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Arabs¹ in segregated vs. mixed Jewish–Arab schools in Israel: their identities and attitudes towards Jews

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ABSTRACT

In Israel, the majority of Jewish and Arab students attend ethnically-segregated schools. However, a new phenomenon has emerged in recent decades: ethnically mixed schools – either because they are intentionally designed to be bilingual and multicultural, or the circumstantial outcome of a demographic mix. The research compares the self-identifications of Arab students attending segregated schools and mixed schools of various kinds, and examines their attitudes toward Jews. The findings suggest that students attending mixed schools tend to define themselves in national terms, as social identity theory predicts. In addition, while Arab students attending circumstantially-mixed Hebrew schools tend to define themselves as Israelis, those attending multicultural and segregated schools tend to define themselves as Palestinians. The “Arab” self-definition is common to all research participants. Additionally, Arab students who identify as Israelis tend to have more positive attitudes toward Jews, but no significant correlation between Palestinian self-identification and negative attitudes toward Jews was found.

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Since its establishment, Israel has experienced intense conflict between its Jewish majority and its Arab minority (which constitutes about 20 per cent of its total population).

In recent decades, numerous studies have explored the complicated social identification of Arabs in Israel, characterized by inner tensions between their national (Arab or Palestinian) and civil (Israeli citizenship) identities (Bishara 1993; Mjdoob and Shoshana 2017; Rekhess 2014; Rouhana 1997). While some claim that Arabs feel alienated and discriminated against in Israeli society, leading them to accentuate their Palestinian identity, others argue that Arabs are undergoing a dual process of Israelization and modernization while simultaneously reinforcing their national Palestinian affiliation. A survey conducted repeatedly over the last 30 years (Smootha 1990, 2013) offers an

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interesting example: it asked Arab respondents to indicate how they define their identity, providing no fewer than nine categories to choose from: Arab, Israeli Arab, Arab in Israel, Israeli, Palestinian Arab, Israeli Palestinian, Palestinian in Israel, Palestinian Arab in Israel, and Palestinian. The profusion of alternatives reflects this population's complexity, the multiplicity of loyalties, their status as a minority, and the various identity categories that at times contradict one another while co-existing harmoniously at other times. While a substantial corpus of studies has focused on the social identification of Israel's adult Arab population, the social identification of Arab children and adolescents in Israel remains poorly understood. Nonetheless, the school system plays a vital role in shaping collective identity, with a wide range of schools that vary with respect to national composition and ideology. Encounters with outgroup members – or the lack thereof – particularly among minority groups, contributes to the determination of a collective identity.

In Israel, Jews and Arabs are largely segregated geographically: more than 90 per cent of Arabs reside in Arab-only towns and villages, while the majority of the remaining 10 per cent reside in cities where Jews form a majority (Smooha 2013). A divide is also evident in the school system, with Jews and Arabs attending separate institutions. However, the last two decades have witnessed the emergence of a new phenomenon: mixed schools. A small but increasing number of Arabs living in mixed Jewish–Arab cities (Rabinowitz and Monterescu 2008) and neighbourhoods have entered predominantly Hebrew schools.² I term them “circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools” because they are mixed due to the social and demographic circumstances in their neighbourhoods or townships rather than as a result of a deliberate attempt to promote Arab-Jewish integration. Israel also has several multicultural-bilingual schools founded by private initiatives that acknowledge their student bodies' ethnic and cultural diversity, seek to provide equal recognition to both ethno-national groups as well as various religious groups, and encourage meaningful intergroup contact. The different frequencies and types of encounters between majority- and minority-group children in these diverse schools have the potential to shape not only the collective identities of the minority population (i.e. Arab students), but also their attitudes toward the majority (i.e. Jewish) population.

Therefore, the study's main aim is to explore Arab students' identity choices and attitudes toward their Jewish peers in different types of school: homogeneous, multiculturally mixed or circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools. The study further aims to examine the association between variations in social identification and Arab students' attitudes toward the majority population (more specifically, the desire to maintain distance from or closeness with Jews) across different school contexts.

Drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Tajfel 1978), the study perceives identity as a dynamic feature that develops differently based

on the type of encounter experienced with outgroup members and the ideology on which the encounter is based. This study thus seeks to contribute to the literature on identification processes in multiethnic contexts and their association with the educational system and to shed light on the diversity within the Arab minority group.

Quantitative surveys were delivered to 334 students in 11 schools between 2017 and 2018. Comparing three types of institutions – segregated, multicultural-bilingual, and circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools – shed light on school's context – its composition, policies and strategies, and minorities' identities.

In the sections that follow, I first describe the Israeli education system. Then, I review existing theory and research on the concepts of social identity and social distance, in general and in the context of Israel in particular, followed by the research hypotheses in each section. Subsequently, I present the research design and methodology, the study's results, and discussion.

The context – Israeli education system: islands of integration in a sea of separation

Israel has been, for almost a century, a society riddled with conflict between Arabs and Jews. Arab citizens are a native minority, comprising nearly 1.9 million and 20 per cent of the population, with 80 per cent of them being Muslims. Arabs and Jews are largely segregated geographically and socially. The former's Palestinian origin and identity are considered antagonistic to the state, and there exist religious, cultural, and linguistic differences between them and the latter, all of which have snowballed into socio-political tensions and inequalities between them (Shdema and Martin 2022).

Arabs and Jews also attend separate school systems that have different types of supervision, different languages of instruction (Arabic vs. Hebrew), and different curricula (Abu Asbah 2007; Al-Haj 1995). Over 70 per cent of Arabs and Jewish students attend Arab-only or Jewish-only schools, respectively (Shwed, Kalish, and Shavit 2018), whereas most of the remaining students attend schools that enroll only a handful of the minority group (Arabs or Jews) or special education schools that are more often integrated.

However, in the last two decades, a small but rising number of Arabs who live in mixed Jewish-Arab cities³ and neighbourhoods have entered predominantly Hebrew schools. In 2019, about 34 of the 1,500 public Hebrew schools (excluding religious, Haredi, and special education schools) enrolled at least 10 per cent of Arab students. According to data, over the past decade, mixed schools have become more mixed: the proportions of Arabs in them have increased (Erich, work in progress). This trend is attributed to the rising number of Arab residents in Jewish communities (Rabinowitz and Montescu 2008), along with the flourishing Arab middle class, whose members

seek quality education for their children and acknowledge the importance of acquiring high-level Hebrew to improve educational and occupational attainments in Israel.

As previously stated, I term Hebrew schools that are attended by both Jews and Arabs, Circumstantially Mixed Hebrew schools. These schools promote a homogeneous Hebrew-Jewish-Zionist culture and expect their Arab (as well as immigrant Jewish) students to adapt to the national-cultural and lingual orientation of the school. Arab students are expected to be proficient and interact in Hebrew, join in the observance of Jewish and national holidays, and internalize the Jewish-Zionist narrative. This is generally consistent with Arab parents' aspirations that by attending Hebrew schools, their children will gain fluency and familiarity with the Hebrew language and Jewish-Israeli culture. The Jewish population's profile of the circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools tends to be lower class, with a right-wing political orientation.

In addition to circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools, there are a few Multicultural-bilingual schools in Israel that were founded by private initiatives. Both Jewish and Arab families whose children attend these schools are disproportionately academically educated, upper-middle class, and secular. The schools acknowledge ethnic and cultural diversity among students and seek to provide humanistic values and equal recognition to both ethno-national groups and to the various religious groups (The vast majority of their Arab students are Muslims, but a small proportion are Christians). The schools advocate an ideology of equality and symmetry between the two national groups while emphasizing group nationality. The schools' pedagogy is influenced by various educational models such as "two-way bilingualism, progressive education, contextual peace education, and critical education" (Meshulam 2019a, 2019b, 7). School staff, management and teachers are numerically balanced in terms of nationality, and schools also try to maintain this balance at the student level (Bekerman and Horenczyk 2004; Svirsky et al. 2007). According to the Hand in Hand website – the Centre for Jewish-Arab bilingual Education in Israel – "the separate identities of the Arab and Jewish students are formed distinctly, along with having a relationship with the other⁴". Identity and social relations are at the heart of the multicultural-bilingual project in Israel. In the next section, I review existing theories and research on the concepts of social identity and social distance.

Theoretical and empirical background

Social identity

While personal identity refers to one's sense of self as a unique individual, with unique traits and characteristics, social identity refers to one's sense of

self as a member of a collective group, with traits and characteristics that are shared with other members of the group.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Tajfel 1978), focuses on the situational and relational nature of social identity and emphasizes the social-psychological processes happening in group encounters. Its basic assumption is that all individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity and elevate their self-esteem. However, developing a positive identity might fail when group members compare their group's status to those of another group's members and realize that they are somewhat inferior (Levin and Sidanius 1999). Groups who suffer from low status may develop one of several alternative strategies. In some cases, the minority may accept the hierarchy and their status inferiority, and will not actively challenge the status quo (Nadler 2002; Suleiman 2009). In other cases, some minority members may wish to leave their group to improve their symbolic status, and others may extend their group's boundaries. Alternatively, if minority members view the status hierarchy as illegitimate and if they have the means to challenge it, they may take active measures to transform it and gain equality. Thus, SIT examines identities from a relational and contextual perspective. Identity, therefore, changes and evolves according to social and group context – "situational environments shape the localized meanings of the situationally relevant identities" (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010).

Self-categorization theory (Turner 1985; Turner and Oakes 2015), an offshoot of SIT, focuses on how and when individual associates and defines him/herself according to a particular identity (Haslam and Reicher 2015; Hornsey 2008). The categories become more salient when there are conflicting or oppositional identities, and when the use of a label "maximizes the similarities between oneself and other group members, and heightens one's differences with outsiders" (Huddy 2001, 134).

SIT is manifested in many studies focusing on the "instrumental" or "situational" nature of ethnic identities and predicts which type of encounter that minority group members experience, may cause them to adopt "oppositional" identities. When they identify injustices or racism lead by the majority group, they can oppose them by clinging even more firmly to their ethnic group as a source of identity and pride (Bisin et al. 2011; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Portes and Rivas 2011; Rumbaut 1994; Taylor and Van dyke 2007). A different strategy minority members might choose is adopting a hyphenated identity, which serves as a bridge or mediator between the majority identity and minority origins or ethnicity (Rumbaut 1994; Ari 2012).

Arabs' social identification in Israel

Research on Arabs' identification generally focuses on the inner tensions between the national (Arab or Palestinian) and civil (Israeli citizenship)

components in their identity. Due to the national conflict in Israel, Arab identity is considered a national and not an ethnic identity (Mjdoob and Shoshana 2017).

Some scholars claim that Arabs feel alienation and discrimination in Israeli society, and tend to accentuate their Palestinian identity (Bishara 1993; Rekhess 2014; Rouhana 1997), especially after the 2000 intifada⁵ (Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz 2002). According to Rouhana 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 Arab-Palestinian minority does not present them with an Israeli identity with which they can identify on ideological, normative or emotional levels (Rouhana 1993; Suleiman 2009, 40).

Others claim that Arabs are going through a dual process of Israelization and modernization while also strengthening their national Palestinian affiliation (Smooha 2013). Additional studies add the growing importance of the religious dimension, which encompasses cultural issues, rules, and guidance that shape a lifestyle, and an international dimension that evolved from exposure to global media (Amara and Schnell 2004).

In recent decades, in the spirit of critical sociology and post-colonial paradigm, scholars relate to the "Israeli Arabs" identification as one that is imposed on Arabs by the Jewish-Israeli state, aiming to abolish and suppress their particular Palestinian national identity so that it does not compete with the national Jewish identity (Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz 2002; Bishara 1993; Makhoul 2018; Rabinowitz 1993; N. N. Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2015; Zeedan 2019). The "Israeli Arab" definition is considered a softer and less threatening terminology for the Israeli collective and the Jewish nation-state than the "Palestinian" term.

Empirically, Smooha 2015 indices (Smooha 2017), show that since 2003 Arabs identify less and less as Israelis and more and more as Palestinians. While in 2003, 29.7 per cent defined themselves as Arab Israelis, and 3.7 per cent as Arab Palestinians, in 2015 the percentages were 12.3 per cent and 20.3 respectively, exemplifying the acceleration of the Palestinization process.

Studies on identification in multicultural-bilingual education in Israel suggest that it encourages ethno-national distinctions but promotes cultural tolerance. Bekerman's ethnographic research on bilingual schools in early 2000, (2009) found that these institutions carry an inherent tension. While they aspire to create a just and democratic society, wherein all groups can co-exist, they concomitantly consolidate group identities. Adults in the schools are "captive to hegemonic perspectives of an essentialized identity" (2009, 36) that preserve and reproduce the conflict they are trying to solve. As the children in these schools grow older, religious and national differences increasingly seem to intrude into their interactions, but they do not catalyze conflicts or disagreements.

In a different study Bekerman and Maoz (2005) argue that essentialist language is very common among joint initiatives leaders. Terms such as “strengthening” or “weakening” identity are explicitly spoken and transfer a message to children that the identity of one group requires the denial of the other and produces a contradiction between identities.

However, Bekerman and Shhadi’s (2003) ethnographic research found in terms of identity perception, Arabs studying at the bilingual schools used the “Israeli” identification to describe themselves in addition to “Arab” or “Palestinian”, as opposed to students in the Arab schools, who dismissed this definition (Bekerman, Habib, and Shhadi 2011b; Bekerman and Shhadi 2003).

The literature reviewed above suggests the following hypotheses regarding social identification: First, SIT and categorization theory suggest that Arabs attending mixed schools (multicultural or circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools), where they encounter Jews daily, will have a more salient national identity, and are more likely to strongly identify in national-collective terms such as Arab or Palestinian. Second, compared to Arabs attending circumstantially-mixed Hebrew schools, those attending multicultural schools tend to identify as Palestinians rather than Israelis or Arabs, following their school’s multicultural approach.

Social distance

Social distance represents the desire to maintain distance or closeness with members of an outgroup. In general, group members tend to be driven by homophily, namely, by the tendency to be close to persons who are similar to oneself in a variety of ways including ethnicity, culture, class position, and more (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001). The willingness to decrease social distance and have more contact with outgroup members may be influenced by shared positive experiences that create closeness. Negative experiences on the contrary, might produce distance. The desire to maintain social distance may also be affected by a lack of knowledge about the outgroup or by differences in perception, beliefs, or behaviours (Ata and Sambol 2022).

The basic assumption in Allports’ Contact Hypothesis (Pettigrew 1998) is that lack of contact between rival groups enhances and increases fear and mutual mistrust, while contact dissolves stereotypes. Allport specified four conditions for optimal intergroup contact, to reduce mutual prejudice: equal status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and authority support. Based on criticism and ongoing theoretical developments, Pettigrew (1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) added a fifth ingredient – friendship potential. Accordingly, the contact situation must provide participants with “the opportunity to become friends” (Pettigrew 1998, 76).

Pettigrew's research regarding friendship patterns found that having out-group members as friends is strongly correlated with lower prejudices, and vice versa – those who hold prejudices are less likely to associate with out-group members. In addition, immigrants or minority group members are more likely to seek closeness with majority group members than vice versa, because the former wish to be accepted in the majority society. In the Israeli case, due to the violent conflict between Jews and Arabs, Amir (1969) identified additional conditions that should be met in conflict-ridden societies, if the contact hypothesis were to apply: namely, there should be opportunities for individual-based contact, and initial attitudes should not be “too negative”.

Social distance in Israel

As stated at the opening of the article, in Israel there is relatively strong segregation between Jews and Arabs in all life spheres – geographical, educational, and in the labour market. Although minority members usually have high motivation to interact with majority groups, several surveys conducted in recent years show that Arabs' willingness to interact with Jews is declining (Smootha 2017). Whereas in 2003 66.4 per cent agreed that Arabs should live in Jewish neighbourhoods, and 70.5 per cent favoured allowing Arabs to attend Jewish high schools, by 2015 these proportions decreased to 51.8 per cent and 46.5 per cent respectively. Over the years, a stable 69 per cent of Arabs were willing to congregate and socialize in Jewish public places, but only 38.4 per cent were willing to enroll their kids in Hebrew schools or live in Jewish neighbourhoods. The majority of Arabs wanted to maintain both an Arab cultural lifestyle and enjoy Israeli spaces from time to time.

Another survey conducted in 2021 by the Israeli Democracy Institute (Herman et al. 2022), found that the willingness of Arabs to have a Jewish co-worker dropped from 95 per cent in 2017 to 88 per cent in 2021, as a neighbour from 86 to 64 per cent, and from 88 to 78 per cent as a personal friend.

School differences in social distances between Arabs and Jews were studied by Bekerman, Habib, and Shhadi (2011a) and by Shwed, Kalish, and Shavit (2018). Bekerman and his associates compared and found that students in multicultural schools in Galilee were more knowledgeable about the other's culture and values, and were more tolerant of group differences than their peers in segregated schools. Shwed and his associates compared friendship patterns in multicultural and circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools. They found that ethnic homophily is much stronger among pupils attending multicultural schools than those attending circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools.

The literature reviewed above suggests the following hypotheses concerning social distance. First, as predicted by Contact Theory, Arab students who attend mixed schools, express a stronger desire to interact with Jews than those attending segregated schools. Second, Arab students who attend multicultural schools, which advocate coexistence, have a stronger desire to interact with Jews than those attending homogenous schools and circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools.

The association between identity and social distance

According to SIT, identity and social distance are related and affect each other (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Borrowing Berry's terms (Berry 1997) with regards to acculturation strategies, in social contexts where their identity is not accepted or respected, minority members may adopt either assimilation or separation strategies of acculturation. Under assimilation, they efface their ethnic identity and aim to merge into the majority culture, whereas under separation they accentuate their ethnic identity and distance themselves from the majority culture. Separation may increase social distance and discrimination. However, if minority groups feel that their ethnic identity has legitimacy, they can adopt integration, as an acculturation strategy, according to which they identify with both cultures and are encouraged to interact with outgroup members. However, critics of the Multicultural approach contend that emphasizing differences can enhance social closure since it legitimizes and may essentialize distinctions between ethnic groups (Prashad 2003; Rosenthal and Levy 2010).

Regarding friendship patterns, research has suggested that strong ethnic identity produces seclusion and a lack of desire to connect with the majority, and vice versa – identification with broader identity categories increases the chance to become closer to majority members. Some scholars have suggested an opposite causal direction, arguing that having a majority member as a friend increases minority members' identification with broad and inclusive categories and reduces negative attitudes of the majority group toward minority members (Jugert, Leszczensky, and Pink 2018; Leszczensky 2013). This might derive from a similarity-attraction perspective, suggesting that identifying with the majority/host society indicates a stronger desire to become similar to its members by the minority group (Leszczensky et al. 2016). Data on this association among Arabs in Israel in Smooha's Indices find a correlation between choosing an exclusively Palestinian identity and having no Jewish friends or being harmed by Jews.

As theoretically and empirically demonstrated, social identification and encounters with outgroup members are intertwined.

The literature reviewed above suggests that Arabs who identify as Israelis will have more desire for social contact with Jews than those who identify as Palestinians because they see themselves as part of the broader inclusive category.

Research design

The data was collected during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years, from sixth, seventh, and tenth graders studying in 11 schools in Israel: four multicultural schools, four circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools, and three all-Arab schools.⁶ Six of the multicultural schools that existed in Israel during the years of the survey were elementary. Therefore, I focused my comparison of multicultural and other school types on 6th graders, the oldest age group in elementary schools. However, since identity evolves with age (Erikson 1968, 1963; Phinney 1993), I also studied a sample of high-school students – three all-Arab schools, and one multicultural school (there is only one multicultural high school in Israeli), and one circumstantially mixed school. Table 1 presents the characteristics of schools included in the study.

Hoping to control for socioeconomic and geographic factors, an effort was made to collect data in schools of different types that are similar in socioeconomic composition and geographical proximity to one another. However, this was not always possible because there are very few multicultural and circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools, and they are not often located nearby (out of the entire study sample three Hebrew-mixed schools, two segregated schools, and two multicultural schools are located in mixed cities). In addition, the socioeconomic composition of these schools differs considerably (Shwed, Kalish, and Shavit 2018).

I gained access to four multicultural schools, two of which are part of the Hand in Hand group, and two belong to other NGOs promoting Arab-Jewish coexistence. In general, in most multicultural schools there are more Arab students than Jews in almost all cohorts. In selecting the circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools I tried to match them as closely as possible to the ethnic proportions of the multicultural schools. In three of these schools, 30 per cent or more of the student body were Arab. In the fourth school, there were fewer Arab students, but it was located close to a multicultural school. Two of the all-Arab schools were located in mixed cities, and one was a selective Islamic

Table 1. Characteristics of schools included in the study.

	Arab segregated	Hebrew mixed	Multicultural
Socioeconomic characteristics	Working-class	Working-class	Upper-Middle class
Ideological tenets	Separation	Assimilation	Multiculturalism
Number of schools included in the study	3	4	4
Geographic setting	Arab towns / mixed cities	Predominantly mixed cities	Mixed cities / Arab towns

high school that enrolls students from various parts of the country. In most of the mixed schools, there were only two classes in each cohort. One had only one 6th grade, and another had 3 classes, but we avoided special education classes. In the segregated schools, we avoided special education classes as well and attempted to sample diverse classes concerning academic performance.

Procedures

Data collection was subject to the Ministry of Education's approval and instructions, regarding the questionnaire, anonymity of respondents and parents' permission. The students completed a self-administered questionnaire that included questions on identity and attitudes towards Jews, as well as questions on their socio-demographic background. The questionnaires were developed in Hebrew, translated into Arabic, double-checked by native Arabic speakers, and pretested. The questionnaires were administered to the class set by the researcher (Jewish) and an Arab research assistant, allowing respondents to ask questions in their mother tongue. The response rate was high, about 95 per cent in total, with no differences detected by type of school or grade. Students filled in the questionnaires individually. In the Arab segregated schools, I distributed the questionnaires in Arabic. In mixed schools, the students were allowed to choose between the two versions. Many Arab students in Hebrew schools chose the Hebrew version, as some respondents were more fluent in written Hebrew than in Arabic.

Variables

Social identity

Students' identification can be accounted for in two ways. The first is that schools socialize their students to develop identifications of one type or another according to their agenda or strategy. The second is a selection effect: certain types of families and parents choose certain types of schools, in a way that might reflect their tendencies or political agenda. In the absence of longitudinal data, it is not possible to determine whether the first causal assumption is valid, therefore, I used two measures of social identity:

The first was open-ended questions that allowed respondents the opportunity to describe themselves without dictating categories of answers to them. I employed a modification of the 20-statement test model (Watkins et al. 1997) for children (reducing the number of statements to 7), following Garza and Ringer (1987). The respondents received a page with seven blank lines headed by "I _____" that are to be completed freely.

All answers were transcribed (the Arabic answers were translated into Hebrew) and coded. The respondents provided about 300 self-descriptions, according to the coding. The codes were grouped into five types, as follows: personal descriptions and characteristics (e.g. happy or strong), tastes, things that I do or do not like (e.g. football), relations or people I like or respect (e.g. my family), religious affiliation (e.g. Muslim), and national affiliation (e.g. Palestinian). Each description was coded independently by the researcher and the research assistant, and minor differences were resolved by discussion and consensus. We then created five dummy variables to reflect the categorization as personal, taste, relation, national, or religious.

The second was the degree of identification with a group. Respondents were shown a list of five categories: Arab, Palestinian, Israeli, Muslim, and Christian, and asked to score their sense of belonging to each on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). The main focus of this analysis is national categories rather than religious, as the respondent were not directly asked what their religion is.

Social distance

To assess individual attitudes toward outgroup members, I used the Bogardus social distance scale (Bogardus 1933). The respondents were asked to what extent, on a scale from 1 (not willing) to 5 (definitely willing), they were willing to socialize in places where Jews also spend their time, have a Jewish neighbour in their building or on their block, study in the same class with Jews, host a Jew in their home, and have a Jew as a good friend (Cronbach's Alpha .919). For easier analysis, I created a mean of the five items for each respondent.

Other variables that are included in the analysis are dummies representing the type of schools multicultural, circumstantially mixed Hebrew, and segregated schools, students' gender (boy = 1), grade level (10th graders = 1, 6th–7th graders = 0), and parents' academic education⁷ (Academic parents = 1). In addition, the level of religiosity was measured by an ordinal variable (1 – very religious, 2 – religious, 3 – traditional-religious, 4 – traditional, not so religious, 5–secular). Later on, I reversed that order (very religious was coded as 5, secular as 1).⁸ In order to control for the socio-economic gap between students studying in multicultural schools and those attending Hebrew mixed and segregated schools, I measured standard of living according to children's report.⁹ The effect in the analysis was insignificant, therefore, was omitted. For the same reason additional dummy variable indicating whether the respondent live in a mixed city was omitted from the analysis.

Descriptive statistics for these variables by school type are presented in [Table 2](#). As seen, in multicultural and circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools the proportions of Arab students are 64 per cent and 30 per cent

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for students' sample.

Arab segregated	Hebrew mixed	Multicultural	Arab segregated	Total
Arab proportion (%)	100	30	64	100
Gender (Boys, %)	39.8	49.3	50	43.4
Academic Parents (%)	23.5	13.64	56.38	31.1
Grade Level (tenth grade, %)	67.9	20.45	32.3	51.8
Religiosity 1–5 (mean)	3.40	2.15	3.08	3.16
Class size (average)	24	19	21	
Distribution (%)	58.7	13.2	28.1	100
Respondents (<i>N</i>)	196	44	96	334

respectively. Class size is in the range of 19–24, with an average of 22 students. Since tenth graders were oversampled in the Arab segregated schools (67.9 per cent), it affected the gender composition in these schools (39.8 per cent boys) as the proportion of girls is higher in secondary Arab schools than in primary Arab schools. This might be a result of higher dropout rates among Arab boys than among Arab girls, or since vocational schools were not part of the sample.

The percentage of academically educated parents seems to be the highest in multicultural schools and the lowest in Arab-segregated schools. The percentages in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools are in between.

There is a large gap in religiosity level between schools. In segregated schools, students are the most religious (3.41) in multicultural schools a bit less (3.08) and in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools Arabs are the least religious (2.15). However, since we do not know the religion of the Arab students included in the study (whether Muslims or Christians), we cannot correlate these results.

Findings and analysis

First measurement: open identity statements

Figure 1 displays the proportions of students who responded to the open questions with each of the five different identification categories. Arab students, when answering freely, identified themselves in terms of personal attributes, tastes, and relationships with friends and family. Only a minority mentioned religious or national identifications.

Figure 2 exhibits the national and religious identification of Arabs by school type. The finding is partially consistent with the first hypothesis as the Arab group in mixed schools did tend to distinguish itself compared to segregated schools, moreover in multicultural schools, although the terms of the distinction differed by school type.

Arab students in multicultural schools mentioned their national identification more often than Arabs in other types of schools (26.4 per cent in multicultural schools, 15.9 per cent in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools, and

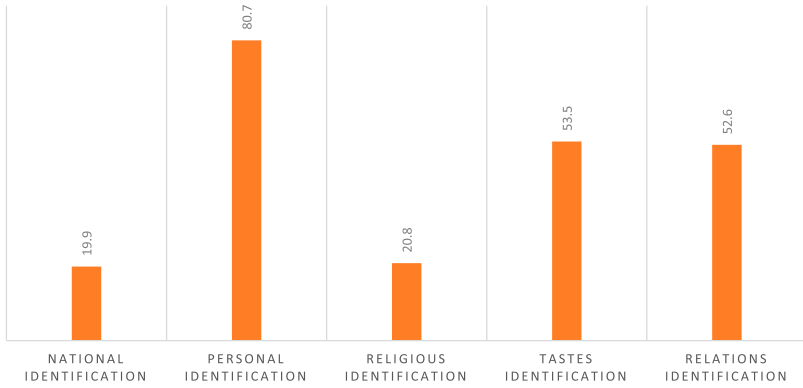


Figure 1. Proportions of Arabs students who mentioned each of the five categories in the open identification question.

17.9 per cent in segregated schools), while Arabs in segregated schools mentioned religious identity more often than their peers in other school types 23 per cent in segregated schools, 18.2 per cent in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools and 17.6 per cent in multicultural schools. The differences between the three groups in the free-form national and religious identifications were statistically insignificant. However, when I examined national identification among the younger group of respondents, it appeared that while 11.11 per cent of the multicultural school students', and 11.43 per cent of the circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools' students mentioned collective attributions, none of the Arab students in the segregated schools did so. The differences between mixed and segregated schools were statistically

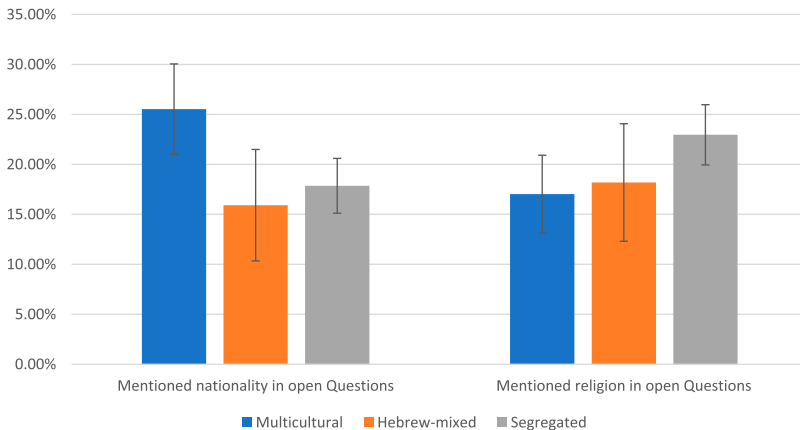


Figure 2. Percent of Arabs who identify by national and religious categories, by school type (S.E).

significant. In the older cohort proportions were 54.8 per cent, 33.3 per cent and 26.3 per cent respectively. Nevertheless, only the differences between multicultural to segregated school students were statistically significant.

While Arabs at circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools used the term “Arab” to identify themselves, Arab students in multicultural and segregated schools used both “Arab” and “Palestinian”.

Sense of belonging

Figure 3 shows the means and confidence intervals of Sense of Belonging by group and school type. The total sample of Arab students rated their sense of belonging to the Arab and Palestinian categories as relatively high (4.40, 3.97) respectively, and their sense of belonging to the Israeli category as relatively low (2.53). When examining the differences between schools, there were statistically significant differences in students’ sense of belonging in all three categories. In the multicultural and Arab schools, students expressed a strong sense of belonging to the Palestinian group (4.12 and 4.30, respectively), as was predicted in the second hypothesis, but their Arab peers in the circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools scored it much lower (2.07). By contrast, students in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools exhibited a greater sense of belonging to the Israeli category (4.17), much higher than in the multicultural and segregated schools (2.41 and 2.24). The degree of belonging to the Arab category, which is considered politically neutral, was quite similar for all three types of schools.

Table 3 presents a binary logistic regression estimating differences among school types for Arab students’ sense of belonging to the Arab, Palestinian,

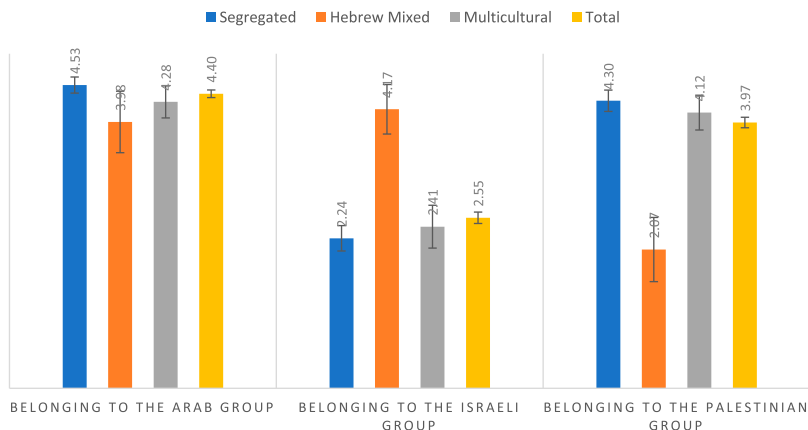


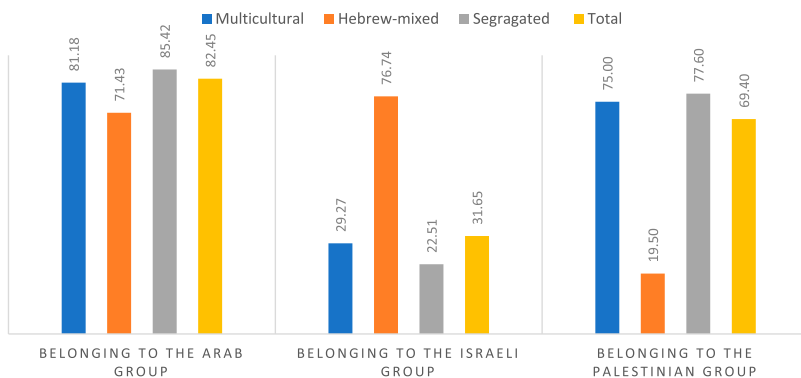
Figure 3. Mean sense of belonging of Arab students to Arab, Israeli and Palestinian groups by school type (C.I).

Table 3. Binary logit regressions identification as Arab, Palestinian, and Israeli among Arab students (S.E) $N = 313$.

	Belonging to the Palestinian group	Belonging to the Israeli group	Belonging to the Arab group
Age	-.021 (.308)	-.826* (.299)	-.328 (.352)
Multicultural School	-.172 (.358)	.295 (.350)	-.232 (.410)
Hebrew Mixed school	-2.189* (.490)	1.787* (.461)	-.464 (.498)
Male	.162 (.283)	.099 (.279)	-.147 (.311)
Religiosity	.341* (.128)	-.169 (.126)	.394* (.146)
Academic parents	.319 (.324)	-.447 (.330)	.129 (.360)
Constant	-.023 (.531)	-.121 (.526)	.739 (.598)
Pseudo R^2	15.7%	15.5%	4.2%

and Israeli groups, controlling for respondents' age, gender, religiosity, and parents' education.

The degree to which respondents expressed a sense of belonging was recoded into binary categories representing high and low senses of belonging (1, 2, 3 = 0; 4, 5 = 1). The ordinal variable was transformed into a binary one for the purpose of regression analysis. I had few options – the first was to keep it ordinal, however reading and understanding this type of regression is less intuitive. The second was to use linear regression, however, the five-level Likert scale can be considered as too short for it. The third option which I eventually chose was transforming the scale to a binary variable. It is important to mention that the results in all three types of analyses were similar and showed school importance in sense of belonging. Figure 4 presents the frequency the binary variable of the sense of belonging to different groups by school type.

**Figure 4.** Frequencies of Arab students ranking high sense of belonging to Arab, Israeli and Palestinian groups by school type.

The results were consistent with the descriptive data. Arab pupils in circumstantially mixed schools had higher odds of having a stronger sense of belonging to the Israeli category and a weaker sense of identifying as Palestinian, compared to their peers in the multicultural and Arab segregated schools. Religiosity was associated with a higher sense of identification as Arab and Palestinian. Parents' education and gender do not affect ethnic identification significantly.

These results suggest that Israeli or Palestinian identification may not be related to having contact with Jews, as both multicultural and circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools' students have daily interactions with Jews and make completely different identity choices. Evidently, a different assessment is necessary, perhaps one related to students' political perceptions or the school's agenda.

As mentioned in the methodology section, selection effect cannot be ruled out, meaning certain types of families and parents choose certain types of schools, in a way that might reflect their tendencies or political agenda. In the absence of longitudinal data, it is not possible to determine whether there is a causal relation between school type and social identification.

Nevertheless, the fact that Arabs at mixed schools tend to emphasize their national identification when asked freely to describe themselves, to a greater degree than their peers at segregated schools, reinforces social identity theory, which holds that encounter between groups contributes to a more marked and salient social identity.

Attitudes toward interaction with Jews

Figure 5 shows the means of the attitudes expressed by Arabs toward interaction with Jews, by school type.

The willingness to interact with Jews was lowest in segregated schools and highest among Arabs in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools. Arab students attending multicultural schools differ significantly in their attitudes from their Arab peers in both circumstantially mixed Hebrew and segregated schools. Their desire for contact is higher than among Arab students at segregated schools, but it is still lower than among students at circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools. These results are partially in line with research hypotheses – as predicted by Contact Theory, Arab students who attend mixed schools express a stronger desire to interact with Jews than those attending homogenous schools. However, the following hypothesis, stating that Arabs attending multicultural schools will have higher desire to interact with Jews compared to circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools was refuted. This resonated with the findings of Shwed et al., according to which, when juxtaposing Contact Hypothesis and Social Identity Theory, the second has

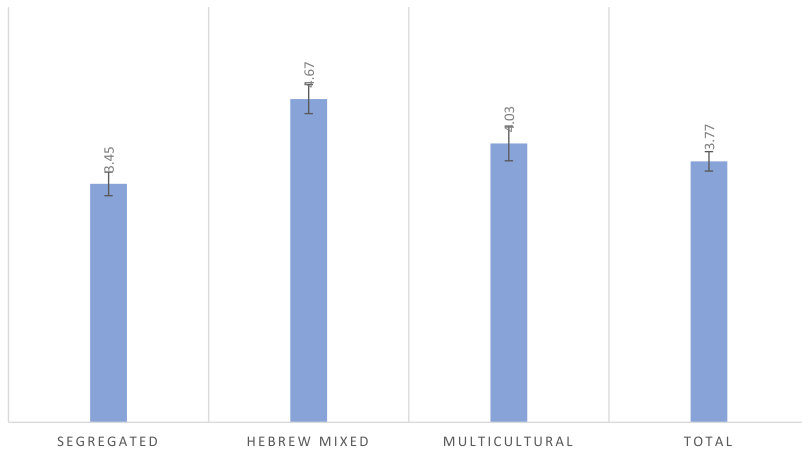


Figure 5. Desire for interaction among students with outgroup members by school type (C.I.).

the upper hand. Meaning, although multicultural schools fulfill the conditions for optimal contact suggested by Contact Hypothesis, there are less cross-national friendships than in Circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools. Similar to what Bekerman showed in his research “Identity vs. peace, Identity wins” (2009), in multicultural schools where recognition in multiple identities is emphasized along with encouraging relations between Jews and Arabs, it seems that the pendulum is tilted to the first.

Correlation between students’ identification and attitudes toward Jews

To examine the association between identification and social distance, as indicated by attitudes regarding socialization with Jews, I used linear regression (Table 4) with two models. Segregated schools were the reference category. Model 1 controls for school type, age group, gender, parents’

Table 4. Linear regression of social distance from Jews (S.E) $N = 304$.

	Model 1	Model 2
Multicultural School	.482* (0.161)	.448* (.154)
Hebrew Mixed	1.159* (0.217)	.828* (.231)
Age	.278* (0.137)	.394* (.132)
Boys	-.131 (0.124)	-.155 (.119)
Academic Parents	.*312 (0.142)	.*376 (.137)
Religiosity	-.229* (0.058)	-.205* (.057)
Belonging to the Palestinian Group		.011 (0.50)
Belonging to the Israeli Group		.237* (0.43)
Constant	4.017 *(0.246)	3.277 * (.329)
R^2	21.2%	24.2%

education and religiosity, in order to examine demographic and school type correlation. Model 2 adds identification variables as explanatory variables for positive attitudes toward Jews.

The results show that studying in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools contributes most to positive attitudes toward contact with Jews, much more than studying at multicultural or segregated schools. Age appears important suggesting that tenth graders hold more positive attitudes towards Jews than younger respondents. The level of religiosity significantly reduces positive attitudes, which corresponds with literature on the association between religion and social closure (Güngör, Bornstein, and Phalet 2012). Arab boys tend to have less positive attitudes toward contact with Jews, however, this reduction was not statistically significant. This finding might be explained by the argument that since girls are more exposed to oppression in conservative cultures, they wish to distance themselves from the “traditional” gender roles and, therefore, might feel closer to the majority’s culture and members (Rumbaut 2005). Having academically educated parents contribute to positive attitudes towards Jews.

Model 2 adds the identification measurement (sense of belonging to the Israeli/Palestinian group) and shows that identification as an Israeli significantly increases the odds of having positive attitudes toward contact with Jews. However, identification with the Palestinian group decreases positive attitudes toward contact (but the coefficients are very small and statistically insignificant). The effects of mixed schools remain positive and statistically significant in both types of schools. The effects of age, gender, parents’ education, and religiosity are similar to the first model and (except for gender) are significant. The explained variance in this model increased significantly.

The hypothesis concerning the relations between identity and attitudes is partially confirmed, as Arabs who identified as Israeli expressed more positive attitudes toward contact with Jews. However, those who identify as Palestinian are not significantly different from those who identify as Arab in terms of their attitudes toward contact with Jews.

Discussion

This article examines the social identifications and attitudes toward Jews among Arab students who attend three types of schools: segregated, circumstantially mixed or multicultural bilingual and investigate whether social identifications and attitudes correlated with each other and with other variables, such as socioeconomic status, education, religion, and religiosity.

The principal findings of this study reveal inner fragmentation within Arab society. Arabs who study at circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools tend to identify as Arabs and Israelis, two categories perceived as less oppositional in the current Israeli political climate. The Arab identification marks their

ethnic uniqueness, on the one hand, and the Israeli identification denotes an inclusive civil component, intimating their desire for integration. Arab respondents at multicultural or segregated schools, by contrast, tended to identify as Palestinian and eschew the Israeli civil component. Indeed, Palestinian identification is considered a negation of one's Israeli identity and a radical political act (Rabinowitz 2002). In practice, the two definitions contradict one another, and Arab students choose sides that vary by school type. In circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools, Palestinian identification is supposedly less legitimized because the ideology of the school is dominated by Hebrew–Jewish–Zionist values. Conversely, in multicultural schools that emphasize the national distinction and aim to empower the minority groups' identity, a Palestinian identity is considered desirable, so Israeli identification is relatively less dominant. An Arab identity is common to all students in all school types, which suggests that this definition goes hand in hand with both Israeli and Palestinian identifications. In addition, those who feel closer to an Israeli rather than Palestinian identification can still mark their distinction from an Israeli identity in a more ethnic manner and not completely assimilate.

This identificational distinction between both types of mixed schools, along with the similarity between multicultural and segregated schools, supposedly affirms that Social identity theory that predicts different identifications according to the type of encounter between social groups and the encounter's ideology (Shwed, Kalish, and Shavit 2018).

While in the multicultural schools minority students feel their Palestinian national identity is desired, in circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools that promote a Hebrew–Jewish culture Arab students are sometimes considered a burden. However, as mentioned before, the research data cannot determine a causal effect, since parents might choose certain schools, related to their social class, education or political affiliation. Meshulam's study on parents' in multicultural schools choices (2019a) claims that there is a difference between middle- and working-class parents, since the first "are strategic in their educational choices in an effort to improve their class position, whereas the working-class are less strategic in their consumption choices and practices regarding their children's education (Meshulam 2019b, 252)". Nevertheless, the current research might suggest that working-class parents who enroll their children in Hebrew schools are strategic decision makers as well in their attempts to give their children a good education that fits their national identification. Arabs from the lower classes who choose Hebrew schools might perceive the integration with Israeli culture and identity as a source of power and strength that will enable their children to mobilize in Israeli society, help them be more fluent.

Mjdoob and Shoshana, who studied Arabs' coping mechanisms with stigmatization in Jewish-dominated workspaces (2017), differentiate between

two types of Arabness. The first is what they call “Exaggerated Arabness”; “an Arabness that is annoying or even stressful for Jewish colleagues” (2017, 162) that might include political talk. The second is “Palatable Arabness”; a “disciplined Arabness with specific content, such as ‘exotic events’ – particularly talk” (2017, 167), about Arab culture (especially weddings and food) and the condemnation of cultural and political events affiliated with Islam (particularly terrorist attacks and murders related to family honour). Shoshana and Mjdoob claim that although both types of Arabness are available, professional Arabs’ position as a minority “defeated their political agency, obligated them to be palatable Arabs, and required them to express apolitical subjectivity” (177).

At first sight, this logic can be translated into the schools’ case study; Arabs who study in Hebrew schools are forced to pass as palatable Arabs and identify in less threatening, less political, and more cultural terms, as they are an unwanted minority. Conversely, their peers from multicultural schools felt comfortable expressing their Palestinian identity, similar to their friends in segregated schools. However, the school case opens additional interpretations that challenge the perception that Palestinian identity is the only authentic identity, while other types identifications result from false consciousness or oppression. It seems that Arabs who study in Circumstantially mixed schools are living mostly in mixed cities and their encounter with Jews and Hebrew-Israeli culture happens daily. In addition, they belong to the same social classes such as the Jews in their schools, therefore, might feel more attached to Israeli identification. Palestinian identity, therefore, doesn’t give them the same social reward that upper-middle class Arabs get.

The different identifications in mixed schools are interesting considering the friendship patterns found by Shwed, Kalish, and Shavit (2018), who identified more homophily among students in multicultural schools than among their peers at circumstantially mixed Hebrew schools. Their conclusion that social identity theory prevails over the contact hypothesis fits this finding. Although Arab students in multicultural schools are part of an institution that respects and cherishes both cultures, in addition to their daily equal encounters with Jews, the emphasis on identity might strengthen their distinction – both in their identities and attitudes.

Consistent with existing theories, it appears that identification with the majority group increase the desire to have contact with its members. Thus, the mission of the multicultural schools is, therefore, complex: they intend to develop and preserve the distinct identities of their Arab students, while also reducing social distance among them. These schools do succeed to a certain extent because their students have more desire for interaction with outgroup members than their counterparts at segregated schools. Since our data found that social distance is related to identification with the Israeli component among Arabs, a further inquiry is needed in order to

examine whether Palestinian identification damage the desire to interact with Jews.

The results of this study contribute to a more sensitive understanding of social identification, the inner fragmentation within Arab society, and its relation to different types of educational settings. This study however invites more thorough research on the connection between demographic factors (education, income, religion and religiosity) and the varying strategies adopted by minority group parents.

The most important limitation of this study is the weakness of cross-sectional studies which makes causal conclusions difficult due to a possible selection bias, highlighting the need for longitudinal studies to clarify the nature of developmental effects of schools' ideology on students in terms of social identification and distance. In addition, the study cannot distinguish between 'school effects' and 'neighbourhood effects' since majority of mixed schools sampled are not located in the same towns.

Notes

1. The main research question of the study concerns the social identification of the Arab minority in Israel. Any term I use to describe this group as a researcher carries a political meaning and agenda that are inevitable (Rabinowitz 1993). Nevertheless, as the research will show, 'Arab' is the most common identification / component of identity, among most of the members of this group, therefore I use this term throughout the paper.
2. The Israeli school system consists of four tracks – Hebrew state schools, Jewish religious state schools Haredi schools (all three attended by Jews) and Arab state schools.
3. The term "mixed cities" is used here to indicate cities in Israel with a significant proportion of Arab residents in their population. Arab-Jewish cities in Israel are Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, Lydda, Ramla and Jerusalem (Falah, Hoy, and Sarker 2000).
4. <http://www.handinhand.org.il>.
5. The 2000 intifada/second intifada describes a period of intensified Israeli-Palestinian violence – began in September 2000, and lasted for years. During the first month, many support demonstrations were held among Arab Israelis, in which thirteen Arab citizens were killed by the police forces.
6. I also collected data in 3 all-Jewish schools but, since this paper concerns Arab students, the data for Jews are not included in the analyses.
7. Students were asked whether each of their parents had attended university/college, allowing them to answer yes, no, or I do not know. A high rate replied that they did not know (25.4% on mother's education, 29.7% on father's education), which is common (Engzell and Jonsson 2015), as young children do not always know their parents' level of education. Parents' education is represented by a dummy variable indicating that at least one parent completed higher education. The complement represents "no parent did complete higher education", as well as the "don't know" responses. We also created a dummy variable representing the "don't know" responses but found that its statistical effects do not differ significantly from those of "no higher education". We

concluded that responses of “don’t know” are more likely among respondents whose parents did not attend higher education.

8. In addition, a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent lives in mixed city was measured but had insignificant effect on the analysis therefore was omitted.
9. In order to measure standard of living, respondents were asked the following eight questions: Does a cleaning person worked in their home; Had they travelled abroad in the last two years; Whether their family had a vacuum cleaner, a dishwasher, a dryer, air conditioning, and a tablet or PC. Responses were coded as 1 representing yes, and 0 representing no. Then I created an index that summarized the 1’s weighted by their relative scarcity in the sample and calculated for each respondent its average. That is, in the scarcity index of standard of living, each item was given a weight calculated as $1-p$, where p is the proportion of households in the research sample who possess the item (Semyonov and Gorodzeisky 2004; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 2001).

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