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Minority Self-Categorization: The Case of the Palestinians in Israel

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This article summarizes basic principles derived from Social Identity Theory for the case of minorities. It then uses them as a theoretical framework to discuss research findings on the self-categorization of the Palestinian minority in Israel. Based on recent findings, a “double marginality” model is proposed, according to which members of this minority internalize a marginal civic identity, alongside a marginal ethnic identity. It is argued that minority members resolve the inherent contradiction between their civic (Israeli) and ethnic (Palestinian) identities by separating the two, rather than by reconciling them. In addition to achieving a critical stability of the self, it is argued that such separation provides minority members with a reasonable degree of self-esteem.

The persistence of collective identities stands in contradiction to classical political and sociological predictions that modernization and globalization processes will cause their decline. The emergence of prominent national, ethnic, and religious collectives is noticeable in many East European and Third World countries. Recent political and sociological analyses stress the significance of macro-social cues that lie in population shifts and political, economic and technological developments, as catalysts of ethnic and national identities. Other factors lie in the incompatibility of ethnic boundaries and contemporary state or national boundaries (Smith, 1990). The domination of one group in multi-ethnic states is a constant source of inter-ethnic conflicts, which enhance the centrality and salience of ethnic identities, especially among dominated or low-status groups.

Notwithstanding the crucial role of macro processes in shaping intergroup relations and group identities, their operation requires the mediation of psychological

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processes. The mobilization of ethnic and national groups requires that sufficient group members internalize group values and goals. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978a, 1981, 1982), and the Self-Categorization Hypothesis (Turner, 1985, 1987) provide a social psychological framework for understanding the interrelation between the socio-political and psychological levels of group and intergroup processes. They also highlight the significance of psychological factors—mainly the need for positive self-esteem—as important individual and group goals, and not as catalysts for achieving tangible collective goods.

This article focuses on the significance of self-categorization and self-esteem in determining minority identities. First, basic theoretical principles based on Social Identity Theory will be detailed. These will then serve as a framework for discussing the findings of relevant empirical research on the ethnic identity of the Palestinian minority in Israel.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY: A BRIEF SUMMARY

Reductionist approaches are still central to many contemporary analyses of intergroup phenomena. This applies to the analyses of intergroup conflicts and intergroup aggression based on psychoanalytic theories, the Authoritarian Personality theory (Adorno et al. 1950) and the Frustration–Aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al. 1939). Social Identity Theory constitutes a unique effort to depart from reductionist approaches which attempt to explain group phenomena on the bases of individual psychology. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), social identities are defined as those aspects of self-categorization that derive from a person’s awareness and embracing of membership in social categories such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, and social class. Consensual to all the literature on SIT is that its basic ideas are traced to the accentuation effect discovered in experimental studies. In a typical experiment, Tajfel & Wilkes (1963) showed that the perception of physical stimuli is influenced by their categorization according to peripheral dimensions. Specifically, they showed that the categorization of a number of straight lines to two groups, A and B, caused participants to attenuate the differences between the lengths of lines from the same group, and accentuate the differences between lengths of lines from differing groups. That is, lines from the same group were perceived as more similar than they actually were, whereas lines from different groups were perceived as more different than they were. Similar results were obtained for comparisons based on nonphysical attributes. This cognitive phenomenon becomes relevant to the social field if the categorization is made according to social categories (race, ethnicity, etc.). In such instances, a motivational factor is superimposed on the cognitive one. Negative stereotyping and outgroup homogeneity can be partially attributed to the accentuation effect.
Although the accentuation principle marks the beginnings of SIT, its wider bases were laid by Tajfel’s experimental research on intergroup relations, or what is known as the “minimal group experiments” (c.f., Tajfel et al., 1971). In a typical experiment of this type, the experimenter invites a group of participants to the laboratory. He then divides them into two groups according to a trivial criterion or simply by flipping a coin and determining accordingly who becomes a member of group A and who becomes member of group B. Participants are invited to the lab individually. They do not meet before, during, or after the experiment. Each participant is requested to divide a negligible amount of money between an anonymous member of his group and another anonymous member of the outgroup. The results of many experiments of this type showed that any arbitrary categorization of “us” and “them” was sufficient for inducing ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination.

Tajfel and his colleagues posited that such discrimination derives from the individual’s attempt to achieve a personal sense of value, or self-esteem. By favoring anonymous ingroup members and discriminating against outgroup members, individuals achieve a “positive distinctiveness” for their own group in comparison to the outgroup. This, in turn, enhances their own self-esteem. The theory stresses two interrelated processes in intergroup relations: categorization and comparison. In laboratory settings, categorization is achieved artificially by dividing the participants to two groups according to a trivial criterion. For real groups, social categories are often pre-existent according to race, religion, ethnicity, etc. The mere existence of categories leads to stereotypical perceptions and to some accentuation of intergroup differences, but it is mainly the process of comparison that causes the accentuation effect to occur on self-enhancing dimensions. “By differentiating ingroup from outgroup on dimensions on which the ingroup falls at the evaluatively positive pole, the ingroup acquires a ‘positive distinctiveness’, and thus a relatively positive social identity in comparison to the outgroup. Since the self is defined in terms of the ingroup, this selective differentiation accomplishes a relatively positive evaluation that endows the individual with a sense of well-being, enhanced self-worth and self-esteem” (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, p. 23).

It is not unrealistic to argue that what had been demonstrated for artificial groups with no history and no future is even more true for real life groups. This fact was understood by many scholars who tried to grasp the irrational social forces behind the rise of racist, fascist, and fundamentalist movements. The striving for self-worth by belonging to a strong and glorious “we” is an important force even in the development of “normal” ethnic, religious and national movements.

It is worthwhile noting that Henri Tajfel and his colleagues were not aware that their basic ideas with respect to the significance of self-esteem were not new. Fukuyama (1992) remarks that ideas centering on the individual’s desire for recognition appear throughout the writings of many Western philosophers. Hobbes’
“pride” and “vainglory,” Hegel’s “recognition,” and Nietzsche’s conception of man as the “beast with red cheeks” are synonymous in many respects with Tajfel’s concept of self-esteem. Self-esteem, or “Thymos,” appears in Plato’s Republic. In Book IV, he provides his famous tripartite division of the soul, according to which in addition to Desire and Reason, the soul includes an independent third part, the Thymos, which is the value one sets for oneself, that is, an innate human sense of self-esteem.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AND MINORITY STATUS

Social Identity Theory pays special attention to asymmetric group relations like majority–minority relations. An important assumption of SIT is that membership in a high-status group is desirable because it contributes positively to one’s social identity. Conversely, membership in a low-status group would have negative effects on one’s self-concept and social image (Ellemers, Wilke, & Knippenberg, 1993). This prediction was repeatedly validated in laboratory settings and in field studies, which showed that members of low-status groups evaluate their groups less positively than members of high-status groups (Brown, 1984; Brown & Wade, 1987). In addition, there is ample empirical evidence showing that members of high-status groups identify more strongly with their group than do members of low-status groups (Ellemers et al., 1990).

Social Identity Theory posits that minority members will use various strategies to avoid feelings of low self-esteem. They may leave or dissociate themselves from their low-status group and try to join the high-status group. Another strategy is “social creativity,” according to which individuals may seek “positive distinctiveness” for their group by redefining the dimensions of comparison between their group and the outgroup. Altering the evaluation criteria or the referent outgroup are common “creative” strategies. Finally, low-status group members may choose to directly compete with the outgroup. This is done through mobilizing the group—as a collective—and challenging the status quo.

The specific strategy adhered to by a low-status group member depends, among other factors, on his or her perception of the degree of stability and legitimacy of the status quo, and on his or her perception of the degree of permeability of the group boundaries (Ellemers et al., 1990; Ellemers et al., 1993; Turner & Brown, 1978). Individual mobility to the high-status group becomes more possible when the group boundaries are more permeable. Collective mobility, by challenging the

1Although experimental manipulations of the perceived stability and legitimacy usually assume these dimensions to be independent, it is reasonable to think that they are not. The perception of the status quo as illegitimate by a large number of minority members behooves them to challenge it, thus affecting its perceived stability.
status quo, becomes an option if individual mobility is difficult, and if the minority members perceive the status difference as unstable. Finally, if the minority members perceive the status quo as stable and unchallenged, then their psychological reaction to their inferior situation is often characterized by feelings of low self-esteem and self-hatred. Tajfel (1978b) posited that the reaction of minority members who accept their inferior situation may fall somewhere between two end poles. The first is characterized by withdrawal from the wider society and the creation of a new reference group, with different norms and values, through which members can retain their positive self-worth. On the other extreme, the group may simply begin to disintegrate.

Although insightful, the application of SIT’s analysis to real majority-minority situations is problematic. One major problem lies in the difficulty in making an unequivocal assessment regarding the degree of permeability of intergroup boundaries. Experimental evidence (e.g., Azzi, 1992) shows that while majority members are strongly opposed to sharing power and decision making resources with minority members, they are more willing to adopt a proportionality principle in allocating material resources. This finding is congruent with many observations of real groups showing that ruling majorities allow differential degrees of permeability for different types of goods. Typically, majorities are more resentful in applying rules of distributive justice with regard to the allocation of power and other vital collective resources.

In the remainder of this article we shall focus on the case of the Palestinian minority in Israel.2 At the outset, it is worth noting that the application of the previous analysis to this case yields mixed, nonconclusive predictions. According to the theory, the extreme ethnocentricity of the Jewish majority, and the fact that its ideology is fueled by excluding the minority, should render individual—let alone collective—mobility very difficult to achieve. Even if feasible for some members, individual mobility cannot provide a main route for the entire minority. For such a case, the theory predicts that the difficulty to “pass,” coupled with the perceived illegitimacy of the status quo, will behoove the minority to engage in a collective struggle for achieving an alternative, more just, social contract. This prediction fits well with the internal colonialism model (Memmi, 1965), which posits that the experience of discrimination shared by ethnic minority members will result in ethnic solidarity, in which ethnic culture and pride serve as symbolic forces for promoting social change.

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2The Palestinian minority in Israel (within its pre-1967 borders) includes all Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. It is an indigenous, nonassimilating, community that in December 1996 numbered some 910,000 people, or 16 percent of Israel’s population (Yiftachel, 1999). The historical and political background of this minority and of Palestinian–Jewish relations in Israel is covered in several studies (c.f., Rouhana, 1997; Rouhana & Ghanem, 1998).
Although these predictions are congruent with several results regarding the continuous rise in Palestinian awareness (e.g., Smooha, 1988; Tessler, 1977) they fall short of telling the entire story. For example, consider the Palestinian minority struggle against the State’s expropriation of Palestinian-owned lands. This struggle—which reached its climax during the Land Day\textsuperscript{3} protests in 1976—provides a classical example of a collective struggle in which the material–economic and the moral–symbolic were in unity. Notwithstanding, such fusion between national pride and collective interests was not long lasting. The memorials of the Land Day gradually waned from impressive demonstrations during the first successive years, to quiet, “picnic-like” days in the last several years. Among the reasons behind this process, two seem of special importance: (a) The risky prospects of collective protest—as proven by the violent official reaction to the first Land Day—instigated considerable anxiety among wide portions of the minority, including its leadership. Escalating the minority struggle along the ethnic dimension has been, and is still considered, illegal and hostile to the very definition of Israel as a Jewish state; that is, a State that does not recognize any collective rights for its Palestinian minority. (b) The “stick and carrot” policy of control (Lustick, 1980) vis-à-vis this minority has always assured that any ethnically based collective challenge of the status quo will have negative effects on the minority members’ prospects for individual mobility. In fact, these prospects were considerably improved during the last two decades. Although the comparison between living standards of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis (as measured on various socio-economic scales) reveals a significant, long-lasting, gap, it remains true that the average per capita income of Palestinians in Israel and the upward mobility of lower-middle and middle class strata have increased (Bishara, 1995; Kraus & Yonay, 2000; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1992).

Under these conditions, minority leaders (predominantly members of the middle-class stratum) opted not to escalate an ethnic-based struggle against the State. Instead, they diverted their struggle away from the national dimension and focused on individual and collective civic demands, such as the demand for equal government investment in Arab education and local services. From a theoretical point of view, the minority behavior now fits better in a relative deprivation model (Davis, 1959), as the unsatisfied and frustrated “high-aspirators”—much less the disadvantaged—are now brought to the forefront as victims of discrimination. Demands for developing programs for “gifted” Arab children, and securing positions for Arabs in public offices and academia, gained considerable support and became consensual in the last few years.

\textsuperscript{3}The first “Land Day” protest was organized by the Land Defense Committee and other minority representatives on March 30, 1976. It was forcefully confronted by the police, causing the death of six protesters and the injury of hundreds.
To summarize, it is argued that although SIT theory can be insightful in delineating the possible strategies available to minority members, it does not accurately predict the dominant strategy they might adopt in dealing with their inferior status. For the case of the Palestinian minority in Israel, the previous brief analysis shows that the political and economic constraints of their specific situation caused the minority to divert its dominant strategy away from the route of collective challenge. The relative permeability of the high-status boundaries in some economic and business domains was quite effective in enhancing individual mobility strategies, at the expense of collective ones. This implies that an analysis that accounts for the specific socio-political and economic variables dominating the majority–minority relations is indispensable for understanding such strategies.

On a theoretical level, it is worth noting that the conventional interpretation of SIT is essentially a static one. As such, it renders itself unsatisfactory for capturing the dynamic relations detailed previously between the Palestinian minority and the Jewish majority. We propose a dynamic interpretation of the theory, one that recognizes the dynamic interplay between strategy-choices made by both majority and minority. According to this interpretation, the limits put on the individual mobility of minority members lead them to pursue a collective struggle. This struggle persuades the majority to provide greater opportunities for individual mobility, which, in turn, leads to a decline in collective struggle.

Ethnic minorities and self-categorization

A later reformulation of Social Identity Theory stresses the importance of self-categorization for group formation. The Self-Categorization Hypothesis (Turner, 1985, 1987) posits that in addition to categorizing others, individuals are consciously and actively involved in categorizing themselves. By asserting their membership in a certain group, they perceive themselves as more similar to ingroup members, and in parallel, more different from outgroup members. Turner views the self-categorization process as the core of social identity. Self-categorization, according to Turner, is the process through which individuals become groups.

According to the Self-Categorization Hypothesis, the social identity of each individual is viewed as one that derives from an awareness of the intersection of his or her multiple memberships in all relevant sub-identities. Such multiple identity is an integral part of the self. The unique combination of many identities is what gives each person a unique individuality.

The self-categorization of minority members poses an interesting case for Social Identity Theory and the Self-Categorization Hypothesis. This is because the mere categorization of minority members is complicated by the fact that they belong simultaneously to two categories: their ethnic group, and the State to which they belong as citizens. On the one hand, the conflicting interests of the minority
and the hegemonic majority are bound to increase intergroup conflict, and, consequently, intergroup discrimination. On the other hand, the two groups, by virtue of their common citizenship, constitute one—although asymmetric—superordinate group. The minority’s “crossed category” membership (Deschamps & Doise, 1978), coupled with its assimilation orientation (Tajfel, 1978b), might moderate the perception of intergroup differences by minority members, and motivate them to decrease their social distance from the majority and its hegemonic culture.

The tension experienced by minority members between identification with their ethnic group and identification with the superordinate group (i.e., the mainstream culture, dominated by the majority) does not necessitate a categorical preference between the two identities. According to the “acculturation typological perspective,” minority members may use one of four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, dissociation, and marginalization (Berry et al., 1986; Berry et al., 1989). Consequently, the adopted acculturation mode will affect one’s self-categorization. Minority members who adopt an assimilation strategy will eventually categorize themselves in a manner that emphasizes their assimilation into mainstream culture (dominated by the majority). An integration strategy will result in self-categorization that emphasizes the belonging both to the ethnic minority and to mainstream society. A dissociation strategy will result in self-categorization that emphasizes only membership in the ethnic minority, and a marginality strategy will result in excluding both minority and majority identities from one’s self-categorization. In this case the self may be categorized primarily in terms of other relevant social categories.

**Self-categorization of the Palestinian minority in Israel.** The self-categorizations of Palestinians in Israel provide a test case for the various strategies outlined in the previous section. This can be done by investigating the categorization labels used by members of this minority. The results of several studies that directly tested this issue are far from being consistent. In part, such inconsistency can be attributed to methodological differences, but it can also be attributed to the dramatic changes in Palestinian and regional politics in the last decades, as well as the interrelated changes in majority–minority relations in Israel.

The fluidity in the perception of social identity among the Palestinian minority was given a striking expression in a pioneering study conducted by Peres & Yuval-Davis (1969) on the eve of the 1967 war and immediately following it. In the summer of 1966 the researchers requested their respondents to rank-order a number of relevant identification labels according to their appropriateness for describing their social identity. The results showed that labels, ranked from most preferred to least preferred, were: (1) Israeli, (2) Israeli–Arab, (3) Arab, (4) Palestinian, and (5) Muslim/Christian. In the summer of 1967 a follow-up study was conducted using the same labels. This time the order was (1) Arab, (2) Mus-
lim/Christian, (3) Israeli–Arab, (4) Palestinian, and (5) Israeli. The civic-Israeli identity, which a year earlier had headed the list, was relegated to the bottom.

Results of several subsequent studies indicated a significant rise in national self-awareness, as a growing percentage of minority members used ethnic and national labels for self-categorization (c.f., Rouhana, 1984, 1993; Smooha, 1988; Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997; Tessler, 1977). In parallel, several studies, including some cited earlier, showed that a non-negligible percentage of minority members define themselves using categories that combine their national and civic affiliations. Tessler (1977) found that whereas 70% of his respondents identified themselves as either Israelis (29%) or Palestinians (41%), 23% defined themselves as both Israelis and Palestinians. The most reliable results in this respect were reported by Smooha (1988), who conducted a series of comprehensive studies on a representative sample of the Palestinian minority in Israel (in 1976, 1980, 1985, and 1988). According to Smooha, while in 1975 only 12% of this minority used a “combined identity” label (Palestinian–Israeli, or Palestinian in Israel) to describe their collective identity, the percentage of those using a “combined identity” in 1987 increased to 40%. Smooha interprets these findings as indicative of a rising acculturation of this minority, and suggests that a “new Arab” in Israel has evolved, one who successfully integrates the Palestinian and Israeli components in his collective identity. This “new Arab,” Smooha asserts, is bi-lingual and bi-cultural. He feels solidarity with the Palestinian people but loyalty to the state of Israel. He supports the PLO and aspires for a two-state solution (Israeli and Palestinian states living side-by-side), but sees his future as associated with Israel (Smooha, 1992).

Another finding that seems congruent with a synthetic model for minority identity (Berry et al., 1986; Hutnik, 1991) was obtained by Suleiman and Beit-Hallahmi (1997). They presented a sample of Palestinian University graduates with a list of seventeen attitudes concerning various components of ethnic and civic identities. Attitudes that were related to ethnic identity included statements related to the value one ascribes to the Palestinian cultural heritage and to its cultivation, to the Arabic language and its mastery, and to the establishment of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Attitudes that were related to civic identity included statements related to one’s interest in improving one’s income standard, housing conditions, career opportunities, and giving one’s children the opportunity for higher education (for more details, see Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997).

A Ross ordering method (Ross, 1934) was used for generating and ordering all possible pairs of attitudes. The resulting 136 pairs were then formed as questions that were phrased as follows: “For a certain person with attitude A, what is the likelihood that he/she holds attitude B as well?” Answers were obtained on a 9-point rating scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 9 (most likely). The results obtained on this questionnaire were used to construct the “proximity matrix” between attitudes for each respondent. Using these matrices as input for a multi-dimensional scaling procedure (Kruskal, 1964; Kruskal & Wish, 1978), Suleiman and Beit-Hallahmi (1997)
found that the respondents’ “identity space” could be best described as a two-dimensional space whose dimensions can be interpreted as national-Palestinian and civic-Israeli dimensions.

A re-analysis of the data using an INDSCAL (Individual Differences Multi-Dimensional Scaling) method (Takane et al., 1977; Young et al., 1978) revealed that the sample can be delineated in terms of three main sub-groups based on the different modes used for synthesis between the national and the civic components of identity (Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1996). One uni-dimensional sub-group (18% of the sample) can be classified as a “dissociative.” Its “identity space” was uni-dimensional, which can be defined as a “national” dimension. A second uni-dimensional group (11% of the sample) can be classified as an “assimilative” group, because its “identity space” included only a “civic” dimension. The majority of the sample (71%) can be classified as an “acculturative” group. Its identity space was two-dimensional with national and civic dimensions, but with the former twice as important as the latter.

A strong argument against a synthetic or acculturation model comes from Rouhana’s (1993) accentuated identity model. According to Rouhana, the Palestinian identity is the only identity internalized by the Palestinian minority, whereas the civic-Israeli identity is secondary and exists only in the formal and legal sense. He argues that Israel’s policy toward the Palestinian minority does not present them with an Israeli identity with which they can identify on ideological, normative or emotional levels. A genuine integration of the Palestinians in Israel requires a change in policy toward them, in a way that demonstrates Israel’s recognition of their individual and collective aspirations and needs. Rouhana expects that if such a change does not take place, the alienation of the Palestinian minority from the state will grow.

In fact, some support for Rouhana’s critique is provided by the results of the Suleiman and Beit-Hallahmi (1997) study described earlier. A careful investigation of the components of the emerging Israeli dimension reveals that these components were exclusively instrumental and almost entirely comprised of individual civic interests. These components included the individuals’ interests in improving their income standard, their housing conditions, and in fulfilling their vocational aspirations and securing higher education opportunities for their children. In contrast, the national component was comprised of deeply-rooted cultural and historical elements. In addition, it was found that Israel’s state ideology and its legal and economic policies vis-à-vis the Palestinian minority—as a collective—were perceived as antagonistic to Palestinian national identity.

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4Attitudes related to these issues included attitudes toward Zionism and toward various discriminatory policies, such as Arab land expropriation and discriminatory investment in developing the Arab sector.
More convincing evidence against the acculturation model was obtained in a recent study by Suleiman (in press). In this study, the perception of minority self-categorization by minority and by majority members was tested using Individual Differences Multidimensional Scaling Methods (INDSCAL). One hundred and thirty Palestinian and one hundred and fifty-three Jewish students from the University of Haifa participated in this study. The categories used as stimuli for constructing the perceived identity spaces were: Palestinian, Palestinian in Israel, Palestinian Arab, Israeli–Palestinian, Arab, Israeli–Arab, and Minority member, I myself” for Arab respondents and the label “an Arab resident of the state of Israel living within the boundaries of the Green Line.”

The resulting identity space for the Palestinian respondents revealed that the categories “Israeli” and “Israeli–Arab” were perceived as distant from the “self” identification label, whereas the “Palestinian” and “Arab” categories were perceived as close to the “self” label. This finding is supportive of several previous results (c.f., Rouhana, 1984, 1993; Smooha, 1988; Suleiman & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997; Tessler, 1977) showing that the Palestinian identity is more central to the collective identity of Palestinians in Israel than the Israeli one. More interesting is the finding that the minority’s identity spaces perceived by Israeli Palestinians and Jews were one-dimensional, with one pole defined by the “Palestinian” label and the other by the “Israeli” label. This finding is supportive of the Bipolar Model (Tessler, 1977), because it indicates that both Arab and Jewish respondents perceive the Palestinian and Israeli identities as diametrically opposed.

Another, seemingly contradictory, finding was that the Palestinian sample perceived the combined “Israeli–Palestinian” label as fairly close to their self-identity. The inconsistency between the two findings warrants an explanation. Specifically, how can the Palestinian respondents integrate their national and civic identities while perceiving them as diametrically opposed? The results of the cited study do not provide any conclusive answer to this question. Nevertheless, I propose that a “double marginality” model can account for the ostensibly nonreconcilable findings: Only by being marginal on both (national and civic) identities can the Palestinian minority integrate between these conflicting identities.

The double-marginality explanation proposed here is consistent with Al-Hajj’s (1993) theoretical analysis, suggesting that the Palestinian minority constitute a peripheral group for the Jewish–Israeli society, as well as for the Palestinian society living outside the “Green Line.” The double marginality of this minority enables its members to define their identity in national (Palestinian) terms—and to some extent in civic (Israeli) terms—without the need to commit themselves to either one of the two referent groups. It also enables them to tolerate the friction between the two identities, and even to integrate them, despite the fact that they perceive them as contradictory and conflictual.

The marginality of Palestinians as citizens is embedded in the definition of Israel as the State of the Jewish people. This implies not only that minority members
are denied their right to equal citizenship, but also that this right is ascribed for noncitizen Jews. In fact, most relevant literature seems consensual in asserting the ethnic nature of Israel (c.f., Beit-Hallahmi, 1993; Bourhis et al., 1997; Rouhana, 1997; Saádi, 1992; Smooha, 1990; Yiftachel, 1993) and its exclusive ideology and policy vis-a-vis the Palestinian minority (c.f., Bishara, 1995; Rouhana, 1997; Rouhana & Ghanem, 1998). Defined as the State of the Jewish people, Israel has always held a strong policy against assimilating, or integrating, the Palestinian minority. The exclusion of the Palestinian minority from the boundaries of equal citizenship is exacerbated by the fact that Judaism defines both a religious and an ethnic category. Moreover, Israeli policy has always been firm in rejecting any autonomous status for the minority, thus blocking the option for a dissociated mode of acculturation (Saádi, 1992).

The consequent marginality of minority members as citizens is manifest in almost all aspects of the civic and public spheres, and not only in the discriminatory allocation of public goods. This entails marginalization of the minority, as a collective, from the state culture, myths, and symbols. At best, cultural marginalization takes the form of alienation and absence. More often, it takes the form of devaluing, negative stereotyping, and dehumanizing. Although negative perceptions and negative stereotyping of minorities are—regrettfully—universal phenomena, it should be noted that the Palestinian minority case is more problematic than that of immigrant minorities like Indians in England or Algerians in France. This is because many values of the Zionist ideology, and State collective history, derive their positive valence from excluding the Arab or Palestinian “other.” “Geulat Haadama” (redemption of the land) is a core value of the Zionist ideology that prescribes that the land should be “redeemed” from the hands of indigenous Palestinians who are considered as aliens occupying lands that historically belong to the Jewish people. Another important value is “Kibush Haavoda” (conquering the work) according to which early Jewish settlers sought to exclude Palestinians from the job market. “Redemption of the land” and “conquering the work” are two major examples of positive Zionist ideals having such exclusion at their core.

The reasons behind the marginality of the Palestinian identity are less evident. Although partly attributable to the prolonged isolation of this minority from the rest of the Palestinian and Arab peoples, it is argued that this component of marginality derives mainly from the minority members’ desire to assimilate (as marginal citizens) in Israel. The political and economic marginality of the Palestinians entails a cultural marginality as well. The vacuum created by their alienation from their national culture is partially occupied by their assimilation of a marginal, and distorted, version of an Israeli, ghetto-type culture. Although not self-contained, this culture, with its relatively closed cleavage economy and communal experience, had grown to a level that enabled it to produce a unique type of marginal culture, a breed that is “half Israeli–half Palestinian” (Bishara, 1995). As such, this marginal, relatively
closed, culture has been preoccupied with a regressive reproduction of ethnic folklore, in addition to certain levels of solidarity with the cause and struggle of the wider Palestinian people. The emerging “half Arab–half Israeli” holds only remote resemblance to the acculturative type described earlier (Berry et al., 1986; Hutnik, 1991), nor does he resemble Smooha’s “new Arab,” who successfully integrates the two identities. His double-marginality is internalized and constitutes the core of a diffuse collective self.

It is important to stress here that the State policy through its various institutions, especially its educational system and official media, continues to play a key role in reinforcing the production and reproduction of an “Israeli Arab” marginal culture (Bishara, 1995). In fact, the Palestinian Authority soon discovered the benefits of utilizing the double-marginality of leading Palestinian minority figures, as mediators between itself and various sectors of the Jewish majority.

The double marginality hypothesis raises the following question: how can Palestinians in Israel maintain positive feelings of national pride (as was shown by several studies cited earlier), while accepting their marginality in a state that de-legitimizes their mere existence as a national group?

The observation of the political behavior of Arab political parties, social movements, and community leaders suggests that the Palestinians in Israel try to resolve this contradiction by separating the two conflicting parts of their identity. Such separation is instrumental for maintaining their marginal, dual-identity membership, without the need to experience or reconcile its inherent conflicts. It is interesting to note that a “separation model” for describing the Palestinian minority’s dual-identity was first introduced in the late 1960s by Peres and Yuval-Davis (1969). According to Peres and Yuval-Davis, the Israeli Arabs’ national and civic identities co-exist in total separation, with the Arab identity active in the political and ideological sphere, and the Israeli identity active in the sphere of daily life. The separation between the two spheres is obtained by means of psychological mechanisms such as compartmentalization, and by becoming politically indifferent. In essence, the Peres and Yuval-Davis model is a political passivity model, according to which the Arabs in Israel do not transform their national aspiration to a political agenda.

As I noted some years ago (Suleiman, 1983), subsequent events have provided enough evidence for the refutation of this model, especially in light of the minority’s struggle against the expropriation of Palestinian-owned lands. The isolation hypothesis proposed here is fundamentally different from the one proposed by Peres and Yuval-Davis. It does not assume a shallow and instrumental civic component compared to a deeply-rooted, but suppressed, national component. The suggested reformulation of this hypothesis assumes the assimilation, and internalization, of a marginal civic identity, alongside with a marginal national identity. According to this perspective, separation is functional for achieving harmony and continuity between two internalized, but fundamentally conflicting parts. In addition to achieving a critical stability of the self, it is argued that the separation mech-
anism provides minority members with a reasonable degree of positive self-esteem. It accomplishes this through the accentuation of tangible and psychological gratification derived from each separate identity, while attenuating the negative concrete, and psychological, implications of experiencing their inherent conflict.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

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