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National and Civic Identities of Palestinians in Israel

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ABSTRACT. Similarity measures were obtained from 77 Palestinians living in Israel about 17 attitudes toward their national and civic identities. The symmetric similarity matrices were subjected to a multidimensional scaling analysis. Results showed that (a) the Arabic language and cultural heritage were key factors in the participants' national identity; (b) of two orthogonal dimensions that emerged, a national-Palestinian dimension and a civic-Israeli dimension, the former was judged twice as important; (c) the Zionist movement and Israel's policies toward its Palestinian citizens were evaluated negatively on both dimensions; and (d) political and social aspects of the national identity were evaluated positively on the national dimension but negatively on the civic dimension.

SOCIAL AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH has continually provided evidence of a significant rise in national consciousness among members of the Palestinian minority in Israel since 1967 (Meari, 1978; Smooha 1980, 1988; Tessler, 1977). Although it has been shown that the national identity of this group is gaining ascendancy over its more traditional identities (e.g., familial and religious), all relevant studies have focused on the participants' self-identification rather than on their identity structures. On the basis of reports of self-identification, Smooha (1980) measured the relative centrality of national, civic, and religious identities. Peres (1967) measured the centrality, solidarity, and valence of different labels: Hofman and Rouhana (1976) and Lazarowitz, Hofman, Beit-Hallahmi, and Rouhana (1978) measured the relative importance, attractiveness, and salience of different identities. Besides stressing subjective identification, most studies focused on the affective com-

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ponent of attitudes. In fact, identities were commonly treated as well-defined constructs, with little attention to their cognitive contents. No attempt was made to understand the meaning of being a Palestinian or an Israeli. Christian, Gadfield, Giles, and Taylor (1976, p. 271) expressed a similar observation with respect to the general body of research on ethnic identity by pointing out that "much of the research has focused on affective dimensions with special emphasis on how minority ethnic groups deal with identity in the process of achieving a positive self-image."

In the present study we explored cognitive aspects of ethnic identity by means of multidimensional scaling methods (MDS). Previous studies using MDS methods revealed significant components of ethnic identities for different ethnic groups. For instance, Taylor, Simard, and Aboud (1972) showed that the most salient features of ethnic identity for Anglo-Canadians and Franco-Canadians were language, geographical boundaries, and cultural background. In a follow-up study, Taylor, Bassili, and Aboud (1973) demonstrated that language was the most prominent of the three. Giles, Taylor, and Bourhis (1977) reached a similar conclusion about the importance of language to the Welsh population, and Giles, Taylor, Lambert, and Albert (1976), in a study of ethnic identity in northern Maine, found that language was the most salient dimension for Anglo-Americans, as well as for Franco-Americans with a mastery of French. For Franco-Americans who were not fluent in French, cultural background was the most significant component of their ethnic identity.

Whereas our general orientation was similar to that of those studies, it differed from them in two respects: First, the Palestinians in Israel were viewed here as a minority experiencing a rapid process of politicization, coupled with the development of a strong Palestinian identity (Smooha, 1988); therefore, the hypothesized features of their collective identity included both political and cultural components. Second, with the rise of national awareness, Palestinians are undergoing a relatively powerful process of "Israelization" (Smooha, 1988). We thus hypothesized that because an interrelation exists between the national and civic identities of Palestinians in Israel, both identities needed to be studied jointly, with emphasis on the nature of the relationship between their national (Palestinian) and their civic (Israeli) identities. Although the common conception places the two identities in complete opposition, there is some evidence that they are orthogonal (Rouhana, 1984; Zak, 1976).

Our purpose in this study was to investigate the Palestinian minority's perceptions of the cognitive components of and the relationship between their national and civic identities. An attempt was made specifically (a) to construct a multidimensional space for a set of attitudes about various aspects of the national and civic identities of a sample of Israeli Palestinians and (b) to suggest an interpretation of the obtained dimensions.
Method

The stimuli in the study were perceived attitudes about different features of national and civic identities. The similarities between all pairs of attitudes for each participant served to construct his "proximity matrix" (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). The "proximity matrices" obtained from all participants constituted the input for the MDS procedures for the construction of the identity space.

Participants

The respondents were 77 adult Palestinians living in Israel, all of whom were college graduates ranging in age from 21 to 51 years. Their average age was 30 years. Adults were chosen because national and civic identities are rarely crystallized before adulthood, particularly civic identity, which is strongly influenced by daily involvement in the social and economic activities of the state. The respondents' distribution on relevant background variables was (a) gender—53 males (68%) and 24 (32%) females; (b) religion—51 Moslems (66%) and 26 Christians (34%); (c) marital status—39 single (51%) and 38 (49%) married; (d) region—39 participants (51%) from the Galilee (in the northern part of Israel), 28 (37%) from the Triangle area (in the central region of Israel), and 10 (12%) from the coastal area; (e) place of residence—40 residents (52%) of villages, 28 residents (37%) of Nazareth (the largest Arab town in Israel), and 9 residents (11%) of Haifa (a city of mixed Jewish-Arab population); (f) occupational status—58 salaried professionals (75%), 12 self-employed professionals (15%), 5 unemployed persons (7%), and 2 not reporting their occupational status (3%); (g) political affiliation—32 supporters of Arab parties (42%), 12 supporters of Zionist parties (15%), 14 supporters of extra-parliamentary radical Arab movements (18%), and 19 (25%) unaligned (stating that no existing party or movement represents the interests of the Arab minority in Israel).

Instruments

Attitudes similarity questionnaire. This questionnaire included 17 items regarding various hypothesized components of the national-Palestinian identity as well as components of the civic-Israeli identity. An initial list of 31 items suggested by the authors was rated on a 5-point scale by five independent judges, all researchers in relevant fields, according to the items' relevance to the studied identities. Following are the 17 items receiving the highest average ratings:

1. Supports Israeli recognition of and negotiations with the PLO
2. Supports autonomy for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in accordance with the Camp David agreement
3. Supports the elimination of the state of Israel in its present form and its replacement by a secular democratic state
4. Prefers to live in a Palestinian state
5. Prefers to live in Israel, provided that equal rights are awarded to all
6. Favors acts of land expropriations in the Galilee for the benefit of the
   “Galilee Development Plan”
7. Is satisfied with the quality of services and development given to Arabs
   in Israel
8. Is satisfied with the degree of civic and democratic rights given to Arabs
   in Israel
9. Considers the Zionist movement a national liberation movement for the
   Jewish people
10. Favors the formation of personal relations and friendships with Jews
11. Values the Arabic language and its mastery
12. Values the Palestinian cultural heritage and seeks its cultivation
13. Is interested in improving his/her income standard
14. Is interested in improving his/her housing conditions
15. Values the improvement of the cultural and recreational activities in
   his/her neighborhood
16. Is interested in giving his/her children the opportunity for higher edu-
    cation
17. Is interested in career enhancement and vocational aspirations

A Ross ordering method (Ross, 1934) was used for generating and ordering
all possible pairs of attitudes. This procedure yielded a total of 136 pairs. Each
pair formed a question that was phrased as follows: “For a certain person with atti-
tude A, what is the likelihood that he holds attitude B as well?” Answers were ob-
tained 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 a “proximi-
ity matrix” between attitudes for each respondent. The 77 proximity matrices served
as input for the MDS procedures for the construction of the attitudes spaces.

A biographical questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was written in Arabic
and handed to the respondents by an Arab research assistant, explored several
background variables and also was used to map the sample on the background
variables detailed earlier.

Procedure

In 1983, respondents were selected randomly from a list of Arab college
graduates. All respondents then met personally with a research assistant, who
informed them of their selection as participants in a study conducted by
researchers from the Department of Psychology at the University of Haifa. The
respondents then received a brief explanation of how to fill out the similarity
questionnaire, followed by a request to complete it at their convenience. Upon
completion, they mailed the questionnaires to the business address of the authors. A time limit of 1 month was set for returning the questionnaires; the response rate was about 60%.

Results

Several MDS analyses (Young & Lewyckyj, 1979), allowing the solution’s dimension to vary from 1 to 5, were performed on the participants’ proximity matrices. The results showed that only the one- and the two-dimensional solutions yielded stress values that were significantly small on the $p = .05$ level (Klahr, 1969). Inspection of the one- and the two-dimensional solutions showed that the addition of a second dimension contributed significantly to the interpretability of the solution.

In the two-dimensional solution for the “identity space,” results showed that the first dimension was more important than the second, accounting for about 67% of the total explained variance (see Figure 1). Each point in the two-dimensional space of Figure 1 corresponded to one of the previously listed 17 attitudes toward various aspects of national and civic identities. A hierarchical clustering analysis on the attitude structure (Johnson, 1967) yielded the five clusters marked by the closed areas in Figure 1. Cluster A comprised attitudes about both the cultural aspects (Arabic language and Palestinian heritage) and the political aspects (recognition of the PLO and establishment of a Palestinian state) of Palestinian national identity. The attitude supporting the elimination of Israel and its replacement by a secular democratic state formed a separate cluster (Cluster E) near the “national cluster.”

Whereas Cluster A might be defined as the national identity cluster, Cluster B might be considered a “civic cluster” consisting of attitudes about daily individual interests (improving income, housing conditions, and education; pursuing a career). These interests matched the preference for living in Israel, provided that equal rights are guaranteed (Item 5). Except for the attitude toward Zionism, Cluster D contained attitudes about Israel’s policies toward its Palestinian minority.

An alternative approach to cluster analysis is the attempt to reach a meaningful interpretation of the obtained dimensions: In Figure 2, each dimension is separate, with all 17 attitudes projected on each dimension. Upon examination of the coordinates of the 17 items on both dimensions, two separate but interrelated dimensions became apparent: a national dimension and a civic dimension.

National Dimension

The positive pole of Dimension 1 was defined primarily by a preference for living in a Palestinian state, along with other attitudes related to political aspects.
of national-Palestinian identity (Items 1, 3, and 4). Nevertheless, attitudes related to cultural aspects of national identity (Items 11 and 12) and those related to daily civil concerns (Items 14 and 15) were ascribed moderate positive weights on this dimension. The negative pole was defined by attitudes regarding the state's policies toward the Palestinian minority (Items 6, 7, and 8), the Zionist ideology, and the Camp David agreement (Items 9 and 2).

Therefore, Dimension 1 as a whole might be considered a “national dimension.” Moreover, the attitudes with the lowest coordinates on this dimension were those about preference for living in Israel (Item 5) and those tightly related to daily civic interests (Items 13 and 17).
FIGURE 2. Projections of the tested attitudes on the obtained dimensions.
Civic Dimension

The attitudes' coordinates on Dimension 2 portrayed an almost inverse picture: The positive pole of this dimension was defined by preference for living in Israel provided that equal rights were awarded (item 5) and by daily civic interests (Items 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17). The negative pole of this dimension was determined primarily by opposition to the elimination of the state of Israel. This coordinate was the highest in absolute value of all stimuli coordinates on both dimensions. For these reasons, Dimension 2 might be labeled a "civic dimension."

Relative Importance of the Two Dimensions

Some issues were inversely appraised on the two dimensions. One example was attitudes toward the Arabic language and the Palestinian cultural heritage (Items 11 and 12). Figures 1 and 2 clearly show that those issues were appraised positively on the national dimension but negatively on the civic dimension. This result implied that the participants might be in a state of conflict with regard to those stimuli. A similar, but reversed, situation emerged with respect to the Camp David agreement, which was appraised negatively on the national dimension and positively on the civic dimension.

As reported earlier, the first dimension was twice as important as the second. This implies that the relative importance of each dimension should not be overlooked during speculation about final attitudes toward the various issues in the questionnaire.

Discussion

Language and cultural heritage emerged as major components of the respondents' national identity. This finding is similar to the results of studies of the significance of language for various ethnic groups: Canadians (Taylor et al., 1972), Welsh (Giles et al., 1977), Puerto Ricans (Giles, Llado, Mckirnan, & Taylor, 1979), and Jews in Israel (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992). The importance that Israeli Palestinians ascribe to the Arabic language is at odds with the increasing necessity for them to become bilingual (Smooha, 1980), because Hebrew, Israel's official language, is spoken by the majority of Israelis. Consequently, the use of Arabic is seriously marginalized.

The inclusion of both political and cultural factors in the national identity cluster is explained by the fact that the Palestinian minority, influenced by internal and regional processes, is undergoing an intense process of politicization (Smooha, 1988).

A major finding of this study is that the attitude space is best represented by two orthogonal dimensions: national-Palestinian and civic-Israeli, the former twice as important as the latter. In spite of differences in approach and
methodology, the findings here are in general agreement with similar findings by Rouhana (1984) and by Zak (1976). It is worthwhile noting that in spite of a possible experimenter effect, the respondents were not hesitant to report that they consider their national-Palestinian identity twice as important as their civic-Israeli identity.

Aside from the relative importance of the two dimensions, the last finding implies that an attitude about any relevant issue is the vector sum of two orthogonal components: a national-Palestinian component and a civic-Israeli component. To illustrate the different ways of synthesizing the two components, the overall mean attitudes toward daily civic interests must first be considered. In Figure 2, all stimuli representing those interests (Items 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17) are weighted positively on both dimensions. Consistent evaluations of the two dimensions are also manifest in the attitude toward both Zionism (Item 9) and the state’s policy (Items 6, 7 and 8); all are weighted as highly negative on both dimensions (see Figure 2). The latter finding may indicate that the respondents perceive this policy as hostile not only to their national aspirations, but also to their civic interests.

A more interesting mode of synthesis between the national and the civic dimensions is manifest when evaluations of those dimensions are inconsistent with one another. Such inconsistency is evident with regard to cultural and political aspects of Palestinian identity (Items 4, 11 and 12). Figure 2 indicates clearly that, although these stimuli are ascribed high positive weights on the national-Palestinian dimension, they are ascribed moderate negative weights on the civic-Israeli dimension. The last finding could be conceived as a reaction to Israel’s policy toward Palestinian manifestation of national sentiment: The government equates signs of national awareness with extremism or even enmity to the state; consequently, such displays are usually met with firm acts of punishment (Smooha, 1980).

Finally, a theoretical note is in order. The mapping of attitudes by MDS methods has at least two major advantages: (a) The simultaneous mapping of several attitudes (as stimuli in a multidimensional space) implies that a change in one attitude may resonate across the whole attitude (stimulus) structure, an effect congruent with a schemata approach to understanding attitude structures; and (b) each attitude is represented as a vector in an n-dimensional attitudes space. Interpretation of those dimensions, as attempted in this study, provides understanding of the factors at play in shaping the cognitive content of each attitude. It can also help to predict attitude shifts caused by relevant influential events, if the events’ effect on the relative weight ascribed by each respondent to each one of the space dimensions can be evaluated. The predictive power of this approach must be tested in further research.

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