



Identity repertoires among Arabs in Israel

Muhammad Amara & Izhak Schnell

To cite this article: Muhammad Amara & Izhak Schnell (2004) Identity repertoires among Arabs in Israel, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30:1, 175-193, DOI: [10.1080/1369183032000170222](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183032000170222)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183032000170222>



Published online: 23 Jan 2007.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 634



Citing articles: 35 [View citing articles](#) [↗](#)

Identity Repertoires Among Arabs in Israel

Muhammad Amara & Izhak Schnell

This study investigates the structure and components of the Arab identity repertoire in Israel. We analyse the relative salience of each component and the structural relations among the components. In addition we interpret the meanings associated with each component of the Arab identity repertoire in Israel. Our study differs from traditional investigations of Arab identities in Israel in considering identity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and in interpreting the meanings that the respondents assign to the relevant identities. Empirically we find that most Arabs in Israel feel strongly attached to at least three identities, none of them dominating the others. The correlations among the identities are low, meaning that they are only marginally affected by the feasibility of alternative identities and more by the type of practices performed in each respective milieu. In this respect it is interesting to see that the Palestinian identity is not associated with citizenship beyond national pride, while the Israeli identity is expected to supply them with a sense of citizenship. Our finding that different groups constitute for themselves different relations among the components of the identity repertoire suggests that our multi-dimensional model supplies a better explanation for the structure of Arab repertoires of identities.

Keywords: Identity Repertoire; Palestinians; Arabs in Israel; Druze; Religion

Introduction

Non-dominant social groups' repertoires of identities tend to reflect their problematic status in the wider society. Particularly complex, in this sense, is the position of Arab citizens in the state of Israel. The unstable political situation imposed on them, together with globalisation processes and their consequences on Middle Eastern politics, set challenges for their complex identity repertoire.¹ On the one

Muhammad Amara is Senior Lecturer in the Departments of Political Science and English, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel. Izhak Schnell is Associate Professor in and Chairperson of the Department of Geography and Human Environment, Tel Aviv University, Israel. Correspondence to: E-mail: khitam@zahav.net.il; schnell@post.tau.ac.il

hand, they are expected to become Israeli citizens despite the fact that they are excluded from the national collective, because Israel defines and perceives itself as a Jewish-Zionist state. On the other hand, they remain marginal to the Palestinian struggle for a national independent state. Furthermore, they are exposed to Pan-Arabism and to the rising political Islamic world-views. Globalisation seems to have tremendous impact on individuals' and groups' repertoires of identities exposing individuals to more complex options (Bar-On 1999; Giddens 1991); it may also threaten the identities of marginalised groups in the world economy, pushing them to compensate their low statuses by withdrawing into closed reclusive identities (Castells 1997). In this context, the main discourse regarding Arab identity repertoire in Israel, focusing on the relative salience and the degree of congruence between Israeli civil identity and national identities (either Arab or Palestinian), seems inadequate. There is a need to study Arab identity repertoires in their full complexity.

This paper aims at investigating the structure of the Arab identity repertoire in Israel at a time when the establishment of a Palestinian state has become a real option. Several research questions are at the focus of our investigation: What are the major components of the Arab identity repertoire in Israel? What is the relative salience of each component of their identity repertoire? What are the structural relations among the components of the identity repertoire? What are the meanings associated with each component of the Arab identity repertoire in Israel?

The Study of Social Identities

Social identity is a complex construct, which may be captured satisfactorily only by a multi-dimensional approach. Philosophically, the question of identity relates to two questions: how can we understand human vitality, and what makes two or more individuals become a social group? The two questions of identity should not be considered separately but as complementing each other, thereby bridging individuals' sense of 'self' and 'others', on the one hand, and broader sociological categories such as class, nationality, ethnicity and gender that help to create the common social world (Holland *et al.* 1998). The gap between the micro and the macro level can be bridged by the structuration theory, which views human agency and social structure to be dialectically associated (Giddens 1991). Identity may be considered as a set of abstract schemes of human subjectivity or the ways in which individuals experience and view themselves, things they know about themselves and ways in which they evaluate themselves, as well as the ways empathic others view them (Noy 1995). These schemes are constituted through human reflections on the ways that they perform their everyday life practices.

Two theories concerning human social identity are offered by social scientists nowadays. The first, which has been essential to European modernist social psychologists, assumes that those quintessentially sociological forces like class, gender and national ideology constitute one unified, cohesive and relatively stable identity which individuals internalise. This theory, developed by scholars like Tajfel (1970, 1978),

dominates the study of Arab identity in Israel, with Rouhana (1997) articulating one of the more detailed arguments in this direction.

The second, developed in the last decade, tends to represent human identity as a repertoire of unstable, componential and at times even conflicting sub-identities. These sub-identities may express a multitude of meanings, which develop in respect to different social, economic, political and psychological contexts which individuals may be exposed to, due either to the reality of being minorities in nation-states or to their exposure to globalisation (Sarup 1996). In this complexity individuals are required to develop more autonomy in constituting their identities. They may achieve it by a reflexive process of unifying memories of their past, current schemes of interpreting their reality and interests, and future aspirations, into one coherent narrative, instead of stressing sameness to others in reference groups or negation of strangers (Anderson 1997; Weinreich 1986). Therefore, identity may be considered balanced if each component of a complex repertoire of identities has the freedom to move to the centre of the identity field as a response to everyday practices. At the same time, each component may leave room for alternative components to move to the centre of the field whenever circumstances change (Lewin 1951; Sarup 1996).

Both theories recognise the ability to understand changes in identities as part of a broader social change (Bhabha 1994). They differ in assigning salience either to the other as the mirror of the self, or to everyday life events and human temporality in constituting identities. In addition, they differ in their implications for the formation of cohesive social groups. Taylor and Moghaddam (1987) argue that members of social groups adopt either personal or group strategies in constituting their identities, but we still lack the knowledge to predict under what circumstances each choice will be made.

Castells' argument (1997) can be understood as an attempt to characterise the social circumstances in which groups adopt the option of a cohesive collective identity. He identifies three typical strategies for the constitution of collective identities: legitimising, resistance and projective. Social elites and dominant institutions in society tend to present legitimising identities to the public in order to achieve hegemony over society at large. In the current historical context, legitimising identities in liberal Western countries tend to promote national collective identities, but also leave some personal autonomy by promoting values such as citizenship, stability and social order. Agents who tend to define new collectivities inside society in order to improve their position in society at large may constitute projective identities; thus, they struggle for social change. Agents draw on cultural sources from the past in their struggle for social change and the redefinition of societal identity. This process may give meaning to the new groups' participation in society, enabling them to identify with their society. Resistance identity most likely emerges from marginal groups in society who feel threatened by the elite. Certain individuals, located in crucial positions in society, gain authority over members of such groups in order to mobilise them to constitute alternative identities (Calhoun 1994). Attempts to emphasise collective identities and to negate the legitimised identity may become major motivations in the constitution of resistance identity. Resistance

identities tend to emphasise their members' differences from the legitimised identity, and even present themselves in opposition to them, stressing their positive qualities in comparison to the others' negative qualities. In this way, members of resistant groups may apply the first strategy of constituting identities, stressing similarity and moral privilege to members of the group with whom they highly identify, and negating the others. This is the case when socio-spatial strategies are used in order to segregate (Schnell 2002).

According to the aforementioned typology a constant struggle over social identities is taking place in society. Different social groups may feel at times the need to redefine their repertoire of identities in a way that social identities will become more congruent with their personal feeling of uniqueness, belonging and worth. In some cases they may struggle for recognition of new social categories, empathy toward their needs and legitimisation of their set of meanings in society. In other cases they may struggle to constitute an alternative identity, which negates the legitimised one. Taylor and Moghaddam (1987) present two other options: either assimilation in the legitimised identity or acceptance of unsatisfied identity because of lack of opportunities. They follow Lewin (1951), positing that priority given to one identity or another depends on the everyday life situation individuals are involved in. When groups fight to change their social status in society at large or when they feel threatened by alternative identities, they may adopt collective strategies of identity formation, while in other circumstances they may adopt more individual strategies of identity formation. In this sense we ask the following question: Are Arabs in Israel developing a resistance identity that emphasises collective strategies of identity formation or alternative strategies?

The Investigation

The study is based on a wider survey aimed at understanding Palestinians' identity repertoires in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The current paper presents the results for the Arab repertoire of identities in Israel. The interview survey lasted four months, from June to September 2000, just before the events of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. The sample consists of 500 Arab men and women aged 20 and over, selected from five localities (Nazareth in the Galilee; Arara in the Little Triangle; Hora, a Bedouin semi-urban settlement in the Negev; Daliyyat Al-carmel, a Druze semi-urban settlement; and Jaffa, an Arab-Jewish mixed city), representing the different Arab communities in the pre-1967 borders of Israel. In each locality about one hundred respondents were interviewed as a layered sample.² We considered mainly three layers: socio-economic status (educational attainment and occupation), religion and religiosity, and gender and age groups. Each interviewer received a list that specified the socio-demographic characteristics of the person who should be chosen in each randomly chosen household. However, some adjustments were needed when results for the total population are presented in order to enable a representative sample for the community as a whole. The calculated adjustments are shown in Table 1. Women were 3 per cent under-represented in the sample, a value considered

Table 1 Sampled and real population distributions by religion

Religion	% in sample	% in population	Adjustment factor
Moslems	65	80	1.23
Christians	15	11	0.80
Druze	20	9	0.55
Total	100	100	

negligible. One-third of the sample is of the younger age of 20–34 years, 39 per cent are of age 35–49 and 28 per cent within the range 50–64. In terms of religiosity 59 per cent of the sample presented themselves as secular, 24 per cent presented themselves as ‘traditional’ and only 17 per cent as religious. In comparing our results to Smootha and Ghanem’s (2001) findings for Moslems, in their sample 34 per cent were identified as being religious while in our sample only 22 per cent defined themselves thus.

Five Arab interviewers were selected, one in each locality, to carry out the interviews. The principal researchers trained them in the field, while performing ten pre-test interviews each. The respondents were interviewed, face-to-face, in Arabic by Arab interviewers, using a partly structured and partly open-ended questionnaire. In the structured part we asked the respondents to specify their most salient identity from a list of six possibilities and to evaluate on a scale from 0 to 6 the relative salience of each of them for their overall repertoire of identities. These answers were cross-correlated and clustered in order to unravel the structure of the repertoire of identities. In the open-ended questions we asked the respondents to describe what makes them proud and/or not proud about each identity in their repertoire. The descriptions served as a basis for a narrative analysis in which we exposed the meanings of each identity and the relations among the component of the repertoire of identities, as the respondents perceive them relevant to their life.

Arab Identity Repertoire

Before we present the results of the study, we offer a description of the development of Arab identity repertoires since the 1950s. Identities in the Arab world are formed within a complex socio-political context (Smootha 1992). They include religious, national, Pan-Arab, ecological-cultural and kinship identities. Some of these identities incorporate the community as a whole, while others subdivide them into separate sub-communities. The identity repertoire of the Arabs in Israel is even more complex because they are caught in the midst of a national and religious conflict. However, scholars tend to over-simplify the discussion on this Arab identity by mainly focusing on the tension between their Israeli civil identity and their Palestinian and/or Arab national identity. Various studies (e.g. Mayer 1988; Rekhess 1998; Smootha and Ghanem 2001) have paid attention to the increasing role of political Islam in shaping Arab identity repertoire.

The various studies indicate changes in the order and significance of identities during different periods among the Arab minority in Israel (Amara and Kabaha 1996). This is briefly summarised as follows. During the first period, 1948–67, most studies establish that there was a delicate balance in the identity of the Arabs in Israel; this period is called by Amara (1999a) the ‘quest for security and accommodation’. This found expression in the development of systems for adapting and a desire to become part of the life of the country (e.g. Bishara 1993; Cohen 1989; Ozacky-Lazar 1990; Peres and Yuval-Davis 1969; Yisraeli 1981). The Palestinian element in their individual and collective identity, it was reported, was extremely weak due to the defeat during the war of 1948, the lack of political and cultural leadership, and the disconnection of contact with the remnants of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian leadership abroad did not promote a national Palestinian identity; rather they served either the goals of their host nations or a Pan-Arabic worldview. While the Israeli Arabs were deeply engaged in adapting to their new status as a minority, the process of coming to terms with the contradicting factors in their identity commenced, hoping the condition was only temporary and fleeting. They put emphasis on their Israeli identity more than any other identity. The reawakening of the Palestinian element in their identity began only after the Six-Day War in 1967.

The second period is 1967–73. As indicated by most studies, the Six-Day War—with the conquering of the territories and the military defeat of the Arab countries—amplified Israeli Arabs’ fear and hatred of Israel and strengthened their identification with the Arab world. Renewed contact with the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip put an end to their isolation and created direct contact with a population and leadership having a high sense of nationalistic consciousness. These contacts awakened the Palestinian component in the Arab identity repertoire in Israel, which connected, anew, with the consciousness of Palestinian suffering. During this period strong emphasis was placed on Pan-Arabism, and the first seeds of the development of the Islamic movement were planted. Identification with the Palestinians’ suffering in the Occupied Territory increased the salience of the Palestinian identity (Eisenstadt 1990; Gabbai 1984; Peres 1976; Rekhess 1989; Shtendahl 1988).

The third period, from 1973 to the 1990s, was characterised by the strengthening of the Palestinian component, the reawakening of Islam and the weakening of the Israeli element in the repertoire of identities (Schnell 1996). The decision of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) to strive for a Palestinian state instead of a Pan-Arabic solution since the 1980s and the Palestinian Intifada toward the end of the decade further awakened the rise of the Palestinian component in their repertoire of identities. The Oslo agreement with the Palestinians and Rabin’s (Prime Minister 1992–95) positive policies towards the Arabs in Israel raised their expectations to come to terms with their Israeli identity—expectations that were broken by Barak (Prime Minister 1999–2000), who neglected them as a politically legitimate power.

Most studies tended to formulate a dichotomous model in which civil and national identities are usually described as excluding each other, pushing Arabs in

Israel either to Israelisation or towards nationalisation as Palestinians or Arabs (Hoffman 1977; Peres and Yuval-Davis 1969). Almost all scholars believe that the Israeli civil identity remains relevant in one way or another to Arabs in Israel, while emotionally they increasingly identify with alternative aspects of their identity repertoire (Bishara 1996; Smooha 1992). Rouhana's (1993, 1997) more theoretically-laden model distinguishes three levels of identity: (1) an instrumental level in the polity defined by Israeli identity; (2) an intermediate value level which shares both Israeli and new Palestinian identity; and (3) a deep sentimental and loyal feeling of common fate, which is monopolised by the Palestinian identity. In his search for a 'super-organic' collective identity, Rouhana regards this complexity in terms of an incomplete identity. As we have mentioned earlier, we argue that such complexities are structured and restructured in the experiences of a wide range of social groups in our globalising world. The key questions are, rather, to what extent do individuals and social groups comprehend all their relevant identities when they wish to do so, and to what extent do they succeed in perceiving them as sources of richness instead of emotional burdens?

A model that comes closer to our conceptualisation is offered by Smooha (1988) who suggests studying civil and national identities within a framework that treats them independently of each other. We suggest moving one step further by replacing the dichotomous model of civil and national identities by a multi-dimensional model, including the wider range of possible identities—each of them only loosely dependent on the others. Individuals may constitute their identities by categorising reference groups, feeling different degrees of identification with some of these reference groups, and evaluating them as worthy or unworthy of trust and appreciation (Schnell 1996). Each reference group may be relevant to individuals in four complementary forms: their meanings to the individual's identity; structural relations among the different reference groups; the relative salience of each reference group; and the flexibility of each identity to changes (Rouhana 1997).

The discussion thus far leads to three major possibilities. First, the different components of the Arabs' repertoire of identities in Israel are competing with each other, presenting negative correlations among their relative salience. Second, only civil and national identities negate each other while other identities remain indifferent to both of them. Third, the major components of Arabs' repertoire of identities in Israel are independent of each other, presenting low correlations among themselves. In addition we propose that different Arab groups within the Arab society in Israel may constitute for themselves different repertoires of identities rather than one cohesive collective identity.

Results

The first step in understanding the Arab identity repertoire is to investigate the relative salience they assign to each of their relevant identities. Generally speaking, about half of the respondents (47 per cent) chose Arab identity as the one they prefer to present when forced to choose one of their identities in their repertoire. In

comparison only 29 per cent chose their religious identities, whether as Moslems, Christians or Druze. Palestinian and Israeli identities remained far behind with less than 10 per cent each. When the whole spectrum of the repertoire is considered, they assign the highest values to their Arab and religious identities. On a scale of salience that ranges between 0 = irrelevant and 6 = very important, they assign average values of 4.9 for their Arab identity and 4.6 for their religious identity. The Palestinian and the Israeli identities remain behind with 3.1 for Palestinian and 2.9 for Israeli Arab, while the relevance of local identities of the Hamula (1.3) and the home community (1.7) remain only marginal.

Differences among respondents are quite significant. Standard deviations in the respondents' evaluations are generally between 1.3 and 1.8, and in the case of the Palestinian identity the standard deviation is even higher (2.2), representing deeper disagreements concerning its salience.

In an attempt to uncover the characteristics that explain variations in evaluating the relative salience of each identity, we subdivided the results by the following socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents: age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, occupational status, ecological-cultural environment, religion and religious attitudes. From all eight independent variables the last three present statistically significant explanations of the differences in evaluations, with religion being significant at the highest level.³

The distribution of the salience assigned to each identity by the respondents' religion is presented in Table 2. Several conclusions may be drawn. There are significant differences among the attitudes of the three communities toward major identities in the repertoire.⁴ It seems that Moslems and Christians almost unanimously tend to emphasise the high salience of their Arab identity. Religious identities are also presented as highly salient, especially among Druze who tend to play down their sense of belonging to the Arab identity. All three groups, but mainly the Druze, tend to assign local identities (Hamula and local community) a low salience. The two other identities—the Palestinian and the Israeli—are more controversial among Moslems and Christians. About half of them assign their Israeli identity a moderate level of salience with the rest being distributed between those who consider it irrelevant and those tending to highly relevant. The salience of the Palestinian identity is highly emphasised by about 40 per cent of the Moslems and the Christians, but is irrelevant or only marginally relevant to 17 per cent of the Moslems and 36 per cent of the Christians. This means that the Palestinian identity, like the Israeli one, is somewhat controversial in the Israeli Arab minds, with the Christians particularly divided in their sense of belonging to the Palestinian identity.

Druze have developed extremely different attitudes towards their identity repertoire. Most of them assign high priority to their religious identity as well as to their citizenship in Israel. Almost all of them perceive the Palestinian identity to be irrelevant to their repertoire of identities and about 40 per cent of them feel the same in respect to Arab identity. It seems that both Moslems and Christians assign the highest priority to their Arab identity, which has the potential to incorporate all three communities within one united collective identity.

Table 2 The relative salience of the identity repertoire by religion

Identity repertoire	Sector	Relative salience (%)				Total
		Not relevant	Low	Medium	High	
Palestinian (<i>I_P</i>)	Moslems	11	6	43	40	100
	Christians	28	8	24	40	100
	Druze	87	0	2	11	100
Arab (<i>I_A</i>)	Moslems	0	1	11	88	100
	Christians	0	0	11	89	100
	Druze	40	0	20	40	100
Israeli (<i>I_I</i>)	Moslems	14	27	53	6	100
	Christians	27	4	58	11	100
	Druze	17	0	29	54	100
Religious (<i>I_R</i>)	Moslems	5	7	26	62	100
	Christians	1	8	35	56	100
	Druze	14	0	14	72	100
Hamula (<i>I_H</i>)	Moslems	29	53	17	1	100
	Christians	71	18	11	0	100
	Druze	90	0	3	7	100
Home community (<i>I_C</i>)	Moslems	21	38	40	1	100
	Christians	29	24	43	4	100
	Druze	95	0	3	2	100

Two groups, the Christians and the Druze, seem to be internally divided concerning their repertoire of identities. Christians face a debate concerning their belonging to the Palestinian identity. While 40 per cent of them perceive their Palestinian identity to be highly important, almost 30 per cent perceive the Palestinian identity to be irrelevant. It seems to us that both attitudes may be understood in the context of the rise of political Islam (Smootha and Ghanem 2001). Some tend to view the Palestinian identity as the one that can unite Moslems, Christians and Druze, moderating the tensions in terms of their religious identities. Others tend to emphasise their differences from the Moslem identity. Such attitudes were strong among Christians in Nazareth, probably in response to the struggle over the mosque in the centre of the city. Druze are united in their rejection of the Palestinian identity but they are divided concerning the relevance of their Arab identity. On the one hand a group of intellectuals tend to present themselves as Arabs, blaming the Israeli establishment for inventing a separatist Druze identity. On the other hand 40 per cent of the Druze stick to their leaders' choice to join Israeli citizenship as an ethnic-religious minority.

Probably the most prominent finding that comes out of Table 2 is that most Arabs in Israel feel attached to more than one identity in their repertoire, with 77 per cent assigning values of 4 and higher salience to at least three identities. This finding leads us to raise questions concerning the relations among the components of their identity repertoire in terms of its structure, meaning and flexibility.

Table 3 Correlation coefficients among the components of the identity repertoire

	Identity repertoire	Palestinian	Arab	Israeli	Religious	Hamula	Local
Correlations (Pearson)	Palestinian	1.00	0.35	-0.52	-0.23	0.09	0.25
	Arab	0.35	1.00	-0.25	-0.20	-0.04	0.22
	Israeli	-0.52	-0.25	1.00	-0.00	-0.36	-0.40
	Religious	-0.23	-0.20	0.00	1.00	0.08	-0.02
	Hamula	0.09	-0.04	-0.36	0.08	1.00	0.44
	Local	0.25	0.22	-0.40	-0.02	0.44	1.00
Significance (1-tailed)	Palestinian		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025	0.000
	Arab	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.184	0.000
	Israeli	0.000	0.000		0.491	0.000	0.000
	Religious	0.000	0.000	0.491		0.034	0.370
	Hamula	0.025	0.184	0.000	0.034		0.000
	Local	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.370	0.000	

The Structure of the Identity Repertoire

Structurally we have defined three possible models. First, the different components of the identity repertoire are reinforcing each other, defining a comprehensive and coherent overall identity. Second, the different components of the identity repertoire are indifferent to each other. In this case low correlation coefficients may be expected among the salience of the different identities. Third, groups of identities contradict each other, presenting strong negative correlation coefficients among themselves.

Table 3 summarises the correlation coefficients among the components of the Arab identity repertoire in Israel. The analysis shows that almost all correlations among the components of the identity repertoire are relatively low, with most coefficients lower than 0.4. Only two correlations show higher coefficients—those between the Palestinian and the Israeli identities ($R^2 = 0.27$, meaning that variability of one component explains 27 per cent of the variability of the second component), and between the local and the Hamula identities, which partly reinforce each other ($R^2 = 0.19$). At somewhat lower levels the Palestinian and the Arab identities tend to reinforce each other while local and Hamula identities tend to contradict the Israeli identity. Part of the correlations present positive values and part of them negative ones. It seems that Israeli identity exhibits negative values with the rest of the repertoire of identities, but these coefficients are relatively low. One exception is the religious identity, which shows a coefficient of zero due to the fact that on the one hand many of the Druze may perceive these two identities as reinforcing each other, while part of the Moslems and Christians may view them as negating each other.

The main conclusion from the correlation analysis is that the different components of the identity repertoire are to a large extent indifferent to each other, with a low tendency to perceive the Israeli identity as contradicting the Palestinian one. This result comes close both to Smootha's model (1992), which defines the repertoire

Table 4 The structure of the repertoire of identities

No.	Cluster name	Cluster structure [(<i>I_P</i>), (<i>I_A</i>), (<i>I_I</i>), (<i>I_R</i>), (<i>I_H</i>), (<i>I_C</i>)]	% of sample	Adjusted sample
1	Autonomous Arabs	[(4.5),(5.2),(1.8),(5.1),(1.2),(1.9)]	46	54
2	Arab Israelis	[(0.9),(5.3),(4.0),(5.1),(0.9),(1.6)]	31	26
3	Arab Nationalists	[(5.0),(5.7),(2.7),(1.9),(1.2),(2.4)]	14	15
4	Druze	[(0.2),(0.0),(3.9),(5.7),(1.7),(0.5)]	5	3
5	Israeli Druze	[(0.0),(0.9),(5.3),(2.6),(0.0),(0.0)]	4	2
	Total (%)		100	100
	Total (no.)		498	

Notes: The numbers refer to the values of the clusters' centres, varying from 0 = irrelevant to 6 = very important. The symbols refer to the following identities: (*I_P*) = Palestinian, (*I_A*) = Arab, (*I_I*) = Israeli, (*I_R*) = Religious, (*I_H*) = Hamula, (*I_C*) = Local.

of identities along the national and the civil dimensions, and our suggested multi-dimensional model, which assumes relatively low correlation coefficients among a whole cluster of relevant identities.

Clustering the respondents by their repertoire of identities may further clarify the relations among the components of the repertoire of identities. We apply a mean cluster analysis twice. A first one is based on the original data and the second on an adjusted sample in which we randomly duplicated respondents to a degree that is required in order to adjust the layers of the samples to their real proportion in the population. In the analysis we find that five clusters best distinguish among different repertoires of identities (Table 4). Four of the six components of the repertoire [(*I_P*), (*I_A*), (*I_I*), (*I_R*)] are salient to respondents in at least one of the clusters, while two remain marginal to all of them [(*I_H*), (*I_C*)]. More than three-quarters of the respondents have identity repertoires that incorporate at least three salient identities (in clusters 1 and 2 three components have values of 4 and above), and only 9 per cent of the respondents emphasised only one identity (clusters 4 and 5). Only for about half of the respondents has the Israeli identity remained low, negating alternative national and religious identities (cluster 1), while for the rest the Israeli identity played a significant role, parallel to their national or religious identities.⁵

The five clusters distinguish different structures of identity repertoires. About half of the respondents define themselves as an autonomous minority. They assign extremely high salience to both their Arab and religious identities and a slightly weaker salience to their Palestinian identity. Their identification with their Israeli identity remains weak although relevant to their repertoire (Table 5). They differ also from the Palestinians in the Palestinian Authority who assign higher salience to their Palestinian and religious identities and obviously regard the Israeli identity as irrelevant to them. Instead the autonomous Arab cluster assigns higher salience to their Arab identity, presenting it as a key factor in their repertoire. Close to one-third of the respondents define themselves as Israeli Arabs, assigning high salience to their Arab and religious identities and a slightly lower salience to their Israeli identity, which replaces the Palestinian one. Fourteen per cent of the respondents emphasise

Table 5 The distribution of socio-demographic factors by clusters of identity repertoire

Independent variable	Clusters of identity repertoire	
	Cramer's V	Significance
Age	0.123	0.058
Gender	0.124	0.103
Marital status	0.126	0.156
Occupational status	0.135	0.060
Ecological origin	0.379	0.003
Religiosity	0.202	0.007
Religion	0.489	0.001

their Arab and Palestinian identities, assigning only low relevance to the religious identity and a slightly higher salience to the Israeli identity. This means that they define themselves mainly along national lines, perceiving themselves as a national minority within Israel. The last two clusters represent two groups of Druze who express their unique position among the Israeli Arabs, either by emphasising their religious identity or by attempting to integrate into the Israeli identity. Based on the adjusted sample (Table 4) we may conclude that the group of autonomous Arabs increases to slightly above half of the population, while the percentage of Arab Israelis declines to about a quarter of the population.

In an attempt to typify the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in each cluster, we calculate the Cramer's V coefficients between our seven independent variables and the respondents' participation in the clusters (Table 5). The results clearly show the clusters vary according to the respondents' ecological origin, religiosity and religion. In accord with the ecological factor, Bedouins and Christians from Jaffa constitute 78 per cent of the participants in cluster 2. Many Bedouins who serve in the Israeli military forces tend to assign high salience to their Israeli identity and lower salience to their Palestinian identity, while strongly identifying with their Arab and Islamic identities and perceiving them complementary to their Israeli identity. Part of the Christian community in Jaffa succeed in incorporating their Arabic and religious identities with their Israeli one, expressing their attempt to integrate into Israeli society while disengaging themselves from the Palestinian struggle that becomes in their views increasingly dominated by political Islam.

Concerning the factor of religiosity, non-religious respondents show a relatively higher tendency to participate in the second cluster and less in the first one. They assign low salience to their religious identity and a relatively high salience to their Israeli identity. The most significant factor that influences distribution among the clusters is religion: 58 per cent of the Moslems participated in the first cluster relative to 40 per cent of the Christians and 10 per cent of the Druze. In contrast, while about 45 per cent of the Druze and the Christians participated in the second cluster, only one-quarter of the Moslems participated in the second cluster. At the same

time it is almost only the Druze who participated in the fourth and the fifth clusters.

The Meanings Assigned to Identity Repertoire

One problem that was not addressed in most identity research performed on the Arab community in Israel was the question of how people understand the meaning of each identity in the repertoire. We asked the respondents to say in a few sentences what makes them feel either proud or not proud of each of their identities. Some quotations of their statements help to highlight the meanings that are commonly assigned to each of the components of the identity repertoire.

The Arab identity as the most salient one was mentioned in three contexts by most of the respondents: cultural roots; Arab Middle-Eastern solidarity; and to some extent the common denominator of the Arab community in Israel. Here are some quotations to demonstrate these conclusions:

Arabism is a major source of cultural heritage, science, literature, poetry, moral values and family honour ... it gives me a sense of worth and makes me proud to belong to the Arab community.

I am embarrassed by the lack of political unity and solidarity, by political corruption as well as low cultural achievements in modern time.

I feel ashamed of traditional habits like revenge for abuse of family honour, women's status etc.

Arabism represents the tradition that unites all the Arabs in Israel.

It seems that Arabs in Israel draw their cultural roots and heritage from their Arab identity and they feel they cannot or do not want to escape it, even when they feel ashamed of some of their traditions.

Unlike the Arab identity, the Palestinian one emphasises much more the sense of national pride and solidarity on behalf of cultural heritage, as the following quotations reveal:

The highly determined uprising gives me pride, I feel part of this battle for independence and respect, and therefore I participate in the ceremonies of the 'Land Day' in which we demonstrate against expropriation of lands by the government.

I feel proud of the Palestinian history and I hope to live in a Palestinian state.

I feel shame in the way the Palestinians murder innocent people in their battle for independence.

It is interesting that deliberate nationalist attempts to reconstruct a Palestinian national history were not articulated by the respondents. They rather preferred to emphasise the pride they gain from the battle for national freedom and self-determination, which they so strongly lack as a defeated minority of a Jewish state. It seems from the discussion that many of the respondents perceived their Palestinian identity as emerging out of the Palestinian battle against Israel. Therefore the Palestinian

identity may at least partly negate their Israeli identity, a result that is further supported by the negative correlations between the two respective identities.

In reflecting on the meanings that the respondents have assigned to their Israeli identity, it appears that the negation of national pride represents only part of their attitudes, as the next group of quotations illustrates:

Proud of our democratic system and our economic achievements relative to the Arab world.

Feel good about the sense of political and public order and cleanness that exists in Israel.

In Israel we care for individual human rights, well-being, health and educational care.

I feel bad about lack of equality in Israel, and cases of deprivation and racism against Arabs.

I am not proud of the Israeli massacres against Arabs in cases like 'Kefar Qassem', 'Sabra and Shatilla' and 'Hebron'.

It seems that the Israeli identity is relevant to the Arabs in Israel at least in three complementary forms—as a democratic system that assigns high priority to individual rights and well-being, as a wealthy country that secures people a high standard of living relative to Arab countries, but also as a system that deprives Israeli Arabs from their rights relative to Jews. Unlike the Arab and the Palestinian national identities, the Israeli one is frequently defined in negative terms. Furthermore, the Israeli identity is frequently defined in comparison to the former two identities, while they were generally defined independent of any other identity.

Religious identities are perceived differently by the different religions. Moslems emphasised at least four complementary meanings to their Islamic identity, as the following quotations demonstrate:

Islam is the religion of morals and justice, which distinguishes between right and fault.

Religious Moslems tend to distort the Islamic morals.

I am proud of the new clever commandments introduced into the Islamic law nowadays.

Belief in Allah supports me with a sense of comfort and security.

Past victories and the heroic resistance of the 'Hizbu-allah', made in the name of Islam, make me proud.

I feel bad that the rich Islamic countries do not help the poor in the Islamic world.

Islam is perceived as a source of morality, commandments and spiritual experience that so many of the religious and non-religious Moslems feel they lack in the modern world. A minority of them perceive their sense of belonging to an Islamic identity in political terms (cf. Amara 1996). Like many nationalist movements, they reconstruct their 'golden age' and call for Islamic solidarity in solving political and economic problems.

Christians put more emphasis on religious aspects but they also relate to their

identity as Christians in terms of being an ethnic minority within the Arab community in Israel. The following quotations demonstrate these interpretations:

Our religion emphasises spirituality, openness and forgiveness. It adopts a liberal stance and therefore it is the transcendental religion.

Living in the Holy Land—the Land of Historic and Holy places—gives us a sense of belonging to the country.

Christians are members of the more educated community among the Israeli Arabs.

Conclusions

The study reported in this paper differs from traditional investigations of Arab identities in Israel in two important ways. First, it adopts a theoretical framework that considers identity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which evidences complex relations among the different components of individuals' identity. Traditional models assumed a dual model in which they focused on the relations between national and civic identities. Second, unlike former studies, we do not assume that the meanings of self-declared identities are self-evident. Therefore we apply an interpretative methodology in order to unravel the meanings that the respondents assign to each identity that they mentioned to be relevant for them. The results support the multi-dimensional model proposed by us.

Empirically we present several pieces of evidence for our argument. Most Arabs in Israel feel strongly attached to at least three identities. Most of them assigned high salience to several identities in a way that none of them dominates the others. Each identity relates to a different content of meanings, playing a different role in the identity repertoire. Accordingly, the correlations among the identities remained relatively low, emphasising by this their independence of each other. This means that the relative salience of each identity is more dependent on the type of practices performed in each respective milieu, than on the attractiveness of alternative identities. In this respect it is interesting that the Palestinian identity is not associated with citizenship beyond national pride, while the Israeli identity is expected to supply Israeli Arabs mainly with a sense of citizenship. The role of the Israeli identity is even more remarkable when comparing this attitude with the Palestinians' one. They did not mention citizenship and individuals' rights at all in their identity repertoire, emphasising instead their collective identity as Palestinians.

One exception is the relatively high negative correlation between the Palestinian and the Israeli identity. This may be explained by many Israeli Arab feelings of humiliation due to the fact that their citizenship is not tolerated in Israeli society. In this sense the Palestinian identity supplies them at least with some sense of pride. This finding may explain why the dual model of Israeli vs. Palestinian identities may gain some empirical support, and this is the situation that led Rouhana (1997) to define Israeli Arabs' identity to be incomplete. However, our finding that different groups constitute for themselves different relations among the components of the

identity repertoire hints at the conclusion that our multi-dimensional model offers a better explanation of the structure of Israeli Arabs' repertoires of identities. Many of the Bedouins and some others (represented in cluster 2) have developed an identity repertoire in which both the Palestinian and the Israeli identity are relatively highly salient—hence the positive correlation between them. This option fits the argument of Smooha (1992) who argues that 'Israelisation' and 'Palestinisation' may be working in parallel. At the same time Arab nationalists (cluster 3) tend to emphasise their Palestinian identity but they do not do it wholly at the expense of their attachment to their Israeli identity. Only the largest group, representing close to half of the Israeli Arabs, represent negative correlations between the two identities, as postulated by Rouhana.

The socio-political and historical contexts that lead to the constitution of this complex repertoire of identities are beyond the scope of this paper. These contexts have rarely been studied systematically. However, there is evidence that the practices of everyday life tend to reinforce certain identities in different sets of activity patterns. Schnell (1996) argues that the daily commute between Arab and Jewish spaces of more than half of the Arab workforce exposes many Arabs to events that bring their Palestinian and Arab identities into the centre of their identity field. Their failure to integrate into the Israeli legitimate collective undermines their sense of Israeli identity. And Amara (1999b) exemplifies how the daily use of language in various domains of life (whether on signs or institutions) is closely related to the identity repertoire.

What we learn from this study is that the use of quantitative methods may bring some fresh insight into the study of identity. We were able to show that even members of highly marginalised groups may develop complex repertoires of identities instead of developing one unified identity. Furthermore, different subgroups may develop different strategies of identity formation. We also learn, unlike the existing research on identity in the Arab society in Israel, that each identity is only marginally influenced by other identities in the repertoire. Consequently, our argument is different from the current arguments of 'Israelisation versus Palestinisation' approaches, which claim dependency between the two.

The discussion cannot be concluded without two more remarks. First, since identities are continuously socially negotiated, two phenomena must be taken into consideration in evaluating future trends. First, the Israeli Arab violent demonstrations in October 2000, which ended in the killing of 13 Arab demonstrators by Israeli police forces, shocked the Arab community in Israel. Following these events, Arabs in Israel started questioning their identification with their civil identity as Israelis. Second, the political discourse is dominated today by the Islamic movement and the National Democratic Party (a secular-national party, mainly led by the Knesset member Azmi Bishara). They aspire either to transform Israel into a democratic non-Zionist state or to recognise the rights of the Israeli Arabs as a national minority. Both trends threaten to challenge the basic structure of the Israeli state and the repertoire of identities crystallised among the Arabs over the last few decades.

Acknowledgement

The first draft of this paper was presented at the Study Day 'Jewish–Arab Relations: October Events' at The Centre for Peace Studies, Giv'at Haviva, 1 March 2001. This study is funded by the Israel Science Foundation.

Notes

- [1] The term repertoire is borrowed from music, and it is widely employed in sociolinguistics. It includes all the languages and varieties known and used by a specific community. In a similar vein, we apply the concept to the study of identity in the sense of a set of multitudes of identities with complex interrelations among them.
- [2] We chose to interview equal numbers of respondents in each town since we intend to compare communities in our wider study. The equal sample secures representation to small towns and enables comparison. Since we do not know about internal variability we do not have any reason to adopt different sample size, assuming that internal variability has a much larger effect on sample size than population size in a town. In order to overcome distortion in the total sample, we made the necessary adjustments for each community: Moslems, Druze, Christians and Bedouins.
- [3] Chi-square test equals 0.0001.
- [4] Chi-square test equals 0.0001.
- [5] The correlations between education and type of locality on the one hand and the type of identity on the other are low and insignificant, therefore we did not include them in the analysis.

References

- Amara, M. (1996) 'The nature of Islamic fundamentalism in Israel', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 8(2): 155–70.
- Amara, M. (1999a) 'Identity dilemma of Palestinians in Israel', in Hoffman, A., Schnell, I., Stephan, G., Bruer, G. and Fenn, P. (eds) *Identity and Education in Germany and Israel*. Hamburg: Fachverlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur, 213–34.
- Amara, M. (1999b) *Politics and Sociolinguistic Reflexes: Palestinian Border Villages*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Amara, M. and Kabaha, S. (1996) *Divided Identity: A Study of Political Division and Social Reflections in a Split Village*. Giv'at Haviva: Peace Research Institute (in Hebrew).
- Anderson, J. (1997) 'Nationalism and geography', in Anderson, J. (ed.) *The Rise of the Modern State*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 7–21.
- Bar-On, D. (1999) *The Others Within Us*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bishara, A. (1993) 'On the question of the Arab minority in Israel', *tioria ubikorit*, 3: 7–20 (in Hebrew).
- Bishara, A. (1996) 'The Israeli Arab: scrutinizing a divided political dialogue', in Ginosar, P. and Bareli, A. (eds) *Zionism: A Modern Polemic. Research and Ideological Approaches*. Beer-Sheva: The Ben-Gurion Legacy Institute, Sde Boker; The Haim Weizmann Zionist Research Institute, Tel Aviv University; Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Publishing, 312–39 (in Hebrew).
- Calhoun, C. (1994) 'Social theory and the politics of identity', in Calhoun, C. (ed.) *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 9–36.
- Castells, M. (1997) *The Information Age—Economy, Society and Culture: Volume II—The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Cohen, R. (1989) *In the Thicket of Loyalty: Society and Politics in the Arab Sector*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved (in Hebrew).
- Eisenstadt, S. (1990) *Israeli Society and its Values*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press (in Hebrew).
- Gabbai, M. (1984) *The Arabs of Israel: A Question of Identity*. Giv'at Haviva: Arab Studies Institute (in Hebrew).
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hoffman, Y. (1977) *Likenesses and Identity of Arab Youth in Israel*. Haifa: Haifa University, Arab Education and Development Research Institute (in Hebrew).
- Holland, W., Lachicotte, J., Skinner, D. and Cain, C. (1998) *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lewin, K. (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science*. New York: Harper.
- Mayer, T. (1988) *The Awakening of Muslims in Israel*. Giv'at Haviva: The Institute for Arabic Studies (in Hebrew).
- Noy, P. (1995) 'What is the self in the psychology of the self?' *Sichot*, 9(3): 180–90 (in Hebrew).
- Ozacky-Lazar, S. (1990) *The Stands of the Arabs of Israel vis-à-vis the State, 1949–67*. Haifa: Haifa University, unpublished MA thesis, (in Hebrew).
- Peres, Y. (1976) *Relations of Ethnic Communities in Israel*. Ramat-Aviv: Tel Aviv University (in Hebrew).
- Peres, Y. and Yuval-Davis, N. (1969) 'Some observations on the national identity of the Israeli Arabs', *Human Relations*, 22(3): 219–33.
- Rekheh, R. (1989) 'The Arabs of Israel and the Arabs of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: political ties and national identity', *hamizrah hehadash*, 32: 165–91 (in Hebrew).
- Rekheh, R. (1998) 'Political Islam in Israel and its relation to the Islamic movement in the territories', in Rekheh, E. (ed.) *The Arabs in the Israeli Politics: Dilemmas of Identity*. Beer-Sheva: Tel-Aviv University, The Moshe Dayyan Centre for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, 73–84.
- Rouhana, R. (1993) 'Accentuated identities in protracted conflicts: the collective identity of the Palestinian citizens in Israel', *Asian and African Studies*, 27: 97–127.
- Rouhana, R. (1997) *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Sarup, M. (1996) *Identity, Culture and the Post-modern World*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press.
- Schnell, I. (1996) *Perceptions of Israeli Arabs: Territoriality and Identity*. London: Avebury.
- Schnell, I. (2002) 'Segregation in everyday life spaces: a conceptual model', in Schnell, I. and Ostendorf, W. (eds) *Studies in Segregation and Desegregation*. Aldershot: Avebury, 39–66.
- Shtendahl, U. (1988) 'The Arab population in Judaea and Samaria', *skira hodshit*, 8(28): 3–19 (in Hebrew).
- Smooha, S. (1988) 'The Arab minority in Israel: radicalization or politicization?', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 5: 1–21.
- Smooha, S. (1992) *Arabs and Jews in Israel: Change and Continuity in Mutual Intolerance*. Boulder, CO: Boulder University Press.
- Smooha, S. and Ghanem, A. (2001) 'Political Islam among the Arabs in Israel', in Hanf, T. (ed.) *Dealing with Difference: Religion, Ethnicity and Politics: Comparing Cases and Concepts*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 143–73.
- Tajfel, H. (1970) 'Experiments in inter-group discrimination', *Scientific American*, 223(5): 96–102.
- Tajfel, H. (1978) 'Social categorization, social identity and social comparison', in Tajfel, H. (ed.) *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Psychology of Inter-Group Relations*. New York and London: Academic Press, 61–76.
- Taylor, D.M. and Moghaddam, F.M. (1987) *Theories of Intergroup Relations*. New York, Westport and London: Praeger.
- Weinreich, P. (1986) 'The operationalisation of identity theory in racial and ethnic relations', in

Rex, J. and Mason, D. (eds) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 134–58.

Yisraeli, R. (1981) 'On the problem of identity of the Arabs in Israel', in Har-Even, A. (ed.) *One Out of Six Israelis*. Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, Mossad Publishing, 179–84 (in Hebrew).

