict ridden societies.

The focus is on the experiences of Palestinian-Israeli teachers working in secular, Jewish Hebrew-speaking schools in Israel. Palestinian Israelis are those Arab-Palestinians who remained in their villages and towns during Israel's War of Independence in 1948, and later became Israeli citizens, totaling 20% of the population. They comprise 85% Muslims, 6% Druze, and 7.5% Christians (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

Palestinians who achieve an academic education suffer from a high rate of unemployment. Given that their rate of employment in the private sector (e.g., high-tech) is very low, they consider that working in the civil services (e.g., in the education or health systems) offers them stability (Agbaria, 2011). Thousands of

Palestinian teachers in Israel submit employment requests to the Ministry of Education each year. Yet, Agbaria (2011) found that there are hundreds of certified teachers who remain unemployed after graduation.

For individual Palestinian-Israeli teachers who cannot find employment in the State's Arab-sector school system (the name used by Israeli officialdom), working in Jewish-Israeli schools constitutes a solution; at the same time, it helps the Jewish-Israeli-sector school system contend with the continuous shortage of qualified teachers.

The qualitative study's objective is to describe and analyze the role of the Palestinian-Israeli teachers' experiences in Jewish-Israeli schools in shaping their acculturation process in majority culture, their ethno-cultural belonging and their sense of self-efficacy. The study exposes also the Palestinian-Israeli teachers' motivations for teaching in Jewish-Israeli schools and their general feelings and relationships with the Jewish principals, colleagues, students and their parents, emphasizing their feelings about their role in reducing prejudice among those they meet.

2. Literature review

2.1. Palestinian Israelis and the educational systems in Israel

Palestinians in Israel are a national ethnic group and an indigenous minority typically viewed as a putatively hostile minority. This attitude, combined with little political representation and a debilitated social and economic infrastructure (Hesketh, 2011), is a source of further tensions and conflicts between the Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli sectors in Israeli society. This rift is further manifested in the existence of separate Jewish and Arab educational systems that makes it very rare for Palestinian Arab and Jewish students to study under one roof (Jabareen, 2006).

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The Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Israeli educational systems are not equal in terms of per capita expenditure for students, teaching hours, facilities, professional resources, or special curricular programs and opportunities. Consequently, the academic achievements in the Arab system tend to be poorer than those in the Jewish system (Al-Haj, 2012). Palestinian-Israeli teachers who work in Jewish schools benefit from these advantages and do not have to struggle for teaching hours, facilities, professional resources, or special curricular programs and opportunities.

Until 1973 Palestinian-Israeli teachers worked only in schools affiliated with their own sector. In 1973, a government committee recommended, for the first time, that Palestinian-Israeli teachers be incorporated into the Hebrew-speaking educational network (Shohat, 1973). By 1980, some 80 Palestinian-Israeli teachers were teaching Arabic in Jewish schools, a full 10% of the total number of Arabic teachers in the country (Yonai, 1992). In 2013, the Ministry of Education decided to step up the process and incorporated an additional 500 Palestinian-Israeli teachers into Jewish schools. Since then, the numbers have steadily risen and today Palestinians teach not only Arabic but a variety of other subjects for which the system suffers from a shortage of teachers, such as English, science, special education, and other subjects, at Israeli State secular schools (Merchavim, 2016). Recent indicators show that out of a total of 170,238 teachers in Israel, almost 24% of them are Palestinian-Israeli (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017), of which only 0.015% teach in the Jewish secular sector budgeted and supervised by the State and Local Authorities.

The phenomenon of integrating minority/migrant/international teachers in majority schools is not exclusive to Israel. In the United States, for instance, the issue of integrating people of color has been addressed from the 1970s (King, 1993). Researchers unanimously agree that teachers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds contribute extensively to American education (Easton-Brooks, Lewis, & Yang, 2010; Irvine & Fenwick, 2011). In Germany, hiring more minority teachers is considered a promising means of dealing with existing difficulties in diverse schools. Minority teachers draw on specific personal experiences that may be useful in overcoming cultural and/or language barriers (Irvine, 1989; Strasser & Waburg, 2015). Their sociocultural experiences, as well as their potential multilingual competencies (Nieto, 1998), facilitate more deliberate dealings with cultural diversity at schools (Lengyel & Rosen, 2015). The Palestinian-Israeli teachers who integrate in the Jewish-Israeli schools work in the secular, "official" and "recognized" schools, i.e., supervised and supported by the government. Detailing in full the complexities of the Israeli segregated school system would be for another article, although we have indicated that given these complexities Jews and Palestinians have little chance to meet within the educational system.

McNamara and Basit (2004) examined the induction experiences of British teachers of Asian and African Caribbean origin and showed that the majority of the teachers find their schools supportive and the induction process valuable and that they feel successful in building bridges between antagonistic communities and feel that they counter prejudice and racism both within schools and the wider community.

Santoro (2007) investigated the experiences of indigenous teachers and ethnic minority teachers in Australian schools. She suggested that the teachers' "knowledge of self" in regard to ethnicity and/or indigeneity and social class enables them to empathize with diverse students from perspectives not available to teachers from the dominant cultural majority.

Kheimets and Epstein (2001) studied the Mofet school system, which was founded by a group of immigrant teachers in 1991 in Israel for immigrant Russians. The findings indicated that the immigrant teachers are a valuable resource in multicultural schools

with a majority of marginalized populations of students: a systematic and meaningful dialogue with them may help host directors, counselors and teachers born in Israel to improve their understanding of their immigrant students' expectations and reduce alienation among them.

Michael (2006) examined the professional absorption of immigrant teachers from the Former Soviet Union in comparison to veteran teachers working in the same schools in Israel. His findings show significant differences between the two groups, with immigrant teachers belonging less often to professional organizations, participating less in school decision-making forums, holding fewer coordinating school positions and partaking less frequently in professional enrichment courses, indicating that barriers exist in the school system that place difficulties in the way of immigrant teachers' absorption, despite the prevalent view that immigrant absorption is of significant national value.

Research on Palestinian-Israeli teachers working in State Hebrew-speaking schools is scant. Fragman (2008) shows them having a strong desire to be "ambassadors of good will," offering them an opportunity to break down stereotypes and misconceptions about the Palestinian-Israeli minority. Brosh's (2013) findings indicate that the teachers were unsuccessful in integrating because of a lack of cultural understanding and that it was difficult, even impossible, for them to effectively communicate their knowledge to students. Sion (2014) examined how Palestinian-Israeli teachers appropriated performative identity strategies by passing as cultural hybrids to gain acceptance in the schools. She found that despite their efforts, the teachers, for the most part, felt lonely, isolated and vulnerable.

At this early point in the involvement of Palestinian-Israeli teachers in the Hebrew-speaking school system, the main questions we ask do not relate to their potential to contribute to more adequate and professional approaches to diversity issues. The Ministry of Education states as its primary aim for the integration of Palestinian-Israeli teachers in Jewish schools the potential this step has to add to today's shortage of highly qualified teaching staff, thus saving the government large sums of money by eliminating the need to train or retrain new teachers; only in second place does it mention the potential to encourage tolerance for diversity among students (Ministry of Education, 2015). Given the ministry's declared self-interest mostly unrelated to diversity issues, our present research is more aligned with research inquiring into the teachers' perspectives and concerns when entering majority schools (Maylor, Ross, Rollock, & Williams, 2006; Strasser, 2013; Wilkins & Lall, 2011). More specifically our concern is with the teachers' experiences regarding stereotypical attitudes of peers, social isolation, their experiences in the faculty room, how they judge their potential contribution to school and students, their need to acculturate or not to the hegemonic culture, their sense of having or not having opportunity for promotion and progression in the school hierarchy, etc.

In the following we point to the ways in which psychological constructs such as acculturation, ethnic identity and self-efficacy intersect and their potential to help us better understand the functioning of minority teachers in educational settings (Flores & Clark, 2004; Tong, Castillo, & Pérez, 2010); these seemed fertile theoretical perspectives through which to interpret our data after the analysis.

2.2. Acculturation, ethnic identity and self efficacy

Acculturation can be defined as a dual process of cultural and psychological change that involves various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some long-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between the groups in contact (Sam &

Berry, 2010). Berry (2005) developed a model suggesting that the intersection of two predominant dimensions receiving culture acquisition and heritage-culture retention renders four acculturation types: *assimilation* (adopting the receiving culture and discarding one's own heritage), *separation* (rejecting the receiving culture and retaining one's heritage), *integration* (adopting the receiving culture and retaining one's heritage), and *marginalization* (rejecting both the receiving culture and one's heritage).

Acculturation theorists have noted that acculturation processes can elicit changes in ethnic identity (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995), defined as one's self-identification as part of an ethnic group or subgroup sharing varied cultural elements (Phinney, 2003). The importance of ethnic identity for teachers is well documented (Flores & Clark, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Aguilar, MacGillivray, and Walker (2003) described the acculturation process that Latino teachers experienced as the incorporation of school cultural discourse and home cultural discourse; becoming a successful teacher required developing an integrated new identity (teacher identity). However, when values of school and home cultures conflicted, painful tensions could result, which could influence an individual's cultural identity. Minority teachers sometimes have to act as "lone fighters" (Strasser, 2013), as they encounter the manifestations of the existing sociocultural barriers and differences. Thus, for example, black minority teachers in the United Kingdom found themselves secluded and isolated from the majority (Wilkins & Lall, 2011). Teachers who are immersed in an unfamiliar and new culture are liable to experience culture shock, as they seek to acculturate to the new and overlapping environments (Romig, 2009). Another possibility is that minority teachers might develop a negative image of their own ethnic identity (Téllez, 1999) and consequently adopt strategies that involve dissociation from their ethnocultural backgrounds, in pursuit of professional success (Strasser & Hirschauer, 2011). This strategy may prove effective for avoiding the effects of negative stereotyping of one's group of origin (Strasser & Waburg, 2015).

The strong connection between acculturation and ethnic identities is particularly important as studies have also shown ethnic identity to be related to self-esteem (Phinney, Chavira, & Tate, 1993), self-concept and teacher identity (Clark & Flores, 2001), and self-efficacy (Flores & Clark, 2004). The psychological construct of teacher efficacy (Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, & Ellett, 2008; Jerald, 2007) is defined as the belief that one has capabilities in the areas of student engagement, instruction and classroom management that can be put to work to help students reach desired outcomes when learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Teacher effectiveness depends on the individual teacher's cognitive outcomes, moral and social well-being, and the establishment of positive relationships with colleagues and parents (Campbell, Kyriakides, Mujis & Robinson, 2003). Teachers with a strong sense of professional self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate the following beneficial behaviors: a respectful and trusting relationship with students, whose life experiences they view as meaningful and valuable; improved communication with students and their families; strong collaboration with their colleagues and the community; and a tendency to examine and question their own fundamental beliefs and practices. These are individuals who are challenge-oriented and can act as change agents; these teachers set high standards for themselves, as well as for their students, demanding persistence and believing in their own and their students' potential success (Gay, 1995; Guyton & Hidalgo, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sachs, 2004). Furthermore, effective teachers tend to demonstrate enhanced self-understanding, which facilitates the development of a positive ethnic self-identity and the capacity for self-inquiry regarding the relationships between their fundamental values, attitudes, beliefs and teaching practices (Gay,

1995; Sachs, 2004).

Integrative acculturation processes have been shown, in recent studies, to help interactants better adjust, show higher self-esteem, lower depression, more prosocial behaviors (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008; Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Jarvis, 2007) and become more able to integrate competing tenets from the different cultures to which they are exposed (Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009).

All in all, the above researches seem to indicate that when properly managed the interrelation between acculturation, ethnic identity and self-efficacy produces positive outcomes at the individual level in general and, in our case, in particular in teachers.

3. Method

We employed a qualitative method that enabled us to construct a richly detailed depiction of Palestinian-Israeli teachers' varied and multidimensional worldviews, with the aim of trying to understand the teachers' perspectives on the social and cultural contexts within which they evolved (Gay & Airasian, 2003). The in-depth interviews conducted allowed the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Teachers, after being asked to render some biographical background, were asked to talk about their decision to work in the majority-sector schools and to describe the reactions they encountered in response to their choice. They were also asked to describe their relationships with the principals, students, teachers and parents and to give examples of important events or experiences that they had faced in the classrooms and in other school settings. Inquiries were also made regarding their feelings while working at the schools - what made them feel satisfied and proud and what made them feel sad and angry. With the exception of these few guiding questions, interviewees were encouraged to tell their stories without limiting themselves to any fixed agenda.

3.1. Participants

In 2016 interviews were conducted with 15 Palestinian-Israeli female teachers employed in Jewish schools. The teachers ranged from 32 to 50 years of age. Eight teachers taught Arabic and Shared Citizenship; two taught math; three taught English; one taught Hebrew, and one was a remedial teacher. Three of the teachers defined themselves as religious (Muslims) and wore headscarves; the remaining twelve had adopted a secular dress code. Seven teachers had graduated from Arab teacher-education colleges and eight from Jewish ones. Their experience teaching in Jewish schools ranged between 3 and 11 years, and one had 22 years of teaching experience. Four teachers started their careers teaching in Jewish schools and 11 had first worked for a year or two in Arab-sector schools.

We used snowball sampling (Vogt, 1999) to recruit the participants. The first teacher interviewed was an acquaintance of the research team and was asked to give the names of other teachers whom she felt might be interested in participating in the research project. A similar procedure was undertaken with subsequent interviewees. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, at a place of the participant's choosing, and lasted between 1.5 to three hours. All interviews were fully recorded and transcribed for analysis. Participation in the research was voluntary and participants signed an informed consent form after hearing and reading an explanation (both in Arabic) regarding the research purpose, procedure and expected benefits. Participants were also informed that their identities would remain undisclosed and they were free to withdraw their participation at any time.

3.2. Analysis

The analysis of the data was conducted based on the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which emphasizes the generation of theories and concepts based on the research data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We avoided using preconceived categories (Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002) and chose instead to develop categories through an inductive process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), that included multiple readings of the transcribed texts allowing the categories to emerge from the data (Kondracki et al., 2002).

Several stages of analysis were undertaken (Berg, 2004). The first phase included a thematic analysis of each interview. The initial analysis revealed numerous thematic categories emerging from each interview. After rereading a given interview, the number of categories was reduced by combining similar categories and focusing on those which were most relevant. The relevance of categories determined by their consistency to the research objective and targeted domains like acculturation processes in the Jewish culture, general feelings and relationships with relevant parties, ethnocultural belonging and sense of self-efficacy. Next, the findings from the various interviews were integrated into common categories. These categories were scrutinized again to examine the connections among them, and to ascertain their centrality (repeated appearances across interviews), and relevance to the theoretical framework, the subject of the study, and the questions addressed (Berg, 2004; Roth, Bobko, & McFarland, 2005). The analysis process revealed major thematic categories that emerged from the interviews. We then re-examined the classification of themes and their correspondence to both the collected data and to the researchers' proposed explanations of the observed phenomena. When necessary we requested further clarifications from interviewees.

The researchers are both from the field of education. The first one is a member of the Palestinian national minority. She is expert in peace education and minority-majority relations in the educational system. Including a researcher who is a member of the researched community helps ensure access to sensitive issues, as the participants feel a bond with the researcher and willingly cooperate in the construction of meaning. From another angle, a researcher who is over-involved or over-identifies with the participants of the study is liable to influence the analysis of the findings. Since the essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency, to ensure the reliability of the study the two researchers exercised a scrupulous and reflexive approach (Wasserfall, 1993), and, therefore, they continually asked themselves where they were at any given moment in relation to what they were studying and what potential ramifications this position might have in terms of their research. Both researchers reflected on their work repeatedly considered this issue and discussed it with others (coresearchers, peers, colleagues). In addition, the first researcher discussed the results with a group of the participants, to obtain their feedback (member checking, according to Carspecken, 1996).

The second researcher is a member of the Jewish-Israeli majority group, intellectually anchored in critical perspectives in the field of education and an expert in minority studies. The interviews were analyzed by both authors together.

4. Findings

The findings are organized under five major headings, representing the main themes identified in the interviews. The order of the presented themes depends on the research philosophy and theoretical framework of the study. They were organized into a coherent and internally consistent structure which demonstrates the hierarchy of meaning within the data.

4.1. Reasons or motivations for teaching in Jewish schools

Eleven of the 15 teachers interviewed mentioned that they had applied for work in the Arab sector, but their efforts had not been successful.

I looked for a job in the Arab schools; I was [finally] fed up and frustrated. I was tired of applying for a job. I had received lots of promises without fulfillment … I was thinking of retraining until I heard about the Merchavim Institute, which helps Palestinian-Israeli teachers find employment in Jewish schools.

Four of the eight teachers who had studied in Jewish-Israeli colleges and had their practicum in Jewish schools did not apply to teach in Arab schools because, besides being aware of the difficulty of finding a job in Arab-sector schools, they already felt familiar with Jewish schools.

I studied at Levinsky College (a Jewish-Israeli college). The pedagogical supervisor admired me because I was an excellent student. In my third year in the program, she told me that an Arabic teacher in a school in Raanana (a Jewish town) was very ill and had withdrawn from the position. I was so afraid at the beginning, because [I knew] this would be different from [what I had learned in] the practical training module. My parents encouraged me to accept and I did.

All the teachers reported that they had the support of their families and friends, who encouraged them to work in Jewish schools and still do; one of them stated this succinctly.

My husband, my parents and all the people supported me.

4.2. General feelings and relationships with relevant parties

Out of the 15 teachers interviewed, 14 reported feeling satisfied with their work. They liked teaching in the Jewish schools and wanted to continue working in them. The thought of switching to the Arab-sector school was motivated, if at all, by the desire to work closer to home and spend more of the day in the geographic vicinity of their children, who were growing up and would soon attend the local schools. One of the interviewees stated:

The school for me is like a warm home. I have faced a crisis (divorce) and I needed help and support. The school gave me the support that I needed. I don't know if someday I'll leave. If I do, it may be related to my aging or dealing with the traffic: It takes me one hour to get to school.

4.3. Relationships with principals

The teachers, for the most part, described having a good working relationship with the current school principal. Principals played an important role in helping the Palestinian-Israeli teachers adjust to the Jewish schools by expressing their belief in a teacher's potential to integrate in the school and by treating the teacher as an equal among other staff members, by offering support and help, and by establishing and maintaining a trusting relationship. One teacher stated this succinctly: "This principal was [like] a second mother to me …" Another teacher offered a more extensive statement that underlines the importance of political sentiments.

The principal helped and supported me from the inside after accepting me from the outside. It is what makes me continue working here. My relationship with the principal was strong, because of her political views. This principal had a liberal, left-wing political approach and awareness, so she was able to understand [the challenges I face] and she was accepting and supportive of me … the only Arab teacher with a new voice.

Two teachers had dealt with uncooperative principals: they had felt unwelcome as Palestinians emphasizing again their need to have a sense that the school leadership aligns with political views with which they feel comfortable. The teachers left but looked for and found positions in different Jewish schools where they currently teach. One recalls,

After the principal invited the settlers to the school, I had quarreled with the principal.

Something had broken inside me regarding the school's platform and ambiance. [The principal and I] became enemies and we did not accept one another. He began to convince the others that I didn't fit in this school and its atmosphere. From that moment, I began looking for a position in another [Jewish] school.

Teachers emphasized that they also benefitted from the principals' support regarding regular dealings with parents and students, even if parents let slip a racist remark.

… When there is a problem in class or with parents, the principal immediately helps. She believes in me and sympathizes with me … The principal asked the family to apologize after their racist behavior. They wrote me a letter [of apology] which I still keep.

Fourteen of the 15 teachers felt that the school principal understood their feelings about attending the school's ceremony for Israel's Memorial Day, Israel's national day of remembrance for fallen soldiers and victims of terrorism. For the Palestinians, this day and Independence Day after are remembrance of the thousands of Palestinians who were killed or were forced to leave their homes and became refugees (Independence Day for Israel is Nakba, or catastrophe, Day for the Palestinians). Some of the principals gave the teachers (if they requested) permission not to attend the memorial ceremonies or to be absent from school on Memorial Day. During politically stressful times (e.g., the Gaza War), whenever there was tension between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis, the principals consistently supported the Palestinian-Israeli teachers.

It was a hard time for me: the principal came to me and told me that it is a hard time for all of us and that if I encountered any difficulties in my work, I should tell her. She also offered to come to my classes and to talk to the students, if I felt it would help.

Only one principal, who had a reputation for being tough on the school staff, obliged a teacher to attend the Memorial Day ceremony. At first, the teacher abided by the principal's demand, but more recently she makes excuses. This same principal is the only one reported to force the teacher to come to school during Muslim holidays.

The principal asks me to attend the evening ceremony … I make up excuses. On the other hand, she prevents me from taking the day off on Muslim holidays, even though she knows I am a single

mother and have to be with my son. I solved this by getting a note of illness from my doctor.

With a few exceptions, Palestinian teachers are welcomed and supported by their principals; the few exceptions noted seem to underline the importance of principals holding tolerant and balanced political perspectives when sustaining a dialogue with and about involved minorities.

4.4. Relationships with students

According to the teachers, their relationships with the students are in general very good. The teachers indicated that they feel liked and respected by the students and that they too like the students and treat them with warmth. The teachers did not mention having any unusual conflicts with the students. Some of the teachers told touching stories about helping and supporting students with educational and personal problems.

… A 5th-grade student whose parents went through an abrupt divorce had lost contact with her father after he disappeared. This situation caused the student a great deal of sorrow. I helped the student by talking with her and encouraging her … Her mother told the principal that her daughter is happy and does not stop talking about me ….

In addition to the positive experiences described, the teachers were challenged by a small number of students to address political aspects related to their national minority background. The Palestinian teachers understood that students asked political questions because they viewed the Palestinian teachers as representing the whole of the Palestinian people, and especially those in the Palestinian territories and in the Gaza Strip.

Some students ask questions, like why do the Arabs in Gaza hate us? Why do they attack us? Why do they try to kill us? I answer their questions. I tell them that it happens because there is a struggle and a war between two groups that are in conflict. I explain that not all of Gaza's citizens are terrorists and they have regular families and children, like people in Israel, and that these children have dreams and worlds of their own. I also tell them that there are children on the other side who live under occupation and shelling and some of them die. I teach the students the meaning of inclusion. I explain that not everyone who says 'Allah Akbar' is a member of Hamas; I mention it too as part of the prayer … I explain a lot of things because that could change a lot of wrong perceptions. This [change] happens gradually; perceptions aren't changed overnight.

One of my students told me that while her father was watching the news he cursed the Arabs in general and that she had asked him to stop and told him that she has an amazing Arab teacher …

Even when confronting challenging events, the teachers believed that they had succeeded in changing students' negative and prejudiced perceptions.

4.5. Relationships with parents

The relationships that the interviewees described having with the parents appear, in general, to be also positive. Three of the teachers even mentioned having friendly relationships with parents. The teachers feel confident that many parents respect and

trust them regarding educational issues. They recall events in which parents asked directly for help regarding their child. Teachers also talked about parents who gave them positive feedback, sometimes through a thank-you note, and other times directly, in the course of a meeting.

> Some of the parents express respect. The success of their kids is very important to them. They asked me directly to help their kids in math through private lessons.

> I have a good relationship with some of the parents. I feel that we are like a family. The head of the school's PTA said to me that it has become clearer every year that I am not only a member of the school staff; as he put it, 'for the parents, [you are] an essential part of the school' ….

Yet, despite the general positive relationship between teachers and parents, teachers occasionally faced situations in which parents exhibited prejudice.

> … Parents asked the principal: 'Why did you bring an Arab English teacher for our children? Now they will speak English with an Arabic accent.' A student told me once: 'when I am sick, my mother takes me to the hospital, where there is an Arab doctor, [but] she refuses to let him treat me' …

> Events such as the one related above are seldom reported, and even then, teachers

See their success in the fact that children share these stories with them.

4.6. Relationships with Jewish colleagues

The interviewees reported diverse relationships (different relationships with different people) with their Jewish colleagues.

Seven of the interviewees mentioned that they had not developed particularly strong or friendly relationships with their Jewish colleagues; they had not visited them in their homes, nor had the Jewish teachers visited them.

> I don't meet them outside of school because of the distance. It is difficult for us to visit one another: it takes an hour and a half each way. We talk on the phone.

All of the interviewees admitted that they tried to avoid talking about political events or expressing their own opinion. They explained that, in general, they come to teach, to earn a living, and they do not wish to get involved in anything that might jeopardize their job.

> … I don't know what the teachers honestly think [about the political conflict]. I prefer to remain a colleague, not a friend.…
> … When political issues are raised, as happened recently because of the situation, I am very careful and I try not to become emotional because I might say things that I'll regret later. The policy of the school is not to discuss politics, but sometimes it happens and I try not to intervene.

Yet, at times, they felt they could not but react to political statements.

> I entered the teachers' lounge and one of the teachers, a person of Russian descent, was saying that 'it's necessary to get the Arabs out of here.' When she suddenly saw me, she stopped talking. I said that she is wrong and that the Arabs in Israel did

not come from nowhere; they were born here from the moment God created them; it is their land and they live on it.

Four of the teachers described having strong friendly relationships with Jewish teachers, including mutual visits. All of the teachers thought that they succeeded in changing and affecting Jewish teachers' prejudices and stereotyped images.

> The atmosphere in the staffroom is positive. I think that I succeeded in changing prejudices of a lot of teachers. The strongest proof of that was from the teacher who had lost her son in the war. She used to give me a very piercing and hateful look at the beginning of my first year at the school. She hated all Arabs – and now we are friends.

Even in very difficult situations in which teachers have to confront the harsh realities which sustain Israel's interethnic tensions they seem to be able to find ways towards reconciliation.

4.7. Ethnic identity

When speaking about their ethnic identification, teachers tended to refer to themselves as Arab. They mentioned their Palestinian identity, especially when referring to events related to the Memorial Day ceremony. Thirteen of the teachers said that on Israel's Memorial Day they go to school dressed in white (adhering to the traditional dress code adopted by Jewish schools for this day), but emotionally, it is a very difficult day for them. Although they abide by the custom of standing at attention during the sounding of the siren, a moment dedicated to the memory of those who died serving their country, they do so out of respect for their colleagues and students. Two of the interviewees explained that they were unable to hold back their tears during the ceremony because they were thinking about their own narrative at the same time.

> Obviously, I don't sing the "Hatikva" (the national anthem) with them; I even think about the spirits of our dead. They [the Jews present at the ceremony] know that I am standing because I respect them. I sing the Arabic song "Mawtiny – my homeland" in my heart. I cannot shake off my roots. I don't forget who I am.

> It is too hard for me on Memorial Day. I used to stand with them, but it was very hard. I cried several times and other teachers hugged me, I explained to them that it hurts for me and for my people … The teachers accepted my decision. However, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, I feel sad for the people who were killed and I want to express solidarity. I don't have any problem attending – or even participating actively – in the ceremony.

Nine of the interviewed teachers noted that they seldom talk about their Palestinian identity with other teachers or students. Regarding their students, they claimed that it would be difficult to explain things to them because their opinions had already been formed and set within the wider context of the Israeli society.

> The younger students won't understand or even care … They are little children and don't have a deep understanding regarding [the idea of a] homeland. I tell them that I am Arab, I have an Israeli ID, and that I've lived my whole life here.

> … I explain to them that Israeli Arabs were originally Palestinians because some students asked me if I came from Syria or Lebanon or any other Arab country. I explained – up to a point. I am very careful with the information I give.

Moving in between their own and the Jewish Israeli preferred categories, though, they try to clarify their identity between Arab and Palestinian within the Israeli context.

4.8. Acculturation

All the teachers indicated that, at first, they went through an initial stage, in which they learned about the new majority culture, became accustomed to the spoken Hebrew language, and experienced some surprising occurrences and discoveries. After this, they gradually felt more and more comfortable and well-integrated in the school; they developed a sense of belonging and grew to like the new culture.

> In the first 3–4 months, it was hard for me. In the beginning, I faced the language barrier; I had to use spoken Hebrew with the students and not the literary language that I learned. It was also difficult to understand the mentality of the society; they have a lot of complex issues that I was supposed to understand … I studied in an Arab college, so I was not trained for these situations. I had to accept the students in every aspect and, for that, I needed to understand and observe many new things. In my first meeting with parents, two mothers came to me, and I asked one of them: "who are you?" she answered: "his mother." Then I asked the other one: "who are you?" and she answered, "his mother." I was shocked. I knew what lesbians are, but I'd never imagined [it could involve] a couple with a son. It was surprising …."

All the teachers interviewed indicated that they experienced a change as a result of their encounter with the Jewish-Israeli culture.

> It seems that I went with the flow. My husband tells me sometimes that I am forgetting that I am an Arab. Now I see more wrong habits in my society, I don't like a lot of things and wish to change them.

> I began to think and talk like them. For example, I tried to convince my friend, a single Jewish teacher, to get pregnant using a sperm bank. In my society, it's madness to talk like that, even among women. I think that [going to a sperm bank] is a simple solution, but it is not acceptable in the Arab society.

All of the teachers compared the two cultures. They were proud of and felt emotionally attached to certain aspects of their own heritage, but they admitted they also had become critical of some aspects. They compared the school systems of the two sectors: all of the teachers were impressed with the school climate, the attitude towards students, and the efforts teachers regularly make on behalf of their students in the Jewish-sector schools.

The teachers mentioned that they had adopted some practices from the surrounding Jewish culture, which they wanted to introduce in their own culture, even if such changes could only be introduced on an individual level. One of the teachers emotively mentioned, "Their mentality is completely different from ours in a positive way." One other stated,

> I found differences between the two cultures. Jewish people are [more open to] accepting others' opinions, more than Arabs are. We don't know how to encourage others, but they do. [At first] I used to adopt these behaviors, but I hid them and didn't talk about them [within my home] community. Now I don't care.

Four teachers expressed their concerns about being able to reintegrate into the Arab schools, in case they ever went back to teaching there in the future.

> If I ever decided to move to an Arab-sector school, it would be very difficult for my principal and for the other teachers. I don't know if I could integrate there …. I think [if] I would manage to reintegrate finally, and then I would be in a position to contribute to the school and the staff, I would become kind of a leader, because I learned a lot of things that could be helpful to [an Arab-sector] school.

It is also important to mention here that during the interviews, 14 teachers mixed.
Hebrew with Arabic while they spoke.
Despite their positive attitude towards their own acculturation process, the teachers who have children explained that they do not enroll them in Jewish schools because they fear their children's cultural identity and language skills would be jeopardized.

> Children are learning and will continue to learn in Arab schools, for lots of reasons. The Jews are very liberated; I don't see this liberation or freedom as a positive thing. I see it as a mess and I don't like a mess. For example, a 5th grade student was telling me that she has a boyfriend from another class and they are going to a movie together. This is not acceptable for me. I cannot imagine my daughter in this situation. Life is not only math and English; it is important to keep our culture and language and we have to uphold certain limits.

As we have mentioned, three of the teachers defined themselves as being religious, one of them became religious while working in the Jewish school.

> I was not religious and used to dress like secular Jews. I decided to repent during the summer vacation. Then they suddenly saw me differently; they were surprised and only after a while did they get used to my new look …

The teachers, while recognizing cultural differences and potential tensions, seem to be able manage them both critically and with ease.

4.9. Professional self-efficacy and positive experiences

All of the teachers mentioned they felt that in their work they contribute a great deal to the school functioning and to the students' learning and development, and they expressed positive experiences with their perceived status in the schools. The entire cohort of interviewees talked about using a variety of teaching methods, innovating new strategies, enabling genuine learning, and making the students' learning meaningful. The teachers made it clear that they believe they are excellent teachers and that their students' grades have improved. According to the interviewees, the school principals also appreciated their work.

> You can't imagine how successful I am at work. That is one of the reasons that keeps me in the school. I get a lot of compliments and thank-you letters from students and their parents. I teach in an interesting way. I teach them about the similarity between the three religions and that Islam is very tolerant. This is meaningful learning that helps them internalize and remember what they learned.

> I use a lot of educational strategies … the students like that; they like my lessons more than any other lesson. I contribute a lot to the school.

When asked about the school's role in developing their professional abilities, the interviewees all agreed and explained that working in a Jewish school had a very positive effect on the development of their sense of self-efficacy.

> I feel that I am growing professionally. They respect my work. I am a person who likes getting attention and I have that in the school. I have also a lot of encouragement and praise and that pushes me to give more.

> … Maybe I have more qualities which help me in my work, help me to be more devoted, more effective, and better than others. I think this exists among minorities all over the world. They want to be the best and prove themselves …

They also mentioned other important qualities that help them professionally, such as a strong personality, self-confidence and sociability. According to the teachers, self-efficacy is connected also with keeping an open mind, having a strong personality, being proficient in spoken Hebrew, exhibiting friendliness, demonstrating professional skills, creativity, a strong work ethic and being very motivated to succeed.

Fourteen teachers said that they were asked but refused to serve as homeroom teachers, because of the responsibility and the time, effort and contact with parents that it involves, and because they live far away from the school. Regarding the position of subject coordinator, some of them said that the principal did not offer them this position and they were fine with that. Two said that as part of the staff, they were free to request any position they wanted, but they thought it was not yet appropriate. Five of them currently have important positions heading school projects, and four others lead a "Shared lives" project, organizing mutual visits with Arab schools. Only one teacher was very troubled and angry because despite having developed two projects to promote Arabic language in the school, when she asked for the position of Arabic language coordinator at the school, the principal gave the position to a newly hired Jewish teacher instead.

The sense that the teachers had that they were helping create a bridge between the two societies and that they succeeded in changing negative stereotypes about the Palestinian society in Israel, and about alterity in general, added to their sense of self-efficacy.

> … Besides my educational contribution, my presence in the Jewish school makes a difference. My students learned that it is important to know about the "other," not to judge, [but rather] to accept the "other." It is not only in relation to Arabs, [but also] Ethiopians or Russians; there are students of many ethnic origins in the class. I'm sending a message to the students that being different doesn't make the other worthless.

> … I am not only teaching; I deliver all the good things from my culture. I represent a nation, so it is important for the Arab teacher to be who he is really and to show the good things.

The interviewees in general were very positive about their experiences working in the Jewish-Israeli State schools. This becomes apparent in the fact that they strongly recommended that other Palestinian teachers work in Jewish State schools. They were ready to encourage this participation not only to teachers lacking jobs in the Arab sector but also to new graduate teachers looking for a first job. They all thought that teaching in a Jewish school was a good and learning experience for Palestinian-Israeli teachers, one that also affords them the opportunity to change Jews' stereotypical beliefs.

> I recommend it because we can make a difference in the Jewish-Arab relations. An Arab teacher can learn a lot of things there like I did. She can adopt the good things and avoid the inappropriate. I began to understand life better thanks to my experience in the Jewish school.

5. Discussion

The rationale for research about teachers from minority/immigrant/international backgrounds follows mainly from the understanding that their work can greatly contribute to the education of ethnically and culturally diverse cohorts (Easton-Brooks et al., 2010; Irvine & Fenwick, 2011). The Israeli case on which we are reporting does not contribute much in this direction for Israel is a society ridden with conflict where Palestinians and Jews live mostly segregated lives.

Primarily, the study seeks to add to our understanding of the induction experiences of minority teachers in general, the processes and mechanisms that come into play when they work at majority schools (McNamara & Basit, 2004) and, more specifically, sheds light on the experiences of indigenous minorities in majority schools in conflict-ridden societies. It is worth recalling that in our case these teachers, belonging to the Palestinian minority, assumed to be hostile to the majority, are brought in mainly because of a lack of Jewish teachers willing to work in education and only secondarily and mostly declaratively for the purpose of supporting tolerance and recognition.

More specifically, the results of our study allow us to better understand the potentials and challenges confronting minority teachers when working in the Jewish school sector and to help us understand, at least by extension, the benefits that the majority society might gain from the induction of minority teachers into their schools. We obtain a picture which, while not free of difficulties, is positive and seems to have the possibility of improvement if we become attentive to the experiences these teachers related to us.

Palestinian-Israeli teachers initially started working in Jewish majority schools for lack of options in the Arab sector's educational system, but they continued to work there due to a growing sense of both positive experiences and self-efficacy. Although not always convenient in terms of geographic location vis-à-vis family commitments, they prefer to stay in the Jewish schools and do not consider going to teach in Arab-sector schools. The acculturation process that the Palestinian teachers experienced coincides with levels described in the literature (Sam & Berry, 2010), namely, as these relate to integration, adopting the receiving culture and retaining one's heritage, and less so with processes of separation or marginalization.

Téllez (1999) argued that minority teachers might even develop negative images of their own ethnic groups. Strasser and Hirschauer (2011) claimed that in order to succeed, minority teachers would have to pursue strategies that involve dissociation from their own ethnocultural backgrounds. However, in the case of the current study, these changes were not perceived as threatening to the minority teachers' own ethnic identity. Perhaps, as Nieto and Bode (2008) suggested, this is because individuals can have multiple identities that connect to various cultural groups and reflect different life experiences. As the findings indicate, the teachers' experiences of integration did not alter their feelings of pride regarding their own culture, and they expressed a wish to serve their society and to contribute to the Arab educational system one day by proposing ideas that they learned in the Jewish schools.

Moreover, the participants in this study believed that rather than being affected by the surrounding majority culture, they were

able to have a strong impact on those in their work environment. Through their presence and work in the Jewish schools, they were able to alter existing prejudiced opinions, and, on a personal level, they helped promote mutual understanding between Palestinians and Jews. Hence, they see themselves as playing an important role in bridging the two societies and reducing prejudice, thus stimulating students to correct social inequality (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

The Palestinian teachers feel satisfied with their work in the Jewish schools, also in terms of the relationships they have forged with Jewish colleagues, principals, students and parents.

These relationships have a strong effect on teachers' feelings and motivate them to continue teaching in the Jewish schools. The relationships typically tend to get stronger on a more personal level when the other side shows tolerant and balanced political views and believes in equality and integration.

Flores and Clark (2004) reported that minority pre-service teachers' self-concept, which includes ethnic identity, positively affected their teaching efficacy. All the teachers in the current research have declared that they contribute a great deal to the school and to the students. They consider themselves to be excellent teachers; they use new and unique teaching strategies, and their students' grades improve thanks to them. They also claim that they have a strong personality, a high degree of self-confidence, and a strong sense of self-efficacy developed mostly due to their experience and involvement in the Jewish schools. Teachers' belief in their ability to teach directly influences their instructional behavior, which in turn promotes students' outcomes and success (De Mesquita & Drake, 1994; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001; Sachs, 2004).

This is not to say that the teachers experienced no difficulties or challenges. Our study adds to the known literature on the need by principals to respect teachers' differences and to put emphasis on the impossibility of disregarding the interaction of political issues both at a personal and a group level. For the most part, these needs were informally accommodated, however, and even when they encountered cases of obvious racism, the Palestinian teachers demonstrated cultural competency, i.e., the ability to work effectively across cultures, in ways that accept and respect differences. The Palestinian-Israeli teachers' sense of well-being was disturbed by school events that ignore or deny their ethnic and national identity: as is the case with the Memorial Day ceremonies. Hence, a principals' demonstration of support and understanding regarding such sensitive occasions is very important. The teachers who participate in the Memorial Day ceremonies do so despite the memory of the Nakba, while other teachers ask to be absent on that day, and most principals agree. As Winfrey (2009) noted, positive experiences are a key element influencing retention, and are negatively affected if teachers feel that their principals do not respect their differences. Differences must be acknowledged and addressed, and principals should be aware of unobserved issues, learn to decipher complex cultural codes, and understand what is needed for teachers to succeed (Henze, Norte, Sather, Walker & Katz, 2002). Although for the most part Palestinian teachers' needs were adequately addressed, on this matter, the teachers seem to be seeking more than simply to be accommodated.

The current research makes an important contribution to our understanding of the challenges and experiences of Palestinian minority teachers working in schools affiliated with the cultural majority. Given that the relations between the minority and the majority cultures in Israeli society are typically accompanied by mutual rejection, harsh beliefs and stereotypes, the findings indicate a way to promote coexistence.

The findings also have important implications regarding the educational system's policies on the issue of integrating Palestinian-Israeli teachers in Jewish-Israeli schools. Based on these findings, we suggest that increasing the number of Palestinian-Israeli teachers in Jewish-Israeli schools would be beneficial for all those involved due to the teachers' significant contribution, not only to the schools but also to Israeli society in general, through the ripple effect - the Palestinian-Israeli teachers' contribution to the school and the students and their successes to change negative stereotypes among them could disseminate and pass to the parents students told teachers how they discussed with their parents some mistaken misconceptions in particular and to other groups in the Jewish community to broaden its positive impact. It is important to support these teachers, by offering special preparatory workshops before and during the first year of induction. Furthermore, establishing special training units in universities and in education colleges for teaching on the "other" side should be considered.

Nonetheless, we need to consider the study's limitations. First, we relied on self-reported data (interviewees only). Therefore we bear in mind that the reports might not reflect the actual performance of the respondents. Second, the research topic is sensitive so we made efforts to ensure reflexivity and also needed to be especially careful about the possibility that the interviewer might unintentionally affect the course of the interview, by means of the social codes shared with the Palestinian researcher who interviewed the Palestinian teachers.

Finally, the findings of this study, namely, that the practice of integrating minority teachers in majority schools, are beneficial to all parties involved, as well as to the encompassing society could be relevant to other societies in which the relationship between the majority and minority cultures is strained. Undoubtedly, further studies are warranted to determine the applicability of these findings. Nevertheless, we believe this study provides a foundation for careful optimism.

Acknowledgments

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