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CONSTRUCTING INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY WITHIN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: THE CASE OF YOUNG ARABS IN ISRAEL, GRADUATES OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Abstract:

Studies on Arab society as a minority group in Israel, most often deal with the role of identity in the Arab-Israeli conflict and minority-majority relations. While the fact that Arab society in Israel is a minority ruled by a Jewish majority is of great importance, it is not the sole factor that influences and shapes processes within Arab society. As such, this study examined the intra group relations within Arab minority in Israel.

Identity touches on how individuals and societies perceive themselves within conflict, and it also forms a link between the individual and society (Burke & Stets, 2009). The present study examined the conflict between the individual identity and the social identity of young Arabs, graduates of alternative education, that encouraged them to intellectually and normatively differentiate themselves from the Arab society. Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 young men and women from the Arab society, Christians and Muslims, aged 18-25. The interviews were analyzed using two combined methods: content analysis and structural analysis.

The findings suggest that the alternative educational experience fostered a normative intra-group conflict, and identity conflict at the individual level. Findings: a) Individual identity was constructed within Alternative education as "incubator", saturated with dialogue and critical pedagogy. b) Meeting traditional Arabic society, the young people face ideological and behavioral gaps. c) Identity conflict accrue and escalate between their individual identity and their social identity. d) The young cope with conflict using four main strategies: Verbal dialogue, "Dialogue through actions", Placation and Avoidance. Each strategy is used according to a specific component of the conflict. Apparently, constructing an identity with individualistic characteristics within traditional Arab society is accompanied by a process of socialization and loyalty to the educational experience, while accompanied by acute conflict between young Arabs and their own traditional society.

Keywords:

Conflict, Identity, Intragroup relations, Alternative education, Individualism, Arab society

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