In the Shadows of Inclusion

An exploration of the experiences of Palestinian Arab undergraduate students in Israeli higher education



Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation by stand-alone papers at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford

Lamma Mansour

Word count: 48533

(excluding abstract, references, and appendices)

Total word count: 73913

Green Templeton College

February 2024

ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an exploration of the experiences of Palestinian Arab undergraduate students who possess Israeli citizenship (PAIs) as they navigate the landscape of higher education (HE) in Israel as an ethnonational minority group on campus. While there is some knowledge about the paths of PAIs to HE, there is currently limited research concerning their experiences once they enrol in academic institutions. Adopting an iterative sequential mixed-methods design and consisting of three distinct papers, this research utilises an anti-deficit lens to examine the multifaceted dimensions of the educational journeys of PAI students within the Israeli HE system.

The first paper uses data from focus groups and a survey to investigate the pivotal phase of transitioning into HE for PAI undergraduate students, uncovering a multifaceted experience of academic, physical, social, and cultural disorientation. It suggests that over time, this disorientation transforms into a persistent sense of lagging behind their peers. Within this context, the paper highlights the structural barriers faced by PAI students, originating from larger systemic discrimination in Israel. The findings suggest that these barriers manifest in three key areas: language, age, and finances, hindering their academic progress. Simultaneously, PAI students demonstrate resilience and determination as they strive to succeed despite these challenges. The paper also explores variations among different subgroups of PAI students, illuminating how certain demographic and academic factors shape their experiences.

The second paper adopts Hurtado and colleagues' (1998) racial campus climate framework as the analytical lens to examine PAI undergraduate students' perceptions of the ethnonational campus environment at their academic institutions. Findings from the same data used in the first paper indicate that campuses are often viewed as foreign, unwelcoming and segregated

with little interaction among different ethnonational groups, forcing PAI students to expend time and energy negotiating their presence on campus. In response to this campus climate, PAI students exhibit resilience by creating pockets of belonging, asserting their identities, and actively contributing to their home communities. They also express a strong desire to bridge the divide with their Jewish-Israeli peers, and to foster connections. Similar to the first paper, this paper explores the differences between PAI students attending research universities and those attending academic colleges.

The third paper examines the challenges encountered by PAI students during times of turbulence and violence, with a focus on the violent events of May 2021, using interviews with students, lecturers, and members of civil society organisations. Through a constructive grounded theory approach, the findings of this research indicate that students' experiences of various forms of violence led to a concretisation of the wider ethnonational struggle. In response, they describe withdrawing from their campuses both physically and mentally, and mobilising with and in their communities to address the needs that were not met by the official authorities. PAI students' perceptions of their institutions' responses to national events are characterised by intense cynicism and accusations of a partial and selective democracy, mitigated by the compassionate individual actions of some faculty members accompanied by practical assistance.

Collectively, this dissertation weaves together a comprehensive narrative that sheds light on the multifaceted experiences of PAI undergraduate students as an ethnonational minority group within Israeli HE. By adopting an anti-deficit lens, this research reframes the discussion, shifting the focus from perceived deficits to students' capabilities and potential as well as to the proactive steps that HE institutions should take to promote the success and well-being of PAI students. Ultimately, by focusing on this specific minority group, this dissertation contributes to the global discourse on diversity and inclusion in HE as it broadens

the understanding of the complex interplay between multiple dimensions of diversity, including ethnicity, citizenship, and socio-political context, and how they shape educational experiences while acknowledging and making space for students' agency.

ملخّص الأطروحة

تَتتبّع هذه الأطروحة تجارِب الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين مواطني إسرائيل (فيما بعد: العرب الفلسطينيين) في التعليم العاليّ الإسرائيلي كأقلّية اثنيّة-قوميّة. هنالِك وفرة من الأبحاث التي تختصّ في مسار الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين للدخول للتعليم العاليّ، لكنّ الدراسات التي تتعلّق في تجاربهم بعد الالتحاق بالمؤسسات الأكاديمية لا تزال ضئيلة. في ثلاث مقالات وبعَدَسة مضادّة "لِرؤية العجز"، تتبنّى هذه الاطروحة نهج الأساليب البحثيّة المختلطة المتسلسلة والمتكرّرة لِبحث الجوانِب المتعدّدة لِتجارِب الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين في جهاز التعليم العالي الإسرائيليّ.

يدمج المقال الأول بين بيانات مُستقاة من مجموعات نقاش مع طلاب وبيانات من استطلاع رأي ليتقصّى مرحلة الانتقال المحوريّة للطالب العربي الفلسطينيّ عند دخوله لِجهاز التعليم العاليّ الإسرائيليّ. يفيد البحث بأن تجربة الانتقال تتسمّ بالارتباك الاكاديمي، المكانيّ، الاجتماعي والثقافيّ، والذي يتحوّل مع الوقت لشعور دائِم بالتأخّر عن الزملاء في التعليم. يلقي المقال الضوء على العقبات البنيويّة التي يواجهُها الطلاب والتي تنبع من سياق التميز المُمَنهج ضدّ المواطنين العرب الفلسطينيين في إسرائيل بشكل أوسع. تظهر هذه العقبات في ثلاث مجالات اساسيّة: اللغة، الجيل والحالة الاقتصادية، وهي تعيق تقدّم الطلاب الأكاديمي. في ذات الوقت، يسعى الطلاب للنجاح بالرغم من التحديات بإصرار وبِمرونة. يفحص المقال ايضًا الفروقات ما بين مجموعات مختلفة من الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيين، ويُظهر بذلك كيف تؤثّر عوامِل اكاديميّة وديموغرافية معيّنة على تجارِبِهُم.

يَرتَكِز المقال الثاني على الإطار النظريّ المسمّى "بالمناخ العِرقي في الحرم الجامعي" الذي وضعته هرتادو وزملائِها لِتحليل نظرة الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين للمناخ الإثني-قوميّ في الحرم الجامعيّ في مؤسساتهم الاكاديميّة. تفيد البيانات (ذاتَها المُستخدَمَة في المقال الأول) بأن الطلاب يرَون البيئة في الحرم الجامِعي كغريبة، غير مُرَحِّبَة ومَعزولة بِحيث انّ المجموعات الإثنية-قوميّة فيها لا تتفاعَل الواحدة مع الأُخرى، مِمّا يجبُر الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين أن يبذلوا الكثير من الوقت والطاقة في التفاوُض بشأن شروط وجودهم في الحرم الجامعيّ. كردّة فعل على هذا المناخ في البيئة الجامعيّة، يُبدي الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيين قُدرة على التكيّف والتأقلم عن طريق تشكيل بُؤَر مِن الانتماء، الإصرار على هويّتهم، والمساهمة بشكل فعّال لِمجتمعاتِهم. يعبّر الطلاب ايضًا عن رغبة قويّة في التواصل مع زملائهم اليهود الإسرائيليّين. يبحث المقال ايضًا، على شاكلة المقال الأول، في الفروقات ما بين الطلاب العرب الذين يتعلّمون في الجامِعات، واترابهم في الكلّيات الأكاديمية.

امّا المقال الثالث فيُعالج التحدّيات التي يواجهها الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيين عند اندلاع اضطرابات قوميّة عنيفة، ويسلّط الضوء بشكل خاصّ على احداث ايّار 2021 عن طريق مقابلات مع طلّاب، مُحاضرين وأعضاء جمعيّات مجتمع مدنيّ. تفيد نتائج هذا البحث بأن تعرّض الطلاب للعنف (بأشكاله المتنوّعة) أدّت لتحوّل الصراع الإثني-قوميّ لواقِع ملموس، مِمّا دفعهم للانسحاب

جسديًا ونفسيًا من البيئة الجامعيّة، والتحرُّك بشكل عفويّ ومنظّم داخل مجتمعاتهم المحلّية لتسديد الاحتياجات التي لم تلبّيها السلطات الرسمية. تتسمّ نظرة الطلاب العرب لمواقِف مؤسساتهم الأكاديميّة في المواضيع القوميّة بالتهكّم الشديد واتّهامها بالديموقراطية المُنتَقَصة الانتقائية – وهو شعور تخفّف من حدّتِه المُبادرات الشخصيّة الفرديّة المُتعاطفة من قِبَل بعض المُحاضرين والتي ترافقها مُساعدة عمليّة ملموسة.

تنسِج هذه الأطروحة بمُجمَلِها سرديّة شامِلة لتجربة الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيين كأقلية اثنيّة-قوميّة في التعليم العالي الإسرائيلي. من خلال استخدامها لِعدسة مضادّة "لرؤية العجز"، تُعيد هذه الأطروحة تأطير الموضوع من نقاش يدور حول ما يُظنّ انّه نقص في الطلاب انفُسِهم لِحوار مُحتَرِم يقدِّر إمكانيّات الطلاب وقدراتِهم، وهي تُشدِّد بِهذا على الخطوات الفعّالة التي على المؤسسات الأكاديميّة بأن تتخذها لتعزيز نجاح ورفاه الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيين. من خلال التركيز على هذه المجموعة من الطلاب، تُساهم هذه الاطروحة في الحوار العالميّ عن التعدّدية والاحتواء في سياق التعليم العاليّ وتوسّع المعرفة بِما يختصّ في العلاقات ما بين الجوانب المختلفة للتنوّع، بما يشمل الإثنية، المواطنة، والسياق الاجتماعي-السياسي وكيفيّة تأثيرهم على التجربة الطلابية، في حين تقرّ ايضًا بِوكالة الطلاب وتوفّر لهم مساحة لصنع التغيير بأنفُسِهم.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation stands as a testament to the kindness, wisdom and generosity of a community of people who have walked with me throughout my DPhil journey.

First, I am indebted to all those who participated in this research and entrusted me with their experiences. Your strength and commitment have continually inspired me – I hope I carried your voice well.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jane Barlow, whose wise, calm and generous guidance was vital in producing this thesis. Thank you for always finding the time to closely read my work and provide insightful comments at each step of the process.

I was incredibly blessed to have not one, but three homes during my time at Oxford: Rhodes House, the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, and Green Templeton College.

The support of the Rhodes Trust far exceeded funding for an educational opportunity – the Rhodes House team was my first port of call in any of the numerous challenges I encountered at Oxford, and I am so grateful that they provided a listening ear and a helping hand at every turn.

The DSPI community, with its warmth and grace, gave me space to grow as a researcher. I am thankful for the faculty members and my fellow DPhil students who never hesitated to provide encouragement and thoughtful feedback which enriched my research journey and broadened my academic horizons.

I am also grateful to Green Templeton College for their support of this work, and especially to the members of the academic team who patiently and graciously helped me navigate the bureaucracies of Oxford throughout both my MPhil and DPhil.

To my cherished friends – as I reflect on this journey I am overwhelmed with gratitude at the ways you have loved and cared for me. Rayan and Joumana – our days at Lake Street will always be held close to my heart. Thank you for being my home away from home. Elena – whether it is in Oxford, Tirana or Nazareth, your friendship has been a source of strength through the highs and lows of this DPhil. Thank you for the quiet, steady presence. Bana and Layan – my childhood friends who have become my sisters. During moments of self-doubt, your faith in me pushed me to persevere. Thank you for the warmth that transcended the distance.

To my beloved family: my grandparents, my uncles, my aunts and my cousins - you have been my pillars of strength. Knowing that I come from a faithful, kind and compassionate family is one of my greatest prides. My siblings: Mai, Atallah and Shaden – you have brought so much joy to this journey, celebrating each milestone with me enthusiastically. I hope to one day pass on the same love and support that you have given me.

To my parents, Abir and Botrus – you have raised us to always seek the truth in love, with your own lives as shining examples, and this is the driving force behind this doctorate. As I think back on my time at Oxford, I am filled with gratitude for your love, your encouragement, your prayers, and our countless videocalls bridging the distance. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made so I can be here today. I am immeasurably blessed to be your daughter.

And all the glory be to the Creator God who has done immeasurably more than I could ask for or imagine.

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THIS DISSERTATION AND ITS STRUCTURE

This dissertation set out to explore the experiences of Palestinian Arab undergraduate students who are Israeli citizens (PAIs) in the Israeli higher education (HE) system as a marginalised indigenous ethnonational minority group. It addresses PAI students directly and examines various aspects of their experiences by adopting an iterative sequential mixed-methods approach and an anti-deficit lens. In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the challenges and opportunities faced by underrepresented minority groups in HE, and provides insights for researchers and policymakers on the multi-dimensionality of diversity in academic spaces.

The chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on which this dissertation is based, beginning with a theoretical background on the student experience in HE and the ways it has been conceptualised in research, followed by an overview of the socioeconomic, educational, legal and political context of the population on which this dissertation focuses and its relationship with HE.

Chapter 3 outlines the research questions this dissertation seeks to answer, and chapter 4 details the methodology guiding the dissertation and the methods employed at every phase of data collection.

Chapter 5 provides an introduction and overview of this dissertation's three articles which are then presented in chapters 6, 7, and 8. The first article focuses on PAI students' transition into Israeli HE and the structural barriers they face; the second explores their perception of the

ethnonational climate at their campuses; and the third delves into their experiences as students during times of violence and national turbulence, specifically during the May 2021 events.

Chapter 9 weaves the components of this dissertation together and synthesises their main findings and contributions. This chapter also discusses the limitations of the dissertation and outlines possible future directions for research and policy.

The main body of the dissertation is complemented by supplementary material, which is provided in the appendices.

2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides the background to this dissertation and an exploration of the existing literature that underpins it. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first presents several central theories and current evidence in HE student literature; the second focuses on the population target of this dissertation, i.e., Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.

2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section explores several themes and theories in HE student literature pertinent to this dissertation. Student transition, engagement and persistence are discussed first, followed by a focus on the experiences of underrepresented minority students through non-deficit perspectives.

2.1.1 Transition to higher education

Students' early experiences in HE have been shown to have a decisive impact on the rest of their academic journeys, prompting researchers to investigate the period between a student's graduation from high school till the end of their first year at university or college (Lowe & Cook, 2003; Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018). During this transitional period, students are faced with new academic, institutional, social, and personal environments that require significant navigation and adjustment, causing students varying degrees of stress (Maunder et al., 2013). While all students find transitioning to HE challenging, underrepresented minority (URM) students tend to encounter additional barriers during this period, including fewer financial resources and discrimination (Carter et al., 2013). The experiences of URM students are explored further in section 2.1.3.

Alongside the challenges associated with the transition to HE, it also presents an opportunity for students to develop academically, personally, and socially, and is often accompanied by excitement and exhilaration (Christie et al., 2008).

Students' transition to HE has been studied through two main lenses: a psychological lens investigating concepts of self-efficacy, motivation and meta-cognition, and a sociological lens that examines student experiences within the wider social and academic communities in which they occur (Carter et al., 2013). In the next sections, Schlossberg's transition theory (1981, 2008) is presented – an example of a psychological perspective of transition, then Tinto's model of student departure (1975, 1993) - an example of a sociological one.

2.1.1.1 Schlossberg's transition theory (1981, 2008)

Originally developed in the context of adult counselling literature, Schlossberg's transition theory defines transition as an event or non-event (i.e., an event that was expected but did not materialise) that disrupts one's "roles, relationships, routines, or assumptions" requiring significant adaptation (2011, p. 159).

Schlossberg's theory offers a three-step framework for understanding and assisting individuals in transition: (a) approaching transition, where the individual identifies the nature of the transition and its impact on them; (b) taking stock of coping resources, where the individual identifies potential resources for coping with the transition. These resources can be categorised using the 4S system: situation, self, support, and strategies; (c) taking charge, where the individual utilises the resources they have identified to navigate the transition (Anderson et al., 2011; Schlossberg, 2008). Figure 2-1 visually depicts the transition model.

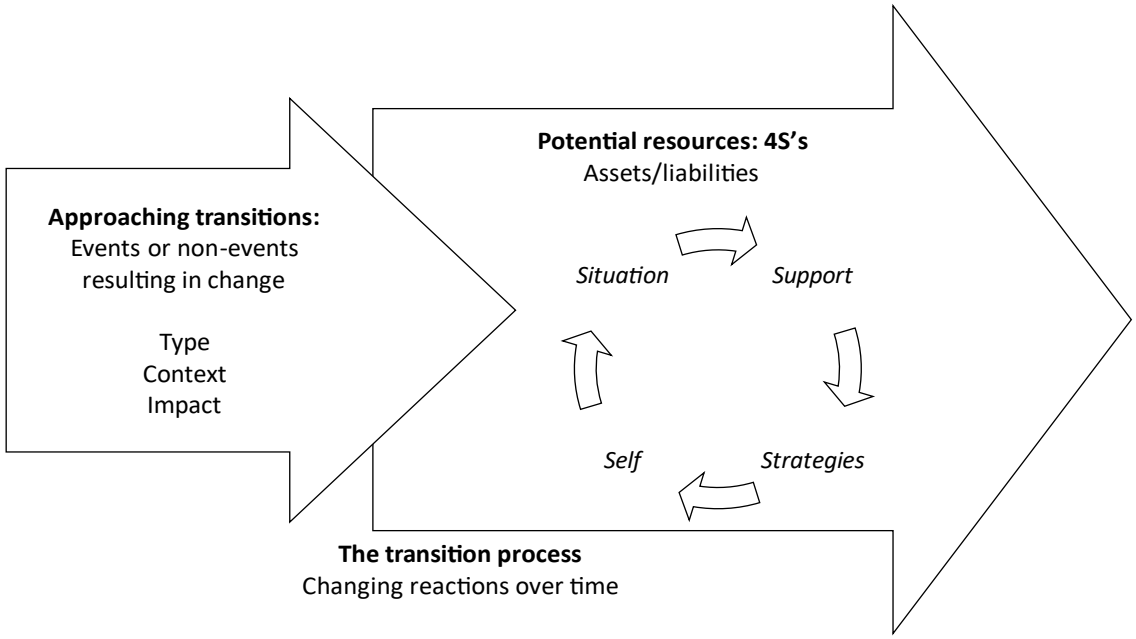

Figure 2-1 Schlossberg's transition theory (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 39)

Schlossberg's model has assisted educational researchers in conceptualising the transition to HE, especially as it relates to non-traditional students such as student veterans (Jenner, 2017) and neurodivergent students (Bonanni, 2015; Sefotho & Onyishi, 2021). Furthermore, student affairs practitioners use the 4S system to design holistic transitional programs for incoming students (Barclay, 2017).

2.1.1.2 Tinto's model of student departure (1975, 1993)

Tinto's model of student departure (1975, 1993) is, by far, the most dominant in the field of student research (McCubbin, 2003; Swail, 2003). While its goal is to explain student departure decisions it rests on several assumptions regarding the transition to HE and the processes that need to occur during that time for the student to persist.

Drawing from Durkheim's theory of suicide (1897) and Van Gennep's rites of passage (1909), Tinto's model closely examines the interaction between the student and the institution (see Figure 2-2). Tinto theorises that students enter college or university with prior characteristics, skills, and dispositions towards HE that are then renegotiated and altered

through the student's interactions with the academic and social communities in the institution, as well as with external environments beyond HE (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

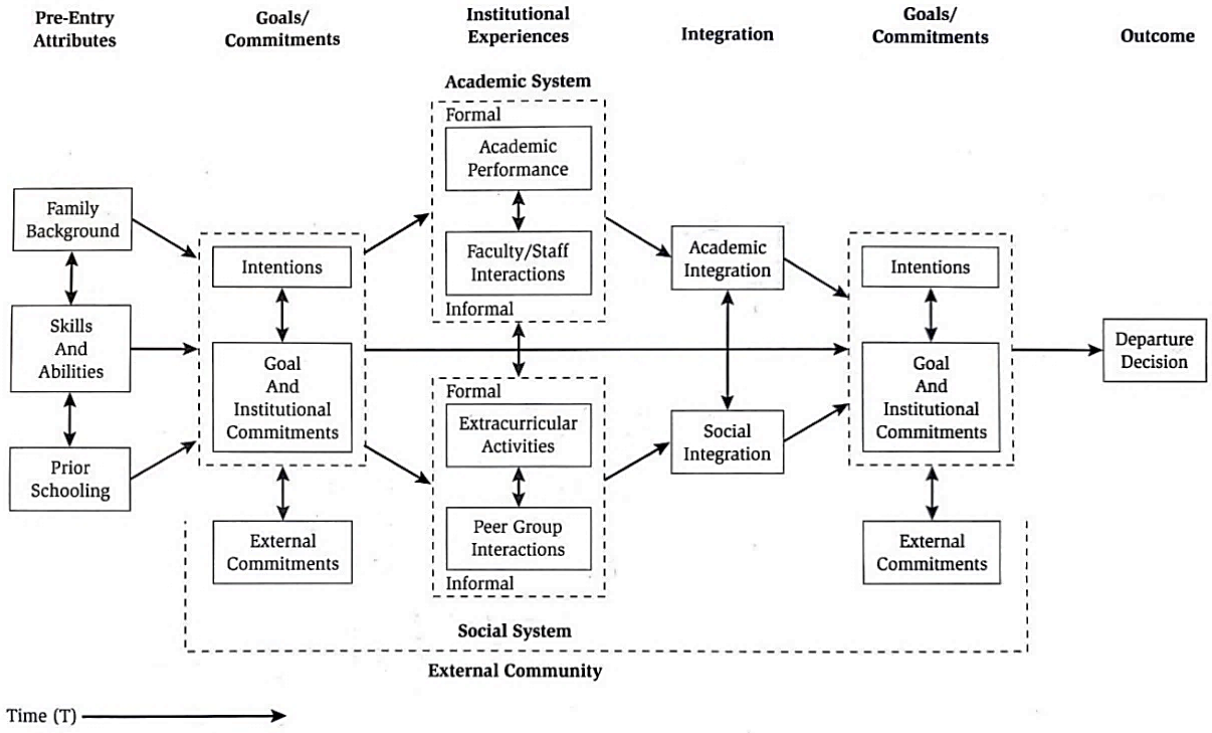

Figure 2-2 Tinto's theoretical model of student departure (1993, p. 114)

Tinto's model centres around the concepts of *integration* and *commitment*. Integration, according to Tinto, means the "extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal requirements for membership in that community or subgroups of it" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 54). Integration, during the transitional period, is achieved through a process of separation from the norms of past communities and incorporation of the prevailing norms and behaviours of the college or university into a student's life (Milem & Berger, 1997).

Thus, according to Tinto (1975, 1993), the more academically and socially integrated a student is, the deeper their commitment to their goals and the institution, and the more likely they will stay in the system and complete their degrees. However, the more negative experiences a student has with the academic and social communities of the institution, the

less integrated they will be, and their commitment to their goals and the institution will weaken, increasing the likelihood of attrition.

Despite its popularity, Tinto's model has secured little support in terms of its use in empirical research, with researchers disagreeing on how to operationalise its concepts (Chrysikos et al., 2017; Liu & Liu, 2000; Nora et al., 1990). Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, Tinto's model is arguably inadequate and/or problematic in explaining the departure of non-traditional students such as adult learners (Ashar & Skenes, 1993), commuters (Braxton & Lee, 2005), or ethnic minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Torres & Solberg, 2001).

Specifically, for URM students, Tinto's assertion that students need to separate from their home communities to integrate into the institution socially and academically can be deeply harmful (Metz, 2004; Tierney, 1992). It assumes that URM students' association with their culture needs to be severed, representing it as a barrier rather than an asset (L. Rendón et al., 2000; Tierney, 1999). Research has shown that support networks outside the campus can have an especially positive impact on URM students (Guiffrida, 2005; Palmer et al., 2011). Furthermore, Tinto's model fails to account for the wider context of discrimination and marginalisation that URM students often face and instead reinforces a language of assimilation (L. Rendón et al., 2000). It should be noted that Tinto himself has acknowledged some flaws in his model (Tinto, 2006).

2.1.2 Student engagement & persistence

Another major theme in HE research literature is student engagement and persistence. This theme has gained salience as the intrinsic and instrumental value of education has been increasingly recognised, i.e., that learning can be enjoyable in and of itself, and that advanced education produces better outcomes for both the individual and society (Shields et al., 2017). By the same token, a student's disengagement from HE, and ultimately attrition, is costly for

the individual, the institution, and the state, as all have invested resources in the academic endeavour (Gillis, 2007; Schneider & Yin, 2011). Attrition, then, has serious consequences on all levels, as Nigel Keohane writes: "Each dropout represents a loss of potential, a poor and probably confidence-sapping experience for a student and an investment in tuition costs which is likely to have a low return" (Bulman, 2017).

The next section presents two key theoretical models in this area: Astin's model of student involvement (1984) and Terenzini and Reason's model of influences on student persistence (2005).

2.1.2.1 Astin's model of student involvement (1984)

Drawing on psychological and educational theories, Astin (1984) defines student involvement as the "amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 297). Student involvement includes activities such as student government, athletic activities, conversations with peers or interactions with faculty. Simply stated, Astin's theory suggests that students learn and develop by being involved.

Astin's student involvement theory (1984) rests on his previous work on the Input-Environment-Outputs model (1970). This model views HE as comprising three components: student inputs, the college environment and student outputs (see Figure 2-3). Outputs refer to the various measures of student development that HE seeks to influence, while inputs are the "raw materials" that students enter HE with (e.g., high school grades, gender, income), and they can impact outputs directly or indirectly through interactions with HE environments (Astin, 1970, p. 3). HE environments include all aspects of HE institutions that can influence students, including teaching practices, administrative practices, racial climates, curriculums, etc.

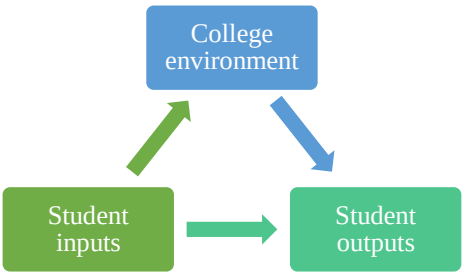

Figure 2-3 Astin's I-E-O model of student involvement (1970, p. 3)

Despite their similarities, Tinto's (1975) principles are perceptual, while Astin's (1984) are behavioural and "susceptible to direct observation and measurement" (p. 302).

Five basic assumptions are made in the theory of student involvement: (a) a student can invest physical or psychological energy in a variety of objects, (b) involvement exists on a continuum whereby students exhibit "different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times," (p. 298) (c) involvement could be measured both quantitatively or qualitatively, (d) a student's learning and personal development are directly proportional to the extent of their involvement, (e) the success of any educational policy is directly related to its ability to grow student involvement. Astin's theory, then, acknowledges the role played by institutional environments in offering students opportunities for involvement, yet the student remains the primary actor as they choose to what extent to capitalise on those opportunities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Student involvement theory has been used in a variety of contexts in educational literature, yet similar to the critique of Tinto's model, scholars have challenged its relevance to URM students (Museus & Varaxy, 2015; L. Rendón et al., 2000). They point out that the main premise of this theory assumes that HE institutions are culturally neutral. Therefore, student development theory is prone to underestimate the conditional effects that campus culture has on URM students and overemphasise the role of students' individual responsibility over

institutional accountability (Dowd et al., 2011; Lundberg et al., 2007; Tanaka, 2002). In other words, student involvement theory does not pay sufficient attention to the ways that interactions with HE institutions are more complex and/or daunting for students who are not from the dominant culture (e.g., having to cross cultural boundaries to engage in certain experiences on campuses, or having to engage with biased curricula). These experiences are explored further in section 2.1.3.

2.1.2.2 Terenzini and Reason's model of influences on student persistence (2005)

Terenzini and Reason's model (2005) extends and synthesises previous sociological and psychological theories on student retention and persistence. The framework posits that there are four main sets of constructs that impact students' learning and persistence in HE: the student's pre-college characteristics and experiences, the organisational context of the institution, the peer environment and the student's individual experiences (see figure 2-4). These forces interact with one another and create distinct, interconnected patterns of influence on student persistence.

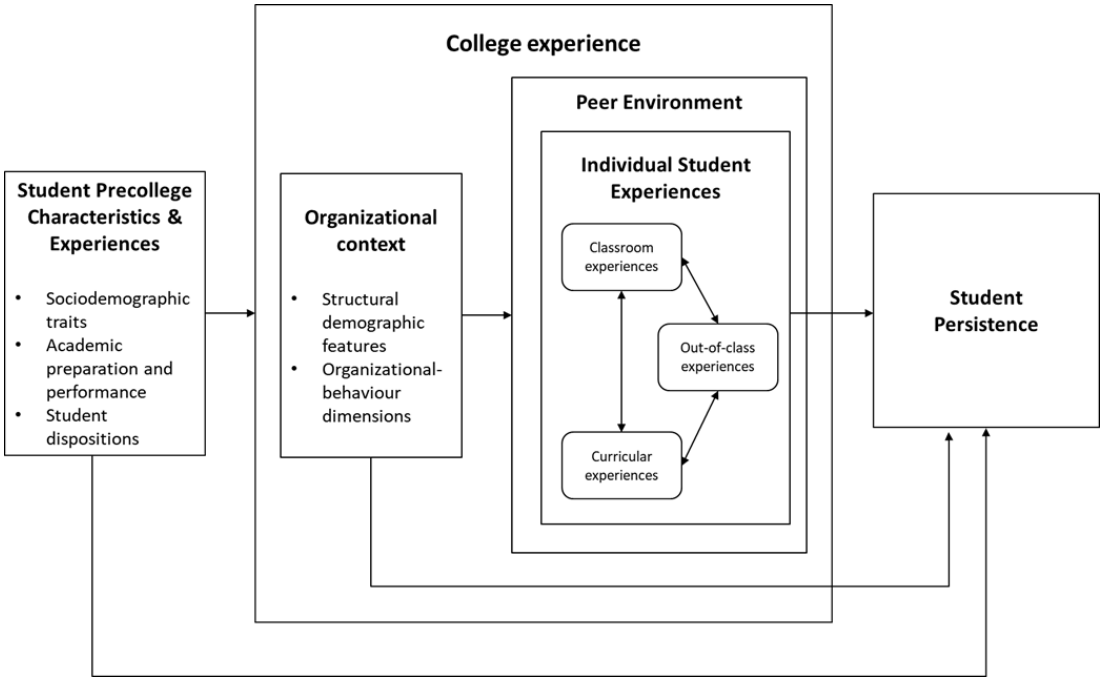

Figure 2-4 Terenzini and Reason's model of influences on student persistence (2005, p. 661)

While this model accounts for various forces that influence a student's journey in HE and their ability to persist, it does not account for wider societal, historical, and political factors that influence the four other constructs (similar to the chronosystem in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of human development).

2.1.3 Experiences of underrepresented minority students in higher education

While substantial progress has been made to protect the right to equal opportunity and access to HE across the world, certain population groups, such as ethnic/racial minorities, continue to be significantly underrepresented in higher education in many societies. This is particularly pertinent as URM groups view HE as especially important, believing it will accelerate their social mobility (Modood, 1993; Shiner & Modood, 2002). There is some evidence suggesting that URM students are more likely to prioritise HE than students from the majority group, expecting it to enhance their employment, financial prospects, and social standing (Connor et al., 2004).

Access to HE has historically been restricted for URM groups as a result of a range of institutional, cultural, and financial barriers, many of which persist today (Harper et al., 2009; Swail, 2003). Furthermore, improvements in URM students' enrolment rates are often quickly eclipsed by their disproportionately higher attrition rate and lower educational outcomes (Clewell & Ficklen, 1986; Espinosa et al., 2019; Martin, 1999; Richardson, 2008; Seidman, 2005).

Research indicates that on entering HE institutes, URM students experience a range of challenges that are often distinctly different from those of majority students (Connor et al., 2004). Minority status confers an additional layer of stress on EM students and is typically associated with an increased risk of negative outcomes (Abu Gweder, 2022; D. H. Saldaña, 1994).

Challenges facing URM students include difficulties in adjusting academically, feelings of being unprepared for academic work, a ‘tug of war’ between their home culture and the campus culture, linguistic and cultural barriers, direct and indirect discrimination, stereotyping and social isolation (Abu-Rabia-Queder & Arar, 2011; Hernandez, 2002; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Modood et al., 1999; Stevenson, 2009; Wilkins & Lall, 2011). Different minority groups experience these problems to different degrees.

As campuses became more diverse, researchers have sought to understand the experiences of URM students in HE – spaces that were not initially designed for them. This is not merely a theoretical endeavour, but one that is also meant to increase the enrolment and persistence rates of URM students in HE. The next section begins with a brief exploration of deficit thinking when it comes to researching and programming for URM students, followed by the presentation of two anti-deficit theoretical frameworks that seek to (re)conceptualise URM students’ experiences in HE. The section ends with a discussion on the relevance of Critical Race Theory and decolonisation discourse in HE research.

2.1.3.1 A note on deficit thinking

Deficit thinking refers to the tendency to “locate the source of academic problems in deficiencies within students, their families, their communities, or their membership in social categories” (Peck, 2021, p. 941). In other words, deficit thinking attributes academic failure to internal deficits in students, especially URM students, linking it to their culture, class, family or even genetics, disregarding the systems in which they are embedded (Valencia, 1997). Davis and Museus (2019) reviewed the literature conceptualising deficit thinking and found that it is implicit, pervasive, and characterised by a victim-blaming orientation. They show that it is symptomatic of larger systems of oppression and serves to reinforce other forms of discrimination.

This dissertation adopts an anti-deficit thinking lens to educational research, drawing on themes from Yosso (2005), Hurtado and colleagues (1998) and critical discourses in HE research.

2.1.3.2 Yosso's cultural wealth model (2005)

Yosso's cultural wealth model (2005) is one example of an anti-deficit thinking model that emphasises the assets of URM students. It challenges traditional interpretations of Bourdieu's cultural capital (1985), defined as the behaviours, knowledge, or practices that allow an individual to participate and advance in a certain society (Vryonides, 2007). Yosso (2005) points out that Bourdieu's theory has been used to portray some communities as possessing cultural capital and others as lacking it and argues that the cultural capital that Bourdieu refers to is the "accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society" (p. 76). One example that Yosso (2005) provides of this is a Chicano student who conducts house errands on the bus on behalf of his parents who do not speak English – a skill that is not valued by the education system yet is of great necessity for their family.

Community cultural wealth is an asset-based framework aiming to highlight the "array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilised by Communities of Colour to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression," especially in educational contexts (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). The model identifies six forms of interconnected cultural capital: aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, navigational, and resistant (see Figure 2-5).

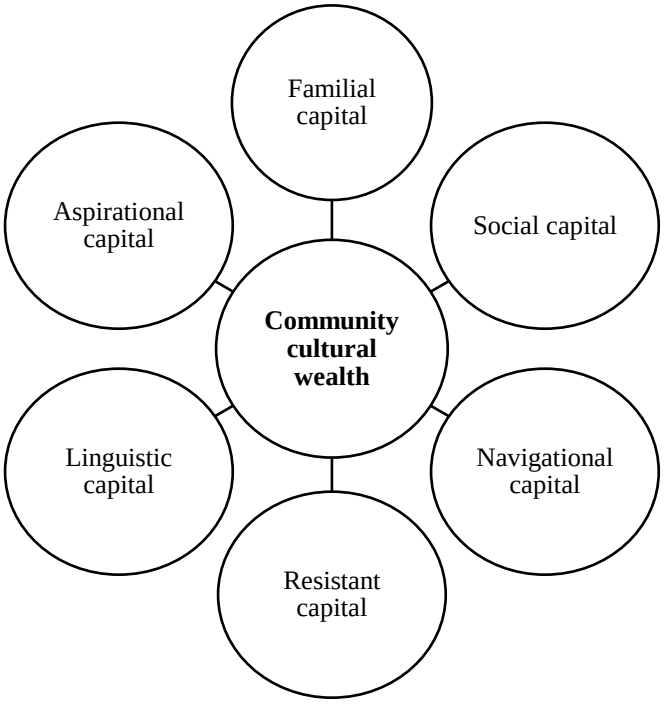

Figure 2-5 Yosso's community cultural wealth model (2005, p. 78)

Researchers have used and expanded the community cultural wealth model in various ways: Jayakumar, Vue and Allen (2013) demonstrated, by exploring the Young Black Scholars program, how community cultural wealth can transform HE environments into spaces where URM students can thrive and disrupt social reproduction, Acevedo and Solorzano (2021) argued that URM communities can use community cultural wealth as a protective strategy when facing racism, and Huber (2009) suggested spiritual capital as an additional form of capital in community cultural wealth.

2.1.3.3 Hurtado and colleagues' campus racial climate framework (1998)

Hurtado and colleagues (1998) pointed out that there is an abundance of research on race relations on campuses, yet policy initiatives targeting campus racial climates were, at that time, few and far between. They also identified that the concept of campus climate in general, and campus racial climate in particular, remained largely under-theorised and under-defined. To that end, they suggested a framework for understanding and describing campus racial

climates, based on the assertion that "students are educated in distinct racial contexts" shaped by interconnected external and internal institutional forces (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 282).

External forces are environmental factors outside the institution's immediate control that impact racial relations inside it, such as governmental policies (e.g., affirmative action policies) or socio-historical events. As for internal forces, campus racial climates are influenced by four main ones: (a) an institution's history of inclusion or exclusion of URM students, which can be important in shaping current practices towards diversity (e.g. whether there are still built-in privileges for certain groups on campus); (b) the representation of ethnic/racial groups on campus; (c) the psychological climate, i.e. individuals' views of the institution's climate for diversity including views of group relations; and (d) the behavioural climate.

A decade after Hurtado and colleagues' (1998) paper delineated the model of campus racial climates, Harper, and Hurtado (2007) reviewed the literature that uses the model, uncovering nine themes, three of which I have found relevant for discussion here. First, research has consistently found that URM students tend to view campus racial climates more negatively than their counterparts from majority groups – a finding that is also true in Israel (Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2010). Second, literature has documented the benefits reaped by students who study on campuses that facilitate purposeful interactions between racial/ethnic groups. Third, students display high levels of awareness of the racial segregation that occurs on campus.

2.1.3.4 Critical race theory in higher education & decolonisation discourses

In the last three decades, critical race theory (CRT) has emerged as a key analytical framework to address racial/ethnic inequities in HE, offering researchers a set of tools with

which to examine, document and dismantle covert structural and institutional racism (Alexander, 2010; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Originating in critical legal studies, CRT posits that racism is an endemic and ingrained feature of society and is embedded in institutions constructed to favour individuals of the dominant group, and thus, it is imperative to centre power relations at the heart of academic inquiry (Charmaz, 2017; Hiraldo, 2010; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Furthermore, People of Colour have valid knowledge through their experiences of subordination, and narrating these experiences can challenge dominant hegemonic narratives (Hiraldo, 2010). CRT also argues that race intersects with other social categories (e.g., gender, class), creating unique discrimination patterns (Crenshaw, 2017).

In the education literature, Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018) observe that CRT is organised within six "boundaries": first, racial inequity is the "logical outcome" of education achievement systems based on competition; second, educational policy and practices can and do perpetuate racial inequities; third, the dominant assumption that People of Colour are inherently inferior must be challenged; fourth, educational inequities should be perceived and contextualised through a historical lens; fifth, educational inequities are shaped by intersecting social categories; sixth, research using CRT should not only document disparities but pushes for change and progress (p. 122).

Based on the belief in the validity and legitimacy of the People of Colour's experiential knowledge, much of the research on CRT in HE has emphasized the need for the platforming of marginalised voices and documenting experiences that counter hegemonic narratives (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Pérez et al., 2010). Moreover, extending the argument on structural racism to campuses and HE institutions, scholars have critiqued knowledge production processes in academia as perpetuating the hegemony of the dominant group by

remaining rooted in colonial epistemologies and narratives of Western superiority (Heleta, 2016; Johnson & Joseph-Salisbury, 2018; Stein, 2021).

Global movements calling to decolonise HE aim to "transform the terms upon which the university exists, the purpose of knowledge it imparts and produces, and its pedagogical operations." (Bhambra et al., 2018, p. 1) In practice, this includes transforming curriculums, syllabi, and assessment methods, recognising power dynamics in classrooms, and empowering students to be critical learners (Mintz, 2021).

2.1.4 Summary

This section presented eight central theories, models and approaches in the field of higher education (HE) student research and engaged with evidence regarding students' transition to HE and their engagement and persistence within it, showing that a student's early experiences are crucial to the rest of their academic journeys and that various forces impact a student's decision to persist in HE or to leave it. The section then described some main themes in the experiences of URM students in HE, discussed the relevance of CRT in HE research, and traced the pervasiveness of deficit thinking in that field of research, highlighting the importance of adopting an anti-deficit lens in this dissertation.

2.2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: PALESTINIAN ARAB STUDENTS IN ISRAELI HIGHER EDUCATION

This section presents an overview of the legal, political, socioeconomic, and educational context of the population that this dissertation focuses on (i.e., Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel) and its relationship with HE in Israel, especially at the undergraduate level.

2.2.1 Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel

The Arab-Israeli war of 1948, or the *Nakba* as Palestinians call it (i.e. the catastrophe in Arabic), fragmented Palestinians who were living in British-mandated Palestine into several groups differing by geographical location and civil status: first, the seven hundred thousand Palestinians who became refugees as they fled or were expelled from their homes to neighbouring countries during the war; second, Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem who came under Jordanian rule; third, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip under Egyptian rule; and fourth, the hundred and sixty thousand Palestinians who remained within the boundaries of the newly-established state of Israel and were given its citizenship (Masalha, 2012; Morris, 2004; N. Rouhana & Sabbagh-Khoury, 2015).

The last group is the focus of this dissertation.

Today, Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are an indigenous ethnonational minority group within the country, totalling 1.9 million citizens and comprising 21% of the entire population (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019a). This group includes Muslims (~85%), Christians (~7%), and Druze (~ 6%; Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019a, 2020).

Over half of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel live in the Northern part of the country, a fifth in the Triangle region and 17% in the Southern Negev, many of whom live in villages unrecognised by the state, while only 8% live in Israel's eight mixed cities (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022). Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens generally live in separate localities,

and even in mixed cities, research shows that they tend to live in separate neighbourhoods or streets (Cohen, 2015).

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are functionally trilingual, with Palestinian Arabic as their first language, modern-day Hebrew as their second which they use for interacting with institutions and (for some) work, and English as their third, which is especially necessary for entry to HE (Hager & Jabareen, 2016).

2.2.1.1 A note on terminology

There are multiple terms used to describe members of this group: Arab Israelis, Palestinians in Israel, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinian Arabs, 48 Arabs, Palestinians of the Interior, Palestinians inside the Green Line, and more variations. These terms are highly politicised and each of their uses reflects "political, national, and ideological orientations" (Makhoul, 2018, p. 6).

While a discussion of the nuances of each term is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is relevant to point out that recent sociological surveys indicate that the personal identity of most of the members in this group includes a national/ethnic Palestinian/Arab identity as well as an Israeli civil identity (Smooha, 2020). Thus, this dissertation uses the term "Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel," or PAIs for short. However, by and large, the Jewish-Israeli public refrains from using the term Palestinian to describe this group, instead reserving it for those in the West Bank and Gaza, and the term "Arab Israelis" is used for those with Israeli citizenship (Rabinowitz, 1993).

2.2.1.2 Political and legal aspects

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, as the name suggests, have a complex identity comprising, at least, four components: Palestinian by nationality, Arab by ethnicity, Israeli by citizenship, and Muslim or Christian or Druze by religion (Rudnitzky & Radai, 2017).

Despite being full citizens of Israel, PAIs are often treated as a hostile minority, a demographic threat, or a 'fifth column' undermining the state as the latter expects them to view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict solely through the prism of their citizenship and disengage themselves from the national aspirations of the Palestinian people (Arar et al., 2016; H. Jabareen, 2014; Jamal, 2012). Therefore, PAIs face a constant identity conflict as citizens of a state that is at war with their national group (Arar & Mustafa, 2011).

Due to this complex identity, Palestinian Arab political thought in Israel has largely operated in two main spheres: the civil one, working towards equal civil rights and improving PAI living conditions; and the national one, demanding a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli issue (Haidar, 2018; Zeedan, 2019).

While Israel's declaration of independence promised complete equality to all inhabitants, legal scholars have identified over 60 Israeli laws that discriminate explicitly or implicitly against PAIs and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories based on their national identity (Adalah, 2017b). These laws deal with a variety of issues such as housing, education, political participation, and land ownership.

The introduction of the Nation-State Law in 2018 solidified the inferior status of PAIs in Israeli law, as it declared Israel as the national home of the Jewish people, granting the right of national self-determination to Jewish citizens only (Jamal, 2018). The law cemented the state's attitude towards PAIs as merely a socio-economic group with no collective national rights and thus reflects "a continuous process" of delegitimisation (Saïd, 2020, p. 5). The Nation-State Law also revoked the status of Arabic as an official language of the state, undermining a key component of PAI collective identity (Y. Jabareen, 2018). It should be noted that this is a 'basic law' which has the power to override ordinary laws and is the closest equivalent to constitutional law (Jamal, 2018).

Some argue that the law is symbolic, declarative and "not legally enforceable" (Bell, 2020, p. 1). Indeed, a survey from the Israel Democracy Institute suggests that it has not led to a significant worsening of relations between Jewish citizens and PAIs, and its legal consequences are yet to be fully realised (Hermann et al., 2019). However, even symbolically, it reaffirms the unequal status of PAIs and delegitimises the national rights of a fifth of the country's population (Y. Jabareen, 2018).

The state's policies and attitudes concerning its Palestinian citizens are characterised by both control and neglect, as will be explained and demonstrated in the coming sections on socioeconomic status and education (Jamal, 2012).

2.2.1.3 Socioeconomic aspects

PAIs generally have lower socioeconomic status in Israel: PAI localities are overrepresented in the lowest tiers of socioeconomic status in Israel, and not represented at all in the highest three, as shown in Figure 2-6 (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022). This inequality also holds in mixed cities, whereby PAI neighbourhoods are ranked lower socioeconomically than Jewish ones in the same cities (Ido et al., 2021; Tanous et al., 2022).

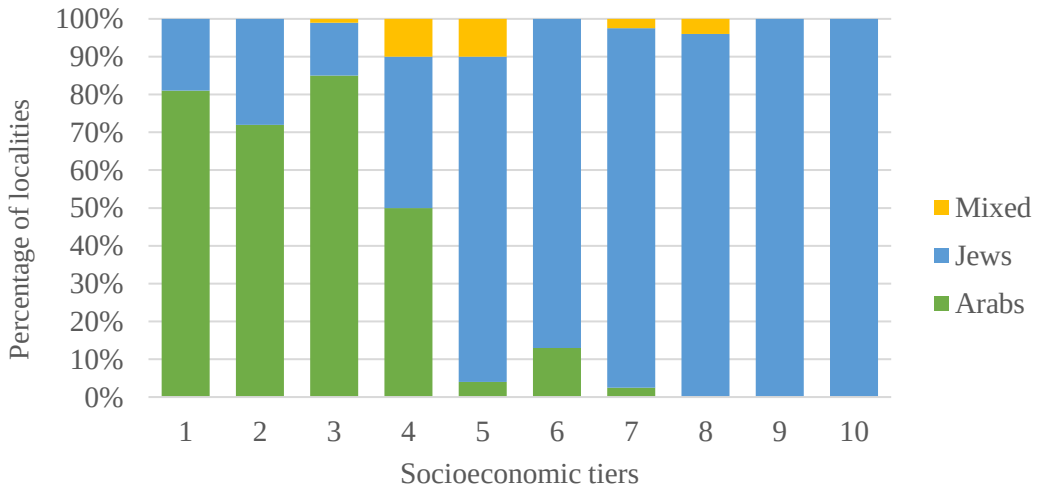

Figure 2-6 Socioeconomic tiers by ethnicity of locality in Israel (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022, p. 10)

Successive governments of Israel have adopted a policy of non-development and marginalisation of PAI areas and localities, resulting in poor social, economic, and educational conditions (Arar et al., 2016; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 2019). This policy is apparent, for example, in governments' designations of "national priority" areas (i.e., areas which receive additional economic support) which largely exclude PAI localities – a discriminatory practice by the government that the Supreme Court of Israel has condemned (Adalah, n.d.). Another example is the state's policy of "boxing" PAI localities, restricting access to housing desperately needed to accommodate natural population growth and developing new Jewish towns on land expropriated from PAIs (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Inter-Agency Task Force for Israeli Arab Issues, 2020b). This leads to the fact that while PAIs make up a fifth of the population, their localities consist of only 3.5% of Israel's territory (Iraqi, 2016).

Recent figures show that 45% of PAI families live below the poverty line, compared with 13% among Jewish families (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022). Furthermore, PAIs have significantly higher unemployment rates than non-Haredi Jewish Israelis (Weiss, 2019). PAI employment differs across sectors, whereby, for example, PAIs are underrepresented in government positions and overrepresented in medical and educational professions (Israel's Civil Service Commission, 2020).

There are also persistent health inequalities between PAIs and Jewish Israeli citizens in Israel, with persistent gaps in several health indicators including life expectancy and infant mortality (Biton & Yagor-Krol, 2023; Saabneh, 2016). Researchers have framed these gaps in the wider context of historical and ongoing discriminatory policies by Israeli governments, especially concerning land and water, which have led to the depeasantisation, minoritisation, and segregation of PAIs (Saabneh, 2021; Tanous, 2023; Tanous et al., 2022, 2023).

In the last few decades, an important sociological shift has occurred with the rise of an identifiable middle class that makes up a third of the PAI population. Haidar and Bar-Haim (2022) attribute this emergence to PAIs seizing opportunities created by state policies meant to marginalise them over the decades. Exploiting governmental discriminatory practices, the PAI middle class have accumulated capital, which it then invested in pursuing HE and business activities. This emerging middle class is also exhibiting more collective self-confidence, engaging in new forms of political participation, and demonstrating more egalitarian views and practices in familial dynamics (Khalaily & Ghanem, 2023; Sabbah-Karkabi, 2022).

It is also worth noting that in recent years, under pressure from several external and internal bodies, Israeli governments have allocated more budgets for the economic development of PAI communities, especially under government resolution 922 which has shown some initial positive impact despite its limitations and partial implementation (Inter-Agency Task Force for Israeli Arab Issues, 2020a; Kosman, 2021).

2.2.1.4 The K-12 education system

The K-12 education system in Israel is separated into four government-funded educational tracks: state-secular, state-religious, independent-religious, and Arab (including 'recognised but not official' Arab church-affiliated schools which are partially funded by the state and collect tuition fees from parents). These tracks differ in budget allocations, language, and certain parts of the curriculum.

The Arab Arabic-speaking education system is tightly controlled by the state and its curriculum is culturally hegemonic, marginalises Palestinian identity, literature and historical narratives and perpetuates existing inequalities (Abu-Saad, 2004, 2019; Arar, 2012; Makkawi, 2013; Nasser & Nasser, 2008; Sa'di, 2014). Effectively, PAIs do not have

administrative or educational autonomy to shape their education track, especially when compared with the state-religious and independent-religious tracks (Y. Jabareen & Agbaria, 2014): PAIs do not meaningfully partake in educational policymaking, and the appointment of key leadership positions (e.g., school directors or inspectors) is heavily vetted by Israeli intelligence agencies (Abu Asabeh, 2018). In the "Vision Documents" formulated by a group of PAI leaders and researchers (The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, 2006), the authors recognise the quantitative expansion of the Arab education track over the decades yet maintain that it is still inadequate in preparing students for the modern world, with outdated curriculums that emphasise memorising knowledge rather than producing it.

It is worth noting that PAIs have, across the decades, succeeded to some extent in formulating alternative educational philosophies that defy Israeli hegemony and suit their community's needs, and in creating alternative spaces outside the formal education system to nurture collective national consciousness (Abdo-Makhoul, 2007; Mari, 1978, 1984).

The Arab education system has been severely underfunded by the government whereby the per-student budget has been consistently substantially higher for Israeli Jewish students, with some estimating that a PAI child receives a ninth of the funding that their Jewish Israeli peer receives (Arlosoroff, 2016; Blass, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2001). According to the latest figures, the largest gap in school funding can be found in high schools whereby, in 2018, there was a difference of ₪9542 in the average funding per student between Jewish and PAI students (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022). This results in more students per class and fewer teachers per student on average (Abu-Saad, 2016).

Consequently, children in Palestinian Arab schools in Israel achieve significantly lower scores on international tests in comparison with their non-Haredi Jewish peers (Blass, 2020).

For example, in the Program for International Student Assessment-2018 (PISA) test scores, there was a 128-point average gap between PAI and Jewish Israeli pupils. To put this into perspective, 30 points on the PISA score usually amount to progress made in one year of schooling (Blass, 2020; Ilan, 2019).

2.2.2 Israel's higher education system

2.2.2.1 Historical formation

Israeli HE can be traced back to the 1910s, a few decades before the establishment of the state of Israel when foundations were laid for the establishment of the Technion Institute in Haifa and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (HUJ). Both were inaugurated under the British mandate in 1924 and 1925 respectively and established Hebrew as their language of instruction (Troen, 1992). It should be noted that the British government's offer to establish an English university for both Jews and Palestinians was rejected by the Zionist Organisation for fear that it would compete with the HUJ (Bamberger, 2020).

Both the Technion and HUJ were essential in advancing Zionist claims over the rights of Jewish settlement in Palestine and delegitimising Palestinian national identity (Rabinowitz, 2002; Troen, 1992). They were pillars in Israel's nation-building project, directly serving the practical needs of the Zionist movement before and shortly after Israel's establishment (e.g., the cooperation between university scientists and the *Haganah* militia to produce military equipment and provide intelligence; (Troen, 1992)).

Regulating HE in the newly established state of Israel was not easy nor quick. There were long deliberations regarding the relationship between HE institutions and the government, especially in finding a balance between the government's desire to shape HE research directions according to the country's needs and HE's need for academic independence and intellectual freedom (Volansky, 2005b).

Finally, in 1958, the Israeli parliament passed the law of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) that established the CHE as a public utilities commission tasked with regulating Israeli HE. The law dictated that the education minister would head the CHE and three-quarters of the members would be representatives from the HE sector. The CHE's responsibilities include having the exclusive authority to license academic institutions, accrediting courses, allocating state funding to HE institutions and long-term academic planning (Hemmings, 2010). The last two responsibilities are carried out by the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC), a subsidiary body created in 1972 (Volansky, 2005b).

In the 1950s and 1960s, four new research universities were established: Bar Ilan University and Tel Aviv University in the 1950s, and the University of Haifa and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in the 1960s (Beller, 2001).

HE in Israel underwent further significant expansions during the 1970s as the Open University was founded, allowing individual independent academic pursuit with little to no admission requirements (Guri-Rosenblit, 1999). In the 1990s, the HE system expanded again, as the Law of the CHE enabled the accreditation of academic colleges, called *michlalot* in Hebrew, dramatically increasing the number of HE students, especially from the periphery (Beller, 2001; Davidovitch & Soen, 2010). Since their inception, academic colleges have been viewed as a second layer of HE, with less strict entry requirements (Ayalon, 2008). Research shows that the main beneficiaries of the 1990s expansion were women from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds (Bar-Haim et al., 2019). In the academic year 2020/2021, almost half of all undergraduate students studied in academic colleges and teacher training colleges (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2022).

2.2.2.2 Current structure

Currently, there are four categories of legally recognised HE institutions in Israel: first, research universities which award bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees and receive the bulk of state-dedicated HE funds; second, public academic colleges which can confer bachelor's and master's degrees and receive funding from the PBC. These include teacher-training colleges that receive funding from Israel's Ministry of Education; third, private academic colleges which also award bachelor's and master's degrees but receive no funding from the state; and fourth, extensions of foreign universities that are not funded by the state either (Dagan-Buzaglo, 2007).

At the time of writing this, there are ten research universities, thirty academic colleges and twenty-one teacher training colleges in Israel.

2.2.3 Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel & higher education

To understand the current situation of PAIs in Israeli HE, the historical background must be kept in mind. Many educational issues observed today are the product of decades of systematic marginalisation by the state and thus must be treated as such (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006).

The *Nakba* of 1948 left the indigenous Arab Palestinian population that remained within the boundaries of Israel depleted, largely illiterate and without social or cultural institutions as the educated elite were among those who fled or were violently expelled (Al-Haj, 1993). Palestinians had also lost their livelihoods by losing land in the war and state confiscation orders following the enactment of property laws in 1950 which classified internally displaced Palestinians as "present absentees" and seized their properties. These losses forced PAIs to shift from being an agricultural society to an urban working-class one that is reliant on the Israeli employment market (Arar & Mustafa, 2011).

PAIs were placed under strict military administration between 1948 and 1966 that tightly controlled their freedom of movement and all aspects of life, isolating their communities from one another and the rest of the Palestinian and Arab world (Bauml, 2017; Jamal, 2012). This period of military rule significantly impeded modernisation and industrialisation processes in PAI societies, kept them dependent on the Jewish majority for resources and employment, and facilitated the transfer of Palestinian land to state ownership (Jamal, 2012; Kabaha, 2016).

In 1949, the Israeli Knesset passed the Compulsory Education Act, requiring all children to be educated from the age of 5 to 13. However, that was difficult to implement in PAI towns and villages as communities were still recovering from the war: many school structures were destroyed, classes overcrowded, and teachers scarce and hand-picked by the military administration (Arar, 2012). Therefore, during the 18 years of military rule over PAIs, access to education in general and HE, in particular, was extremely limited.

In the decades that followed, the PAI community slowly rebuilt its educational infrastructure, cultural institutions, and economic standing, and consequently, its percentage of the student body in HE grew from 0.6% in 1956 to 3% in 1979, and then to 6.7% in 1988 (Al-Haj, 2003; Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Jamal, 2012). The establishment of the University of Haifa at the end of the 1960s and the accreditation of academic colleges by the CHE in the 1990s were key to increasing PAI students' access to HE as these brought HE closer geographically to PAI localities.

Therefore, on the one hand, the factors previously presented all contribute to the unequal representation of PAIs in Israeli HE (as will be discussed in the next sections), yet on the other hand, these conditions have also motivated PAIs to acquire education, especially HE. Research indicates that PAIs view HE to be one of the main, if not the only, tools for both

personal socioeconomic mobility and collective social and political advancement (Al-Haj, 2003; Ali & Da'as, 2018; Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Daniel, 2016; Mari, 1978). Acquiring advanced education, thus, is a source of pride, and is sometimes even seen as a replacement for the land that was confiscated and lost in 1948 (Al-Haj, 1993).

2.2.3.1 Access

Despite PAIs' persistence to acquire advanced education, structural barriers undermine these efforts. The Israeli government's negligence of basic needs in the PAI community makes it difficult to persevere to higher education: increasingly rampant crime and deadly violence in PAI towns, forced evictions and home demolitions, insufficient public transportation, little investment in infrastructure, and limited access to educational enrichment programs in schools (Adalah, 2017a; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016b; Green, 2021; Hesketh et al., 2011).

Furthermore, official data show that in Israel a young person from a locality in the highest two tiers of socioeconomic status is four times more likely to enter HE than their counterparts coming from the lowest two tiers (Weininger, 2021b). As previously discussed, socioeconomic status in Israel intersects with ethnonational identity, and thus PAIs are much less likely to enter HE than their Jewish Israeli peers.

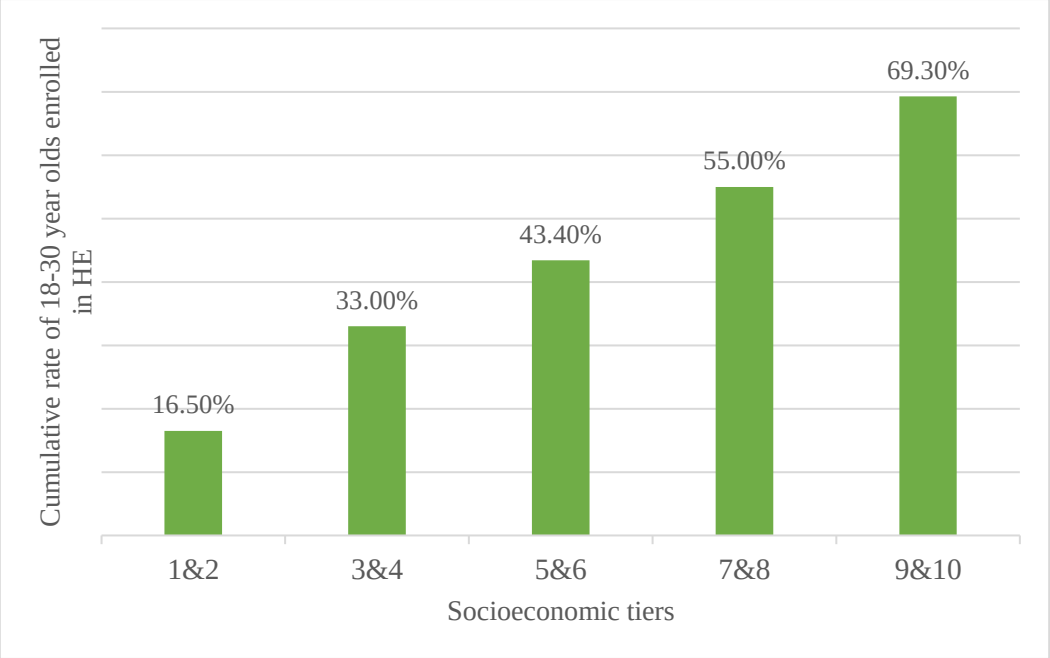

Figure 2-7 The cumulative rate of young people enrolled in higher education by hometown socioeconomic tier (Weininger, 2021b, p. 3)

It should be noted that, due to the various structural barriers to HE, which will be discussed in this chapter, a sizable group of young PAIs, estimated to be as large as twenty-four thousand students, have been temporarily migrating to other countries to pursue further studies there, mainly to eastern European countries, Jordan and, more recently, to the Palestinian West Bank (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016a). This is particularly prominent among Bedouins in the South who are enrolling in Palestinian universities in disproportionately large numbers (The Knesset's Research and Information Center, 2017). PAI students studying outside the Israeli HE system is currently an understudied phenomenon, with limited evidence regarding its volume, reasons, and potential consequences (Shaviv, 2021).

2.2.3.1.1 Entry requirements

Generally speaking, there are three main entry requirements for HE enrolment in Israel: the Bagrut certificate, the psychometric exam, and the 'Yael' exam for non-native Hebrew

speakers. Israeli HE institutions select undergraduate students based on an aggregate computation of these exams (Arar et al., 2016).

2.2.3.1.1.1 The Bagrut system

The Bagrut system is a unit-based matriculation system for high school students in Israel, including several core subjects (e.g., maths and English) and other elective subjects, whereby the number of units reflects the level of difficulty (Hemmings, 2010). There is a minimum number of units required for Bagrut certificate eligibility. Generally, a Bagrut certificate is a prerequisite for enrolment in any HE institution, with some subjects or institutions requiring a certain number of units or scores in selected subjects.

Following inequality trends in other areas, there are sizable gaps between PAI and Jewish Israeli students in Bagrut certificate completion. In 2020, 64.8% of PAI students completed a Bagrut certificate, compared to 72.7% of their Jewish Israeli peers (Weininger, 2020). It should be noted that the PAI figure excludes Druze (whose rates are typically higher), and Bedouins (whose rates are typically lower) as Figure 2-8 shows. The general rate, across education tracks, for Bagrut certificate completion is on the rise (Israel's Ministry of Education, 2019).

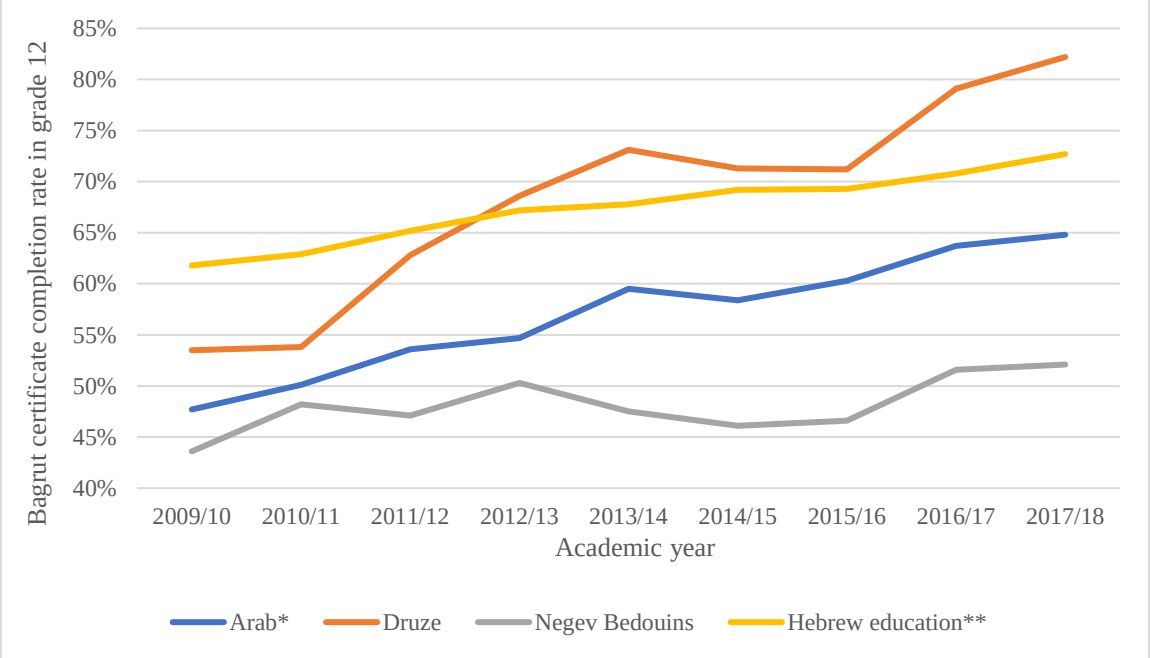

Figure 2-8 Bagrut certificate completion rates from 2009-2018 by education track (Israel's Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 14).

**Arab does not include East Jerusalem residents, Druze or Negev Bedouins.*

***Hebrew education includes Haredi.*

Research shows that the requirement for advanced English in the Bagrut certificate, set by HE institutions for enrolment, is a major contributor to the exclusion of PAIs from HE as English is the second foreign language, after Hebrew, that PAIs are required to be proficient in (Feniger & Ayalon, 2016). It is also worth noting that the diglossic nature of the Arabic language, whereby the formal written language and the informal spoken language significantly differ, further complicates the linguistic landscape of PAIs (Saiegh-Haddad, 2012).

2.2.3.1.1.2 The psychometric exam

In 1981, due to rising demand for HE and the de-standardisation of the Bagrut certificate, universities created the National Institute for Examination and Evaluation (NITE) to administer a standardised scholastic aptitude test, i.e., the psychometric exam, as an

additional admission requirement (Volansky, 2005a). It is comprised of four sections: a writing task, verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and English. The exam is delivered in Hebrew, English, Russian, French, and Arabic.

PAI students consistently underperform on this exam, with an average 100-point gap between them and their Jewish peers (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019). This is consistent with evidence from the United States that shows a similar gap in standardised testing scores between students from underrepresented groups (e.g., African American, Hispanic) and White students (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). PAI students' underperformance in the psychometric exam significantly limits their study choices, leading them to enrol in disciplines they are less interested in and thus more likely to leave (Arar & Mustafa, 2011).

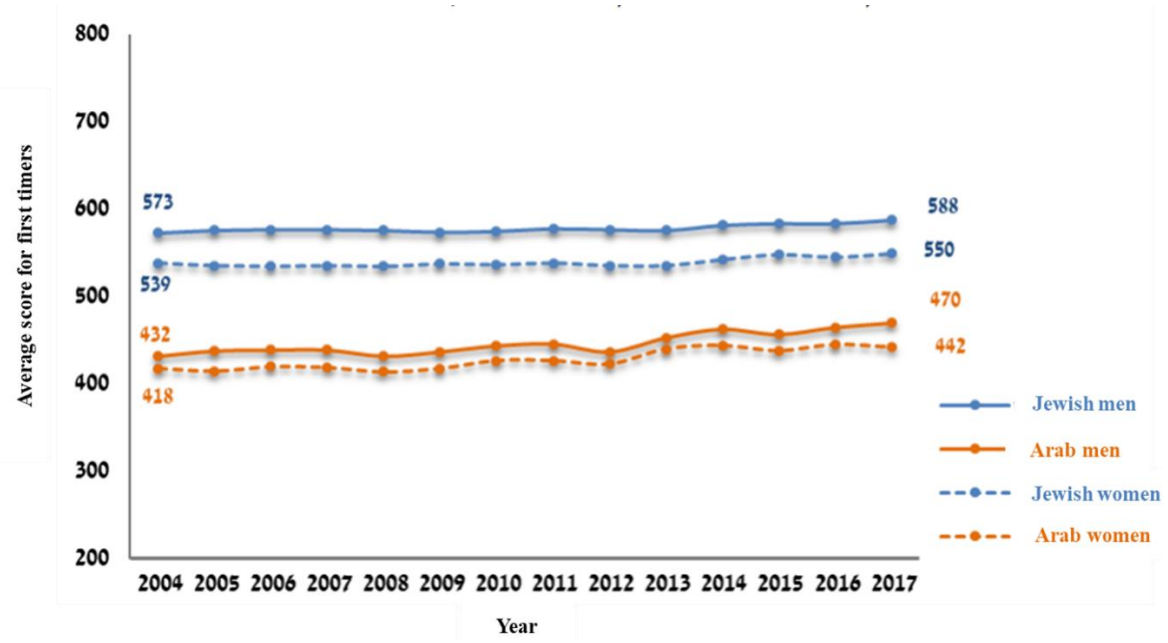

Figure 2-9 Psychometric exam average results from 2004-2017 by ethnicity and gender (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019, p. 28)

Scholars attribute this gap in scores to the exam's cultural bias both in content and methodology. It is translated from Hebrew and written with the Jewish-Ashkenazi-Israeli student in mind (Al-Haj, 2003; Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Fares, 2009; Shaviv et al., 2013;

Volansky, 2005a). Furthermore, evidence shows that the gaps in scores are mainly in the English and verbal reasoning sections (Shaviv, 2021). To explain the score gaps in the verbal reasoning section, researchers have shown that reading texts in Arabic is less efficient for Arabic speakers than reading texts in Hebrew for Hebrew speakers, which contributes to PAI students' lower scores (Karletz et al., 2014).

Additionally, in recent years, an industry of private companies offering expensive courses to prepare candidates for the psychometric exam has massively grown. While the effectiveness of these courses is dubious, they generally further disadvantage young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds who are cannot afford such preparation (Dattel, 2012; Goldsoteg et al., 2014). In response to these claims, in 2020 the Ministry for Social Equalities began offering a free preparatory course for students, yet up until the writing of this, the course is available only in Hebrew.

The bias against PAI students regarding the psychometric exam surfaced in 2003. The universities in Israel had decided to trial abandoning the psychometric exam as a requirement for enrolment and instead rely exclusively on Bagrut exam scores to make HE more accessible for students from the periphery. However, they quickly backtracked once they realised it would overwhelmingly benefit PAIs (Abu-Saad, 2016; Sa'ar, 2003).

2.2.3.1.1.3 The Yael exam

In addition to the psychometric exam, universities and colleges in Israel require students whose first language is not Hebrew, which primarily consists of PAIs, to sit an additional exam called 'Yael' to test their command of the Hebrew language (National Institute for Testing and Evaluation, n.d.). According to official data, more than three-quarters of all those who take this exam are PAI students (Goldzweig & Saar, 2016).

This exam further burdens PAI students, both in terms of effort and money. Moreover, in the last few years, universities such as the Technion have been gradually raising the minimum score required for entry, with the knowledge that it will "drastically decrease Arab candidates' chances of acceptance… [and] deter people from the Arab community from applying." (Adalah, 2016, p. 2)

2.2.3.1.2 Geographical access

It should be noted that all research universities and most academic colleges in Israel are in Jewish-majority cities and are thus less accessible for PAIs especially considering the inadequate public transportation systems serving PAI localities. Calls for establishing a university specifically for PAIs in an Arab locality, which scholars have argued would make HE more accessible to PAIs and boost the PAI economy, have been dismissed by successive Israeli governments (Ali & Da'as, 2019).

2.2.3.2 Representation

Due to the factors discussed in the previous sections, PAIs remain severely underrepresented in HE in both the staff and student body. In the academic year 2021/22, PAIs represented only 3.5% of academic faculty in universities, 3.2% in public academic colleges and 1.7% in private academic colleges (Elkyess et al., 2022). The percentage of academic degree holders among PAIs is nearly half that of Jewish citizens (Fuchs, 2017).

Nevertheless, an incredibly positive trend has been documented in the last decade (2009-2020), as the number of PAI students enrolled in Israeli HE institutions doubled and they now comprise 17.2% of all HE students: 19.3% of undergraduate students, 15.9% of master's students and 8% of doctoral students (see figure 2-10). While this increase brings the percentage of PAIs in HE closer to their percentage in the population, it should be noted that PAIs comprise 30% of the relevant age cohort for HE (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019).

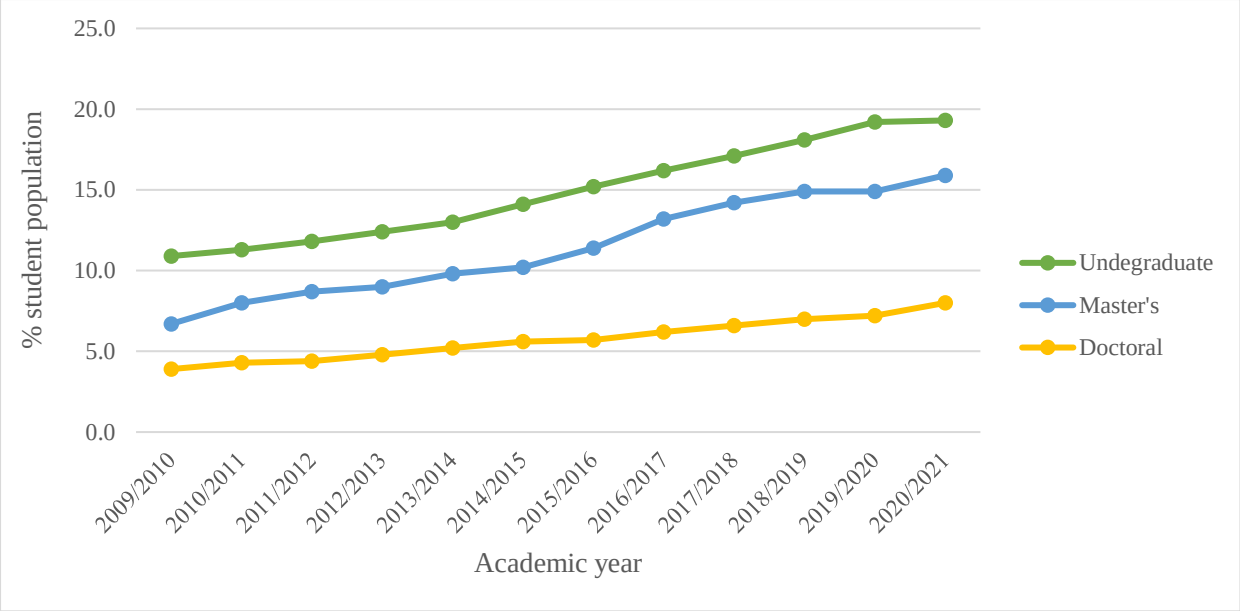

Figure 2-10 The percentage of PAI students across Israeli higher education levels, excluding the Open University (Naftalovich & Krentzler, 2021, p. 7)

This increase is in part due to the drastic improvement of the socio-economic status of the PAI community, including the growth and development of a middle class, the community's strong determination to move from the margins of society, as well as the large investment of Israeli governments in national and institution-level programs working towards that end (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2019; Hager & Jabareen, 2016; Haidar & Bar-Haim, 2022). These investments were spurred on by Israel's joining the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the pressure the latter applied on Israeli governments to reduce educational inequalities (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2013; Hever, 2010; Kashti, 2010).

2.2.3.3 Persistence

Mirroring the trend of minorities in other countries, PAI students are disproportionately dropping out of HE (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019). Furthermore, research shows that PAIs are more likely to take longer than their Jewish peers to complete their studies, even when

controlling for various institutional and educational characteristics, pointing to a pattern of cumulative inequality (Feniger et al., 2016; Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022).

2.2.3.4 Intersections with selected demographic and academic variables

Current research, by and large, views PAIs as a monolithic group, yet some evidence points to various intersectional differences in their enrolment and persistence, specifically by gender, parental education, institution type and religious group.

2.2.3.4.1 Gender

Young PAI women are highly motivated to enter HE and often refer to acquiring education as a "weapon" enabling them to face adversities in the future and gain recognition and autonomy by their community (Flum & Kaplan, 2016). In the academic year 2021/2022, women comprised 67% of all PAI undergraduate students, a percentage that has been relatively stable in the last five years (Naftalovich & Krentzler, 2022a). Following that, the percentage of academic PAI women between the ages of thirty and thirty-four has doubled in the past decade, while the corresponding percentage of men has remained stable (Harpaz et al., 2023). These figures could be partially explained by figures from earlier stages of the education system: 67% of PAI girls have Bagrut certificates by the age of eighteen, compared with 42% of PAI boys (Tehawkho et al., 2022).

As for persistence in higher education, evidence demonstrates a gendered pattern: Figure 2-11 shows the rate of non-completion after the first year by ethnicity and gender, whereby PAI men are more likely to drop out than any other group. The gap seems to be decreasing between PAI women and their Jewish counterparts, but possibly widening among the men.

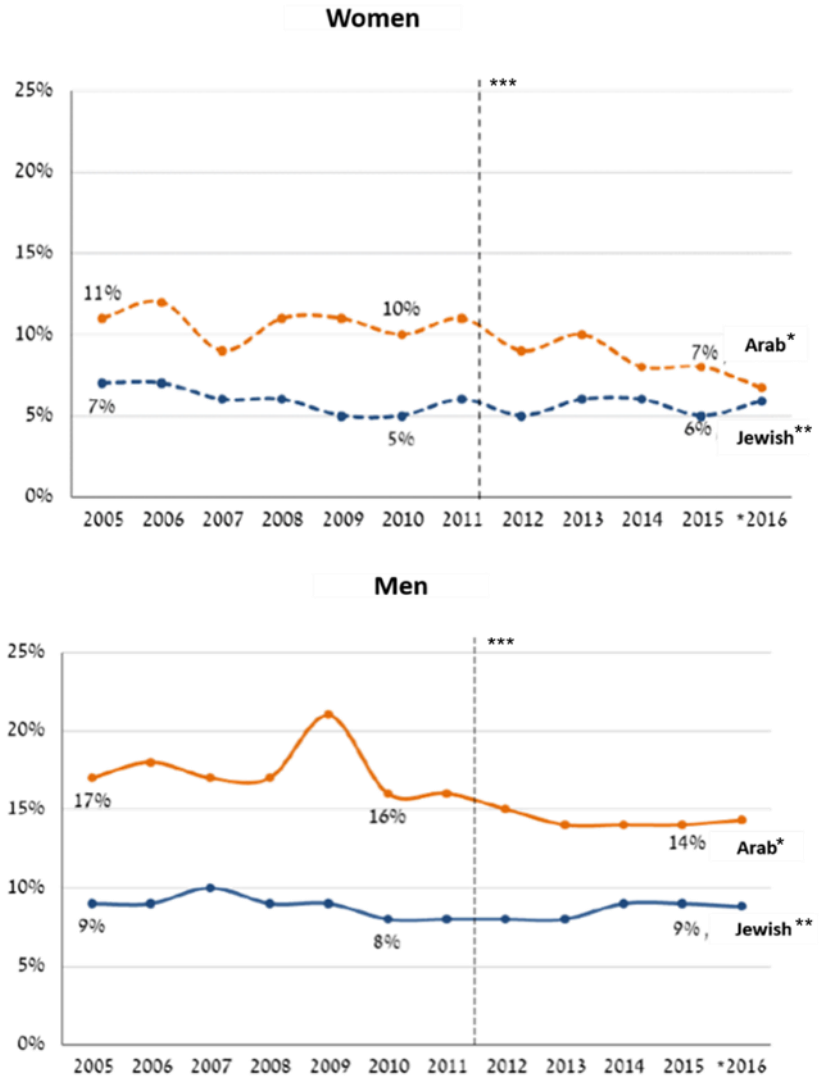

Figure 2-11 Attrition rates of students after the first year of study by gender and ethnicity (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019, p. 15)

**Arab does not include East Jerusalem residents.*

*** Jewish does not include Haredi Jews.*

**** The horizontal line indicates the launch of CHE's program for PAI students (described in section 2.2.3.6)*

There is no formal analysis of the causes of this pattern yet, but scholars have speculated that young PAI men do not believe that HE will advance them economically, especially as Arab society still expects men to be the primary income earners, and thus further study is, many times, not perceived to be worth the resources it requires (Kadri-Uvadia, 2019). Furthermore,

in a survey done by the Galilee Society, PAI youth were asked about their decision to enter HE, whereby a larger proportion of males indicated their parents as a main influence on the decision – as opposed to personal conviction, friends, or school – compared with the proportion of females who indicated similarly (Khatib et al., 2021). This may suggest that a significant portion of PAI men enter HE begrudgingly, which makes them more prone to dropping out later. Another explanation points to the patriarchal practice of handing over family businesses, if there are any, to the sons rather than the daughters in the family – easing men's entrance to the labour market and reducing their need for formal academic qualifications (Abu-Baker, 2016).

2.2.3.4.2 Parental education

There is growing recognition in Israel of the importance of first-generation status as a key category in understanding educational inequalities; the Central Bureau of Statistics recently began publishing data on it, and the PBC is considering its inclusion in various funding decisions (Dayan & Ben-Shushan Gazit, 2021; Nagar-Ron et al., 2022; Yamini et al., 2023). First-generation students in Israel, defined as those who do not have a parent with an academic qualification, are less likely to enrol in HE and less likely to persist in their studies after the first year, compared with continuing-generation students (Lang et al., 2022). Moreover, the likelihood of a first-generation student in Israel enrolling in a research university is a third of that of a continuing-generation student (Lang et al., 2022). Specifically, for PAIs, evidence shows that parental education impacts PAI students' chances of HE enrolment more than it impacts non-Haredi Jews (Lang et al., 2022).

2.2.3.4.3 Type of higher education institution

The percentage of PAIs in research universities is lower than their percentage in academic colleges (The Knesset's Research and Information Center, 2018). This could be attributed to

institutions' selectiveness, geographical proximity and accessibility to PAI communities, or a combination of both aspects.

2.2.3.4.4 Religious group

There are variations between PAI students of different religious groups in terms of academic qualification: the latest figures show that 52.9% of Christian PAIs enrolled in an academic undergraduate course within 8 years of completing high school, compared with 34.1% of all Arab education track graduates and 48.2% of all Jewish education tracks graduates, excluding the Haredi track (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022). In a similar vein, 22.6% of Christian PAIs 24–55-year-olds have an academic qualification from an Israeli HE institution, compared with 15% of Druze, and 9.7% of Muslims (Weininger, 2021a). Moreover, contrary to the trend among other PAIs discussed in the previous section, Christian PAIs are more likely to enrol in research universities rather than academic colleges (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

As for attitudes towards the HE environment, Shamai and Hager (2012) argued that Druze students behave as a "middle group," whereby they support multicultural policies on campus more than Jewish students yet less than other PAI students.

2.2.3.5 Challenges and needs of Palestinian Arab students

There is currently limited research on PAI experiences in HE, as most of the available evidence focuses on students' access to HE (Arar et al., 2016; Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Yirmiyahu et al., 2017). The existing literature is presented in this section.

PAI students face numerous challenges while attending Israeli HE institutions. In a survey conducted by Al-Haj (2003) at the University of Haifa, PAI students were asked to rank the problems they faced at the university from the highest to lowest, and the results were as

follows: English language, adapting to a new method of teaching, selection of courses, social and cultural adjustment, housing, relationships with Jewish counterparts, and the Hebrew language.

Al-Haj's (2003) findings are consistent with research conducted by HUJ's Centre for the Study of Multiculturalism and Diversity (CSMD). This research aimed to better understand the needs of minority students attending HUJ in 2016 (CSMD, 2016). Seven thousand, three hundred and thirty-two students, including Mizrahi, ultra-Orthodox Jewish, Ethiopian and PAI students, completed a survey that asked them to rate the difficulties they encountered during their studies on a scale of 1-100. It is unclear how many PAI students participated. Figure 2-12 visually displays the results.

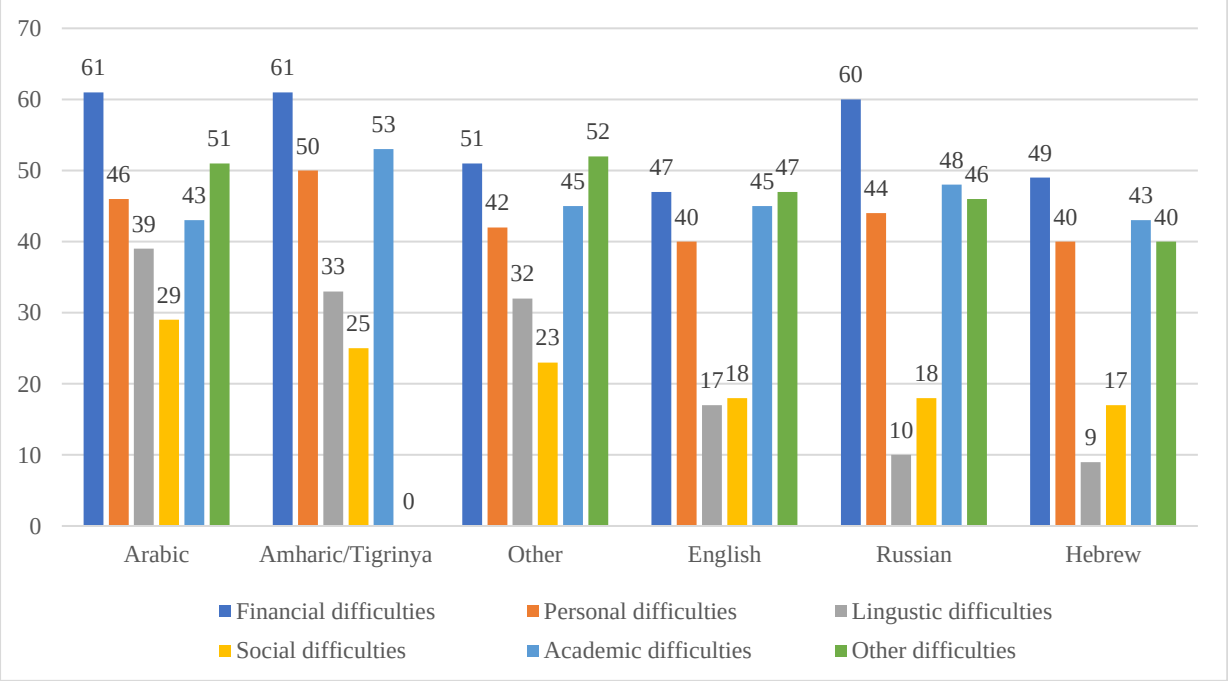

Figure 2-12 HUJ's minority students' average ratings of the intensity of difficulties they face during their studies on a scale of 1-100, by mother tongue and type of difficulty (CSMD, 2016, p. 4)

As Figure 2-12 shows, PAI students (i.e., Arabic speakers) had the highest rating of linguistic difficulties of all minority students, and, similar to other minority groups, reported strong financial difficulties.

More recently, Cohen-Azaria and Zamir (2021) interviewed thirty-three PAI students at an academic college in central Israel and identified four main difficulties that they face, which closely align with those mentioned above: a linguistic-cultural barrier, under-preparedness for academia, low socioeconomic status, and, for female students, societal gendered expectations.

The findings of the two surveys and the qualitative study provide a broad idea of the difficulties PAI students face, yet they are limited in important ways: the three studies were exclusive to students at specific academic institutions, and Al-Haj's (2003) survey was conducted in 2001, before the dramatic increase in PAI students in Israeli HE.

In the sections that follow, I present the current evidence regarding PAI students' financial, cultural, religious, linguistic, and political challenges during their time at Israeli HE.

2.2.3.5.1 Financial challenges

As previously indicated, PAIs are socioeconomically disadvantaged in Israeli society, which in turn influences students' pursuit of HE and their experiences within it (Cohen-Azaria & Zamir, 2021). A survey conducted by Abraham Initiatives (2016) that included 1345 PAI students compared the socioeconomic status of Jewish-Israeli and PAI students and found that the latter come from significantly poorer backgrounds and receive less financial aid and scholarships. This finding is consistent with the HUJ study results, which revealed that PAI students were the youngest, the most dependent on their parents to finance their academic studies and the least dependent on scholarships out of all the minority groups on campus (CSMD, 2016).

This can be partly explained by the fact that the mechanism by which institutions, governmental and otherwise, allocate some financial assistance for students, is biased in favour of Jewish Israeli students, and excludes PAIs. For example, students who are new

immigrants, and thus Jewish by definition, are financially supported by the Aliyah and Integration Ministry; and several organisations grant scholarships contingent on serving in the military or completing high school matriculation modules that are mandatory only in Jewish schools (Dagan-Buzaglo, 2007; Hashmonai & Kashti, 2022).

It is important to note that the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately negatively impacted PAI families (Aviram-Nitzan & Haddad Haj-Yahya, 2021). In a survey conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute in June 2020, approximately three-quarters of PAI students reported that their family's financial situation had deteriorated, compared with 43% of Jewish students (Haddad Haj-Yahya, 2020). Furthermore, reflective of the lower socioeconomic condition of PAIs and the government's low investment in PAI infrastructure, 35% of PAI students indicated that the internet infrastructure where they live is not sufficient to maintain a regular study routine, compared with 12% of Jewish students (Haddad Haj-Yahya, 2020). The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on PAI students is yet to be fully explored.

2.2.3.5.2 Cultural and religious challenges

Generally, Israeli campuses are not culturally or religiously sensitive to PAI students. In a critical review of existing data complemented by the authors' experiences working in academia, Hager and Jabareen (2016) indicate that most academic calendars disregard Muslim and Christian holidays and that institutions do not have a clear policy on students' absence due to cultural or religious reasons. Furthermore, a third of the respondents in the Abraham Initiatives (2016) survey report that there aren't any references to their cultural backgrounds on campus. Instead, campus corridors often "tell the Zionist story" and "augment Arab students' alienation" (Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021, p. 134). Consequently, PAI students experience acculturative stress during their time at HE, i.e., stress caused by the

process of adapting to the dominant culture's language and norms, which has been linked to negative psychological outcomes (Abu Kaf & Khalaf, 2020). It should be noted that this is changing in some academic institutions whereby Muslim and Christian holidays are starting to be included in the academic calendars.

For women, navigating between their home culture and the Israeli culture that dominates the campus is a difficult task. While PAI society is dynamic and is undergoing socio-cultural processes of individualisation, globalisation, and modernisation, PAI communities generally remain more traditional and conservative than the general Israeli secular public (Abu-Baker, 2016; Sabbah-Karkaby & Stier, 2017). Thus, many PAI women have to balance gendered societal expectations with their desire to pursue academic education (Cohen-Azaria & Zamir, 2021). Specifically for Bedouin women, the encounter with Israeli Jewish culture on campus highlights the differences in gender dynamics between Bedouin culture and Israeli Jewish secular culture and reveals their status as an impoverished racialised minority in Israel – all of which reinforces their sense of alienation on campus (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2014; Abu-Rabia-Queder & Arar, 2011).

2.2.3.5.3 Linguistic challenges

Until the passage of the Nation-State Law in 2018, Arabic was an official language of Israel alongside Hebrew. However, in a dissonance between law and reality, Arabic has been absent from the public sphere for decades (Donitsa-Schmidt et al., 2022; Saban & Amara, 2004). Researchers have characterised Israeli governments' approach towards Arabic as "language as a problem" – an approach that stems from a melting pot policy that views any language other than Hebrew as a threat (Amara et al., 2016, p. 15; Ruíz, 1984).

This approach extends to campuses as well. The Arabic language is marginalised on campuses, demonstrated by its absence in HE physical environments (e.g., signs, names of

buildings, public computer keyboards). In a report examining the status of Arabic in Israeli HE institutions by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the authors conclude that "the academic space [in Israel] identifies first and foremost with the Hebrew language, secondarily with English, and almost not at all with Arabic" (Amara et al., 2016, p. 4).

In an effort to bring the Arabic language into HE spaces, the PBC has made several recommendations to HE Institutions: that they translate certain sections of their websites to Arabic, add Arabic to signs around campus, and install Arabic keyboards on the institutions' computers – yet evidence shows that a minority of institutions have implemented this (Amara et al., 2016; Hendin & Ben Rabi, 2015). Language is far more than a tool to communicate but is rather a symbol of identity, culture, and heritage and thus its marginalisation denotes disregard for its speakers (Halabi, 2016).

As for teaching, the main instruction language in Israeli HE is Hebrew and the academic material is often in English, both of which are foreign languages to PAIs (Daniel, 2016; Hager & Jabareen, 2016). Only three HE institutions in Israel teach in Arabic, all of which are teacher training colleges (Donitsa-Schmidt et al., 2022). Thus, PAI students often have difficulties understanding lecturers, writing papers in Hebrew, and expressing themselves verbally in class (Abu Gweder, 2022; Ali & Da'as, 2018; Cohen-Azaria & Zamir, 2021). Research shows that introducing courses taught in Arabic can lead to positive social and educational outcomes for PAI students: one academic college in Israel began offering its PAI students the opportunity to study two courses in Arabic, and after interviewing the participating students, Halabi (2022) concluded that the courses increased PAI students' self-confidence and deepened their sense of belonging to the college.

Furthermore, some courses have requirements tailored to Jewish-Israeli students without regard for those who do not fit this description. For example, many departments, especially in

the social sciences, require students to complete a certain number of experiments to progress in their studies. However, most of these experiments require the participants to be native Hebrew speakers, causing PAIs difficulty in completing their requested number of experiments (Hendin, 2009).

2.2.3.5.4 Political challenges

Current literature demonstrates that PAI students' ethnonational identity is a central factor in their experiences in Israeli HE. Research shows that PAI students experience discrimination due to their identity: almost half of PAI respondents in the Abraham Initiatives' survey (2016) recounted encountering explicit racism on campus, primarily by other students, and in Halabi's (2016) study, eighteen out of the twenty-five student interviewees spoke of hostile interactions between themselves and the academic as well as the administrative staff, perceiving them as uncaring of their wellbeing or academic progress. Specifically in Jerusalem, a city that embodies the national and religious divides that exist in Israel-Palestine, HUJ students speak of "unpleasant daily encounters," whereby, for example, they are routinely profiled, stopped and searched by the security personnel on campus when entering the university through its various checkpoints (Hasson, 2022; Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021, p. 133). Through her interviews with students, Sa'di-Ibraheem (2021) argues that these experiences on the HUJ campus are a continuation of similar hostilities outside it.

Thus, the wider political context is also crucial to consider. The support that universities provide for Israel's military system (e.g., training for military personnel, and defence-related research) often alienates PAI students, reminding them of the complicity of academic institutions in emboldening and enabling the state's militaristic efforts against other Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, preserving, and deepening the status quo (Sen, 2021). In classrooms, especially in social sciences and the humanities, the taught material is

often laden with Zionist discourses and military-related language is frequently employed, immediately disaffecting PAIs (Qa'adan, 2020; Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021). Lecturers often cite Western and Israeli resources in their courses, yet rarely include Palestinian or Arab literature, further cementing intellectual hegemony in HE (Ali-Muqari, 2020).

On a policy level, based on data from official documents, Al-Haj (2003) concludes that HE policy in Israel reflects the wider power relations in society, cementing the Jewish-Israeli cultural hegemony by controlling "the selection system, the written curriculum and the hidden curriculum" (p. 366). In Israeli academia, PAIs are not part of the process of academic knowledge production and thus are "present absentees" in HE institutions, invisible and unable to engage meaningfully, leading them to a state of isolation and withdrawal (Halabi, 2016, p. 568).

2.2.3.6 Institutional systems of support

2.2.3.6.1 Development of the CHE program

In 2001, the CHE's PBC began an extensive effort to increase PAI students' accessibility to HE by creating a permanent steering committee dedicated to that end, as well as allocating a designated budget for institutions to create their own social and academic support systems for PAI students (Shaviv et al., 2013).

In 2011, the efforts were extended, and the budget was increased, paving the way for a "holistic and extensive" program that aims to "improve the quality of integration, support and duration of studies for minority students," among which were Arabs (Shaviv et al., 2013, p. 63). More specifically, the program sets out to "increase the rate of Arab students in HE and their rate of completion, to decrease the difficulties that they face during their studies and to decrease the gaps between them and their Jewish peers" (Levi et al., 2019, p. 2). This is part of the CHE's multi-year plan of 2010/11 – 2015/16 and includes a host of activities targeting

high-school pupils (through the *Rowad* program), current academic students, graduates, and faculty. The program received funding to continue operating in the CHE's plan for 2016/17-2021/22 (Hendin & Ben Rabi, 2016).

The details of these efforts are laid out in the CHE's report "Pluralism and Equal Opportunities in Higher Education" (Shaviv et al., 2013). The authors of the report identified six main obstacles in the path of PAI students seeking HE in Israel: knowledge gaps, the psychometric test, lack of pre-academic guidance, lack of physical accessibility to institutions, cultural and social adjustment, and economic needs. The report states that it has identified these obstacles through meetings with students, staff, and academic officials. However, no other details are presented regarding these meetings (e.g., recruitment, length).

The CHE's report highlights the socioeconomic disadvantage of PAIs and their 'under-preparedness' for academia as the main reasons for unequal educational outcomes. The report views Palestinian Arab culture as a hurdle rather than an asset, stating:

> "[PAI students] encounter difficulties that could have been minimised with appropriate preparation in their previous school years. The students' language skills are a major obstacle; their native tongue is spoken Arabic… The level of teaching at [PAI schools] is apparently not high enough… the studies in Arab schools, as well as the Arab teachers themselves, are influenced by the traditional cultural environment, patterns of accepting authority, technological-digital gaps, etc." (Shaviv et al., 2013, p. 42)

These statements reveal a deficit discourse whereby PAI students are defined in terms of failure and pathologised as lacking in ability or being 'underprepared' for the educational environment (Fogarty et al., 2018). This is in direct contrast with Yosso's community cultural

wealth model (2005) discussed in previous sections, which sees the myriad of skills and knowledge possessed by minority students as assets.

Consequently, the CHE program does not seek to make fundamental changes to the HE system and rather focuses on PAI students' integration into it (Ma'ayan, 2019). The consequences of this approach can be seen in the findings of the HUJ study, where despite a third of PAI participants turning to the university for support, they perceived this support as motivated by financial interests in keeping them in the system rather than an authentic concern for their needs (CSMD, 2016).

2.2.3.6.2 Components of the CHE program and their impact

The main components of the CHE program for undergraduate students focus primarily on the first year in HE and include pre-academic preparatory courses (i.e. summer bridge programs), support for "quality integration" into academia including social and academic support, and 800 scholarships (named the *Irtika'a* scholarship) for new students granted based on their socioeconomic status and field of study and contingent on volunteering in the local community (Shaviv et al., 2013, p. 66).

Despite the national evidence of PAI students' progress in HE, emerging evidence shows that the CHE's efforts produced moderately positive results in reducing attrition and supporting students' academic progress. An evaluation study conducted by the Myers JDC Brookdale Institute showed that 28 out of 66 HE institutions have implemented the CHE's program and 21 of those have implemented all the core components (Levi et al., 2019). Furthermore, the evaluation indicates that the components are rolled out gradually and sometimes inconsistently across time and/or academic courses.

The evaluation study also surveyed third-year PAI students on their perception and use of the support offered to them by their institutions. The respondents indicated that the services only

moderately fulfilled their needs, rating it an average of 5.2 on a scale of 0-10: a third reported that the services helped them very much (i.e., a rating between 8 and 10) and a quarter reported very little to no help at all (i.e., a rating between 0 and 2). Nevertheless, the majority (72%) of respondents received at least one type of support during their studies. Financial support was rated as the most helpful (52%), and academic support was the most used (44%).

2.2.4 Summary

To summarise, this section presented the political, socioeconomic, and educational context of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) and the Israeli higher education (HE) system. It revealed a picture of a systemically disadvantaged indigenous ethnonational group that was made a minority almost overnight yet remains determined to move from the margins and is entering Israeli HE in increasing numbers, despite numerous challenges. It also described the efforts made by Israel's Council for Higher Education (CHE) to increase the number of PAIs in HE and assist with their academic journeys.

This section also presented the existing evidence concerning the PAI students' experiences in Israeli HE, detailing the financial, cultural, religious, linguistic, and political challenges they face. However, generally speaking, the evidence is either outdated, limited to certain institutions, unclear about its methods or does not address students directly. Furthermore, current research tends to treat PAI students as a monolithic group and has not sufficiently explored potential variations among them.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation aims to answer one focal question: how do Palestinian Arab undergraduate students who are Israeli citizens experience Israeli higher education, and how do their experiences vary by academic and sociodemographic factors? This was then parsed out into three sub-questions:

1. What are the experiences of PAI undergraduate students during their transition to Israeli HE? What factors impact their academic progress and how? Do these experiences vary by academic and sociodemographic factors?
2. How do PAI undergraduate students experience and perceive their campus climate as an indigenous minority ethnonational group? How do they perceive the support provided to them by their institutions? Do these experiences and perceptions vary by academic and sociodemographic factors?
3. How did PAI undergraduate students experience the violent events of May 2021? What role did campuses and HE institutions play in their experiences?

Throughout this dissertation, I adopted an exploratory approach, allowing the research questions to be dynamic and evolve during the research process. A prime example of this is the third research question, which I could not have predicted at the outset of this dissertation in 2020 and was born out of conversations with colleagues and research participants about the potential impact of the May 2021 events on the PAI student experience. This exploratory approach proved very valuable to me as I was able to follow the data, as well as events in the ever-changing Palestinian-Israeli context, and remain flexible throughout the research process.

4 METHODOLOGY & METHODS

This chapter presents the methodology that guided this dissertation and the methods employed throughout it. The chapter begins by presenting the historical and philosophical foundations that underpin mixed-methods research, followed by a reflection on my positionality as a researcher focusing on this particular research topic. Then, the research design and the rationale for adopting it in this dissertation are discussed. Finally, the data collection and analysis procedures used in the three main phases of the research of this dissertation are described in detail.

4.1 FOUNDATIONS OF MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH

As Creswell and Plano Clark point out (2017), researchers need to discuss the historical and philosophical foundations of mixed-methods research given its emerging nature as a "third research community" alongside the qualitative and quantitative ones (Tashakkori et al., 2021, p. 3). Examining these foundations can provide insight into researchers' understanding of the social world they study (Mertens, 2019).

4.1.1 Historical and philosophical foundations

Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) organise the historical development of mixed-methods research into five stages. First, the formative stage between the 1950s and 1980s saw interest in using multiple methods in a study rising, beginning with using multiple quantitative methods and ending with using both qualitative and quantitative techniques in the same study. The use of multiple methods gave way to a second stage when, between the 1970s and 1980s, researchers argued whether qualitative and quantitative methods could be combined, in what was later termed the paradigm debates. "Purists" argued that the two methods rest on two incompatible and mutually exclusive worldviews and thus integration is not possible (i.e.

the incompatibility thesis), “situationalists” advocated adapting methods to the needs of the specific research situation, while pragmatists challenged the alleged dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methods and reasoned that either one can be used to “corroborate, elaborate or initiate” findings from the other (Rossman & Wilson, 1985, pp. 629–633).

Central to the paradigm debates were the differences between the fundamental philosophical assumptions of qualitative research (i.e., constructivism) and those of quantitative research (i.e., positivism, and later post-positivism). It should be noted that qualitative research is not inherently constructivist, nor is quantitative research inherently positivist, yet these are the paradigms typically associated with each research type (Shan, 2022). Epistemologically, positivism assumes independence between researcher and researched, while constructivism rejects this and emphasises that it is the interactivity between them that creates the research data; ontologically, positivists believe in a singular objective reality, while constructivists believe that there are multiple realities and therefore search for differing perspectives; and axiologically, positivists seek to eliminate bias as researchers, while constructivists believe that bias is inevitable and thus acknowledge and seek to meaningfully engage with it in their work (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Tashakkori et al., 2021).

Towards the end of the 1980s, the paradigm debates diminished as researchers saw the value of mixed-methods research and began to reconcile its use by adopting a “both-and logic… [meaning] to use what is helpful from both qualitative and quantitative research” (Tashakkori et al., 2021, p. 18). This paved the way to a third stage, where attention shifted to developing the various reasons and procedures for mixed-methods research (J. C. Greene et al., 1989). Following that, during the 2000s, the field of mixed-methods moved towards further formalisation and systematisation, specifically through increased publications and advocacy for its use in various disciplines (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Finally, Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) suggest that the last two decades of mixed-methods research mark a fifth stage,

characterised by reflection and refinement whereby important issues and controversies are identified, discussed, and eventually lead to refining the methods.

4.1.2 Alternative paradigms applied to mixed-methods research: pragmatism and transformativism

As a consequence of the paradigm debates, scholars sought to develop and formalise distinctive philosophical foundations for mixed methods research, the most popular being the pragmatist position (Shan, 2022). Drawing from the both-and logic, pragmatists believe that practical research questions and "situational responsiveness" should be the primary guide in making methodological decisions, as opposed to philosophical traditions and assumptions (J. C. Greene & Caracelli, 1997, p. 9). Pragmatism, therefore, is positioned as an "alternative, inclusive" framework that encompasses multiple assumptions and methods (J. C. Greene et al., 2005, p. 275).

Another paradigm that has been developed as an underpinning of mixed-methods research is the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2003, 2007). The transformative paradigm places primary importance on its axiological beliefs, adopting "an explicit goal for research to serve the ends of creating a more just and democratic society" (Mertens, 2003, p. 159). Proponents of this paradigm point out that, historically, research has not served communities on the margins of society, and therefore, issues of power and social justice "must be addressed at each stage of the research process" (Mertens, 2007, p. 213). Knowledge, according to transformativism, is not neutral and reflects existing power relations within society, and certain actors have disproportionately more power to shape and define reality. In light of these assumptions, Mertens (2007) argues that a cyclical, responsive model of mixed-methods research is one way to include marginalised communities at every level of the

inquiry, encompassing the "qualitative dialogue needed throughout the research cycle, as well as the collection of quantitative data as appropriate" (p. 244).

Throughout this dissertation I draw on the transformative paradigm in several key aspects, guided by the criteria set by Sweetman, Badiee and Creswell (2010): first, the main research issue explored in this dissertation concerns a problem important to PAIs as a systematically marginalised community in Israel; second, the research problem is framed within the context of unequal power relations in Israeli society; third, the research process centres the voices and experiences of the community members; and fourth, I hope that this research will ultimately lead to social transformation and a more just process of policymaking.

4.2 RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY & REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity is the process of continual internal dialogue that a researcher engages in concerning their relationship to the research issue and the explicit acknowledgement of how their social situatedness has influenced the process (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019). Berger (2015) describes reflexivity as "turning the researcher's lens back onto oneself," which challenges the perception of knowledge production as separate from the researcher producing it (p. 220). The process of continuous reflexivity is one of the main strategies for strengthening the trustworthiness of the researcher's analysis as well as deepening their understanding of the subject matter.

4.2.1 Insider and outsider researchers

Closely tied to the issue of reflexivity and positionality in research is the paradigm of insider and outsider researchers: while insider researchers are those who belong to the same social or cultural group as their research participants, outsider researchers are those who do not (M. Greene, 2014). There is value to both positions: insider researchers have a deep understanding of the community and a relational ease with its members, allowing them to build rapport with research participants (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). However, this familiarity with the context could lead an insider researcher to make wrong assumptions about the research based on their own experiences which may differ from those of participants (Delyser, 2001). Thus, some have argued that outsider researchers can make observations that an insider might overlook, for example, "by asking 'naïve questions'…gaining valuable insight precisely because of their outsider perspective" (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015, p. 92).

Alongside this, scholars have argued against viewing the insider-outsider paradigm as binary, and that researchers can be both insiders and outsiders (Breen, 2007). Communities are not homogenous, and identities are not static. Therefore, they argue, the paradigm should be

treated as a continuum (Breen, 2007; Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). I adopt this stance in this dissertation, as I explain in the next section.

4.2.2 Multidimensional reflexivity: my reflection

Walsh (2003) suggests that reflexivity in research is multidimensional, and includes at least four domains: personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual. In what follows I briefly reflect on each domain and how it manifested throughout the research process.

4.2.2.1 Personal reflexivity

Personal reflexivity refers to researchers' consideration of how their assumptions, experiences, and identity have shaped their study in all its phases (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Walsh, 2003).

Viewing the insider-outsider paradigm as a continuum, I consider myself closer to the insider researcher position. I am a Palestinian Arab citizen of Israel and completed my undergraduate studies at the University of Haifa between 2015 and 2018. Therefore, I share many of the experiences the participants in this research have encountered throughout their academic journeys. As I listened to participants' stories during the focus groups and investigated the quantitative results of the questionnaire, I could not help being reminded of my own experiences as an undergraduate student – yet I had to remind myself that, in the words of Berger (2015), "while we may have shared an experience, it was different for each, and I want to learn theirs." (p. 223)

I am also a woman, a Christian, have attended school in Nazareth, and was raised by a middle-class family that consistently supported my education. These are all characteristics that have played a significant role in shaping my research perspective especially as it relates to HE, yet they are characteristics that many of the participants do not share. Furthermore, the very act of researching a topic offers a degree of separation from it, as it necessitates

academic reading and methodological rigour which are not necessarily required from the casual observer or the students whose experience I am studying.

However, I did not share all the experiences that are studied in this dissertation. As previously mentioned, in the third paper of this dissertation, I explore PAI students' experiences during the May 2021 events. During these events, I was in the United Kingdom and was watching, horrified, alarmed, and scared, from afar. I was not on the streets of Haifa, Jerusalem, Lydd, or Nazareth protesting like some of the participants in this study. I did not experience the immediate physical danger to my safety that they spoke about. My experience of those events was largely online, and my knowledge of what was happening was facilitated by videos circulating on social media, coloured by my concern for the well-being of my family and friends back home.

Lastly, the Israel-Gaza 2023 war broke out as I prepared to finalise the write-up of the findings of the third paper. With Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7th and, in turn, Israel's retaliatory military campaign on Gaza, the intensity of the war was personally destabilising and devastating. Many emotions accompanied me throughout this time – the most prominent being fear and anger, in striking similarity to the experiences I had heard about from the interviewees just a few weeks prior about May 2021. These emotions raised various challenges and questions for me: how do I untangle the ongoing war from the previous one? How do I write about the violence of 2021 amid the violence of 2023? These questions were very real as I re-read interview transcripts and found myself thinking of current events rather than those of 2021. I also struggled to navigate my emotional state: How do I distinguish between my own emotions and those I had witnessed by the interviewees? How do I acknowledge the impact of the current events on my narration of the past without undermining the voices of the participants, yet also without seeking to position myself as a neutral observer? How do I take care of my mental state while experiencing violence and

writing about it? And perhaps most importantly, how do I write not out of fear or anger but out of love for people and truth? I cannot say I reached a decisive answer to these questions, but I grappled with them as I read and wrote. I knew that I could not remove the lens of 2023 when looking back at 2021: there was no going back, and I now needed to find ways to engage with the present as I narrate the past.

4.2.2.2 Interpersonal reflexivity

Interpersonal reflexivity pays close attention to the relationships involved in the research, especially the dynamic between participant and researcher which is usually characterised by a power imbalance (Finlay, 2002; Walsh, 2003).

As a researcher, interviewer/moderator, and translator, I have the power to construct participants' realities by prompting answers, choosing data analysis methods, deciding what's relevant for the research, and translating their words. With that in mind, I was attuned to instances of half-sentences where participants assumed I would understand what they meant and made an effort to follow up and ask for more details. I also chose qualitative data methods that are inductive and remain grounded in the data itself, and regularly met with other postgraduate students to discuss the project and identify any potential blind spots or unchecked assumptions. For an extended discussion on translation, see section 4.3.3.

4.2.2.3 Methodological reflexivity

Through methodological reflexivity, researchers are encouraged to reflect on the consequences and nuances of their methodological decisions (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Walsh, 2003).

As previously discussed, I adopted the transformative paradigm throughout this dissertation, and thus my point of departure and guiding principle is advocating for PAI students and conveying their voices. Thus, the central focal point of this dissertation was the experiences

of PAI students which I believe stand as credible on their own – meaning that they are the main participant group in this dissertation rather than other stakeholders (e.g., student guidance counsellors) and that there was no comparison group (e.g., Jewish-Israeli students), although both were viable options for this dissertation.

4.2.2.4 Contextual reflexivity

Contextual reflexivity locates the research project in its historical, sociopolitical, and cultural context, tracing how research influences and is influenced by the social field in which it operates (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023; Walsh, 2003).

The Israeli-Palestinian context is tumultuous and fast-changing. The last five years were characterised by political instability, intensified state violence against Palestinians inside and outside the green line, the continual rise of extreme right-wing nationalistic politics, the collapse of any peace talks or a viable two-state solution, an unprecedented increase in crime in PAI communities that is met with Israeli governments' helplessness at best and intentional neglect at worst; and, of course, the 2023 Israel-Hamas war (Green, 2021; Haaretz Editorial, 2023). This dissertation was born, developed, carried out and produced against this backdrop, impacting both the participants and me. Political conversations were inescapable as five elections were held in the span of four years, periods of heightened emotions and rapidly evolving political events were frequent, and the fear that engulfed PAI communities amidst unprecedented state surveillance and intimidation was palpable (Glazer & Mashiach, 2023).

Three major socio-political events are relevant to highlight in this discussion.

First, I analysed the qualitative findings of the first two papers during the violent events of May 2021 – events that saw PAI political participation the likes of which have not been seen in decades, violent riots in mixed cities, and intense political persecution and police brutality (for more details on these events, see section 8.2.2). The delicate status quo that prevailed

before these events was shattered, especially in mixed cities where societies' fabric was torn apart by violence (Rosen, 2022). In addition to influencing PAI society and PAI students in particular, this context undoubtedly impacted my state of mind as I wrote the analysis of the qualitative data (and ultimately led to the development of the third phase of this dissertation). As I examined and re-examined the data to identify patterns and themes, I diligently reflected on how the unfolding events and my concern for my family and friends back home were influencing my perspective and did my best to portray the participants' reality in a way that is faithful to their recounting of it.

Second, interviews for the third phase were carried out during unprecedented mass Israeli protests against a judicial overhaul proposed by the current right-wing government, prompting a robust public discussion over the nature of democracy in Israel (Saposnik & Aridan, 2023). Therefore, many interviewees drew comparisons between their institution's strong response to the proposed judicial overhaul and their timid response to the May 2021 events – an insight that would not have come up in other circumstances.

Third, and most significant geopolitically, the Israel-Gaza 2023 war, which is still ongoing at the time of writing this, seems to be leading to a seismic shift in the region. This war casts a new light on the past as it could be argued that the events of 2021 were a preamble to 2023.

Simultaneously, the research process also influenced those who participated in it. Two cases stand out here.

First, during the quantitative data collection phase, I was approached by several students who had filled out the questionnaire and wanted to express their gratitude for the opportunity to talk about their experiences in HE. Three of them used a particular phrase to describe their feelings while completing the questionnaire: "بفشّ الغلّ" – a phrase that implies an experience of release, usually a release of anger or frustration. Second, shortly after the second

qualitative data collection phase, when the war in October 2023 broke out, two of the students I had interviewed reached out to tell me about their situation now, the fear they feel and the political persecution their classmates are experiencing.

In both cases, while I was pleased that the research topic was resonating with students and that they trusted me enough to share their experiences, I was afraid that their feelings would be accompanied by an expectation that the research would directly lead to a change in policy – an expectation that I cannot promise to fulfil.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: ITERATIVE SEQUENTIAL MIXED-METHODS

As previously stated, this dissertation sought to understand PAI undergraduate students' experiences in Israeli HE institutions. To that end, an iterative sequential three-step mixed methods research design was employed. Iterative sequential mixed-methods designs are a form of sequential research designs which have more than two strands or phases one after the other (Tashakkori et al., 2021). This design is especially used in research projects where "new salient events occurred in the research setting" that necessitate the project to evolve (Tashakkori et al., 2021, p. 281).

In this dissertation, the iterative sequential mixed-methods design was achieved as follows: first, a qualitative research phase was conducted, consisting of online focus groups with PAI undergraduate students. The findings of this phase then informed the development of a survey instrument that was piloted and disseminated in the following quantitative research phase. Lastly, another round of qualitative data collection was carried out to explore the impact of key events that occurred throughout the first two phases on the main research issue.

A summarised overview of the three research phases is presented in Figure 4-1 below, and a detailed overview is presented in section 4.7.



Figure 4-1 Summarised overview of the dissertation's research phases

4.3.1 Rationale for employing a mixed method approach

Although the hallmark of mixed-methods research is the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, it is not simply a collection of both types of data but involves meaningfully integrating both approaches (Creswell, 2015). Integration in mixed-methods research is the

place “where the quantitative and qualitative phases intersect or bump against each other” (Creswell, 2015, p. 82). The main argument for conducting mixed-methods research is that this integration produces a whole that is “greater than the sum” of the individual parts (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015, p. 116).

Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) propose five potential purposes for mixed-methods research: first, triangulation, meaning to combine data from different sources to bolster the credibility of the study; second, complementarity, whereby the results of one method are used to elaborate, clarify or illustrate the results of the other and thus facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the central phenomenon; third, development, as the findings of one method inform and shape the other, especially in instrumentation processes; fourth, initiation, meaning the emergence of findings using one method which stimulates new research questions in another; and fifth, expansion, or “increasing the scope of the inquiry by selecting the methods most appropriate for multiple inquiry components.” (p. 259)

In this dissertation, the five purposes discussed above were all relevant and implemented to some degree. The research issue was first explored and described in qualitative methods and terms, which provided the skeleton for the quantitative exploration – the themes identified through the focus groups were used to develop a new survey instrument that was then piloted and disseminated in the second phase of the research (i.e., development). This process is explained further in section 4.5.1 and Appendix 2.1. Moreover, the qualitative and quantitative phases explored the research issue from different angles, as the qualitative phases aimed at understanding students’ experiences on campus and their attitudes towards their institutions, while the quantitative phase sought to determine the prevalence of the qualitative themes through a larger, more diverse sample, and identify potential variations among students based on sociodemographic and academic factors (i.e., complementarity and expansion). The qualitative and quantitative findings from the first two phases were then

triangulated, whereby discrepancies and compatibilities between them were discussed and meaningfully engaged with, contributing to a more nuanced representation of the research issue (i.e., triangulation and expansion). Last, the findings from the first two phases, as well as specific events that occurred between them, gave rise to a third phase that investigated these findings and the impact of these events further (i.e., initiation).

4.3.2 Ethical review processes

All research phases of this dissertation were reviewed by and received approval from the Departmental Ethics Committee of the Department for Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford (References: C1A_20_004; C1A_21-22_007; SPI_C1A_23_002).

4.3.3 A note on moving between languages

All data collection for this study was conducted in Arabic. The online questionnaire was administered in Arabic. Participants in the focus groups and interviews spoke primarily in Arabic while incorporating some terms in Hebrew and English, mainly concerning their studies. I transcribed, coded, and analysed the qualitative data in Arabic and only translated the segments of data that I intended to incorporate into the dissertation when writing.

While all research needs to pay close attention to linguistic nuances, a project as multilingual as the current one highlights the role of language in shaping reality. Translation is not merely a technical process but rather a process of constructing meaning laden with cultural assumptions and values (Bashiruddin, 2013). In this case, I am both the researcher and translator, which provides me with a lot of power to present the realities of interviewees by choosing words that I believe reflect their own. I translated the words of interviewees as I understood them from my perspective, influenced by my experiences and beliefs but also with an intimate understanding of the culture both the interviewees and I broadly belong to.

For example, one word that I struggled to translate is فصل – which could be translated either to separation or segregation. While both words generally convey the same meaning, the latter carries historical connotations and implies an intentional, ill-intentioned, often racial form of separation. Choosing one word over the other would indicate a certain perception of sociopolitical reality and historical context. In difficult cases like this, I took a few steps to ensure a rigorous and accurate process of translation: first, I re-read the transcripts multiple times to gain a better understanding of the context in which the word was spoken while re-listening to the audio recording to ensure that my translation remained true to the context of the conversation and the speaker's tone as much as possible. Second, I conferred with colleagues proficient in both English and Arabic to get their opinions and suggestions on the matter. Last, I consulted literature in similar areas to see what terminology other researchers used. In cases where I could not reach an adequate measure of equivalence in translation, I offer several synonyms that collectively closely portray the meaning of the phrase or word in question (Birbili, 2000). In the example mentioned above, I eventually settled on using the word segregation.

4.4 PHASE I

The first phase of this dissertation sought to explore PAI students' experiences in Israeli HE using online focus groups conducted in the spring of 2021. The discussions centred around the challenges PAI students face on campus, their views on the support offered to them by their institutions, and their successes as students.

4.4.1 Planning

4.4.1.1 Rationale for utilising focus groups

Krueger and Casey (2014) define a focus group as a small group of people who share a common characteristic of interest to the researcher, participating in a deliberate discussion to contribute to understanding the topic studied. Interactions between participants are a core feature of focus groups and are actively encouraged by the moderator, as participants not only share their views but also respond to those of others, producing a "synergistic" effect (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014, p. 45). Therefore, focus groups foster spontaneity among participants and allow the researcher to be less directive by providing a wider social context than in one-on-one interviews (Billups, 2012; Finch & Lewis, 2003).

I chose focus groups for this phase for several reasons. First, the literature on URM students' experiences in HE is generally based in the United States, and evidence is scarce in other non-North-American, non-European contexts (Younger et al., 2019). Thus, I deemed focus groups as suitable to explore a wide range of issues. Second, PAI students' experiences in Israeli HE are rarely heard and affirmed. Literature shows that focus groups provide a sense of validation for members of marginalised groups, and it is important for participants to feel supported as they share their experiences with others and reflect and build on each other's responses (Morgan, 1997). Third, contrary to common belief, evidence suggests that participants are just as likely to disclose personal information in focus groups as they would

in an individual interview context (Guest, Namey, Taylor, et al., 2017). Fourth, HE students have been "regularly engaged" in focus groups, and this research method suits their communication style (Billups, 2012, p. 3).

The interactions that focus groups are intended to elicit carry risks alongside creating opportunities. For example, in focus group discussions, experiences and information that are shared between most members of the group tend to be prioritised over those that are not, which might lead to an overemphasis on certain topics and an under-exploration of others (Acocella, 2012). Additionally, while the synergistic effect previously mentioned is a core feature of focus groups and is considered an advantage of the method, it could also be a disadvantage – for instance, there is a risk that a dominating or opinionated participant would overtake the discussion and that more reserved participants would hesitate to share their perspectives (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014).

4.4.1.2 Online focus groups

As this study was carried out in the spring of 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus groups had to be conducted online through a video conferencing platform. Due to its popularity in Israel and convenience (e.g., inexpensive license), I chose to use Zoom.

At that point in time, there was limited empirical evidence about the difference between conducting in-person and online focus groups, and the evidence largely referred to text-based online formats that allow for anonymity (e.g., Gaiser, 2008; Woodyatt et al., 2016). At the time of writing this, more literature has been produced regarding the use of synchronous video-based online focus groups in the social sciences. Generally, evidence suggests that the online video-based format is not detrimental to the quality or richness of the data obtained and that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, especially when the group is small and the

participants have strong internet bandwidth (Aligato et al., 2021; Keemink et al., 2022; Lobe & Morgan, 2020).

Despite the limited evidence at the time of data collection, I attempted to predict some of the challenges and benefits of using an online video platform for group discussion to prevent problems and maximise advantages. Potential problems included unexpected technical problems, participants becoming distracted by external factors, the conversation becoming stilted due to the online format, and non-verbal cues being more difficult to observe on a screen. Potential benefits include flexibility of schedule, the ability to gather participants from different geographical locations and ease of recording the discussion.

I considered these as I planned the study. As all participants were current students or recent graduates, they all had access to a computer or smartphone, as well as a relatively stable internet connection. Furthermore, a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, they were all proficient at navigating Zoom and comfortable participating in conversations facilitated on the platform. In the email reminders I sent to participants, I stressed the importance of having access to a strong internet connection and a quiet environment. Additionally, I encouraged participants to keep their cameras on and microphones unmuted (when possible and comfortable) to facilitate a more natural conversation flow.

All but one participant kept their video and audio on during the discussion, and no major technical problems occurred. Three participants were distracted by family members and/or phone calls.

4.4.1.3 Developing the protocol

I used Billups' (2012, 2019) guide to design the focus groups protocol, which can be found in Appendix 1.3. Additionally, I held an online consultation with Dr Felice Billups to discuss the appropriateness of focus groups for the research questions and crystallise the protocol.

To further refine the protocol, I conducted a pilot focus group. This served multiple purposes. First, the pilot group was needed to ensure that the questions were coherent and clear, especially as I translated them into Arabic and wanted to ensure they carried the same nuance. I asked the participants to point out any confusing phrases or suggest alternatives. A discussion on translation and moving between languages can be found in section 4.3.3. Second, as I moderated the discussion, I could refine my moderating skills and receive feedback from the participants regarding the flow of the conversation (e.g., I was told that some of the questions were repetitive). Third, the pilot focus group allowed me to test the technology and smooth out any potential technical problems.

4.4.1.4 Setting up the focus groups

4.4.1.4.1 Length

I designed the protocol so that the discussion would last no more than an hour and engage all participants at least twice (Billups, 2012; Finch & Lewis, 2003).

4.4.1.4.2 Size

The literature is unclear regarding the optimal number of participants in a focus group which ranges from three participants to fifteen. Most scholars agree that there is no ideal number and that the group size can be left to the researcher's discretion (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Morgan, 1997).

While planning, I intended the groups to have four to five participants each. However, recruiting participants and having them show up proved to be more difficult than expected. The first group was supposed to have five participants (all of whom confirmed their attendance a day prior) yet only two joined. Still, the discussion lasted for 50 minutes. This made me reconsider and aim for fewer participants in each group. This allowed for deeper

discussions and was more convenient for participants (e.g., more flexibility in scheduling). In the end, I conducted four dyads, one triad and two four-participant discussions. For convenience, I refer to all discussions in this dissertation as focus group discussions.

4.4.1.4.3 Stratification

I stratified the focus groups based on both common characteristics such as university attended and subject studied, and convenience. This means that participants were grouped based on their availability.

4.4.1.5 Eligibility criteria

Participants had to be full-time students in their second year or above, or recent graduates (i.e., graduated in the last five years) of the six largest research universities in Israel. I excluded the Open University as its teaching mode significantly differs from traditional universities. I also excluded students at Ariel University following my convictions (the university is built on an illegal-under-international-law settlement in the West Bank) and logic (it has the smallest percentage of PAI students among universities (Dattel, 2018)). Participants had to identify as Arab/Palestinian, and not identify as Druze who have a different political status under Israeli law and serve in the army which delays their entry into HE (Halabi, 2006). I excluded first-year students as they had mainly studied online due to COVID-19 restrictions and thus had limited university life experience.

Table 4-1 summarises the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in this phase of the research.

Table 4-1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Participation in the Focus Groups

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Demographics	1. Identify as an Arab or Palestinian citizen of Israel; 2. Does not identify as Druze.	1. Identifies as Jewish or another ethnicity; 2. Not a citizen of Israel; 3. Identifies as Druze.
Academics	1. Full-time undergraduate student in their 2nd year or above or graduated from a full-time study in the last five years; 2. Student or recent graduate of six major research universities in Israel: o University of Haifa o Technion Institute o Tel Aviv University o Hebrew University of Jerusalem o Ben-Gurion University of the Negev o Bar-Ilan University.	1. First-year undergraduate student; 2. Part-time student; 3. Student who graduated more than 5 years ago or graduated from part-time studies; 4. Student of academic colleges; 5. Student at the Open University or Ariel University.

4.4.1.6 Recruitment channels and processes

To reach a diverse pool of potential participants at the targeted universities, I reached out to personal contacts at each university and asked for their assistance. These contacts served as gatekeepers at their institutions and were either university staff or student leaders. They assisted in advertising the study through their networks and social media platforms. People who were interested in participating in the study completed an online form indicating their informed consent and availability. I then contacted them through their stated preferred communication channel (i.e., email or phone), confirmed the scheduling details for the focus group discussion and answered any questions they had. I contacted the participants again a day before the scheduled meeting to remind them and ensure their attendance. As I mentioned before, some participants dropped out even with these precautions in place.

I intentionally recruited students studying different subjects in different faculties, coming from various geographical locations and hometowns, as well as religious backgrounds. Despite this, time and resource restrictions resulted in a sample of participants that was not completely representative in some respects. I discuss this further in section 4.4.2.

A participant information sheet (see Appendix 1.1) was sent to all potential participants which they were asked to confirm reading as well as a consent form to fill out. Students' participation in the online focus group was acknowledged with a 60NIS voucher for a local coffee shop chain, which is the standard compensation for student participation in research at Israeli universities.

Participants also filled out a pre-session questionnaire (see Appendix 1.2) that collected basic demographic data and asked them to rate the difficulty of various challenges they might face in HE based on existing evidence. This was meant to motivate students to think about the topic before the discussion. A post-session reflective questionnaire (see Appendix 1.4) was also sent to participants, enquiring about their thoughts regarding the discussion and allowing them to express any thoughts they did not voice at the time. Furthermore, a summary of the research findings was sent to the participants after the analysis (see Appendix 1.6) to allow them to respond to it and raise any concerns (i.e., member feedback).

4.4.2 Participants

Seven online focus groups were conducted, with a total of nineteen participants overall. Table 4-2 presents demographic details of each participant. There were nine men and ten women, with ages ranging from 20 and 31 years old (M = 23.36), and five participants were graduates and the rest students. Six participants grew up in villages, and thirteen in cities. Almost half of the participants (n = 9) came from Nazareth which is the largest Palestinian Arab locality in Israel (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019b). Additionally, the majority of

participants came from Arab cities and villages, while two grew up in mixed cities. As for religious backgrounds, Christians were overrepresented in this sample (n =14) while there were only five Muslim participants. This is a limitation I address later.

Students and graduates of the University of Haifa comprised almost half of all participants (n = 9). This reflects the fact that the university has the largest percentage of PAI students in Israeli HE: in 2018, 41% of students were Palestinian Arabs (Dattel, 2018). Furthermore, I have strong contacts at the University of Haifa as I studied there between 2015 and 2018.

Table 4-2

Sociodemographic and Academic Characteristics of Participants in the Focus Groups, Organised by Number of Group from First to Last

Group	University	Status	Faculty	Age	Gender	Religion
1	Haifa	Graduate	Humanities	25	F	Muslim
	Haifa	Student	Social Sciences	26	M	Christian
2	Ben Gurion	Student	Social Sciences	31	F	Christian
	Bar-Ilan	Graduate	Law	24	F	Christian
	Hebrew	Student	Medical sciences	20	M	Christian
3	Tel Aviv	Graduate	Engineering	22	M	Christian
	Tel Aviv	Student	Business	20	M	Christian
	Tel Aviv	Student	Engineering	24	F	Christian
	Tel Aviv	Student	Natural sciences	25	M	Christian
4	Haifa	Graduate	Social Sciences	21	F	Christian
	Haifa	Student	Humanities	21	F	Muslim
5	Haifa	Student	Social sciences	23	M	Muslim
	Haifa	Graduate	Engineering	27	M	Christian
6	Technion	Student	Engineering	23	F	Christian
	Technion	Student	Engineering	24	M	Christian
7	Hebrew	Student	Medical sciences	23	F	Christian
	Haifa	Student	Medical sciences	21	M	Christian
	Haifa	Student	Medical sciences	20	F	Muslim
	Haifa	Student	Medical sciences	24	F	Muslim

4.4.3 Procedure

As previously mentioned, I moderated the focus group discussions. I have facilitated group discussions in the past, albeit not in focus group settings. Therefore, it was important for me to hone my moderating skills by conducting the pilot focus group and reviewing the recordings of the discussions between sessions to identify areas for improvement.

The full protocol and guiding questions of the focus groups can be found in Appendix 1.3.

I began every focus group discussion by introducing myself, welcoming the participants and thanking them for joining. I then explained the purpose of the meeting and stressed their right to withdraw whenever they wish to or not answer any questions. I also stressed the measures I would take to protect their identities. I then set out the principles for effective, respectful communication during the session, explained my role as a moderator/facilitator and encouraged them to interact with one another and comment on one another's experiences.

I asked participants to introduce themselves and answer an ice-breaker question about the way they chose the institution they study at or previously studied at. I then asked them to think back to their first semester and describe the transition. Both questions were structured and meant to allow everyone to participate. Afterwards, I allowed the discussion to be more free and directed the group gently by asking the key questions and prompting when needed. Key questions revolved around the challenges students face at university, their successes, their feelings as PAIs on campus, and the support offered to them by the university or the department. To close off, I asked the participants to imagine they were in charge of university policies and programs for a day. What changes would they make? What would their priorities be?

I concluded the session by thanking the participants for their time and participation and reminding them to fill out the post-session questionnaire once they log off.

4.4.4 Saturation

Saturation is a core methodological principle in qualitative research which refers to whether the researcher has enough data to answer their question and can discontinue their data collection or analysis (Saunders et al., 2018). There are several types of saturation (e.g., theoretical, inductive, a priori). Here I refer to data saturation which is the point when little or no new themes are yielded from the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

When utilising focus groups, evidence suggests that three to four focus groups generally capture most of the themes on a topic with a relatively homogenous population (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017). To fully understand the nuances of the themes identified, more focus groups are needed, with some suggesting two groups per demographic stratum as the optimal situation (Hennink et al., 2019).

While I did not systematically track emerging themes, my general impression is that it resembles the evidence. Generally speaking, most themes had been identified by the fourth group, yet details kept emerging until the last one. Therefore, I decided to discontinue data collection after the seventh focus group based on the lack of new themes as well as time and resource constraints.

4.4.5 Data analysis

I began transcribing the recordings verbatim as soon as the focus groups were completed. As the recordings included video, I was able to note non-verbal cues in the transcripts such as nodding, headshakes, and smiles. During transcription, I noticed three instances where some participants had begun to communicate an idea and were cut off by others or distracted and did not continue their train of thought. Thus, I reached out to those participants for clarification, and two replied to me. I included their replies as notes in the data.

I utilised thematic analysis to identify, analyse and report patterns within the data (i.e., focus group discussion transcripts, my notes, and participants' responses to the reflective questionnaire) by following the six phases of analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as detailed below in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3

The Phases of Thematic Analysis According to Braun and Clarke (2006)

Phase	Description
1. Familiarise yourself with the data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis back to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

For phases 2 and 3, I followed Saldaña's (2013) guide on "generic" coding methods which he recommends for beginner researchers (p. 70). These methods include first-cycle coding methods (i.e., attribute coding, structural coding, descriptive coding, In Vivo coding, and values coding) and second-cycle coding (i.e., eclectic coding and pattern coding). I went through multiple waves of coding and recoding, allowing for time in between for reflection and refinement.

Structural coding was particularly beneficial at this stage. Structural coding is a "question-based" code that categorises segments of the data that relate to a particular research question (J. Saldaña, 2013, p. 84). Thus, using this coding type, I noted any mentions of challenges,

successes, and systems of support both existing and desired. I also paid close attention to terms used by the participants (i.e., In Vivo coding), as well as to statements that express their values and feelings. Additionally, I was especially attentive to interactions between participants (e.g., agreements, disagreements, or qualifications). In other words, I utilised pre-determined codes (i.e., those relating to the research questions) yet remained open to emerging codes. The final list of codes is presented in Appendix 1.5.

I used MaxQDA-2020 Analytics Pro to organise, code and analyse the data. I chose this software because it is relatively easy to navigate and has all the functionalities I predicted I would need (e.g., organising multiple speakers).

4.4.5.1 Trustworthiness of analysis

Several steps were taken throughout the research process to bolster the credibility of the data analysis, informed by the guidelines set forth by Nowell and colleagues (2017) on trustworthiness in thematic analysis.

I read the focus groups' transcripts multiple times in their entirety before coding, noting my initial thoughts in the reflexive journal mentioned previously. This allowed me to immerse myself in the data and consider all aspects of its patterns. Throughout the waves of coding, I recorded my thoughts, leaving an audit trail to examine the evolution of my observations. Before the analysis was completed, an initial draft of the themes was presented to a group of colleagues in the department who offered their comments. After the analysis was completed, a summary of the analysis was sent to the participants (i.e., member reflections, see Appendix 1.6 for the summary) to solicit their feedback and to provide space for further "collaboration and elaboration" with participants (Tracy, 2020, p. 278). One participant provided insights that contributed to refining the analysis.

4.5 PHASE II

The second phase of this dissertation set out to explore the generalisability of the qualitative findings that emerged in the first phase and to identify variations between different subgroups of PAI students. To that end, an online, self-administered, cross-sectional survey was developed and disseminated to PAI students and recent graduates of Israeli HE institutions between December 2021 and May 2022.

4.5.1 Planning

4.5.1.1 Questionnaire development

The themes that emerged from the focus groups in the first phase informed the development of the survey instrument. These themes are summarised below for their relevance to the process of developing the questionnaire.

The findings of the first phase showed that PAI students generally experience intense physical, cultural, and academic disorientation upon entering university. University campuses were viewed as deeply segregated, with Jewish Israeli students and PAI students having minimal intentional positive contact with one another. Participants in the focus groups spoke of difficulty keeping up with other students due to structural barriers including language, age, and financial difficulties. Furthermore, participants expressed the need for a more nuanced understanding of their needs by institutions and tailoring the services offered to students accordingly.

The questionnaire enquired about the details of these themes, aiming to explore their prevalence and estimate their generalisability across various groups. For example, one of the themes that emerged in the focus groups was the academic disorientation that PAI students feel during their first semester in HE as they adjust to new academic demands and the pace of learning. Likert items corresponding to this theme included “I felt anxious about my

academic progress," and "I understood what the requirements were for my classes." Some questionnaire items are based on quotes from participants in the focus groups. For more details about the links between qualitative themes and questionnaire items, see Appendix 2.1.

4.5.1.1.1 Validity of questionnaire items

Groves and colleagues (2009) introduced three standards that all questionnaire items should meet: first, the content standard, i.e. "whether [the questions] are asking for the right information"; second, the cognitive standards, i.e. "whether the respondents can understand and answer the questions"; and third, the usability standard, i.e. "how well a survey instrument can be used in practice." (pp. 268-269) To meet these standards, Groves and colleagues (2009) suggest five methods: focus group discussions, expert reviews, cognitive interviews, field pre-tests, and randomised or split-ballot experiments. These methods complement one another and therefore it is recommended that multiple techniques are used simultaneously.

In this study, I used three of these methods. First, as previously mentioned, I conducted focus group discussions in the first phase to understand the issues that members of the target audience face and the terms they use to describe them. I then developed the questionnaire items based on these discussions. Second, I sought expert reviews for feedback regarding the questionnaire from a quantitative analysis expert and a PAI academic at Israeli HE. I asked them to comment on the relevance, comprehensibility, and clarity of the questionnaire items, as well as point out any confusing phrasing and suggest revisions if they have any. Third, I piloted the questionnaire on a sample of ten people who met the survey criteria. I asked them to respond to the survey and (a) comment on the clarity of the questionnaire items and response categories, and (b) record the length of time it took them to complete the survey.

The main feedback from the pilot was that the questionnaire was long. Thus, in consultation with colleagues and with the research questions in mind, I shortened the questionnaire.

I first developed the questionnaire in English and then translated it into Arabic, which is the first language of the participants. I consulted a linguist to ensure the clarity of the translation.

4.5.1.1.2 Questionnaire measures

The questionnaire is divided into four main sections:

1. Sociodemographic and academic characteristics: the questionnaire enquires about the respondent's age, gender, hometown, parental education, religious identity, and national identity, as well as academic institution attended, subject studied, year of study or degree completion and changes during studies. These are the independent variables of the survey.
2. Transition to HE: the questionnaire asks about the respondent's experience entering HE, and more specifically, about their first semester. Participants in the qualitative phase indicated that their first semester was marked by academic, cultural, social, and physical disorientation (especially if they had moved into a new city to attend HE). The questionnaire enquires about those aspects of the respondent's experience.
3. Student experience: the questionnaire asks about the respondent's general impression of their life in HE, including their perception of their academic progress, their language mastery, their financial situation, the university environment, and their relationship with their Israeli-Jewish peers. Furthermore, as PAI students often enter university significantly earlier than their Israeli Jewish peers due to their exemption from military conscription, participants in the focus groups expressed their feelings of weakness due to their young age in HE. Thus, the questionnaire also enquires about this.

4. Institutional support: the questionnaire asks about the respondent's perception of the support services offered to them by the HE institution they study at.

The last three sections comprise predominantly of Likert items whereby respondents are asked to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement with various statements on a 5-point scale (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, nor disagree nor agree, agree, strongly disagree). I chose the 5-point scale due to its perceived user-friendliness by the participants in the piloting stage. The items were framed both negatively and positively to minimise response bias (Nardi, 2003, p. 70).

The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2.3 in both English and Arabic. For convenience, a summary of the questionnaire's contents is presented in Table 4-4.

Table 4-4

The Questionnaire's Structure and Measures

Section	Topic
Section 1.1: Sociodemographic characteristics	Age
	Gender
	Hometown
	Religious affiliation
	National identification
	Parental education level*
Section 1.2: Academic characteristics	Undergraduate academic institution
	The main language of instruction for undergraduate study
	Undergraduate subject
	Course changes
	Highest level of education completed
	Type of high school qualification
	Year of study
Section 2:	General disorientation*

Transition to HE	Academic disorientation*
	Social disorientation*
	Finding solidarity with other PAI students*
	Physical disorientation*
Section 3: Student experience	Perception of own academic competence and orientation*
	Perception of the effect of own language mastery on academic performance*
	Perception of the institutional environment and its attitude towards one's identity*
	Relationships with Jewish Israeli peers*
	Financial situation*
	Perception of own young age at university/college*
Section 4: Institutional support	Institutional services offered and their perceived importance/benefit*
	Knowledge of support
	Use of support
	Perceived benefit and appropriateness of support*
	Perceived adequacy of support*

*a topic that includes multiple items.

4.5.1.2 Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for this phase were broader than the first phase. This was done in order to expand the sample and diversify it as one of the aims of this phase was to explore potential variations between subgroups of students. All current PAI undergraduate students and recent graduates (i.e. up to five years of undergraduate graduation) of any Israeli academic institution were eligible to participate. Table 4-5 details the exclusion and inclusion criteria.

Table 4-5

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Participation in the Survey

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Demographics	1. Identify as Arab or Palestinian; 2. Citizen of Israel.	1. Identify as Jewish or another ethnicity; 2. Not a citizen of Israel.
Academics	1. Full-time undergraduate students or graduates of a full-time undergraduate study in the last five years; 2. Students or graduates of any academic institution recognised by the CHE to be able to provide an undergraduate degree.	1. Part-time students; 2. Graduates who have completed their undergraduate studies more than 5 years ago or graduated from part-time studies; 3. Students enrolled in diploma studies.

4.5.1.3 Sample size calculation

For the academic year 2021-2022, the number of PAI undergraduate students in Israeli HE is 45.8 thousand (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2021). The number of PAIs who completed an undergraduate degree between 2016 and 2021 is 34.9 thousand (Chocron et al., 2020; Mesika & Naftalovich, 2021; Naftalovich et al., 2018, 2019; Naftalovich & Krentzler, 2022b). This brings the total survey population to approximately 80.7 thousand students and recent graduates.

Given the estimated size of the population, I calculated that the minimum number of respondents is 382 unique responses to be sufficiently well-powered to identify effects with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

4.5.1.4 Recruitment channels and processes

Due to a lack of an accessible sampling frame, this survey has a non-probability volunteer sample. Thus, following best practice guidelines, I attempted to broaden the sample spread of

as much as possible by combining various recruitment channels, as I detail below (Vehovar et al., 2016).

First, I contacted key persons (i.e., student dean or coordinator of Arab students if there is one) at twenty-nine HE institutions in Israel by email and asked whether they could disseminate the survey to their students. The translated text of the email and a list of the institutions contacted can be found in appendices 2.4 and 2.5 respectively. I sent a follow-up email to those who did not respond to my first. Eight institutions did not respond at all, six refused to distribute the survey citing different reasons (e.g., they have their own research and thus did not want to confuse students by sending out another survey), and eleven institutions agreed to send it out: seven through formal channels (e.g., emails) and six through informal ones (e.g., WhatsApp groups and student networks). Some institutions requested that I apply to their ethics committee in order to distribute the survey– a request I complied with.

I would like to highlight one case where an institution refused to distribute the survey based on ideological grounds: they took issue with my use of the term PAI and requested that I change the wording to Israeli Arabs or Israeli Arabs from a Palestinian background. I did not agree to this based on my conviction that, as a population group, PAIs have a right to self-definition.

Second, I contacted two civil society educational organisations that work with students, and one distributed the survey through their network.

Last, I also advertised the survey on social media and especially targeted sixteen student groups on Facebook where I posted about the survey twice, with ten days between the first and second posts. Each of these groups had at least a thousand members, with the largest having thirty thousand members at the time of distributing the survey.

4.5.2 Data collection

The survey was launched at the beginning of March 2022 and remained open till the end of April 2022. Survey responses were collected using the Qualtrics platform which has passed the Oxford University Third-Party Security Assessment. Respondents could access the survey by clicking a link that led them to the respondent information sheet (see Appendix 2.2). They were then asked whether they consented to participate, and if they did, they would begin completing the survey. The survey completion time was reported to be between 10 and 15 minutes by the pilot respondents.

All questionnaire items had an option to respond with 'prefer not to say or not applicable,' and respondents were not forced to respond to questionnaire items to progress through the survey. However, respondents were nudged with a 'request-response' message that alerted them to the fact that they did not respond to a certain item but allowed them to proceed if they wanted. This was done to prevent missing data due to forgetfulness while remaining respectful of respondents who did not wish to answer certain questions.

4.5.2.1 Confidentiality

Respondent identity was not required to complete the questionnaire, and thus all respondents remained anonymous. However, due to the amount of demographic data collected from the respondents, I took additional measures to protect the survey data (e.g., storing it on a secure external hard disc) following guidance from the Departmental Ethics Committee of the Department for Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford.

4.5.3 Respondents

At the time of closing the survey, five hundred unique responses were recorded. Upon closer examination of the data, forty-seven responses had to be excluded as they did not meet the

eligibility criteria (e.g., graduated over five years ago), and thus the final sample comprises 453 responses.

4.5.3.1 Sociodemographic characteristics

The survey sample consisted of 335 females (73.9%) and 115 males (25.3%). The mean age of respondents was 23.35 (*sd* = 4.21) with half (*n* = 229) being between the ages of 20 and 23. Over half of the respondents were Muslim (*n* = 246), a third were Christian (*n* = 151) and 7.7% were Druze (*n* = 35). Respondents came from 73 different localities, the largest group being from Nazareth (22.9%, *n* = 104), and the vast majority from Arab localities (80.3%, *n* = 364).

Table 4-6 presents the main sociodemographic characteristics of the sample as well as the corresponding population statistics when available.

Table 4-6

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Survey Sample and Population

Variable	Category	% population (2020/21) *	% sample	N sample
Gender	Men	32.6%	25.3%	115
	Women	67.4%	73.9%	335
	Prefer not to say	-	0.8%	3
Religious affiliation	Muslim	71%	54.3%	246
	Christian	16%	33.3%	151
	Druze	13%	7.7%	35
	Other	-	1.1%	5
	Prefer not to say	-	3.5%	16
Hometown type	Arab	-	80.3%	364
	Jewish	-	0.4%	2
	Mixed**	-	7%	32
	N/A	-	12%	55

*My processing of data provided by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

**Mixed cities are defined by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics as those whose population has over 10% PAI residents.

Most respondents came from localities in the second, third and fourth SES tiers (94%), and none from the lowest SES tier, nor the highest three, as shown in Figure 4-2.

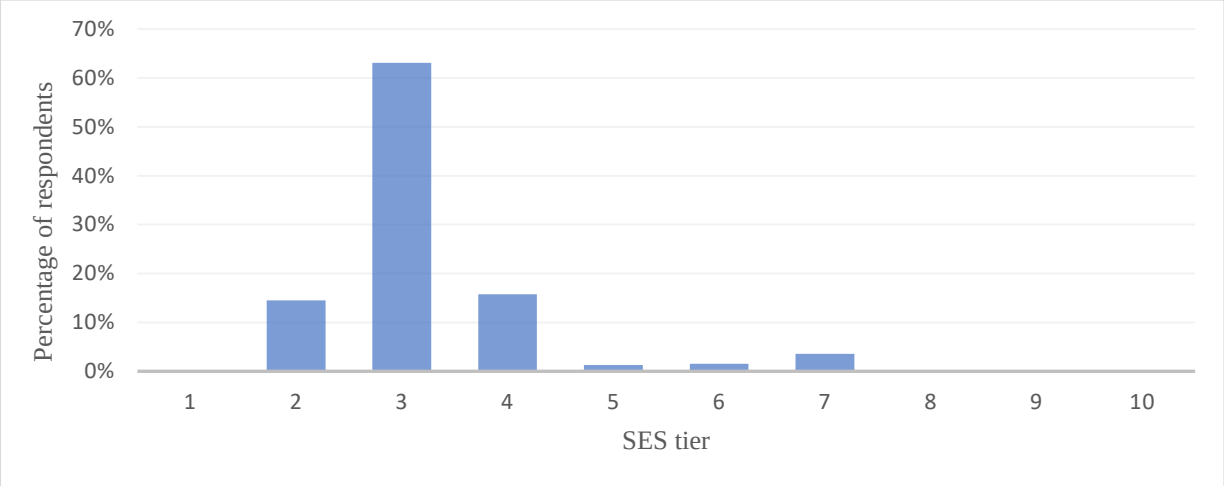

Figure 4-2 Socioeconomic tier designation of respondents' hometowns in percentages

As for parental education, almost half (48.5%; n = 220) of survey respondents were first-generation students, defined as having two parents whose highest level of education is below an undergraduate degree, which resembles the percentage reported in the Brookdale study (Levi et al., 2019). Generally, fathers were less educated than mothers, as Figure 4-3 shows.

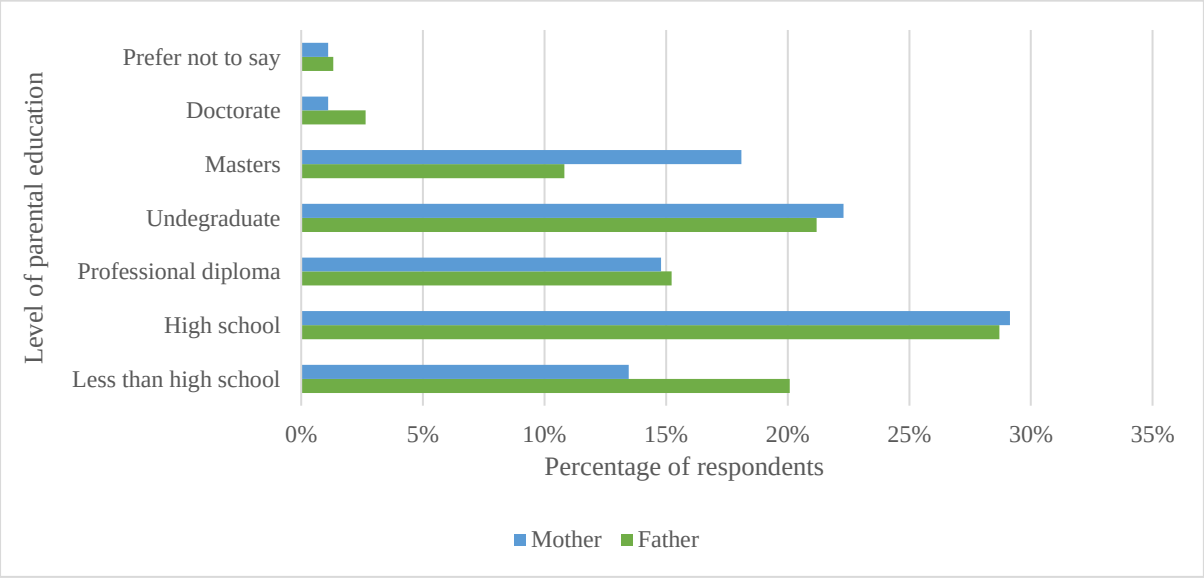

Figure 4-3 Respondents' parental education levels in percentages

4.5.3.2 Academic characteristics

Survey respondents studied at 33 different HE institutions (out of 61 HE institutions in Israel) with the largest groups (20.8%, *n* = 94) at the University of Haifa, ORT Braude Academic College of Engineering (10.8%, *n* = 49), University of Tel Aviv (10.4%, *N*=47) and the Technion Institute (10%, *n* = 45).

Fifty-seven percent of respondents (*n* = 256) studied at research universities. Respondents studied a wide variety of subjects, which I clustered into seven disciplines based on Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics grouping (Naftalovich & Krentzler, 2020). The largest groups were engineering and architecture (33.1%, *n* = 150), and social sciences (19.8%, *n* = 90). Most respondents did not change their course throughout their studies (80.5%, *n* = 365). 64.2% of respondents (*n* = 291) were current students, and 34.8% (*n* = 158) were recent graduates.

Table 4-7 displays the main academic characteristics of the sample as well as the corresponding population statistics when available.

Table 4-7

Academic Characteristics of the Survey Sample and Population

Variable	Category	% population (2020/21) *	% sample	N sample
Academic institution type	Research universities (including private and public)	50.4%	57.1%	259
	Academic colleges (including private and public)	34.5%	41.3%	187
	Open University	15.1%	1.5%	7
Academic institution	University of Haifa	-	20.8%	94
	ORT Braude Academic College of Engineering	-	10.8%	49
	University of Tel Aviv	-	10.3%	47
	Technion – Israel Institute of Technology	-	9.9%	45
	Tel Hai Academic College	-	7.5%	34
	Hebrew University of Jerusalem	-	7.2%	33
	The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College	-	3.7%	17
	Ben Gurion University of the Negev	-	3.5%	16

	Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art	-	3.5%	16
	Ono Academic College	-	3.3%	15
	Bar Ilan University	-	2.4%	11
	Bezalel Academy of Art and Design	-	2.2%	10
	Reichman University (previously Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya)	-	2.2%	10
Academic discipline	Engineering & architecture	22.1%	33.1%	150
	Social Sciences (including social work, organisational consulting, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, criminology, human resources, political science, communication, and psychology)	16.4%	19.8%	90
	Humanities, education & arts (including languages, literature, history, art, music, theatre, design, visual communications, and philosophy)	18.6%	13.2%	60
	Natural sciences & maths (including biology, chemistry, life sciences, biochemistry, pharmacology, statistics, and maths)	8.3%	9.7%	44
	Medical & para-medical sciences (including medicine, dentistry, nursing, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy)	9.9%	9.7%	41
	Business (including accounting, management, and economics)	18.1%	7.7%	35
	Law	6.6%	4.4%	20
Course change	Yes	-	80%	365
	No	-	20%	88
Status	Current student	-	64%	291
	Recent graduate	-	35%	158
	Stopped studies before completion	-	1%	4

*My processing of data provided by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

4.5.4 Data analysis

I analysed the data using R version 4.2. I began by calculating frequencies and percentages for every item in the survey to gain a general picture of the data. As for differences between subgroups, I chose three key variables for analysis based on the evidence presented in earlier chapters: gender, parental education, and institution type. In the papers, I present these variations using cross-tabulations and examine them for statistical significance using $\chi 2$ tests. All analyses were two-sided with a 5% significance level. I limited the data analysis to item-level analysis rather than grouping items into latent constructs to be validated through further statistical analysis.

After the data collection, I consolidated the 5-point Likert items into 3-point ones to simplify reporting the findings, whereby “completely disagree” and “disagree” were grouped into one category, and “completely agree” and “agree” into another. However, I also recognise that this decision reduces the specificity of the responses in favour of a simpler presentation of findings.

4.5.4.1 Incomplete and missing data

The data of respondents who exited the electronic survey before completing it were automatically deleted by Qualtrics after a week of inactivity by the respondent. This is as per the guidance that was presented to respondents in the information sheet.

The data of respondents who completed the questionnaire but, for different reasons, did not respond to certain questions were saved. According to the framework put forth by Mirzaei, Carter, Patanwala and Schneider (2022), I calculated the percentage of missing data of the whole dataset and classified the data as missing completely at random as Little’s test of missingness yielded an insignificant result. The last section of the survey was the only one that had items with over 5% missing data (5.51% at most), which I suspect is due to survey fatigue. Thus, multiple imputations were the optimal method to handle missing data.

As for “prefer not to say” or “not applicable to me” responses, they were kept as a separate category and not imputed as missing data.

4.6 PHASE III

As mentioned in the third chapter, this research phase was born out of discussions with colleagues about how the events of May 2021 could have influenced the findings of the first two phases of research as they occurred between them. From these initial conversations, this phase grew to encompass students' experiences of this time of upheaval and the ways that Israeli HE institutions engaged with them throughout it. This phase of the research was carried out in the Spring and Summer of 2023, with interviews taking place between May and September 2023 with students, academics, and other stakeholders.

4.6.1 Planning

4.6.1.1 Rationale for utilising interviews

I chose to conduct interviews for this phase of the dissertation due to the sensitive nature of the research question. I wanted to provide the participants with privacy so that they could speak freely, as well as the option to not record our conversation if they wished. Furthermore, interviews allow for more flexibility in scheduling, which is especially important when contacting academics with busy schedules.

4.6.1.2 Developing the interview guide

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews using Charmaz's (2014) "intensive interviewing" technique intended to create an "interactional space" of reciprocity between interviewee and researcher (p. 58). This flexible, gently guided conversation allows the interviewee to bring up issues and narratives that they deem important, and for the researcher to guide the conversation and probe further when needed (Adams, 2015; Charmaz, 2014; Kallio et al., 2016).

I developed the interview guide according to the framework by Kallio and colleagues (2016) which includes five phases. First, I identified semi-structured interviews as an appropriate, rigorous method to address the research question as described in section 4.6.1.1 above. Second, I reviewed relevant literature to gain a better understanding of the topic, including literature about the May 2021 events as well as studies about other turbulent periods in Israel/Palestine. Third, I formulated the interview guide so that it is "loose… flexible… [and enables] easy movement from question to question" (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2960). The interview guide consisted of two types of questions: main themes and follow-ups. The procedure for interviewing is explained further in section 4.6.3.1. Fourth, I piloted the interview guide with potential study participants which yielded minor linguistic alterations to the guide. Last, as recommended by Kallio and colleagues (2016), I present the interview guide in Appendix 3.4.

4.6.1.3 Eligibility criteria

To participate in this phase of the research, interviewees had to have been full-time undergraduate students or academics at an Israeli HE institution during the May 2021 events. Furthermore, shortly after beginning the interviews, I decided to also include staff members of key civil society and academic organisations, as these organisations were mentioned multiple times by students and academics during the interviews I conducted.

4.6.1.4 Recruitment channels and processes

Several recruitment mechanisms were utilised. To reach students, I advertised the study on social media, specifically targeting the sixteen Facebook groups mentioned in previous phases (see section 4.5.1.4). I posted the advert twice, with a month in between. The advert was accompanied by a link to the participant information sheet (see Appendix 3.1) and a form to sign up once they had read and agreed to participate. I then contacted them via their

preferred method and scheduled an interview time. At the end of the interview, I asked students to tell others about the study and refer them to me if they wanted to take part (i.e. snowballing).

To reach academics, I used an online database called A-List that contains the contact information of a variety of experts from the PAI community – generally used for media purposes – and reached out to those who are eligible to participate in the study by email, with the information document attached (see Appendix 3.2). As the study progressed, I also used the snowball technique to recruit more academics for interviews.

Last, as previously mentioned, I also decided to interview staff members of two prominent organisations who worked with students at the time in various capacities and reached out to them by email (see Appendix 3.3).

4.6.2 Theoretical sampling and saturation

Following the grounded theory methodology that I adopted in this phase of research (see section 4.6.4), my sampling approach was theoretical, meaning its purpose is theory construction rather than population representativeness (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical sampling is "strategic, specific, and systematic," and aims to refine and develop preliminary categories and theories (Charmaz, 2014, p. 199). It enables the researcher to consider a concept from various viewpoints and provides direction for the following rounds of data collection (Strauss, 1987). Thus, saturation is achieved once the concepts and categories are fully developed (Birks & Mills, 2010).

4.6.3 Data collection

4.6.3.1 Procedure

Participants were given the choice between an online interview or an in-person one. In the majority of cases (*n* = 16), interviews were conducted online using Zoom.

I began each interview by thanking the interviewee for their time and introducing myself and my research. I reminded them of their ability to stop the interview whenever they wanted without providing a reason, or not answering particular questions. I then asked whether they consented to recording our conversation: if they did, I audio-recorded the interview and subsequently transcribed it verbatim; and if they did not consent, I asked to take notes while we spoke, and typed them immediately after the interview was over. Two faculty members requested that the interview not be recorded.

As specified in the interview guide (see Appendix 3.4), I invited the interviewees to tell me a little about themselves to start the conversation. I then asked them to tell me everything they remembered about the events of May 2021, especially as it relates to their life at university. I then asked more specific questions about their feelings during that time, their institution's response, and the relations between students. Following the theoretical sampling approach, my prompts differed based on the interviewee's answers as well as the point that I had reached in data analysis and theoretical saturation. For example, the issue of students returning to their hometowns when the violence began emerged strongly in the first few interviews, and it became clear to me that it is likely to be one of the salient categories in the analysis and thus needed further developing and refining. Therefore, I enquired further about this issue in the following interviews: how was the decision made to return home? Who was involved in making it? How did the interviewee feel once they arrived home?

I concluded the interview by asking whether the interviewee had any other comments or questions and thanking them for their time.

I used memos to capture my thoughts after each interview and built on them in later analysis. I transcribed the interviews in batches of three, pausing between them to consolidate my analysis in a way that shaped and modified subsequent interviews. The process of data analysis is explained further in section 4.6.4.

4.6.3.2 Interviewees

There were three types of interviewees in this phase of the dissertation: students (n = 12), academics (n = 5), and staff members of civil society and academic organisations who work with students in various capacities (n = 3). The characteristics of the interviewees are displayed in Table 4-8 below. The information about academics is presented partially to protect their identities as their numbers are few and thus could be identified easily if provided with basic demographic data. As previously mentioned, interviewees were not recruited to have a representative sample, but rather to advance theory and refine emerging categories and ideas.

Table 4-8

Sociodemographic and Academic Characteristics of Interviewees

Type	University	Faculty	Sex	Religion
Students	Tel Aviv	Social Sciences	F	Muslim
	Tel Aviv	Medicine	M	Christian
	Tel Aviv	Humanities	F	Muslim
	Tel Aviv	Medicine	M	Muslim
	Haifa	Social Sciences	F	Muslim
	Haifa	Social Sciences	M	Christian
	Haifa	Engineering	F	Muslim
	Technion	Engineering	F	Muslim
	Technion	Engineering	M	Christian
	Technion	Engineering	M	Muslim
	Technion	Engineering	M	Muslim
	Hebrew	Social Sciences	F	Muslim
Academics	Tel Aviv	Social Sciences	-	-
	Bar Ilan	Social Sciences	-	-
	Ben-Gurion	Natural Sciences	-	-
	Ben-Gurion	Social Sciences	-	-
	Hebrew	Natural Sciences	-	-
Type	Focus of work		Position of staff member	
Civil society organisation members	Legal rights		General director	
			Executive director	
	Academic issues relating to diversity and inclusion		Board member	

4.6.4 Data analysis

4.6.4.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory

I adopted the constructivist grounded theory approach to data analysis in this phase (Charmaz, 2014).

Grounded theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is an inductive, systematic, iterative approach to qualitative inquiry that aims to generate a theory rooted in the data. The main features of Grounded Theory include the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, the use of open coding as a first step to categorise data, constantly and iteratively comparing

codes and categories, writing memos at every stage of the process, and progressing towards theoretical saturation where the categories have well-developed dimensions and properties (Birks & Mills, 2010). Grounded theory encourages researchers to move from simply describing the data to theoretically analysing it and constructing new concepts based on it (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021).

Constructivist grounded theory preserves the methodological strategies of classic grounded theory and its iterative and open-ended approach but "shifts the epistemological foundations of the original version," recognising the crucial role of the researcher in constructing research (Charmaz, 2017, p. 34). It has three inter-dependent principles: first, knowledge is constructed within a historical, sociopolitical context; second, research data is constructed through the interaction between researcher and participant, and researchers cannot be neutral observers; and people's interpretations and meanings of the phenomenon they experience should be the focus of research (Charmaz, 2014, 2017).

4.6.4.2 Data analysis steps

I followed the guidance by Charmaz (2014) for the data analysis procedure as I will detail below and as is shown in Figure 4-4.

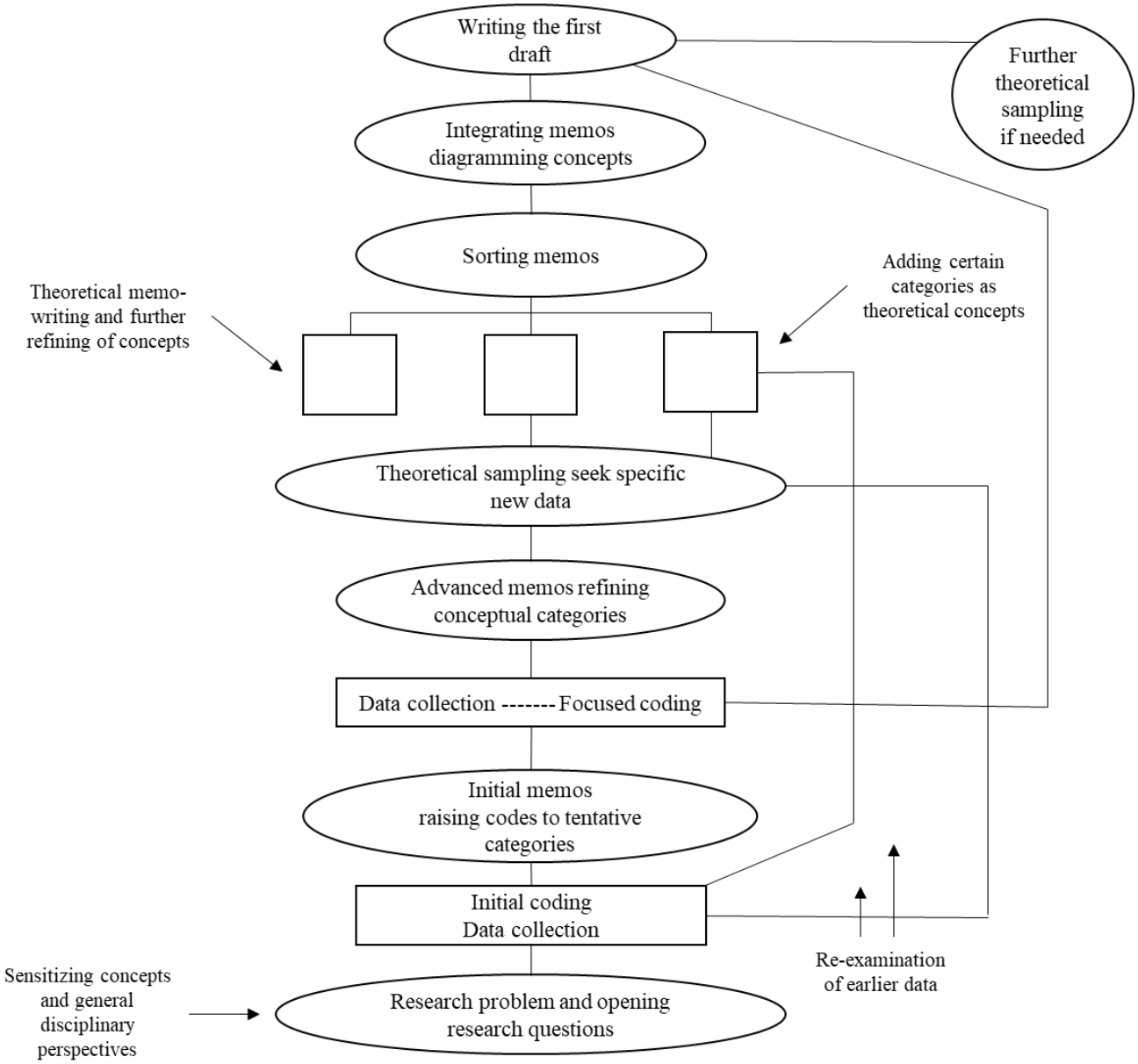

Figure 4-4 The grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2014, p. 11)

As previously mentioned, I transcribed interviews in batches of three and did not proceed until I had coded them line-by-line (i.e. initial coding). This allowed for reflection in between interviews as I also concurrently wrote memos during the coding process to document my thoughts at each stage and gradually move towards theoretical conceptualisation. These initial codes fed into the following batch of interviews, providing focus to the data collection. With each round of interviews, I returned to the earlier interviews and re-read them in light of the

new ideas that were emerging. I continued developing concepts through memo writing, constant comparisons, and theoretical sampling.

After the fifteenth interview, I decided to diagram the concepts constructed up to that point and draw connections between them. The initial diagram can be viewed in Appendix 3.5, where I conceptualised the May 2021 events as a crisis presenting both a threat and an opportunity for PAI students. It includes categories such as *Israeli-Palestinian struggle no longer abstract*, *retreating from campus*, and *the uses of social media* – all of which were incorporated in different ways in the final diagram. This diagramming exercise helped me connect between categories and begin to weave the analysis narrative.

After another batch of interviews, I decided to utilise the coding paradigm by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to further delineate the categories and crystalise the relationships between them. The coding paradigm is an organisational scheme of axial coding consisting of six sub-categories: causal conditions, central phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. These sub-categories facilitate the process of relating "structure with process" and can be a stepping stone towards a clearer understanding of the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 127). Using the coding paradigm, I transformed the initial diagram into an intermediate one that explores how and why the phenomenon occurs (see Appendix 3.6).

As I conducted the last batch of interviews, I simultaneously began to write the first draft of the analysis, continuing to refine the concepts and the connections between them until I felt that they were sufficiently developed. I continued to modify the labels of the categories until I had completed the interviews, and the final diagram is presented in the data analysis section of the paper.

4.6.4.3 Trustworthiness of analysis

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I followed the guidelines on quality in constructivist grounded theory which aim to fulfil four main criteria: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Put succinctly, a credible study has sufficient and relevant data, and its researcher(s) have taken a reflexive stance throughout the research process; an original study provides new insights or conceptualisations; a study that has resonance can offer insights beyond representing the specific experiences of the research participants to other people and contexts; and lastly, a useful study could provide recommendations for policy and practice, chart new directions for research, and uncover important psychological and social processes.

I employed several strategies throughout the research process to produce an analysis that is credible, original, useful and has resonance. First, as mentioned in the second section of this chapter, I kept a reflexive journal to document and reflect on my thought process throughout every step of the research. Second, I interviewed three types of interviewees and attempted to capture the issue from multiple angles, crystallise the analysis, and "construct a multi-faceted, more complicated, and therefore more credible picture of the context." (Tracy, 2020, p. 276). Third, I read and re-read the transcripts throughout the five months of the simultaneous processes of data collection and analysis to immerse myself in the data and understand it thoroughly. Fourth, I carefully considered evidence that contradicted my emerging analysis and used it to "build a richer picture of the phenomenon" (i.e., negative case analysis) (Billups, 2019, p. 30). Last, I invited selected interviewees and colleagues to reflect on the findings to further refine, strengthen, and finalise the analysis.

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the methodology and the methods that this dissertation employed in its three phases – presented in Figure 4-5 below.

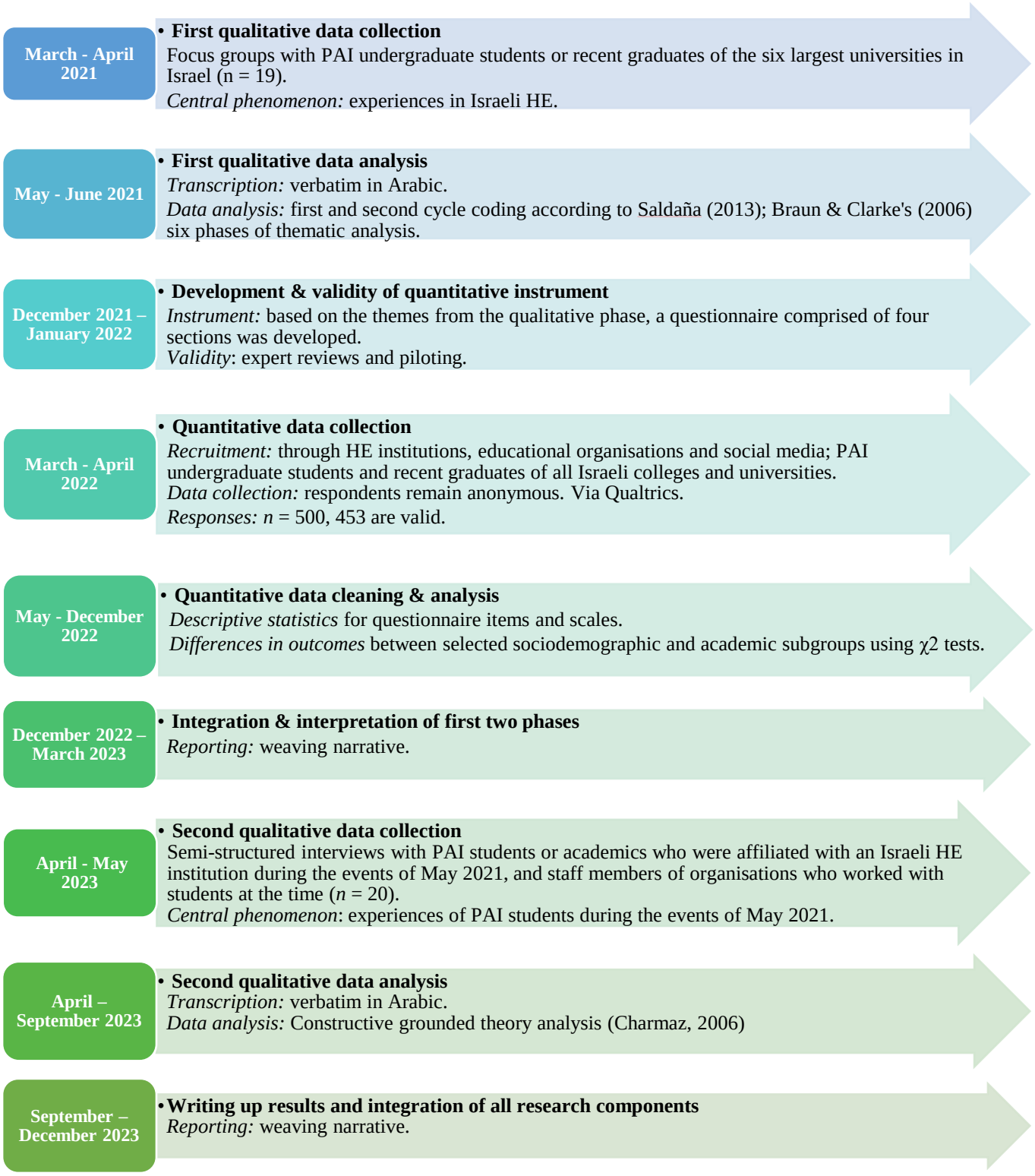

Figure 4-5 Detailed timeline of research phases

5 INTRODUCTION TO PAPERS

Having discussed the theoretical and contextual background for this dissertation, outlining the research questions, and detailing the methodology and methods employed to answer them, the next chapters present the three papers that constitute the bulk of this dissertation.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the first two papers are based on the integration of the first two phases of the research, although each one has a different focus: the first paper examines PAI students' transition to HE and the structural barriers they are faced with, while the second paper investigates their perceptions of the ethnonational campus climate at their institution. The third paper draws from the third phase of the research and aims to qualitatively uncover PAI students' experiences in Israeli HE during times of national turbulence, and specifically, their experiences during the violent events of May 2021.

6 PAPER 1 – PALESTINIAN ARAB UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO ISRAELI HIGHER EDUCATION: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

Published in Studies in Higher Education (2024). Volume 49, issue 2.

DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2023.2231019

Abstract

This paper explores the experiences of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) on entering Israeli higher education (HE). Adopting a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, seven online focus groups (n = 19) were conducted, followed by an online survey (n = 453). The findings indicate that PAI students experience academic, physical, social, and cultural disorientation upon entering HE. This disorientation transforms with time into a persistent feeling of lagging behind others. Three structural barriers appear to impede PAI students' progress in HE: language, age, and finances – all manifestations of larger systematic discrimination faced by PAIs in Israel. PAI students deal with these challenges by turning to one another for support and forming groups on campus. Variations across gender, parental education and institution type are explored. The paper concludes by discussing practical implications and future research directions.

Keywords

Higher education, transition, Israel, Arab-Palestinian minority, mixed methods.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

There is growing recognition among researchers that students' early experiences in higher education (HE) have a crucial impact on their persistence and academic success later on (Baber, 2012; Lowe & Cook, 2003). Ensuring a successful transition to HE for students from underrepresented minority groups (URM) is especially important given their disproportionately lower persistence rates (Seidman, 2005). Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) are one such group. Using mixed-methods, this paper sought to investigate the experiences of PAI undergraduate students during their transition to Israeli HE, and how their transition impacted the rest of their academic journey.

6.1.1 Transition to higher education

Students' transition to HE is a "complex, multidimensional… entangled, nonlinear, iterative and recursive process," broadly encapsulating the period between graduating from high school and the end of the first year at university or college (Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018, p. 1256). This transition is multi-layered, as students navigate a new academic environment, living arrangements, social connections, and an increased sense of independence (Pittman & Richmond, 2008).

While navigating the transition to HE is difficult for all students, URM students face additional barriers such as discrimination, lack of family support, financial difficulties and little familiarity with the assumptions, values, and expectations of HE (i.e., the hidden curriculum) (Devlin, 2010; Dika & D'Amico, 2016). In the case of students of colour, Carter, Locks and Winkle-Wagner (2013) outline three main barriers to a successful transition to HE: financial barriers, academic under-preparedness, and negative racial climates at predominantly White institutions.

Traditional understandings of the challenges facing URM students have often adopted a deficit perspective that presupposes that a successful transition to HE is primarily the individual student's responsibility, and thus positions the students as the problem (Castro, 2014). A deficit lens attributes unequal educational outcomes to "cultural stereotypes, inadequate socialisation, or lack of motivation and initiative on the part of the students" (Bensimon, 2005, p. 102). In practice, this lens is demonstrated by the various institutional efforts to induct students into HE through time-bonded, skills-based interventions that focus solely on enhancing students' ability to persist (Fogarty et al., 2018).

Critics of deficit perspectives highlight the inequalities that URM students face before and upon entering HE and their impact on their experiences. They argue that it is harmful to expect students to fit into the existing institutional dominant structures and that institutions should seek to change these structures to support their diverse student bodies (Zepke & Leach, 2007).

While agreeing with the importance of transforming institutional cultures and challenging deficit discourses, Devlin (2013) noted that students are not passive recipients in HE systems but have the agency to challenge them. Therefore, she argues that deficit models, whether of the students or the institutions, are limited, and offers the concept of sociocultural incongruity as a more useful way to frame this issue. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1985) notion of cultural capital, Devlin argues that students from dominant groups are more likely to have a "reservoir of cultural and social resources" that help them to navigate academic spaces which URM students often do not have (Devlin, 2013, p. 940). Socio-cultural incongruence, then, refers to the spaces where URM students "engage with the discourses, tacit expectations and norms of [the culture of] higher education… [which is] incongruous with the cultures with which they are familiar and comfortable" (Devlin, 2013, p. 945).

Along similar lines, Yosso (2005) argues that HE systems are constructed in a way that rewards cultural capital that is possessed by the dominant group yet devalues those of marginalised communities. Examples include what she terms aspirational capital, which is "the ability to maintain hope and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers", and linguistic capital, which refers to "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (pp. 77-78). Therefore, a student's ability to navigate the transition to HE is heavily influenced by the cultural capital they possess and whether it is valued by the culture of the institution they attend (O'Donnell et al., 2016).

6.1.2 Palestinian Arab undergraduate students in Israeli higher education

6.1.2.1 Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) are an indigenous ethnonational minority of the country, comprising a fifth of its population (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019b). Their identity comprises, at least, four components, including ethnicity (Arab), nationality (Palestinian), citizenship (Israeli), and religion (Muslim, Christian or Druze) (Rudnitzky & Radai, 2017). The tension between these components (i.e., that PAIs are citizens of a country that is at war with their national group) leads to a hostile treatment of PAIs by the Israeli establishment, and they are often perceived as a demographic threat or a "fifth column" undermining the state (H. Jabareen, 2014; Smooha, 2002).

Despite being full citizens of Israel, PAIs are systematically discriminated against in all aspects of life, whereby successive Israeli governments have adopted a policy of non-development and marginalisation of PAI localities, resulting in poor social, economic and health conditions (Hesketh et al., 2011; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 2019). PAIs are

overrepresented in the lowest socioeconomic tiers in Israel, and 45% of PAI families live under the poverty line (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022).

Consequently, PAIs are strongly motivated to acquire HE as it is perceived to be one of the main, if not the only, tools for advancement in a hostile, unstable environment (Al-Haj, 2003; Arar & Mustafa, 2011). However, this is hindered by several systematic barriers, as discussed in the next section.

6.1.2.2 Access to higher education: systematic barriers

First, the dire state of PAI communities following decades of neglect seriously impedes their socioeconomic progress. Weak infrastructure and public transportation, suffocated localities, and loss of personal safety are all examples of the deliberate failure of successive Israeli governments to promote the welfare of PAIs (Adalah, 2017a; Green, 2021).

Second, the Arabic-speaking K-12 education track has been historically underfunded while being kept under surveillance, leading to outdated, weak schools with disproportionately lower educational outcomes (Abu Asabeh, 2018; Blass, 2018).

Third, two of the major requirements for HE admission have been shown to disadvantage PAIs: the psychometric exam has a significant cultural bias in its content and method, and the Yael exam, which tests students' command of Hebrew, poses an additional burden in terms of time and effort (Adalah, 2016; Arar & Mustafa, 2011).

Last, the vast majority of HE institutions (and all the research universities) are located in Jewish-majority localities and are thus less accessible for PAIs.

Despite these barriers, PAIs are entering Israeli HE institutions at record rates, doubling their number in the last decade and they now comprise 17% of all undergraduate students (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2019).

6.1.2.3 Challenges in higher education

The current evidence points to a few prominent challenges that PAI students face in Israeli HE. First, students face linguistic difficulties, transitioning from an Arabic-speaking education track to university campuses teaching in Hebrew and course reading materials often in English (Al-Haj, 2003). Second, PAIs usually come from significantly poorer backgrounds and face difficulties financing their studies with limited external financial support available to them (Abraham Initiatives, 2016). Third, students encounter difficulties in adapting to the academic environment that is usually not culturally and religiously sensitive to them, leading to significant acculturative stress (Abu Kaf & Khalaf, 2020; Hager & Jabareen, 2016). Lastly, the political context plays an important role in the experiences of PAI students, as many report encountering discrimination on campus, primarily by other students (Abraham Initiatives, 2016). Furthermore, mainly in social sciences and humanities, the taught material is often laden with Zionist discourses and military-related language is frequently employed, thereby alienating PAIs (Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021).

Recent evidence points to some variations between PAI students, but they have not yet been meaningfully investigated. For example, more PAI women are entering HE than men, and they are more likely to persist in their studies (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019). Additionally, there is growing recognition in Israel that first-generation status is a key factor in educational inequalities (Yamini et al., 2023). However, the way it intersects with other social categories, such as ethnonationality, is still underexplored.

To summarise, while previous evidence has identified some aspects of PAI students' experiences, there are still gaps in the literature. Generally speaking, the current evidence is either limited to certain institutions (e.g., Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021), unclear about its methods (e.g., Abraham Initiatives, 2016), or does not address students directly (e.g., Hager & Jabareen, 2016). Moreover, it treats PAI students as a monolith group and does not

meaningfully investigate differences between them. Thus, this study sought to explore the experiences of PAI students during their transition to Israeli HE, how structural barriers impact their progress, and whether there are variations in their experiences based on their gender, parental education, or the type of institution they attend.

6.2 METHODS

This study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design beginning with a qualitative phase that shaped the following quantitative phase, such that the integration of the two forms a whole larger than the sum of its parts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Fetters & Freshwater, 2015).

In the first phase, online focus groups were conducted to explore PAI undergraduate students' experiences in HE. Informed by the qualitative findings, a survey instrument was developed and piloted. The second phase then sought to examine the generalisability of the qualitative findings and explore potential variations among PAI students using the survey instrument. Both phases received ethical approval from the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford (References: C1A_20_004; C1A_21-22_007).

6.2.1 Researcher positionality & reflexivity

I believe that, as Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 88) assert, it is "impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired into," and thus, it is important to consider my positionality as an insider researcher conducting research within a social and cultural group of which I am a member (M. Greene, 2014). My choice of topic, question framing and analysis are all influenced by my identity as a female Palestinian Christian citizen of Israel and my experiences as an undergraduate student at the University of Haifa. While my 'insider status' grants me an understanding of the population and a relational ease with its members, it could also lead me to make wrong assumptions based on my own experiences, which might not

reflect those of the participants. This was especially salient as I translated quotes from the focus groups from Arabic to English, as I had the power to construct the participants' realities by choosing words that I believe reflect their own.

Therefore, I endeavoured to be reflexive throughout the research process by keeping a reflexive journal as well as meeting regularly with colleagues to talk through research decisions and recognise any unchecked assumptions. As for translations, I re-listened to the audio recordings as I translated to ensure that I remained as close as possible to the original context. Additionally, I consulted with colleagues regarding specific words and phrases that I found difficult to translate.

6.2.2 Qualitative phase

6.2.2.1 Participants

The first phase consisted of seven online focus groups that were conducted in the spring of 2021 on Zoom, with a total of nineteen participants. There were nine men and ten women, with an average age of 23 (*SD* = 2.7). Participants were at varying stages of their studies and came from different disciplines including psychology, engineering, nursing, law, and accounting.

Institutional gatekeepers (e.g., student leaders, university staff) at the six largest universities in Israel were contacted to assist in participant recruitment through their networks. Participants had to be full-time university students in their second year or above or to have graduated in the last five years and they also had to identify as Arab/Palestinian. Druze students and academic college students were excluded at this stage due to time constraints. Potential participants were sent an information sheet which they were asked to confirm reading and indicate their informed consent. Participation in the study was acknowledged with a 60NIS voucher for a local coffee shop chain.

6.2.2.2 Data collection & analysis

The protocol for the focus groups was designed using Billups' (2019) guidelines and was piloted before data collection to ensure clarity and coherence. The focus groups were semi-structured, conducted in Arabic, and lasted about an hour. The questions focused on the participants' experiences at university, specifically their thoughts and feelings during their first semester, how they coped with the transition, and how it influenced the rest of their academic journey.

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. An inductive, data-based approach was adopted for the analysis, using the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as well as the guidelines by Saldaña (2013) on coding. MaxQDA-2020 Analytics Pro was used for the analysis.

Several steps were taken throughout the research process to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, informed by the guidelines set forth by Nowell and colleagues (2017): the qualitative data was read multiple times before any coding was conducted so that all aspects of the data are considered; the reflexive journal mentioned previously was used to record initial and evolving thoughts throughout the waves of coding, leaving an audit trail; a summary of the analysis was sent to the participants for feedback (i.e. member checking); and a thick description of the findings' context is provided. Additionally, the mixed-methods design adopted aimed to triangulate data sources and bolster the overall credibility of the findings.

6.2.3 Quantitative phase

6.2.3.1 Survey instrument

Based on the themes identified in the first phase, a survey instrument was developed aiming to explore the prevalence of the qualitative findings and their generalisability across various

groups. To ensure that the items meet the content, cognitive and usability standards as outlined by Groves and colleagues (2009, p. 259), two expert reviews were sought, and a pilot was carried out to a sample of ten people who meet the eligibility criteria. Following the feedback, the questionnaire was shortened, and minor linguistic revisions were made. The questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

The questionnaire was administered in Arabic and consisted of four sections: (a) sociodemographic and academic characteristics, (b) transition to HE, (c) student experience on campus, and (d) perception of institutional support. The last three sections comprised predominantly Likert items on a 5-point agreement scale. Only the findings from the first three parts of the questionnaire are presented as part of the current paper.

6.2.3.2 Data collection

The eligibility criteria for the quantitative phase were broader than those of the qualitative phase and included all current full-time PAI undergraduate students and recent graduates (up to five years of graduation). This included Druze students and academic college students.

The survey was open to responses online in March and April 2022 using the Qualtrics platform. Respondents were provided with information about the study and were required to indicate their informed consent to participate before proceeding to the questionnaire. Respondents were not asked to provide any identifying data (e.g., email address) and thus remained anonymous. The questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete.

Due to a lack of an accessible sampling frame, this survey involved a non-probability volunteer sample. Thus, following best practice guidelines, survey recruitment channels were diverse to broaden the spread of the sample (Vehovar et al., 2016). First, student deans or Arab student coordinators at the largest twenty-nine Israeli HE institutions were contacted via email to request assistance in distributing the survey. One follow-up email was sent in the

case of non-response. Eleven institutions agreed to distribute the survey to their students. Second, two educational organisations were contacted, one of which disseminated the survey through their network. Last, sixteen student groups on Facebook were targeted for advertisement where a link to the survey was posted twice.

6.2.3.3 Respondents

Five hundred responses to the survey were recorded, 453 of which met the eligibility criteria. Three-quarters (73.9%) of the sample were women and the rest (25.3%) were men. The average age was 23.3 (*SD* = 4.21) with half being between the ages of 20 and 23. Respondents came from 73 different localities, the largest group being from Nazareth (22.9%). Over half of the respondents were Muslim (54.3%), a third were Christian (33.3%) and 7.7% were Druze.

The respondents studied at 33 different HE institutions, with over half (57.1%) studying at universities. Almost half (48.5%) of respondents were first-generation students, defined as having two parents without an academic qualification. The full demographic and academic characteristics of the sample and the corresponding population statistics, where available, can be found in the Appendix.

6.2.3.4 Data analysis

All analysis was conducted using R version 4.2. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the relevant items and scales. Based on existing evidence, gender, parental education, and type of institution (i.e., research university or academic college) were chosen as the key independent variables. Differences between subgroups were examined for statistical significance using $\chi 2$ tests. Due to the non-probability nature of the sample, the results of the inferential analysis should be treated with caution. Following the framework advanced by Mirzaei and colleagues

(2022), the percentage of missing data was calculated and classified. Multiple imputations were chosen as the optimal method to handle missing data.

6.3 FINDINGS

The findings of both phases of the study are organised topically to provide a comprehensive overall picture based on the two main themes identified in the focus groups: first, the feeling of disorientation as students transitioned to HE; and second, the persistent feeling of lagging behind, which was attributed to three structural barriers – language, age, and finances.

6.3.1 Transition to higher education: disorientation & resilience

Participants expressed a sense of disorientation upon their transition to HE, which manifested in several ways: academic, physical, and cultural/social.

6.3.1.1 Academic disorientation

All participants in the focus groups highlighted the fact that studying at university is significantly different from high school. They had to adapt to a new method of teaching and revising, which caused them to feel overwhelmed with a pervasive feeling that they "are always missing something." While this may not be unique to PAI students, it was raised in every focus group and appears to be a key aspect of the participants' experiences.

The intensity and pace of HE were highlighted as particularly challenging, as one student described:

> "The transition from school was a very big one. In school it was easy, I didn't study other than during exams. Suddenly you come to university and every week there are assignments, not only one but four. And if you miss one, they pile up. So academically it was very difficult and demanding. The standard is very high."

The academic disorientation was often accompanied by a sense of emotional turmoil, as students worked to adapt to the environment around them. One student shared:

> "… I felt like the first semester was all tears. I couldn't understand where I am… I, I didn't know how we were supposed to move between classes. Everything was jumbled, everything was different than it was in high school, how it was in the Bagrut [Israel's matriculation exams]. I also saw that many people dropped out, and I was scared that I would drop out too."

These findings were confirmed in the survey data. Eighty percent of survey respondents reported feeling anxious about their academic progress during their first semester, and 71% felt scared of dropping out. Specifically for in-class interactions, while 67% felt that they understood what was said in class, only 41% felt confident asking and answering questions.

As for variations between men and women, a larger percentage of women than men reported being anxious about their academic progress during their transition to HE (85.1% and 67% respectively; $x^2 = 24.143$, df = 3, $p<0.001$), as well as being scared of dropping out in their first semester (74% and 64% respectively; $x^2 = 12.479$, df = 3, $p<0.01$). In terms of parental education, 49.5% of first-generation students said they were confident asking and answering questions in class, compared to 33% of continuing-generation students ($x^2 = 17.82$, df = 3, $p<0.005$). As for differences between types of institutions, 49% of college students said they were confident asking and answering questions in class, compared to 35% of university students ($x^2 = 13.85$, df = 3, $p<0.001$). Furthermore, a larger proportion of college students felt confident expressing their opinions in class compared to university students (45% and 30% respectively; $x^2 = 11.67$, df = 3, $p<0.01$).

6.3.1.2 Physical disorientation

As there are currently no universities in PAI cities and only a handful of colleges, many PAI students have to move out of their hometowns to pursue their studies in a Jewish-majority city. Consequently, they are often not only adjusting to a new academic environment but also to a new city. One participant who moved from her home village in Galilee (i.e., the periphery) to Bar-Ilan University (i.e., the centre) explained this transition:

> "In the beginning, the challenge was the distance from home… I was 19 years old and alone among my Jewish classmates, and now coming to the centre while I had lived in the North my whole life. The first time I took a public bus was when I came to university."

The quantitative findings reveal a more complex picture. Two-thirds of the survey sample (68%) moved to a new city as students, and of those, 70% reported feeling comfortable in it, while simultaneously, 43% reported experiencing nationally or religiously motivated discrimination in the new city.

6.3.1.3 Social and cultural disorientation

For many PAI students, HE is their first experience of prolonged contact with the majority Jewish Israeli culture, due to the deep segregation that exists in Israel. Thus, the transition to HE can constitute a culture shock. One participant described this:

> "As a girl who has been in a village all her life, we were very far from people. We barely saw the world. Even when I worked, I didn't work somewhere that would introduce me to the world. I worked in a clothes shop and a hair salon. I didn't feel like I had many experiences. So, when I first came to [the University of] Haifa, it was… I saw something that I wasn't used to seeing, and this might sound a bit primitive what I'm going to say, but in our

> [community/culture] if a girl and a guy are walking together people will look and start to talk. But here it was as if I went to another world, where it is normal to behave like this and no one will ask questions or say anything."

This participant's statement "this might sound primitive" demonstrates her awareness of how the university culture (i.e., Ashkenazi Jewish Israeli culture) perceives her home community's traditions and values.

Another participant explored the emotions caused by this cultural shift:

> "I can sum it all up in one word: fear. I am entering a new experience and I'm very scared. When you are scared you are constantly worrying, and this reflects on everything you do. [You start to wonder] what do I wear, what do I do, where do I go, who will help me? All of this is fear. A new experience, fear of a new society, how will my Jewish classmates accept me?"

Here, the participant identified how the actions of PAI students are infused by fear, which could be debilitating to them. Additionally, some participants described feeling lonely and finding it difficult to establish friendships during their first few months in HE. One participant said:

> "When I first entered university, I didn't have any friends, so I felt that there were so many people around me, but at the same time, I felt very lonely. I spent the first week sitting in the library because I didn't have anything to do, I didn't know anyone."

Again, while this challenge is not unique to PAIs, I felt that it is important to include it as it was prominent in the discussions and is compounded by the culture shift students experience.

In the survey, 54% of respondents felt well-adjusted socially during their first semester in HE. There were no statistically significant differences between subgroups on this item.

6.3.1.4 "Huddled around each other": support from PAI students

Students dealt with the different aspects of disorientation by forming groups with other PAI students in their courses. This was stark as all participants were quick to say how many other PAIs were in their course, without prompting. There seemed to be an unspoken assumption that the other PAIs in the classroom if they exist, are the 'default' option for friendships.

Participants felt validated in knowing that they were not the only ones feeling lost:

> "… We would leave the lecture and see that we are all, simply, in the same place, and that helps mentally. The Arabs, I mean. To see that everyone doesn't understand what is happening, so we discovered things together. This is what built friendships… In our first semester, we studied for all the exams together… I couldn't have made it on my own."

The coming together of PAI students was a strong theme among participants. As they phrased it, "Arab students gathered/huddled around each other." They felt that they were all facing similar challenges and that as a minority group, they needed to help one another succeed.

This was confirmed in the survey findings. Eighty-seven percent of respondents felt that their PAI classmates were dealing with similar challenges and 78% turned to their PAI classmates for support. There were no statistically significant differences between subgroups in this regard.

6.3.2 Lagging behind & structural barriers

6.3.2.1 "Several steps behind"

After their first semester at university, participants in the focus groups expressed a persistent feeling that they were "several steps behind" the rest of the students. In a telling exchange between two participants, they attributed this feeling to structural difficulties that exist for PAI students in the HE system:

> "I think that the experience of the Arab student is always different, in any academic setting… All Arab students face structural difficulties, difficulties that exist because we come from a particular background, not due to specific people's [personal characteristics]. From the moment I started university I felt like I needed to prove that I am not less than any other Jewish student. I would always ignore the challenges, and wouldn't acknowledge even to myself that I could be having difficulties... I eventually realised it's wrong to deny reality... I now explain to [incoming] Arab students that there are difficulties we face like the language, age, environment, cultural differences – all these difficulties are structured for us as a society, not because we are less smart or less capable."

> "I agree that we come with built-in difficulties… It's like [other students] are already ten steps further than you, and [they're] also walking at a faster pace than you."

Along with acknowledging the sense of disadvantage, many participants were clear about feeling the need to fight the "victim mentality," as one participant explained:

> "We have to work on ourselves, on our way of thinking… I don't feel like the Jewish students are better than us [in terms of] our intellectual abilities, how

> smart we are. I feel like it stems from the way we think about ourselves as a minority group. We can prove ourselves wrong. We can get to high places if we just give ourselves space."

The survey findings reveal that after the initial shock during their transition to HE, students begin to feel better about their progress. 79% of respondents felt competent in their ability to persist to degree completion after the first semester, a clear improvement from the 71% who reported being scared of dropping out in their first semester. However, the feeling of lagging behind persisted, as only 33% of respondents felt that they were progressing at a pace similar to or faster than their Jewish-Israeli peers, compared with 78% who felt similarly about their PAI peers.

6.3.2.2 Structural barriers

6.3.2.2.1 Language

One of the main structural difficulties the students highlighted in all groups was language. All participants described Hebrew as a major hurdle in their adjustment to university, and a few mentioned English too. The participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how their levels of linguistic mastery affected their experiences in university. One participant shared the following:

> "I used to understand what was said in class but to share or speak up when I have a question, to feel totally at ease like my Jewish classmates- that was very difficult. It took a very long time for me to start speaking in class. Sometimes I would have a clear question that I would keep repeating in my mind before asking it [out loud]."

However, it is important to highlight two points regarding this. First, participants who were taught by PAI lecturers found their Hebrew easier to understand, suggesting that the barrier might not be the language itself but the accent, pace, and vocabulary. Second, some participants suggested that they felt more comfortable asking questions once they moved to remote learning, expressing a feeling of "liberation" on Zoom, possibly because they could turn off their cameras. This suggests that the barrier to speaking in class might be related to the classroom's physical environment and the psychological impact of that rather than mastery of the language.

In the survey, 44% of respondents felt that their language skills badly impacted their grades. Fifty-three percent felt that their Hebrew was strong enough for the academic environment, compared with 59% who felt similarly regarding their English skills.

As for differences across subgroups, a smaller proportion of first-generation students felt that their English was strong enough for the academic environment, compared with continuing-generation students (44.3% and 72.1% respectively, $x^2 = 35.85$, df = 3, $p<0.001$).

6.3.2.2.2 Age

As PAIs are not legally required to be conscripted to the army at the age of 18 (except for men from the Druze community), unlike Jewish-Israeli citizens, the vast majority of PAIs enter HE significantly younger. Most participants in the focus groups viewed their young age as a barrier to adapting to university life, saying:

> "I feel like the biggest obstacle for me is age. [My Jewish classmates] are so much older, so much more mature. I made stupid decisions when I first entered university. If I had been older, I would have made different decisions. They knew themselves more, what they like and what they don't like, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. I didn't know these things about myself."

Consequently, some participants expressed a desire to enter HE at a later stage, even though societal and financial pressures often prevented them from doing so.

There was some consistency between the quantitative and the qualitative findings: Ninety percent of respondents began their studies between the ages of 18 and 21, and of those, 26.2% felt that being young was an obstacle for them and 32% wished that they had entered HE later than they did.

6.3.2.2.3 Finances

As previously discussed, PAIs as a population group are economically disadvantaged. This was reflected in the focus groups, as participants expressed anxiety over their financial situation and the difficulty of balancing work and study:

> "The financial issue – it's a big challenge. You have to study and work [at the same time]. But as a first-year student, I don't think you can work. There is so much to study… It's an even bigger challenge if you don't have supportive parents."

In the quantitative phase, over half of the respondents said that they experienced financial difficulties during their studies (54%) and that their financial situation caused them anxiety (50%). Simultaneously, 70% always or frequently had financial support from their family, 44% never or rarely had to work to finance their studies, and 60% never or rarely had to work to support their family.

As for differences across subgroups, men reported having to work significantly more during their studies than women, whether it is to finance their studies or support their families. First-generation students reported significantly more financial difficulties than continuing-generation students in all the relevant questionnaire items. For example, 49% of first-

generation students never or rarely had to work during their studies to support their families, compared with 71% of continuing-generation students ($x^2 = 25.33$, df = 3, $p<0.001$).

6.4 DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore the experiences of PAI undergraduate students during their transition to HE, and the ways that structural barriers impact their academic journeys. The findings suggest that the transition to HE is marked by a sense of academic, physical, and social/cultural disorientation. Prior evidence has noted some aspects of this transition: Al-Haj (2003) for example, identified the culture shock that PAI students feel upon entering HE campuses and the need to bridge between their home community and the HE community.

In the current study, women reported more academic difficulties than men, which, considering men's lower rates of enrolment and completion (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019), is of concern and should be explored further. Moreover, contrary to evidence from other contexts (Pascarella et al., 2004), continuing-generation students reported more academic difficulties than first-generation students. This could be partially explained by Daniel's (2016) suggestion that while being a first-generation student from a minority group introduces additional difficulties, it could also serve as a driving force for students.

This study also found that to address these challenges, PAI students turn to one another for support. This complements the findings of Abraham Initiatives' (2020) survey which found that PAI students feel a greater sense of belonging on campuses with a high number of other PAI students, and the positive association that Levi, Eyal and Konstantinov (2019) found between the number of PAI students in an institution and completing a degree in the expected time.

The sense of disorientation appears to transform over time into a feeling of constantly lagging behind others. Three main structural barriers that impeded students' progress were

highlighted in the current study: language, age, and finances. These barriers cannot be viewed in isolation from the discrimination that PAIs experience in Israel, but rather as manifestations of it. Age and language are not inherently barriers to success in HE, but the fact that the HE system is designed to cater to the typical (older, Hebrew-speaking) Jewish Israeli student, makes them so. This is apparent in how the CHE frames its efforts towards PAI students, viewing their mother tongue and cultural values as obstacles to equal educational outcomes (Shaviv et al., 2013). This reflects a deficit, assimilationist discourse that pathologises PAI students and does not seek to change unequal HE systems (Fogarty et al., 2018; Ma'ayan, 2019). Thus, this study views the challenges facing PAI students to be a failure of the Israeli HE system to celebrate and enrich PAI students' unique capabilities. The financial challenge also cannot be divorced from the larger context of successive Israeli governments' socioeconomic marginalisation and segregation of PAI localities, as well as the limited financial support available to PAI students and discriminatory financial assistance allocation mechanisms used by HE institutions (e.g., scholarships contingent on military service; (Dagan-Buzaglo, 2007)).

Although this study has expanded the current understanding of PAI students' experiences in HE, it is not without limitations. First, the COVID-19 pandemic cast its shadow over the entirety of the data collection period, in which lockdowns impacted students' experiences in HE in ways that are still being explored. Second, due to a lack of an accessible sampling frame, the survey used a non-probability volunteer sample, which was then influenced by institutional decisions concerning cooperating with the survey distribution requests. While the diversification of recruitment channels was an attempt to minimise the problems associated with this, questions about the generalisability of the findings remain. However, it is important to note that this study's findings are similar to others in the field, thereby supporting their validity. Third, as the survey was conducted online, respondents were unable

to ask clarifying questions. However, the expert reviews and the piloting phase were both efforts to mitigate this.

The current study has several implications for policy, practice, and research. First, it provides a framework for thinking about PAI students' transition to Israeli HE when making policy or designing support programs. Second, it provides evidence that many of the challenges faced by PAI students are the product of discriminatory practices in larger systems in Israel (e.g., Israel's refusal to establish a university in a PAI locality, forcing PAI students to move to Jewish-majority cities, causing physical disorientation and creating additional financial stress). Therefore, to effectively support students, systematic factors must be taken into account and, ultimately, dealt with. Third, this paper argues that the policymakers should view PAI students' academic journeys holistically and in context, shifting their focus from simply assisting students in adapting to the reality of Israeli HE as it is today, to reimagining an academic space that empowers students from all backgrounds and is enriched by their presence. Processes of validation and acknowledging cultural wealth, as proposed by Rendón (1994) and Yosso (2005), could be useful in this process. Fourth, this study explored some variations among PAI students, and future research should investigate further to better understand how intersecting identities impact student experiences. Last, while this study focused on the Israeli context, it provides important insights about linguistic, cultural, and socio-political nuances that may apply to other contexts as well.

7 PAPER 2 – "NOT OURS": PALESTINIAN ARAB STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAMPUS ETHNONATIONAL CLIMATE IN ISRAELI HIGHER EDUCATION

In press at Race Ethnicity and Education.

DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2024.2328282

Abstract

Rooted in the campus racial climate framework by Hurtado and colleagues (1998) and utilising a qualitative-led mixed-methods approach, this study explored the perceptions of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) who are undergraduate students of their campus ethnonational climates. Focus groups (n = 19) were conducted, followed by an online survey (n = 453). The results show that PAI students perceive their campuses as foreign and often exclusionary, leading them to expend a great deal of time and energy negotiating the terms of their presence on campus. PAI students respond to the negative campus climate by forming pockets of belonging, asserting their identities and giving back to their home communities. Campuses were described as highly segregated with little contact between ethnonational groups, yet a desire to connect was strongly expressed. Variations across types of HE institutions as well as implications for practice and research are explored in the paper.

Keywords

Higher education, campus climate, Israel, Arab, Palestinian, mixed methods.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Campus climate refers to the expectations, patterns, attitudes, and interactions that shape a higher education (HE) institution and its members (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Museus et al., 2019). Students' perceptions of the campus climate have been shown to influence their educational and psychosocial outcomes including mental well-being, engagement, and persistence (Kuh et al., 2005; Solorzano et al., 2000).

One crucial element that shapes campus climates is how HE institutions relate to race and ethnicity. Evidence shows that racial/ethnic minority students often encounter hostile campus environments and experience "isolation, alienation and stereotyping… on campuses where they are not the majority" (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 12). Turner (1994) described the sense of exclusion that racial/ethnic minority students feel on campuses as being like "guests in someone else's house," as they feel that they have limited, if any, ownership of the space (p. 356).

While the Israeli-Palestinian divide is not along racial lines but ethnonational ones, Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) encounter similar experiences of marginalisation and exclusion in Israeli HE institutions. Adopting a qualitative-led sequential mixed-methods approach, this study sought to explore PAI undergraduate students' perceptions of their campus ethnonational climates and how they impact their experiences in HE. Specifically, it uses the campus racial climate framework by Hurtado and colleagues (1998) to explore PAI students' sense of inclusion and exclusion on campus, their relationship with their Jewish-Israeli peers, and their perception of the support their institutions offer.

7.1.1 Palestinian Arab undergraduate students in Israeli higher education

7.1.1.1 Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel

PAIs comprise a fifth of the Israeli population, totalling about two million people (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019a). As the name suggests, PAIs have a complex identity with often conflicting components: Palestinian by nationality, Arab by ethnicity, Israeli by citizenship and Muslim (~85%), Christian (~7%) or Druze (~6%) by religious affiliation (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019a; Rudnitzky & Radai, 2017). As they are citizens of a country that is at war with their national group, PAIs are often treated with enmity and perceived as a 'fifth column,' i.e., an internal entity undermining the state from within (Arar & Mustafa, 2011).

Due to historical and political factors, Israel is a highly divided society whereby, generally speaking, PAIs and Jewish Israelis live in separate localities, and even in the seven mixed cities in Israel, they tend to live in separate neighbourhoods or streets (Cohen, 2015). PAI children learn in a separate, Arabic-speaking K-12 education track, further decreasing the prospect of meaningful Jewish-Arab encounters (Arar et al., 2016).

Decades of underinvestment, marginalisation and discrimination by Israeli governments have left PAI communities in poor social, educational, economic and health conditions (Biton & Yagor-Krol, 2023; Hesketh et al., 2011; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 2019). The latest figures show that 45% of PAI families live in poverty, and PAI localities are overrepresented in the lowest socioeconomic tiers in the country (Haddad Haj-Yahya et al., 2022).

7.1.1.2 Palestinian Arab undergraduate students in Israeli higher education

In light of the socioeconomic and political challenges that they face, PAIs are strongly motivated to acquire advanced education, as it is perceived to be one of the only tools for individual and communal mobility (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016b). This has been demonstrated

by a doubling of the number of PAI students in the last decade whereby they now comprise 19.3% of all undergraduate students in Israeli HE (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2021). This increase can be attributed to the economic, social, and cultural processes that PAI communities are undergoing, as well as governmental investments in national and institution-level programs working towards that end (Council for Higher Education Israel, 2019; Hager & Jabareen, 2016).

However, despite their increasing numbers, once PAI students enter HE, they are faced with an environment that is foreign to them: it is, usually, their first prolonged encounter with the Jewish-Israeli majority, their first time being taught almost entirely in Hebrew, and their first time living away from their homes (Abraham Initiatives, 2020; Hager & Jabareen, 2016; Mansour, 2024).

7.1.2 The campus racial climate framework in the context of Israeli higher education

The campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998) suggests that campus racial climates are shaped by several interactive external and internal factors.

7.1.2.1 External factors

External factors are those not within the institution's direct control yet influence the campus climate. These include government policies and initiatives, and sociohistorical events outside the campus which "influence how people view racial diversity in society, [and] simulate discussions or other activity within the campus" (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 282; Tamtik & Guenter, 2020). While discussing the sociohistorical context of Israel-Palestine is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that the ongoing military occupation of the West Bank, the siege of the Gaza Strip, the segregationist policies in PAI localities, the constricting of democratic spaces and the rise of extreme right-wing settler policies – all cast their shadow on Israeli campuses' climate for true diversity and inclusion (Adalah, 2017a; Human Rights

Watch, 2021a). This is especially true when HE institutions are, directly or indirectly, involved in emboldening and enabling the state's militaristic efforts against Palestinians, for example by providing training for military personnel or when they are built in illegal settlements (Kubovic, 2019; Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021).

As for governmental initiatives, the Council for Higher Education in Israel launched a program in 2013 that aims to "improve the quality of integration, support and duration of studies for minority students," among which were PAIs (Shaviv et al., 2013, p. 63). This program provided space for each institution to create its personalised support system, encouraging them to offer various forms of academic and social assistance for their PAI students according to their specific characteristics and needs. However, this government initiative views and treats PAI students as a socioeconomic, cultural group rather than an ethnonational one, providing them with primarily technical assistance to integrate into the existing HE system without requiring institutions to meaningfully change themselves (Ma'ayan, 2019; Mansour, 2024).

7.1.2.2 Internal factors

Internal factors are those that relate directly to the institution and result from its educational practices. Hurtado and colleagues (1998) outline four main factors.

The first factor is the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of marginalised groups which shapes its current practices. While this is less relevant in the Israeli context as institutions did not, at least formally, exclude PAIs from enrolling, it should be noted that due to the military rule that PAIs were under for the first two decades after the establishment of the state of Israel, their access to HE, and education in general, was greatly restricted (Al-Haj, 2003).

The second factor is the numerical representation of ethnic/racial groups in the institution, including the student body, the academic staff, and the administrators. While the percentage of PAI students varies widely between institutions, the percentage of PAIs who are academic faculty members is severely lacking in all HE institutions, amounting to less than four percent in universities as well as public and private academic colleges (Elkyess et al., 2022).

The last two internal factors, i.e., the psychological and behavioural dimensions of campus racial climates, are the focus of the current study. The psychological dimension is concerned with "individuals' views of group relations, institutional responses to diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes toward those from other racial/ethnic backgrounds than one's own" (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 289; Rankin & Reason, 2005). The behavioural dimension refers to the "context, frequency, and quality of interactions on campus" between different social identity groups (Hurtado et al., 2012, p. 66).

Although evidence regarding PAI students' perceptions of the climate at their institutions and their interactions with their Jewish peers is sparse, a few key issues have been identified by researchers. First, research has shown that PAI students often feel afraid to fully express themselves on campus leading them to self-censor. Students interviewed by Golan and Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2019) described a pattern of self-censoring on campus, especially when it came to expressing views that challenge hegemonic Israeli narratives, fearing a harsh response from their institution that could place their future in jeopardy. The findings of Davidovitch & Soen (2008) support this, whereby the majority of PAI students surveyed said that they had to be cautious about what they say in lessons and were afraid to express their opinions on campus.

Second, prior studies have documented PAI students' experiences of discrimination on campus: over half of PAI respondents in a multi-institution survey carried out by the non-

governmental organisation (NGO) Abraham Initiatives (2020) recounted encountering explicit racism on campus, primarily by other students, and 41% felt that they are discriminated against as a group. Furthermore, in Halabi's (2016) study, eighteen out of the twenty-five student interviewees spoke of hostile interactions between themselves and the academic as well as the administrative staff, perceiving them as uncaring of their well-being or academic progress. This is not, however, the case for all students, with some evidence suggesting that a large group of PAI students feel equal to their Jewish-Israeli peers and see the academic space as generally democratic (Davidovitch & Soen, 2008; Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2010).

Third, the same survey previously mentioned by Abraham Initiatives (2020) showed that PAI and Jewish students generally did not have friends from the other group before entering HE, and while some friendships were established throughout their years as students, these friendships remained on an individual level and were not accompanied by a perception shift on the group level. Moreover, PAI and Jewish students reported higher levels of anger toward the other group during the later stages of their studies as they approached graduation.

Last, researchers have demonstrated that institutional characteristics impact PAI students' sense of belonging on campus, whereby a stronger sense of belonging is associated with institutional policies perceived as fostering dialogue and promoting inclusivity, and a higher proportion of PAI students (Abraham Initiatives, 2020).

Overall, this evidence suggests that the unfamiliar environment highlighted above requires careful, laborious navigation on the part of PAI students, potentially constituting a substantial barrier in their academic journeys. By utilising a qualitative-led sequential mixed-methods approach and rooting the study in the campus racial climate framework, the current study seeks to build on the evidence previously presented. It explores PAI students' perceptions of

the ethnonational climate on their campus, including their relationship with their Jewish-Israeli peers and the support offered to them by their institutions, as well as how these perceptions differ across different types of HE institutions.

7.2 METHODS

This study is part of a larger research project (Mansour, 2024) which follows a qualitatively-driven sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design. The advantage of using this design is that it allows for an in-depth exploration of students' experiences, followed by a quantitative examination of the prevalence of such experiences. This way, the quantitative element is rooted in the qualitative. Furthermore, this approach recognises that racial/ethnic minority students are not a monolith, and thus seeks to understand the differences between them using statistical analyses.

This study began with seven online focus groups in April 2021 with PAI undergraduate students and recent graduates (n = 19) of the largest six universities in Israel. The sample for this phase included nine men and ten women, with ages ranging from 20 and 31 years old. As for religious backgrounds, there were fourteen Christians and five Muslims in this sample. Students and graduates of the University of Haifa comprised almost half of all participants (n = 9). This reflects the fact that the university has the largest percentage of PAI students in Israeli HE (Dattel, 2018). Participants studied an array of subjects representing most academic disciplines.

The focus groups were conducted in Arabic, lasted around an hour, and the questions revolved around participants' experiences at university and their feelings as PAIs on campus. The discussions were recorded, transcribed verbatim in Arabic and then thematically analysed according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases: The transcripts were first read multiple times before beginning the process of initial coding (i.e., what Saldaña (2013) terms

first-cycle coding). Initial codes were then collated into themes where potential patterns could be identified (i.e., second-cycle coding per Saldaña's (2013) terms). These themes were then refined, reviewed and defined until a coherent narrative was constructed, supported by compelling quotes from the data. Hurtado and colleagues' (1998) definitions of the psychological and behavioural dimensions of campus racial climates contributed to structuring and defining the themes as detailed in the introduction of the findings section. The analysis was done using MaxQDA-2020 Analytics Pro.

Informed by the themes identified in the focus groups, a survey instrument was developed to investigate the generalisability of the qualitative findings across various subgroups of PAI students. Guided by the content, cognitive and usability standards set out by Groves and colleagues (2009), the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts and then piloted. Following the feedback, the questionnaire was shortened and minor linguistic revisions were made.

The questionnaire, which can be found in the Appendix, was administered in Arabic and contained four parts: (a) sociodemographic and academic characteristics, (b) transition to HE, (c) student experience on campus, and (d) perception of institutional support. This paper presents findings from the first, third and fourth parts of the questionnaire.

The survey was open to anonymous responses online in March and April 2022. Respondents were eligible participate if they are PAI undergraduate students or recent graduates of Israeli HE institutions (i.e., graduated in the last five years). As there was no accessible sampling frame, respondent recruitment channels were diversified following best practice guidelines (Vehovar et al., 2016): first, assistance in distributing the survey was requested from the largest twenty-nine Israeli HE institutions. Eleven institutions agreed to assist. Second, one educational organisation distributed the survey to the students they work with. Third, a link to

the survey was posted twice (with a week in between the first and second post) on sixteen Facebook student groups.

Five hundred responses to the survey were obtained, 453 of which met the eligibility criteria (i.e., some responses were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria, e.g., graduated over five years ago).

Seventy-four percent of respondents were women, and half were between the ages of twenty and twenty-three. Respondents studied at 33 different HE institutions, with 57.1% of them studying at research universities and the rest in academic colleges. In Israel, research universities are the only institutions able to grant doctorate degrees, and thus tend to be geared towards research, while academic colleges tend to be more teaching-oriented. The latter are also usually smaller, have less strict entry requirements, and are more geographically dispersed around the country (Ayalon, 2008).

First-generation students, defined by the average number of parents without an academic degree, accounted for almost half (48.5%) of all respondents. Muslims made up over half the respondents (54.3%), Christians were a third (33.3%) and 7.7% were Druze. The Appendix presents the full sociodemographic and academic characteristics of the sample.

All analysis was conducted using the statistical software R version 4.2. Based on previous evidence, institution type was chosen as the independent variable; i.e., the differences between students who study at research universities and students who study at academic colleges were examined. This was done using $\chi 2$ tests which determine whether two variables are related or independent from each other.

A reflexive journal was kept throughout the entire research process to record initial and evolving thoughts and impressions – leaving an audit trail.

Both phases of the study received ethical approval from the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford (References: C1A_20_004; C1A_21-22_007).

7.3 FINDINGS

Findings from both phases of the study are described in this section in a weaving narrative. This is loosely structured according to Hurtado and colleagues' (1998) definitions of the psychological and behavioural dimensions of the campus racial climate previously discussed: it examines PAI students' perceptions of their inclusion and exclusion at their institution, group relations on campus, and their view of their institution's response to diversity, specifically the support it offers to them as members of a marginalised group.

7.3.1 Perceptions of inclusion and exclusion

7.3.1.1 Foreignness and hostility

Participants in the qualitative phase spoke of the campus as a foreign, often hostile space that oscillates between ignoring them and alienating them. When they navigated the campus and its surrounding areas, their sense of inequality and lack of ownership was reinforced, as one participant remarked:

> "We live in an environment where we aren't equal. The names of buildings, the names of the streets, they're not ours. The calendar is not ours." (male, 23)

In a similar vein, participants spoke about how foreign many of the reference points used on campus are. One main example of this is the centrality of the Israeli military in everyday conversations, which immediately alienates PAI students who do not conscript and view the Israeli military as a hostile force fighting against their fellow Palestinians. One participant explained:

> "Jewish students, when they introduce themselves, after saying their name and where they are from, they say what they did in the army. So, you start hearing random words that have to do with the army and you don't understand any of it. And wow, it is so important to them that they define themselves through it, and we are not at all in that world. On the contrary, it reminds us of where we live." (female, 22)

For this participant, the casual references to the Israeli military are a distressing reminder of the wider political context and its proximity to the campus. Similarly, participants spoke about how Zionist narratives that underlie much of the curriculum can be hurtful to them, with one participant saying:

> "It's very difficult to hear from the lecturer [talking about the establishment of Israel] as if there was nothing here before and they were the ones who have built everything." (female, 21)

The quote above reflects the sense of erasure and invisibility that many PAI students feel in Israeli HE institutions, which colours their experiences on campus. Another participant spoke about a lecturer who brought up, as an example of a social media influencer, Natalie Dadon, "whose content is all about making fun of what happens in Gaza, very extreme stuff." This participant concluded: "… they don't respect that we are present." (female, 21)

Findings from the quantitative phase show some consistency with those described above. Almost half the respondents in the survey (42.4%) did not feel that the campus was a friendly place. Fifty-six percent felt that their national identity is respected on campus, and fifty-three percent felt the same regarding their religious identity.

As for differences across institution type (i.e., between larger and more research-oriented research universities, and academic colleges which tend to be smaller and more teaching-

focused), a significantly larger proportion of college students felt that their national and religious identities were respected on campus compared with university students. However, the difference between college students and university students regarding their perception of the campus as friendly was not statistically significant. Table 7-1 displays the full results.

Table 7-1

Perceptions of the Campus Climate by Institution Type

	"The campus is a friendly place for me"			*"My national identity is respected on campus"*			*"My religious identity is respected on campus"*		
	Agree or completely agree (%)	x^2	p	Agree or completely agree (%)	x^2	p	Agree or completely agree (%)	x^2	p
Institution type		2.9	0.3		20.4	<0.001***		12.5	0.006**
university	55			37			41		
college	61.5			53			56		

7.3.1.2 The cumulative burden of exclusion and the importance of staff intentionality

Throughout the focus groups, participants recounted various instances where they encountered xenophobia and anti-Palestinian remarks from their peers or members of staff. These ranged from the innocuous "But you don't look Arab!" to the more extreme "Do you want this rock? Your people are good at throwing them," and "Go to Gaza." These encounters, understandably, distressed participants, and even caused one of them to wonder:

> "I started to think, what am I doing here? Is this the right place for me to learn and progress in?" (male, 20)

The quote above demonstrates how negative campus climates, beyond damaging students' mental well-being, can impact their educational outcomes, and even decrease their intention to persist in their studies.

Participants differed on the way to respond to such incidents, with some insisting that they must be confronted directly, while others highlighted the debilitating nature of such encounters, confessing that they are often "rendered silent, [not having] space to get into fights." (female, 23)

Alongside individual interpersonal encounters of xenophobia, participants spoke about experiencing discrimination through institutional policies. The issue of respecting religious holidays emerged strongly in these discussions, with participants perceiving campuses as dominated by one culture and dismissive of others. One participant described how a lecturer assigned an exam on the first of January, without regard to those celebrating the New Year. She expressed bafflement at the insensitivity of the decision:

> "… I felt the meanness of the university. Especially the lecturer. Like how vile can you be? In the end, they decided to postpone it to the second of January. So, we weren't studying on New Year's Eve but on New Year's Day." (female, 21)

Another participant recounted a parallel instance during Ramadan, whereby some lecturers refused to grant permission to Muslim students to leave the online classroom to break their fast. She summarised: "… there is more than one religious group on campus. And we have the right to celebrate our holidays just like the Jewish Israeli students do." (female, 21)

When talking about these issues, participants expressed both anger and fatigue, acknowledging that while some incidents are minor, when considered cumulatively, they place a significant emotional burden on them.

Grappling with these feelings, participants highlighted instances when staff members exhibited warmth and thoughtfulness towards them and how they contributed to their

resilience and persistence in HE. Participants appreciated when lecturers made an effort to foster an inclusive atmosphere, as one participant said:

> "I remember that [our lecturers] used to encourage us to participate. They would get us up on the board to answer questions, they wanted us to participate. I found it comfortable and welcoming." (male, 21)

For this participant, the intentional encouragement of the lecturers motivated him to take an active part in class discussions and fostered his sense of belonging.

The quantitative findings showed a general lack of trust in HE institutions by the respondents, with 72% not feeling that their institution is a fair place, and 68.4% not feeling that its decisions are inclusive. Regarding perceptions of discrimination, 46% of respondents reported experiencing some form of prejudice on campus due to their religious or national identity, mainly by other students.

There were no statistically significant differences between university and college students in their perception of their institution as fair or of its decisions as inclusive. However, a significantly larger proportion of university students indicated that they had experienced discrimination due to their religious or national identity from the administrative staff compared with college students (19.9% and 15.5% respectively; $x^2 = 9.7$, df = 3, $p<0.05$) and or discrimination from other students (39.1% and 33.7% respectively; $x^2 = 9.02$, df = 3, $p<0.05$).

7.3.1.3 Pockets of belonging, asserting identity and giving back

Participants in the focus groups pointed to three ways they responded to the perceived foreignness and hostility of the campus: creating pockets of belonging, asserting their identities, and giving back to their home communities.

First, faced with the hostility of the campus, PAI students described banding together, building friendships, and assisting each other in their academic pursuits thus creating pockets of belonging on campus. Using the Arabic idiom equivalent to "in the same boat," one participant explained that PAI students are all "breathing the same air" and thus need to help each other succeed. One participant noted:

> "…You feel belonging as long as you are in your group, in the Arab group." (female, 24)

These pockets of belonging were felt to nurture PAI students' resilience and contribute to their persistence in HE. They are created from a place of survival as well as resistance, as this participant explains:

> "My university has a lot of Arab students in it, so we spent a lot of time together and studied together. It felt like a second home... which is a feeling that came from a place of challenge/resistance – like, yes, this is my home, and you must accept it. [What made it a home?] People. Friends. Everywhere I went I knew someone. I had a feeling that I have space to feel every type of feeling – I can be sad and happy and angry." (female, 25)

The quote above illustrates how the friendships between PAI students on campus operated as a space for emotional catharsis, solidarity, and practical support.

Second, participants asserted their identity on campus in symbolic ways, as a response to the attacks they encountered. One participant shared:

> "It's like that's the only thing we can do. I can show you now the stickers that are on my laptop and the laptops of those who are studying with me – one has *Handala* [a national Palestinian symbol], the other a Palestinian flag. Each one of us - you can see that we have things that express our national identity. My

> notebook has *tatreez* [Palestinian embroidery] on the outside. It's like you end up holding on to the simplest details." (female, 21)

This participant acknowledges the constraints on national expression that exist on campuses, which leads them to "[hold] on to the simplest details" and assert their identities where they can.

Third, many participants expressed a steadfast commitment to giving back to their communities and helping younger students overcome the challenges that they had previously faced themselves. One participant pioneered a support programme for high school students from his home village in their journey to HE:

> "All the challenges that I faced before entering university, like the lack of vocational guidance or finding housing, I am trying to provide solutions for with a group of other students from my village. We established an organization that helps Arab students adjust to university life and face challenges… We even got one of the lecturers from the university to give a lecture to high school students in the village." (male, 23)

On a smaller scale, another participant spoke about sharing her revision material with other students, while another talked about tutoring students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These participants all emphasised the importance of providing the guidance they would have wanted to receive themselves, and how rewarding it was to give back to their communities.

In the survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that their PAI peers were dealing with similar challenges (87%) and that they turned to them for support (78%). There were no statistically significant differences in this regard between university and college students.

7.3.2 Perceptions of relationship with Jewish-Israeli peers: segregation and desire for connection

Most participants taking part in the focus groups described a deep disconnect with their Jewish-Israeli peers and suggested that the sight of mixed groups together on campus is rare. One participant reflected on her relationship with the Jewish-Israeli students in her department:

> "We don't experience racism because we don't have any interactions with the other side. We don't acknowledge them, and they don't acknowledge us. Maybe that is racism in itself." (female, 24)

This was, potentially, made worse by remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, as one participant observed:

> "[before the move to remote learning] we used to at least see [Jewish-Israeli students] in lectures, try to say hi and bye, make small talk. Now there isn't even that interaction." (female, 23)

The participants assigned the responsibility of this divide to institutional structures and decisions. They highlighted the lack of shared activities for PAI and Jewish Israeli students on campus and criticised their universities for not providing adequate opportunities for meaningful encounters:

> "There is a project on campus that works to integrate Arab students into the university, but they integrate Arab students with other Arab students… I never had a problem connecting with an Arab person, even if they have a different background than mine. My difficulty is the [Hebrew] language, being young and having different values and opinions from the Jewish person sitting next to

me in class that I can't seem to connect with. [The project] hasn't done anything to help me talk to this person." (female, 24)

Participants consistently expressed a strong desire to connect and establish friendships with the Jewish Israeli students in their institutions, even if it meant having difficult conversations:

"We can have shared activities [with Jewish Israeli students], and [not focus only on] the things that separate us… Let [the university] sit us down and get us to talk to each other, even if we talk about political issues and argue… I feel like the university is making itself a battle zone and [the two sides] shouldn't communicate." (male, 21)

Participants also communicated that they feel a responsibility to challenge negative stereotypes about PAIs through their connections with their Jewish Israeli classmates. This gave participants a sense of responsibility, as one student shared:

"… It's a big word, but I feel like we are messengers, like we have a task, that maybe no one gave us, but we feel like we need to show them something else. Sometimes that can become a negative thing, but if we do it in moderation, it's always good to have an Arab person in every space… Those who live in Netanya or Herzliya or Tel Aviv, they could live 25 years without meeting an Arab." (male, 25)

Findings from the quantitative phase showed that half (49%) of respondents felt that there is segregation between PAI and Jewish-Israeli students on their campus, and 57% said that they would like to have more Jewish-Israeli friends on campus.

In terms of differences across institution types, college students reported more positive perceptions of the relationship between PAIs and Jewish Israeli students compared with university students. For example, 58.6% of university students agreed that there is

segregation between PAI and Jewish-Israeli students on campus, compared with 36.4% of college students ($x^2 = 22.3$, df = 3, $p<0.001$). However, the differences between college students and university students regarding their desire to be friends with more Jewish-Israeli students were not statistically significant (62% and 53% respectively; $x^2 = 6.2$, df = 3, p=0.09). Table 7-2 displays the full results.

Table 7-2

Perceptions of the Relations Between Jewish-Israeli and PAI Students on Campus by Institution Type

	"There is segregation between Jews and Arabs on campus"			*"I would like to be friends with more Jewish Israeli students on campus"*			*"I have Jewish Israeli friends on campus"*		
	Agree or completely agree (%)	x^2	p	Agree or completely agree (%)	x^2	p	Agree or completely agree (%)	x^2	p
Institution type		22.3	<0.001***		6.2	0.09		10.3	0.01*
university	58.6			53			53.4		
college	36.4			62			65.8		

7.3.3 Perceptions of responses to diversity: institutional support

While forms of assistance offered to PAI students vary across institutions, participants in the qualitative phase highlighted several key aspects of their perceptions of institutional support. They described the importance of understanding the reality of PAI students by speaking to them directly and tailoring support accordingly. One participant described an initiative in her department:

> "I remember we had a class for Arab psychology students in our first year, which was supposed to help us integrate better in university… they had the intent and the potential to help us, but they didn't know how… They tried to

> help us revise for our classes, but because we only had two hours, we would only skim the surface of every class and end up revising material we already understood. We needed someone to explain the specifics to us." (female, 21)

The quote above emphasises the need for open, continuous communication between institutions and PAI students to ensure effective use of the resources that are invested in support systems.

Furthermore, participants highlighted the need to recognise the variation among PAI students and offer more nuanced solutions. For example, a popular policy in Israeli HE institutions is granting additional time in exams for students whose first language is not Hebrew. The length of time differs between institutions and some institutions offer it for students of all years while others only to students in their first year. While participants differed on the value of this policy, with some viewing it as helpful and others as of little use, all participants agreed that there needs to be more nuance in terms of the support offered and not to "throw 25% extra time and expect the issue to be solved," thereby emphasising the importance of providing support that "respects their minds."

The quantitative findings show that two-thirds of students (66%) did not feel that their institution understood their needs, and 64% did not feel that the support provided was sufficient to give PAI students an equal opportunity to succeed. Furthermore, similar to the lack of trust discussed earlier, 41% of respondents felt that their institution is sincere in its attempt to support PAI students.

Similar to the previous section, college students expressed significantly more favourable views of their institution and its support systems than university students. About two-thirds (71.1%) of university students did not feel that their institution understands their needs, compared with 57.8% of college students ($x^2 = 9.6$, df = 3, $p<0.05$), or that it is sincere in its

attempts to support them (65.8% and 49.2% respectively; $x^2 = 13.2$, df = 3, $p<0.005$). Furthermore, 73% of university students did not feel that the support offered by their institution was enough to give PAI students an equal opportunity to succeed, compared with 51.3% of college students ($x^2 = 22.4$, df = 3, $p<0.001$).

7.4 DISCUSSION

This study set out to explore PAI students' perceptions of their campus climate as it relates to them as an ethnonational minority group informed by Hurtado and colleagues' (1998) framework of campus racial climates. The findings show that PAI students generally perceived their campuses as foreign and often exclusionary, leading them to expend a great deal of time and energy navigating the ethnonational climate of their campus, and negotiating the terms of their presence on campus as the ethnonational Other. For example, students thought deeply about how to respond to incidents of discrimination, or when and how they could safely assert their identities on campus. Similar to the findings of the Abraham Initiatives' (2020) survey, PAI students in the current study reported encountering verbally assaultive behaviour as well as feeling systemically discriminated against by institutional decisions and policies – all of which caused them significant stress. Carroll (1998) refers to this emotional burden as "mundane extreme environmental stress," mundane, as it is common and encountered daily; extreme, due to its brutal impact on the psychological well-being of individuals; and environmental, because it is "environmentally induced and fostered" (p. 271). This study also showed, however, that staff members who exhibited intentional warmth towards PAI students helped mitigate the cumulative burden of exclusion.

In response to the sense of exclusion, the findings indicate that PAI students create pockets of belonging where they feel safe and supported, echoing the results of Davidovitch and Soen's (2008) study and the Abraham Initiatives' (2020) survey. This is consistent with what

Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso (2000) call "academic and social counter-spaces" in their study with African American students, defined as "[student-initiated] sites where deficit notions of people of colour can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained." (p. 70) While there is a tendency to frame these groupings as self-segregation and as a problem to be solved, some scholars argue that this is one of the important strategies that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have to enable them to persist in the academic space and can even be transformative in validating their experiences and creating new knowledge (Yosso et al., 2009). In the case of PAIs in Israeli HEs, this is a particularly noteworthy angle, as spaces for knowledge production that are not rooted in Zionist assumptions are rare yet are essential for affirming the cultural wealth of PAIs. The desire for such spaces is apparent in the way that PAI students look for ways to assert their identity, reckoning with the "cultural starvation" that they experience on campus (González, 2002, p. 210). Furthermore, students in the study found meaning and joy in giving back to their communities and assisting future generations in their academic journeys.

Regarding their relationship with their Jewish-Israeli classmates, PAI students spoke about a deep sense of segregation, an extension of that which occurs in the wider context. This finding strengthens the conclusion reached by the Abraham Initiatives (2020) study that campuses are "not managing to realise [their] potential to promote positive and equal relations between Jews and Arabs" (p. 5). While the number of students experiencing hostilities and discrimination is of concern and must be addressed, there is hope to be found in PAI students' palpable desire for better relations with their Jewish-Israeli peers.

Last, PAI students pushed for more tailored support from their institutions and a greater understanding of their needs, exhibiting somewhat distrustful attitudes towards them. Notably, the support offered to PAI students is aimed at helping them adjust to the HE system as it stands (e.g., extra time in exams), shifting the attention from power structures to

individual students (Chung et al., 2020). These findings demonstrate that Israeli HE institutions still have some way to go to foster genuine diversity as opposed to diversity of convenience (Yosso et al., 2009). The latter enacts "superficial policies" designed to increase the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, while the former seeks to create spaces where all students are treated as equals and people on campus "affirm one another's dignity by demonstrating readiness to learn from each other's experiences and willingness to acknowledge each other's contributions to the common welfare of the campus." (p. 664)

The finding that college students had a more positive perception of their campus climate than the latter is consistent with evidence from the United States, where high institutional selectivity and large campus environments were associated with higher racial tensions (Hurtado, 1992).

Further research is needed to explore the variations found in this study between college and university students, to understand the mechanisms that lie behind these variations and, potentially, what institutional characteristics contribute to better campus climates. Furthermore, as not all responses to the survey corresponded with the qualitative findings, future research should explore different attitudes to the ones described in this paper.

7.4.1 Limitations

While this study uncovered important aspects of PAI students' perceptions of their campus ethnonational climate and potential differences among them, it has several limitations. First, the qualitative phase of the study had a narrower set of eligibility criteria due to time limitations, and therefore differences across institution types were only explored quantitatively. Second, the survey employed a non-probability volunteer sample due to a lack of a sampling frame. Thus, while attempts were made to diversify recruitment channels, the composition of this sample is influenced by whether institutions agreed to cooperate with

survey distribution requests, and therefore statistical inferences should be handled cautiously. However, the fact that this study's findings are similar to others in the literature supports their validity. Third, it could be argued that people who have had more negative experiences might be more likely to want to share them, which could bias the findings. Last, this study was conducted between April 2021 and April 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has negatively impacted student experiences in ways that are still being explored.

7.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the ethnonational campus climate that PAI students navigate during their academic journeys in Israeli HE. Using a qualitative-led mixed-methods approach, it was able to delve into the attitudes and perceptions of PAI students as well as examine the prevalence of these views and potential variations across institution types. The findings emphasise the urgent need to address the sense of foreignness and exclusion that PAI students feel and highlight the importance of campus environments that practice true diversity. Policymakers and practitioners should seek to build trust-based relationships with PAI students to deliver tailored support to suit their unique needs, as well as consider ways for institutions to change to be more inclusive of PAI students. This study has also demonstrated how campus climates cannot be divorced from the broader sociopolitical context and expanded the evidence on campus racial climates beyond the Western, English-speaking context, highlighting several important nuances for HE in deeply divided societies.

8 PAPER 3 – FEAR, CYNICISM & COMMUNITY: EXPERIENCES OF PALESTINIAN ARAB UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS DURING THE MAY 2021 EVENTS

Abstract

This paper investigates the challenges faced by Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) who are students amidst periods of national turbulence and violence, particularly focusing on the events of May 2021. Using interviews with students, academics, and members of civil society organizations, the study employs a constructivist grounded theory approach. It reveals that students' experiences of violence, in various forms, give rise to a host of emotional, social and political processes that concretise the broader Israeli-Palestinian struggle. In response, PAI students withdraw both physically and mentally from their campuses and concurrently mobilise within their communities to address unmet needs neglected by official authorities. The perceptions of PAI students regarding their institutions' responses to national events are marked by intense cynicism – a sentiment that is mitigated by individual supportive initiatives by faculty members. The paper concludes by offering insights into the role that academic spaces can play during times of violence.

Keywords

Higher education, violence, Israel, Arab, Palestinian, constructivist grounded theory.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first two weeks of May 2021 Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PAI) took to the streets to demonstrate their solidarity with other Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Gaza but these protests quickly turned into violent, deadly clashes reminiscent of those in October 2000 (Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, 2021). Being both young and educated, PAI students played a vital role in this political movement by leading and participating widely in the protests and using social media platforms for advocacy. However, their participation also made them vulnerable to violence in various forms, including on their campuses.

Adopting a qualitative approach, this paper explores the experiences of PAI students at Israeli universities during this tumultuous period. By examining the impact of the May 2021 events on their academic, social, political, and emotional lives, this paper sheds light on how students engage (or disengage) with their universities during times of national upheaval and unpacks broader questions about the function and value of academic spaces during escalations in divided societies.

8.2 BACKGROUND

8.2.1 Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel in Israeli higher education

PAIs make up a fifth of the Israeli population and constitute an indigenous, ethnonational, cultural, and linguistic minority group. As the name indicates, PAI identity is complex, consisting of at least four elements: nationality as Palestinian, ethnicity as Arab, citizenship as Israeli, and religion as Muslim, Christian, or Druze (Rudnitzky & Radai, 2017). Despite their Israeli citizenship, PAIs are often treated as a demographic threat or a hostile minority undermining the state from within. This perception is a consequence of the Israeli public's expectation of PAIs to view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exclusively through the lens of

their citizenship and to disassociate from the national aspirations of the Palestinian people (H. Jabareen, 2014; Jamal, 2012). Consequently, PAIs grapple with an ongoing identity conflict, being citizens of a state at war with their national group (Arar & Mustafa, 2011).

Due to historical and political factors, and following decades of underinvestment, most PAIs live separately from Jewish-Israelis in localities with poor social, economic, educational, and health conditions (Hesketh et al., 2011; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 2019). In mixed cities, PAIs often live in separate neighbourhoods or even streets that are also ranked lower socio-economically than Jewish ones in the same cities (Ido et al., 2021; Tanous et al., 2022).

In the higher education (HE) system, the number of PAI students has been steadily increasing in the past decade, and they have made up around 20% of all undergraduate students in the last three years (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Due to their status as a marginalised minority group in the country, PAIs perceive HE as a necessary tool for individual socioeconomic mobility and collective advancement (Al-Haj, 2003).

For many PAI students, entry to HE is their first point of prolonged contact with Jewish-Israelis, since the K-12 education system separates Jews and PAIs (Hager & Jabareen, 2016). Evidence indicates that PAIs encounter a foreign, sometimes hostile campus environments when they enter HE. Israeli campuses are generally devoid of references to Arab culture and have minimal Arabic language usage, and are often used to reinforce Zionist narratives (Amara et al., 2016; Hager & Jabareen, 2016; Sa'di-Ibraheem, 2021). Many students report experiencing discrimination on campus, mainly by other students but also by academic and administrative staff members (Abraham Initiatives, 2016, 2020; Halabi, 2016). This environment leads PAI students to self-censor, especially as it relates to challenging hegemonic Israeli narratives, fearing retaliation from their peers or the institution (Davidovitch & Soen, 2008; Golan & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2019). Scholars have also

documented the "conspicuousness" of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle in HE environments, especially in courses that directly relate to it as well as during periods of escalation, posing serious challenges to academic staff who have to navigate the complex power dynamics in their classrooms (Raz-Rotem et al., 2021, p. 311). Simultaneously, some evidence suggests that a large group of PAI students feel equal to their Jewish-Israeli peers and view their campus as generally democratic (Davidovitch & Soen, 2008; Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2010).

8.2.2 The events of May 2021

In May 2021, a series of violent events erupted in multiple locations in Israel/Palestine over two main issues: first, Palestinian families in the East-Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah were threatened with forced eviction by Israel; second, during the month of Ramadan, restrictions were placed on Muslim worshippers' access to Al-Aqsa Mosque and Damascus Gate, culminating in repeated police raids into the mosque between the 7th and 10th of May. In retaliation to these events, on the 10th of May, Hamas launched hundreds of rockets into Israel – to which Israel responded with a military offensive campaign on the Gaza Strip.

Inside Israel, PAIs came out in unprecedented numbers to protest in solidarity with East Jerusalem and Gaza. In the first two weeks of May, protests were held in dozens of towns and cities, drawing particularly large numbers in mixed cities – including Lydd, Acre, Haifa, and Jaffa. Street protests were preceded and accompanied by intense grassroots social media activity, with rapid and wide dissemination of political content online (Abbas et al., 2022).

The protests quickly turned violent, with intensifying clashes between the police, Jewish-Israelis and PAIs (Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, 2021). Homes, shops, synagogues, and Muslim cemeteries were attacked, vandalised, and burned. Israeli police responded to these events harshly, using "unnecessary and excessive force" to disperse PAI protesters (Amnesty International, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021b). On the 21st of May,

Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire deal, ending the fighting. Shortly after, Israel began a campaign of mass arrests to crack down on PAI protesters (Amnesty International, 2021).

Emerging evidence on Arab-Jewish relations inside Israel six months after the May 2021 events indicates that there is a trend of restoration in some aspects including a decrease in anger and an increase in empathy, yet feelings of hatred and fear did not lessen, and distrust rose (aChord, 2023). Furthermore, a survey of PAI and Jewish-Israel adolescents two months after the events revealed that both are not apathetic to national issues, yet despair over them, with PAIs feeling less and less confident in their collective ability to change their reality (aChord, 2021).

8.3 METHODS

8.3.1 Data collection

To explore how PAI students experienced the violent events of May 2021 and the role universities played in their experiences, I adopted a qualitative approach. Due to the sensitivity of the research question, I chose to conduct individual interviews in order to offer participants both privacy and flexibility in scheduling. The interviews took place between May and September 2023.

8.3.1.1 Interviewees

Interviewees were either PAI students at Israeli universities (n = 12), academics affiliated with an Israeli university during the May 2021 events (n = 5), or members of civil society and academic organisations who worked with students in various capacities during that time (n = 3). Table 8.1 below displays the interviewees' characteristics, partially concealed to protect their identities.

Table 8-1

Sociodemographic and Academic Characteristics of Interviewees

Type	University	Faculty	Gender
Students	Tel Aviv	Social Sciences	F
	Tel Aviv	Medicine	M
	Tel Aviv	Humanities	F
	Tel Aviv	Medicine	M
	Haifa	Social Sciences	F
	Haifa	Social Sciences	M
	Haifa	Engineering	F
	Technion	Engineering	F
	Technion	Engineering	M
	Technion	Engineering	M
	Technion	Engineering	M
	Hebrew	Social Sciences	F
Academics	Tel Aviv	Social Sciences	-
	Bar Ilan	Social Sciences	-
	Ben-Gurion	Natural Sciences	-
	Ben-Gurion	Social Sciences	-
	Hebrew	Natural Sciences	-
Type	**Focus of work**		**Position**
Civil society organisation members	Legal rights		General director
			Executive director
	Academic issues relating to diversity and inclusion		Board member

8.3.1.2 Recruitment and sampling

Recruitment channels varied according to the interviewee groups: student recruitment was conducted through social media advertising targeting student Facebook groups and snowballing; and academics were identified through online databases and contacted by email. While members of civil organisations were not initially a target group for interviews, yet their work emerged as a key component of students' experiences at the time and thus the organisations mentioned were also contacted by email. I adopted a theoretical sampling approach, meaning that my purpose was to construct theory rather than achieve a

representative sample, reaching saturation when concepts are fully developed (Birks & Mills, 2010; Charmaz, 2014).

8.3.1.3 Procedure

All participants consented to being interviewed after reading an information sheet about the research. Interviews were mainly conducted in Arabic and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and interviewees were given the choice of conducting the interview online or in-person and most preferred the online option (n = 16). The majority of interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, except for interviewees who preferred not to be recorded (n = 4) whereby I took notes as we spoke. I translated the quotes used in this paper from Arabic into English with consultation from colleagues who speak both languages.

The interview guide, based on Charmaz's (2014) intensive interviewing technique, was designed to allow for flexible and interviewee-driven conversation. After personal introductions, the interview focused on the interviewee's recollection of the May 2021 events, with various prompts regarding aspects of their experience (e.g., emotions, university response). These prompts varied as the interviews progressed and categories emerged. During the interviews, it was not my objective to establish 'what really happened' but rather to gain insight into the students' experiences during that time and the narratives constructed around them.

8.3.2 Data analysis

I analysed the data using the constructivist grounded theory approach, which retains the iterative, open-ended approach of classic grounded theory but shifts its epistemological foundations by acknowledging and engaging with the role of the researcher in constructing theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Constructivist grounded theory is based on three inter-dependent principles: knowledge is constructed within a historical and sociopolitical context;

research data is constructed through the interaction between researcher and participant; and the focus of research should be on people's interpretations and meanings of the experienced phenomenon (Charmaz, 2017).

Following the guidance by Charmaz (2014), the processes of data collection and analysis were done simultaneously: I transcribed and analysed interviews in batches of three, beginning with reading transcripts in full, coding them line-by-line and writing memos to record initial impressions and ideas, followed by a more selective coding phase focused on developing concepts through comparing and connecting codes. After the fifteenth interview, I used the coding paradigm by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to distil the connections between the emerging categories. As I conducted the final batch of interviews, I began writing the first draft of the analysis further refining the concepts until they were sufficiently developed.

8.3.2.1 Trustworthiness

To bolster the credibility, originality, usefulness and resonance of this study (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021), I employed several strategies. First, considering my positionality as a PAI, and simultaneously acting as interviewer, translator and researcher for this study, I had to interrogate my assumptions and reflect on my thought process throughout the study. To do this, I kept a reflexive journal and met regularly with colleagues to discuss aspects of the study. Second, I attempted to capture the issue from multiple angles by including three types of interviewees, thus "construct[ing] a multi-faceted, more complicated, and therefore more credible picture of the context." (Tracy, 2020, p. 276). Third, I immersed myself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts throughout the five months of data collection and analysis. Fourth, I carefully considered evidence that contradicted my emerging analysis, using a negative case analysis approach to "build a richer picture of the phenomenon" (Billups, 2019, p. 30). Last, I sought feedback from selected interviewees and colleagues, incorporating their reflections to further strengthen the analysis.

8.4 FINDINGS

Findings from this study were used to construct a theoretical model tracing the impact of students' experiences of violence during the May 2021 events and the emotional, social and political processes they gave rise to, set against the backdrop of local and global socio-historical events (see Figure 8-1 below).

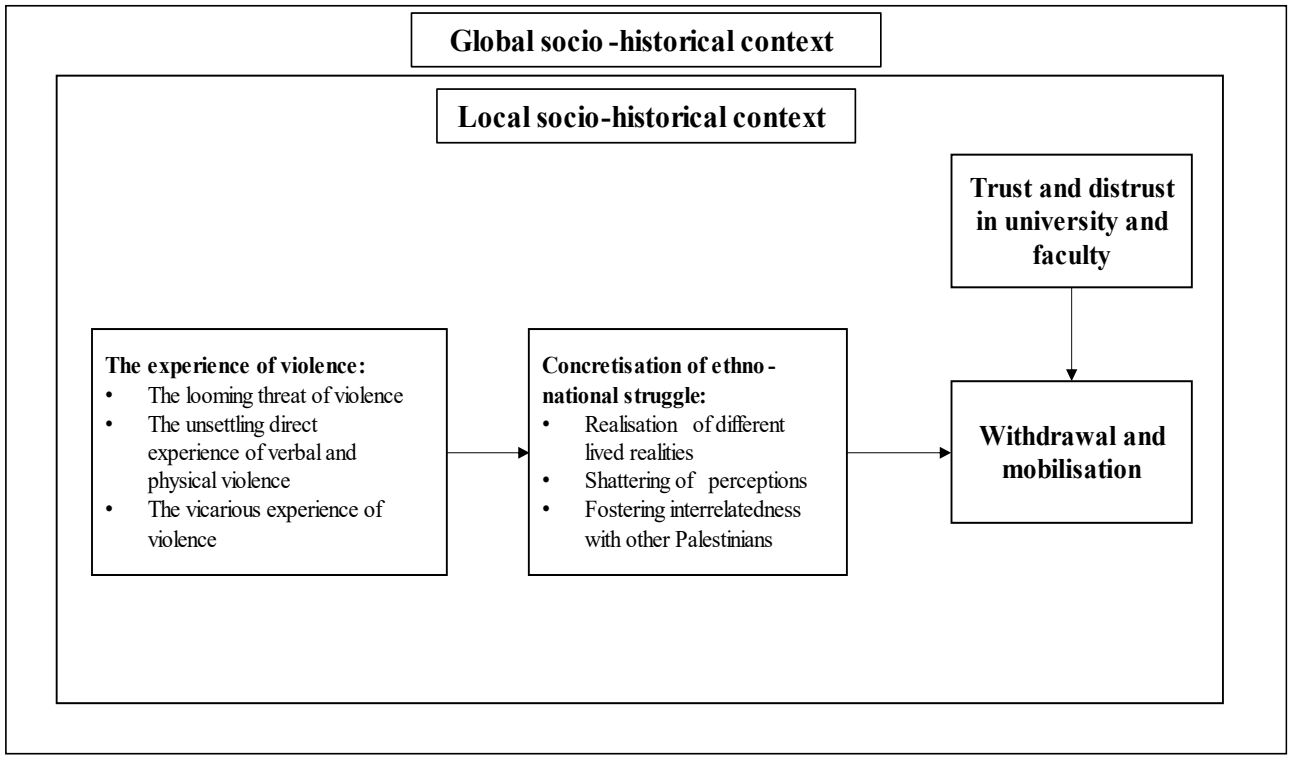

Figure 8-1 Diagram of theoretical model

8.4.1 The experience of violence

Students experienced violence in various forms during the events, including its threat as well as verbally, physically, and vicariously.

8.4.1.1 The looming threat of violence

As political events intensified across Israel/Palestine, students described experiencing a looming threat of violence that accompanied them everywhere they went. This threat led to constant anxiety:

> "I was so afraid. I was afraid for my brothers whenever they left the house. Everyone was checking in on everyone. If I wanted to leave the house to get groceries I would go to an Arab shop. There was this street I passed by. The next day it was reported that there was a lynching attack at the same spot. It could have been me." (Student, male)

The proximity of violence led students to feel that they were constant potential targets, especially if they were visibly Palestinian, and to take measures to protect themselves. One student confessed that she would not take her mother's calls when riding a bus, for fear of being "outed" as an Arab. Another spoke of her hypervigilance as a Muslim woman during that period:

> "It was a stressful time for me, not just as a student, but as a human being. First of all, I wear a hijab. There were racist incidents here and there. I needed to undergo a medical operation in [a Jewish-Israeli town], and we know that this town is very racist. At that time, I had to dress as a Jewish religious woman – I needed to put on my head covering differently so as not to seem Arab, for fear that someone would attack me… I'm an extremely easy target. I'm a woman, an Arab, a Muslim – that is very apparent." (Student, female)

These self-protective measures were discussed with discomfort: while hiding one's identity was seen as necessary for protection, it was not done with any degree of equanimity. They were proud of their identity and it pained them to conceal it.

The threat of violence was not exclusive to public spaces but permeated private spaces as well, especially dorms and privately rented student housing. Right-wing extremists often marched through neighbourhoods with large student populations, terrifying students in their apartments. One particular incident was mentioned by several student interviewees, whereby

a group of extremists marked the homes of PAI students in Haifa and attacked them at night, "banging on their doors and breaking their car windows, with no response from the [university's] security [services]." Documentation of such attacks travelled fast through social media, distressing students, and amplifying their sense of unsafety even in the privacy of their university homes.

8.4.1.2 The unsettling direct experience of verbal and physical violence

The threat of violence sometimes materialised, and students described direct experiences of violence, including intimidation, racist comments, and bodily harm. Students, primarily those who participated in protests, encountered physical violence directly at the hands of police forces and extremist right-wing groups:

> "We barely had time to protest. We had 10 or 15 minutes of peaceful protest. After that, it turned violent. [The police] arrested so many people. And [they] beat so many people, wholeheartedly beat them. And it kept escalating: grenades, rubber bullets and skunk water... The police arrested someone, so a girl yelled 'Why did you arrest him?' and the policeman slapped her. She was very small, so she kind of flew back and fell. I was shocked... I had been to protests before, but never with clashes as violent as this… I used to see this kind of thing on social media. But when it happens right next to you, you understand that it can happen to anyone. It doesn't matter if you're a student or a child or whatever. As long as you are Palestinian, you are a target." (Student, male).

Some students were also arrested during protests. The general director of a civil society organisation that provided legal assistance to students at the time estimated that out of the 3600 arrests during that period, hundreds were students. Yet, as far as the organisation

knows, no indictments have been made against students so far. However, this does not mean they do not face consequences:

> "A student who was arrested remains afraid of being indicted. These things are not closed. They are still indicting people. There aren't any students indicted so far, but they are afraid… There's the lingering trauma and humiliation of the arrest. People who were beaten and humiliated. And there's the fear surrounding future employment and potential repercussions." (General director of a civil society organisation, male)

Experiences of violence have effects that last long after the experience itself has ended. The brutality and humiliation of the arrest followed by hours of interrogation weigh heavy on students' minds, and the impending possibility of further consequences leaves them unable to move forward.

Students were also particularly vulnerable to verbal violence online: social media spaces and student group chats were rife with incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Right-wing groups also targeted PAI students who expressed political views online and incited against them. The executive director of the organisation previously mentioned described this:

> "On social media, extremist groups would take someone's name and where they live and incite against them, to hurt them, physically harm them. They would say 'This person protested or raised the [Palestinian] flag or wrote something on Facebook.' And they would incite the universities against the students, pressure them to take disciplinary action… Or they would go to students' employers, tell them 'You have an employee who was protesting.' Unfortunately, we don't have exact numbers [of such incidents], but it is something we heard and saw repeatedly." (Executive director of civil society organisation, female)

This was also confirmed by a member of an academic organisation that launched a hotline for students during the May 2021 events. She spoke of different instances of PAI students facing retaliation by their institution for expressing political opinions, which became prevalent to the point that "it was very clear they were not sporadic" (member of academic organisation, female). One of the students interviewed for this study was subject to disciplinary action by her university after sharing pro-Palestinian content online, ultimately being suspended for a semester and fined. After sharing details of the incident, visibly emotional, she said: "What can you say when your judge is your executioner?"

8.4.1.3 The vicarious experience of violence

Vicarious experiences of violence refer to learning about other people's experiences of violence through speaking to them or viewing documentation of the incidents. In May 2021, students were constantly communicating with one another and using social media, exposing them to tremendous amounts of vicarious violence:

> "I went home at the time, but I would hear from my brother who stayed on campus. I couldn't believe it. He would show me pictures and videos of people carrying sticks and chanting 'death to Arabs' in the street next to the university... It made me not want to go back there." (Student, male)

Online spaces functioned as a double-edged sword: while it allowed students to make their voices heard, mobilise and advocate for themselves and their people, it also exposed them to a large volume of violent, distressing content. One student spoke about the feelings elicited by viewing such content:

> "Do you know the Instagram account 'Eye on Palestine'? It was everywhere. Every other story was a post from it. And I saw this video of a rocket hitting a small child. His father took him out of the rubble. I started weeping like a baby. I don't remember

ever watching a video and instantly crying that way. Just this wave of sadness over our people and what is happening to us." (Student, male).

Students were stuck between the sense that they needed to advocate for their people and their sense of helplessness to change events:

> "I felt a national duty – but I didn't know what I could do. The only thing I could think of was to raise awareness. But even that, you feel it is not enough. You see people dying, souls being lost – I don't want to start crying now, but it was really difficult. You feel that you have to do something, but what? How?" (Student, female)

Yet while students acknowledged the negative psychological consequences of constantly viewing distressing content, they expressed a sense of guilt whenever they thought of taking time away from social media, with one student saying: "[People in Gaza] are under attack, and I can't handle my feelings being attacked?" (Student, female).

8.4.2 Concretisation of ethnonational struggle

The threat and experience of violence led to the concretisation of the ethnonational struggle in students' minds, meaning that the Israeli-Palestinian struggle became palpable to them:

> "It became tangible. You saw it every day for those two weeks. You see that it could happen to us… I have never felt anything like it. The Arabs in Israel- we always think that wars happen, but they don't touch us, we are citizens. But this is not true. We all know it. At the end of the day, we're Palestinians. When it comes to it, they will violate our rights… You can't live in this country without knowing who you are." (Student, male)

For many of the students, this was their first experience of violent political upheaval, as the last major outbreak of violence inside Israel was during the second intifada and the October 2000 events. One student described his friends' responses when witnessing violence:

> "A lot of my friends who came with me to the protest, it was their first time. So, they saw this – stun grenades and bullets – and it made them pause. Like, wait, something like this happens here?" (Student, male)

The palpability and proximity of the violence led students to identify with events elsewhere in the country:

> "The chaos reached us; it was under all our houses. It was bizarre to suddenly hear the sound of bombing and hear that there is a fire here and police officers there, and a helicopter above the houses – it truly felt like what was happening in Sheikh Jarrah was happening in my village too." (Student, male)

Three dimensions are key in the concretisation process: realisation of different lived realities, shattering of perceptions and the fostering of interrelatedness with other Palestinians.

8.4.2.1 Realisation of different lived realities

Students described the profound differences in their lived realities compared to their Jewish-Israeli peers and lecturers. One student spoke about her participation in the protests against military action that her classmates were taking part in:

> "I would finish my lectures and go to a protest because I've been sitting for six hours with people who are talking about how they are reservists and they're going to Gaza, and I can see on their Instagram where they did their military service… Going to the protest was one way to let out some of the anger, but it also put me even more on the

> ground, in reality, where it was even worse than you thought… How do they expect me to go to a lecture the next morning and want to learn?" (Student, female)

The quote above reflects students' sense of alienation from their campuses, and the emotional labour they engaged in to make sense of their reality as Palestinian students on Israeli campuses during a time of national upheaval.

At different points during the events, universities moved to remote teaching. The nuances of these decisions will be explained further in the next category, but within the context of this category, it is important to point out that the difference in lived realities was especially stark once in-person teaching was resumed. One student shared:

> "After the ceasefire in Gaza, universities returned to normal. The [Jewish-Israeli] students returned because, for them, the danger went away, but for us, it was very difficult because there were still people protesting and getting arrested. In our city, there was a young man who was shot and killed, so the events were still very tangible… I remember we were at the funeral – a very big funeral, around fifty thousand people, and at the same time I had a physiology lecture. It felt like [I was in] two separate worlds." (Student, female)

Students were required to bridge these two worlds – a requirement they could not always fulfil. They struggled to navigate the sharp transition from the chaos and violence of the protests back to the discipline and focus of highly demanding academic studies. They had also undergone a significant shift in their political understanding, as will be explored in the following section.

8.4.2.2 Shattering of perceptions

Students' encounters with the brutality of the events left an enduring mark on their political perspectives and self-identity, shattering perceptions of equal citizenship and shared living. They described a sense of disenchantment:

> "I started thinking about how fragile this co-existence that's always talked about is. I'm kind of happy that this bubble burst. If we don't confront things and talk about them properly, it's all for nothing." (Student, male)

Students spoke about the blurring of the line between their experiences and the experiences of other Palestinians elsewhere, and the recognition that their Israeli citizenship is, at best, incomplete, and, at worst, meaningless. This understanding led to a reconfiguration of students' perception with regard to their sociopolitical location as Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel:

> "My perspective changed a lot. I used to think that I was a citizen of this country and that despite the racism and inequalities, I could still achieve things… [I thought that] in terms of basic rights, I am equal, but if I want certain privileges, I have to work more for them than [Jewish-Israelis]. But during these events, I realised that Israel doesn't care about violating my rights. They put barriers in Arab towns to prevent people from leaving… This is exactly what they do in the West Bank, so I'm not different... In the past, when I thought of Land Day or the Intifada, I thought in terms unrelated to me. The state *was* racist, not that it still is. The state *killed* Arabs, not that it still does. I thought of it all in past terms, as things that are part of the collective that I come from, that my parents lived through these things, but I won't. And these were the first events that were politically real to me, where I realised that there is a clear

line [connecting] the Nakba, what my parents went through, and what I am going through right now." (Student, male)

As the quote reflects, the concretisation of the ethno-national struggle emphasized the similarities between Palestinians across the land, and contributed to the connection of young PAIs with their histories, as they heard echoes from their parents' and grandparents' past in their present.

8.4.2.3 Fostering interrelatedness with other Palestinians

These similarities and connections that were felt during May 2021 brought about a sense of hope too. Student interviewees spoke about the unity they felt with other Palestinians and how it energised them and shaped their sense of identity:

> "It was a big shock, the amount of people [who came to the protest] – it was a good shock… Everyone stood together, morale was high. So many people came, to the point that the square in Haifa didn't fit all of us and we had to move to the street – that was such a great feeling… Nobody expected such a thing." (Student, male)

> "I think the tides turned, and it reminded us that we are one… I felt during that period what it means to be a Palestinian people, and that I am from it… So, I feel that this is one thing that is positive about that time: there was more awareness among people in my generation. If there was someone who was wavering, didn't have a [political] perspective – after the events, there was no more doubt." (Student, female)

8.4.3 Withdrawal and mobilisation

In response to these processes, PAI students withdrew from their campuses, both physically and mentally, and mobilised in and with their communities.

8.4.3.1 Withdrawal

As news of political escalation and incidents of harassment spread, concerns for the safety of PAI students on campuses increased. Large numbers of students returned to their hometowns to stay with their parents, resulting in an emptying of universities and neighbourhoods where PAI students live:

> "There were whole buildings emptied. For example, Nave Sha'anan in Haifa was emptied. All the Arab students who were there went home. Nobody stayed." (General director of a civil society organisation, male)

Students' decision to leave the campus was made jointly with their parents and was often triggered by exposure to violence and a sense of insufficient protection by authorities, as one student explains:

> "What I remember the most is that all Arabs – none of us dared to stay in the dorms. Personally, my parents told me I couldn't stay in Tel Aviv. I think all parents told their children the same thing. Many students wanted to go home but didn't know how to. No one dared to go on public transportation… Eventually, a group of students organised private buses and we were able to go home… I remember there were lots of stories of students harassing students, and that there were some guys who were chased by extremists and beaten, and the police didn't really do anything." (Student, female)

Physical withdrawal from campuses was often accompanied by mental withdrawal from campus life. This relates back to the realisation of different lived realities:

> "I remember that for those two weeks, university became irrelevant. I shut it out of my life. I stopped attending classes and submitting essays. People refused to study… It's like, I study at an Israeli university, I don't want a degree from them. I don't want

> to be taught in Hebrew right now. I'm not going to go to a maths lecture when they're killing my brothers and sisters." (Student, male).

For this student, things that he would, perhaps reluctantly, accept during quieter periods, became unbearable during this period of violence, demonstrating the interaction between the concretisation of the ethnonational struggle and withdrawal from campuses. Other students recounted attending their classes but feeling mentally checked out:

> "I attended classes on Zoom, but I wasn't really there because I was filled with rage – at this duality of all this chaos and violence outside but we are dealing with one another in such civility [in classrooms]. This duality was driving me crazy so I was very angry. I would attend classes but wouldn't engage. I was on Instagram, Facebook, sharing things all the time. Writing, talking to my friends, trying to process what was going on." (Student, female)

In this student's eyes, the civility of the classroom was offensive when contrasted with the external chaos, leading her to disassociate from her studies and seek avenues to process her thoughts and emotions. Later on in the interview, I enquired further about her interpretation of classroom civility as duality and posited that others might view it as creating a shelter rather than a manifestation of hypocrisy. She responded:

> "It didn't feel authentic. It wasn't genuine. If it was to be a place of safety it needs to be real. I felt that we were hiding this part of our political identity… I'm putting forward only parts of me, not the whole me. I have to set aside the part of me that is afraid, afraid that someone will attack me in my home – I have to set that aside so I can be here." (Student, female)

For this student, the calm environment in classrooms felt repressive as it required her to supress parts of her identity which were particularly prominent during this period.

This withdrawal was not without consequences. Students described being thrust back into their studies as the events died down, forced to bridge the gap in the content they missed without support:

> "All of a sudden, we found ourselves at the end of the semester and it was time for exams and we didn't even know what we had been taught and how they had gone through the material… Looking back now, it's one of the worst semesters I ever had – academically and mentally." (Student, female)

While all students interviewed expressed mental withdrawal from campuses to varying degrees, two academics who were interviewed did not share this view. Their experience was that students were keen to return to campus, "for the whole thing to be over," and for them not to be "labelled as trouble-makers." (Academic, female)

8.4.3.2 Mobilisation

Simultaneous with their withdrawal from campuses, PAI students mobilised in and with their communities, establishing informal mutual protection networks. One example of this that was previously mentioned is the spontaneous organisation of buses to help students get to their hometowns when public transportation was deemed dangerous. This mobilisation was crucial due to the perceived failure of official authorities to protect students:

> "I remember that there were chat groups for Arabs, and whoever wanted to be added had to send a picture of their ID card. A group for help. So, if anyone needs anything, for example, if a girl was alone and someone harassed her, she would ask for help there. Like 'I'm on this street and there are five people behind me and I don't feel safe.' It didn't happen very often but it was important to have because we didn't have anyone. The police are not with us, nor university security." (Student, male)

Online spaces were a key arena for mobilisation and knowledge sharing for students. Student interviewees sent me screenshots of social media posts written during the events aiming to raise awareness, covering topics such as protesters' rights, what to do following an arrest, and instructions on providing emotional first aid in case of panic. Students also organised themselves via social media platforms to communicate with their universities as a united body regarding their needs during the events. For example, at one university, an "emergency committee" of PAI students was set up to request, among other things, that security be increased around PAI student accommodation and that exams be postponed and/or changed to an online format.

These efforts fostered reciprocity among students and strengthened their relationships. It also seemed to mitigate some of the negative impacts of violence, as students cultivated each other's resilience:

> "There were some great initiatives by students – to set up a support system of our own… While it was a very ugly time, I also think that some beautiful things emerged that I didn't expect." (student, female).

8.4.4 Trust and distrust of universities and faculty members

The responses of PAI students were influenced by their perceptions of their university and their interpersonal connections with faculty members; namely, whether the university and faculty members demonstrated sensitivity and empathy towards PAI students' situation and whether they could be relied on. News about PAI students facing disciplinary action by their universities over social media posts (such as the one previously mentioned) spread rapidly, causing anxiety and undermining trust in universities.

It is important to note that universities responded differently to the events, and while there is a benefit to examining each response, it is not my intention here to compare specific

institutions but rather to disentangle the way students viewed them during that period. Another point to keep in mind is that these perceptions should be viewed in the context of PAI society's relationship with state institutions more broadly, which is characterised by a certain degree of suspicion yet cautious engagement.

Two dimensions are key to this category: first, a climate of cynicism that pervades students' perceptions of their university's response to the events; and second, the role of faculty members in protecting students and fostering their sense of being cared for and seen.

8.4.4.1 Climate of cynicism

When asked about their university's response to the events, most of the students interviewed expressed scepticism about their institution's sincerity. While some conceded that academic institutions' rhetoric was more moderate than that of the general public, they still claimed hypocrisy.

This cynicism was especially prominent in students' narratives as the data collection process was conducted amidst an unprecedented protest movement against a government-proposed judicial overhaul. Academic institutions were strongly involved in this movement under the slogan: 'no academia without democracy' (Albin et al., 2023). The contrast between the strong stance on the judicial overhaul on the part of HE institutions and their perceived timid response to the 2021 events (and Palestinian issues generally) did not go unnoticed by students:

> "With everything that is going on now, it is very clear to me that no one cares about us. It's so funny that academia now is so recruited to the fight for democracy, and you realise how much hypocrisy there is. If you are so democratic and enlightened as you claim, and equality is such a core value to you – where have you been for seventy years?... You start to understand that there isn't a place for you, and your struggles are

> not a part of the collective awareness… You see that when it burns for them, they're willing to go far. It's sad but not disappointing because I have no expectations." (Student, male)

The quote above illustrates the gap that PAI students perceive between Israeli academia's championing of democratic ideals and its neglect of their lived reality of persistent discrimination. Students also spoke of their frustration at the selective invoking of equality and inclusion:

> "They keep saying we're an apolitical campus and bla bla, but last Wednesday there was a kiosk in the courtyard with Israeli flags and a big banner in support of the reform, and nobody said anything… In the end, this is an Israeli university, not a democratic one. So spare us the 'apolitical' bubble." (Student, female)

Similar echoes of cynicism also arose among students when discussing invitations from universities to engage in open conversations about the situation during the 2021 events, especially when these conversations were not followed by practical steps to assist them. This disconnect between emotional and practical support was interpreted by students as a "containment strategy" and a way to "protect universities' reputations" rather than a real concern for their wellbeing (student, female). One student described:

> "[The lecturers] told us they wanted to hear from us but there wasn't really any help… They kept saying we understand your pain, but they reinstalled the requirement to be physically present at classes… I just wanted them not to let the gap between [Jewish and Arab] students grow so much. They kept pushing forward with teaching because the rockets stopped but there is an entire [Arab] community that is still on fire." (Student, female)

Reiterating the importance of coupling the two types of support is a student whose department provided both. She described the atmosphere as "very supportive and very warm," where she was given space to express her feelings and talk about what is happening in her community, as well as receiving academic assistance (student, female).

8.4.4.2 Power of faculty in fostering inclusion

Amidst the dark cloud of cynicism, glimpses of optimism were evident in the proactive actions of some faculty members'. Students spoke about their lecturers' compassion and the ways they reached out to them to offer support and ensure their wellbeing:

> "There were supportive people. The head of my lab called me to check up on me and ask if I was safe… Many lecturers took a very healthy and principled stance, and I respected them very much. They showed me that there is humanity." (Student, female)

Beyond individual reassurances, faculty members also advocated for PAI students in decision-making circles. In particular, PAI faculty members, despite their low numbers, were key to mediate between PAI students and universities, conveying the former's concerns to the latter. They worked closely with civil society and student committees to advocate for students, despite it often not being part of their job description. Students described the presence of PAI lecturers on campus as reassuring and frequently reached out to them during the events even if they were not personally taught by them. However, this responsibility weighed heavily on lecturers who, in addition to worrying about their own safety, had limited ability to help students. One lecturer described a meeting she had with students:

> "It was a very difficult meeting – I don't remember the details but I remember I was trying very hard not to cry. The students were so scared. To be honest I was scared too… It was difficult to see this fear and as much as you want to reassure them that

> we will do everything so that you feel safe, I felt so helpless… I was uncertain myself – I can't guarantee that nothing will happen. I can guarantee that if anything does happen we will stand with you." (Academic, female)

8.5 DISCUSSION

The constructivist grounded theory model constructed from this study's findings charted PAI students' experiences of violence during the May 2021 events and the emotional, social and political processes that led them to withdraw from campuses and mobilise in and with their communities.

The forms of violence that students experienced varied, yet they all led to insecurity and fear. These experiences made the wider Israeli-Palestinian struggle concrete and palpable to students, amplifying their similarities with other Palestinians (past and present) and their differences with Jewish-Israelis. This is consistent with prior evidence that indicates that exposure to political violence, directly or vicariously, is associated with increased identity salience and intra-group cohesion, as the components of identity that are perceived to be under threat tend to be amplified (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011; Hadzic et al., 2020; Kira et al., 2011). Intra-group cohesion can serve as a method of coping and protection: research on youth in war zones shows that they are not merely passive victims of political violence, but actively seek social support to cope with their sense of insecurity, as PAI students did in this study (Merrilees et al., 2014).

Furthermore, students' shift in political self-perception and their act of connecting their current experiences with those of their parents and grandparents are a manifestation of what Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury (2019) call the "return of history," when a "dormant past is reconstituted and becomes a constitutive force in present collective consciousness and in envisioning the political future" (p. 528). Whether this represents the formation of a new

political generation, similar to the one identified by Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005) in the aftermath of the October 2000 events, remains to be seen.

These processes manifest themselves in students' withdrawal from shared spaces, including campuses, and mobilisation within their communities, amidst a climate of cynicism and distrust. This tallies with prior evidence indicating that exposure to violence is associated with reduced levels of trust in national institutions and retreat into one's own national group (Hadzic et al., 2020; Walden & Zhukov, 2020). The sense of cynicism and distrust found in this study corresponds with the high levels of despair that the aChord (2021) survey revealed among Jewish-Israeli and PAI adolescents and the latter's decreased sense of collective self-efficacy. However, students' cynicism in this study is not rigid and does not necessarily imply resignation: they could recognise the beauty and power in their mobilisation to assist one-another and acknowledged the positive impact of supportive initiatives from faculty members.

Social media use also emerged as particularly important during this time, acting as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it exposed students to large amounts of vicarious violence and made them vulnerable to state and social surveillance (John & Agbarya, 2021); while on the other hand, it kept them informed, connected them with one another and served as a platform for new types of mobilisation as was noted in previous PAI youth movements (Dwonch, 2020).

8.5.1 Limitations

This study is not without limitations: one could argue that students with more adverse or striking experiences of the events would be more likely to volunteer to be interviewed, and thus skew the findings. The inclusion of multiple types of interviewees was an effort to mitigate this and provide a more comprehensive view. Furthermore, data collection for this

study took place two years after the events themselves, potentially influencing interviewees' recollections. However, as previously mentioned, the aim was not to establish facts about specific incidents but rather to explore students' perceptions of the events as a whole.

8.5.2 Conclusion and implications

The findings of this study show the need for a wider sociopolitical examination of the role of HE in divided societies, beyond the multicultural lens or individual-level psychological lens that much of the literature in Israel has adopted so far (e.g., Hen et al., 2016; Lev Ari & Husisi-Sabek, 2020). Periods of escalation reveal that violence permeates campuses and could even emanate from them, leading to a dangerous cycle of fear, anger, guilt, helplessness and cynicism that alienates students from shared spaces. While direct violence may subside, the processes triggered by it continue. Withdrawal from campuses, for example, may persist in different forms, further disengaging an already marginalised student group. The actions of universities and faculty members matter – and students pay close attention to them, as was apparent in the findings of the current study. Universities can create academic spaces that recognise and affirm students' dignity, enabling them to fully engage in the educational process and envision a better future.

Future research should further explore specific responses by academic institutions in times of violence, examine their impact on students, and recommend specific actions to foster inclusive, vibrant academic spaces even during escalations.

9 GENERAL DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation set out to explore the experiences of PAI undergraduate students in Israeli HE using an iterative sequential mixed-methods approach consisting of three interconnected and interdependent phases: first, focus groups were conducted with PAI undergraduate students to explore their experiences at Israeli HE; second, a survey was developed based on the qualitative findings and distributed among PAI undergraduate students to examine the generalisability of the findings and identify potential differences between subgroups; and third, students, academics and members of civil society organisations were interviewed about PAI students' experiences during the May 2021 events.

Each of the three papers in this dissertation spotlights a different aspect of the PAI student experience: the first explores how students navigate the transition into HE and the structural barriers they face; the second examines students' perceptions of the ethnonational climate on their campus; and the third unpacks the experiences of students during times of national upheaval, specifically looking at the events of May 2021.

9.1 OVERALL FINDINGS & CONTRIBUTIONS

This dissertation stands out from existing studies in the field with its mixed-methods approach, its inclusion of PAI students from the majority of academic institutions in Israel and its exploration of various aspects of the PAI student experience. Unlike other studies in the field that typically rely on a single research method and concentrate solely on students affiliated with a single institution, this project adopted a broader strategy aiming to provide a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing students' experiences.

Three major themes emerge from this dissertation, as detailed below.

9.1.1 The prominence of systemic factors

First, the challenges that PAI students face in Israeli HE are largely driven by systemic factors. This dissertation's layout and the sequence of its chapters were deliberate choices meant to reflect the interconnectedness of historical, political, legal, socioeconomic, and educational factors that shape PAI society in Israel, and more specifically, its pursuit of HE. This follows and extends the work of others in the field (e.g., Al-Haj, 2003; Hager & Jabareen, 2016). By presenting a broad contextual background that addresses both historical and contemporary barriers that obstruct PAIs' path to HE, this dissertation rejects deficit perspectives of PAI students and reductionist examinations of their experiences (Davis & Museus, 2019).

Each of the three papers identifies and unpacks how systemic factors shape PAI students' experiences and impede their academic progress. The first paper framed the difficulties that PAI students face during their transition to HE as disorientation, implying a transient state connected to the broader context that could be alleviated by institutional action. Academic, physical and social/cultural disorientation are symptomatic of inherent issues in the larger overarching structures: a neglected and highly controlled K-12 education system that does not sufficiently equip students for academia, the majority of HE institutions being in Jewish-Israeli cities and thus less accessible to PAI localities, and the hegemony of Ashkenazi Jewish-Israeli culture on campus. Similarly, the three factors identified in the paper as barriers (i.e., language, age, finances) are not in and of themselves obstructive to academic progress. Rather, the design of the Israeli HE system, tailored to accommodate the older, Hebrew-speaking Jewish Israeli student, makes them so. While some of these factors had previously been identified in the literature (Cohen-Azaria & Zamir, 2021; Hager & Jabareen, 2016), this paper delves into their impact on students' progress and reframes them through an anti-deficit lens.

The second paper, employing Hurtado and colleagues' (1998) framework on campus racial climates, offers a more comprehensive understanding of PAI students' experiences in Israeli HE and places them in the broader sociohistorical context. The cumulative burden of exclusion, as demonstrated by students' narratives and survey data, stems from, to a large degree, systemic forces. These include the foreignness of references in classes and on campus to PAI students, the lack of inclusivity in institutional policies and decisions, and simplistic, often superficial approaches to student support (Yosso et al., 2009).

Likewise, the third paper highlights how violence permeates campuses and influences the relationship of students with the institution and with their peers. Times of national turbulence bring broader political and societal forces to the fore and expose how they impact PAI students' perceptions of their HE institution and their engagement with it.

The fact that PAI students' experiences are significantly shaped by systemic factors beyond their control does not negate their agency or responsibility. On the contrary, research should continue to unpack how students engage and interact with these factors, and suggest ways for students' sense of agency to be fostered while simultaneously pushing for structural changes.

9.1.2 The necessity of social support

Second, social support, in its various forms, is imperative to the success and wellbeing of PAI students. In the first paper, peer support between students during the transition period is described as "huddling around each other"; in the second paper, students created "pockets of belonging" as a response to the negative ethnonational campus climate; and in the third paper, students' mobilisation reflected the creation of a parallel peer support system during times of violence. Positive interactions with faculty members also emerged as a vital source of support and encouragement for students in the second and third papers.

These connections provide students with emotional, informational, and instrumental support – three of the four domains of social support conceptualised by House (1981). While the literature sometimes casts these groupings of students from URM groups negatively as self-segregation, this dissertation frames it as a key strategy for affirming and validating students' experiences (Yosso et al., 2009). These spaces currently serve a primarily social role in helping students cope with the challenges of HE, as explained in each of the three papers. However, strengthening these spaces could move their purpose from mere survival to production of knowledge rooted in Palestinian heritage that is capable of challenging hegemonic Israeli HE narratives and transforming "the terms upon which [HE] exists." (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2022; Bhambra et al., 2018, p. 1; Solorzano et al., 2000).

9.1.3 The heterogeneity of students

Third, this dissertation demonstrates that PAI students are not monolithic. While there are broad commonalities between them, there are salient differences to be examined. This dissertation began to disentangle how sociodemographic and academic factors influence PAI students' academic journeys. For example, it identified differences between men and women's reporting of academic difficulties, between first-generation and continuing-generation students' financial situation, and between academic colleges and universities' students regarding perceptions of campus climates. These differences are also often reflected in students' outcomes in HE (Imariyyeh & Kril, 2019; Naftalovich & Krentzler, 2022a; Yamini et al., 2023). This should prompt policymakers to reconsider their approach to PAI students, transitioning from offering generic support to fostering open communications channels with the students. This would facilitate a nuanced understanding of students' needs, engage them as equal partners in the process, and build trust between them and the institution.

The development and use of a survey in this dissertation to explore differences among students laid the groundwork for further investigation and the identification of other relevant factors in the student experience. The survey instrument developed as part of this research could potentially be tailored to be used beyond the Israeli context.

9.2 LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are several limitations to this dissertation that could serve as valuable entry points for further investigation and exploration.

First, it is important to acknowledge the influence of global and local events (e.g., COVID-19, political instability) which will in all likelihood have affected the research context and outcomes, limiting its generalisability. However, it also provided insights on the impact of such events on students' experiences. These insights could be further investigated in future studies.

Second, due to the lack of an available, accessible sampling frame, the survey used a non-probability volunteer sample. This sample was as such also susceptible to biases depending on an institution's cooperation (or lack thereof) in distributing the survey among their students. The survey was also cross-sectional and based on students' self-reports. These conditions restricted the ability to draw conclusive causal relationships from the findings. Researchers and policymakers could in the future benefit from the establishment of a centralised annual or quarterly student survey that is uniformly distributed across all institutions. This survey would be based on existing research instruments, such as the survey developed for the current study, and its findings would be made accessible to all institutions. This would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping students' experiences and allow for examining long-term effects and changes over time, as well as the impacts of institutional factors.

Third, the third paper explored the experiences of PAI students in May 2021 and offered a pioneering framework for thinking about the political, social and emotional processes that national violence could prompt. The ongoing war on Gaza puts this framework to the test and perhaps also pushes its boundaries. The vastly different response of PAI society (i.e., vocal protests in 2021 and tense silenc(ing) in 2023) as well as the intense targeting of PAI students in the current round (Glazer & Mashiach, 2023) invites additional investigation into the issue. Future research could examine the distinct responses of institutions both in 2021 and 2023 and their repercussions for PAI students – and especially how they interact with external pressures (e.g., from extremist groups, from politicians). Targeted measures could also be proposed to foster inclusive and dynamic academic spaces, even amidst heightened tensions.

Last, while this dissertation focused primarily on students, faculty members emerged as key players in the relationship between students and institutions. This is especially pertinent as Israeli research universities are increasingly appointing faculty members at the highest levels of decision-making (e.g., vice presidents) to be responsible for inclusion and diversity. Examining the (positive or negative) role of faculty members in the inclusion efforts of PAI students in Israeli HE would be a fruitful area for further work, building on earlier work such as Ahmed's (2012) exploration of 'diversity work' in Australian and British universities.

9.3 FINAL REMARKS

In Arabic, the word for university is جامعة, the root of which is جمع, meaning to gather. This etymology uncovers a crucial function of academic institutions: to bring together diverse people, different ideas and different strands of knowledge. Academic spaces can embody true diversity and inclusion, and thus help individuals and groups imagine a different, better future.

While this is by no means an easy task, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian context, it is one that must be addressed if HE institutions are to remain true to their core functions. Instead of viewing PAI students as a burden or a problem to be solved, they should be valued as an asset that is able to extend HE and the knowledge produced in it beyond its current boundaries and even transform them. HE institutions can create spaces where every person, Israeli and Palestinian, can be respected and valued; spaces where strengths and talents are acknowledged and celebrated; spaces that foster life and meaning for all.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. PHASE I

Appendix 1.1A. Focus group participant information sheet and consent form (English)

This information sheet is intended for students invited to participate in a focus group to discuss their experiences in higher education. This research is part of a master's thesis in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford.

Introduction

My name is Lamma Mansour, a master's student of social policy and intervention, researching Palestinian students' experiences in Israeli higher education. I invite you to be a part of this research and contribute to its findings.

Purpose of study

Attending university is a significant milestone in many people's lives. I am looking to understand this experience better, especially for Palestinian students in Israeli universities. I believe you can help by sharing your perception of university life and your experiences during your studies. I want to find out more about your transition to university, the challenges you face, your successes and the support you receive.

Why have I been invited?

You are invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience as a student can contribute to my understanding of the topic. I intend to have a total of 30 students participate in the study.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. Your choice to participate or not will not cause you problems or have any negative

consequences. You can withdraw from the study at any point. For more information on withdrawal from the study, please refer to the 'What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?' section.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You will take part in a one-hour group discussion and are asked to fill in two short questionnaires: one before the discussion and one afterwards.

The group discussion will involve 6-8 students from your university and will start with me making sure everyone understands the purpose of the meeting and explaining the principles of engagement: respect, honesty, and confidentiality. Then I will ask you some questions about your experience at the university where I will give you space to discuss and interact with one another. I will not ask you to share personal beliefs, stories, or knowledge that you do not feel comfortable sharing.

Due to the ongoing threat of COVID-19, the discussion will be conducted via Zoom and recorded. For information on how the data will be handled, please refer to the 'What will happen to my data?' section.

Will I be reimbursed for taking part?

If you do decide to participate in this study, as a token of my appreciation for your input and time, you will be sent a voucher for 60NIS to use in Aroma.

Are there any possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any questions or take part in the discussion or questionnaires if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

In the unlikely event that you experience significant distress due to the discussion, please seek help. Emotional support is available through your health insurance institution or other organisations. See details below:

Health insurance institutions:

- Clalit: 2700* or 03-9405350
- Maccabi: 3555* or 1-700-50-53-53
- Leumit: 1-700-507-507
- Me'uhedet: 3833* or 077-2703756

ERAN Organisation (Emotional First Aid by Telephone & Internet):

- By phone: 1202
- Online chat: eran.org.il

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

As previously stated, I will not be sharing any information about you with anyone and the information I collect from you will remain private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only I will know what your number is and will keep that information secure.

However, the other students in the focus group will naturally be aware of your participation in the study. I will ask you and others in the group not to talk to people outside the group about what was said in the group. I will ask each of you to keep what was said in the group confidential. You should know, however, that I cannot stop or prevent participants who were in the group from sharing things that should be confidential.

Responsible members of the University of Oxford may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

What will happen to the information I provide?

As previously stated, the focus group discussion will be recorded. The recording will be stored safely on an external hard drive. The recordings will not be accessed by anyone but me and will be deleted after they are transcribed (i.e., written down). In the transcribed text, your name will be replaced with a random number. The link between the random number and your name will be stored separately on a password-protected external hard drive and will be deleted three years after the interview. The same random number will be used for the online survey. This allows me to link the discussion to the survey results provided while protecting your identity.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can stop your participation at any point in time during the research if you change your mind without giving me or anyone else a reason for your withdrawal. You can also ask for the information you provided not to be used in the research and I will delete them.

What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain about any aspect of how you have been approached or treated, or how your information is handled during this study, you should contact Dr David Humphreys at David.humphreys@spi.ox.ac.uk or you may contact the Social Policy and Intervention's Research Ethics Committee: University of Oxford, 32 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2ER, UK or by email at ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the study?

The knowledge that I get from this research will be shared with you, the participants, before it is used in any other way. Each participant will receive a summary of the results. The findings of the research undertaken will contribute to the fulfilment of my master's thesis in an aggregated manner and any quotes will be used anonymously. Following this, the University of Oxford may seek to make the study's findings accessible to the public.

Who has reviewed the study?

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford, which is a committee whose task is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm.

Further information

If you have any questions, you may contact me via this email: lamma.mansour@gtc.ox.ac.uk

Consent

☐ I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet regarding this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without repercussions.

☐ I understand that the focus group will be recorded and that I can choose to switch off my camera.

☐ I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Email address for correspondence: _____

Date:_____

Signature:_____

Appendix 1.1B. Focus group participant information sheet (Arabic)

أُعِدَّت استمارة الموافقة التّالية للطلاب المدعويّن للاشتراك في مجموعة نقاش مُركّزة لمشاركة تجربتهم في التعليم العاليّ. يتمّ هذا البحث بإطار اطروحة لقب ثانٍ في قسم السياسة والتدخّل الاجتماعي في جامعة اوكسفورد.

مُقدِّمة

اسمي لمى منصور، طالبة لقب ثانٍ بالسياسة والتدخُّل الاجتماعي. بحثي يختصّ بتجارِب الطّلاب في التعليم العالي. ادعوك للاشتراك والمُساهمة في هذا البحث.

هدف البحث

تُعتَبَر الدّراسة في الجامعة حدثًا ذا اهميّة في حياة العديد من الناس. هدف بحثي هو فهم هذه التجربة بشكل أعمق، خاصّةً تجربة الطلاب العرب في الجامِعات في اسرائيل. بإمكانك مساعدتي من خلال مشاركة انطباعك عن الحياة الجامِعيّة وتجاربك خلال التّعليم. اريد ان اعرف المزيد عن فترة انتقالك للجامعة، التّحديّات التي واجهتها، نجاحاتك والدّعم الذي تتلقّاه.

لماذا تمّ دعوتك؟

تمّ دعوتك للاشتراك بهذا البحث لأنّ تجربتك كطالِب جامعيّ عربيّ مُهمّة وبإمكانها ان تُساهِم في فهمي للمجال. سيشارك في البحث، بالمُجمَل، 30 طالب وطالبة.

هل انت مُجبَر على الاشتراك؟

لا. قرارك بالاشتراك او عدم الاشتراك هو طوعيّ بالكامل، يعود لَك وحدك ورفض الاشتراك لن يؤثّر عليك سلبًا. إذا قرّرت ان تشترك ومن ثمّ غيّرت رأيك، بإمكانك الانسحاب من البحث في ايّ مرحلة. للمزيد عن هذه الامكانية، راجِع قسم "ماذا سيحدُث إذا قرّرت انّك لا تريد الاستمرار في البحث؟".

ماذا سيحدث إذا قرّرت ان تشترك في البحث؟

سيتمّ دعوتك للاشتراك بمجموعة نقاش مركّزة مُدتها حوالي ساعة وربع، وسيُطلَب منك تعبئة استمارتين قصيرتين: احداهما قبل النقاش والاخرى بعده.

سيشترك 5-6 اشخاص من جامِعَتِكَ في المجموعة. سأتأكّد اوّلًا من انّ الجميع يفهم الغرض من المجموعة ومُستعدّ للالتزام بمبادئ التواصل السّليم: الاحترام، الصّدق والسّرّية. بعدها سأسألكم بعض الأسئلة عن تجربتكم في الجامعة، حيث سيتسنح لكم النقاش والتفاعل مع بعضكم البعض. لن اطلب منكم مشاركة امور شخصيّة لا تشعرون انّه من المريح مشاركتها.

بسبب وضع الجائحة الحاليّ، سيتمّ عقد النقاش عن طريق الزوم وتسجيله. للمزيد من المعلومات عن كيفية استخدام المعلومات المُسجّلة، راجِع قسم "ماذا سيحصُل للمعلومات في البحث؟".

على ماذا ستحصل مُقابِل مُشاركتك بالبحث؟

إذا قرّرت بالاشتراك في البحث، كعُربون امتناني لوقتك ومساهمتك، ستحصل على قسيمة شراء بقيمة 60 شاقل لشبكة مقاهي اروما.

هل هنالِكَ ابعاد سلبيّة لاشتراكك في البحث؟

هنالك خطر ان تكشف بالصُّدفة عن معلومات شخصيّة او سرّية خلال النقاش، او ان تشعر بعدم الارتياح خلال الحديث عن مواضيع مُعيّنة، لكنّني لا اريد ان يحدُث ذلك. انت غير مُجبَر بالإجابة او المشاركة في النقاش ان كُنتَ تشعُر بأنّ السؤال شخصيّ او انّ الإجابة عنه غير مُريحة لك.

بحالة ولّدت محادثتنا لديك ضيق نفسي، رجاءًا اطلب مساعدة. بإمكانك الحصول على دعم نفسي من خلال صندوق المرضى الخاصّ بك او عن طريق جمعيّات اخرى. فيما يلي التفاصيل:

- صناديق المرضى:
  - كلاليت: 2700* او 03-9405350
  - مكابي: 3555* او 1-700-50-53-53
  - لئوميت: 1-700-507-507
  - مئوحيدت: 3833* او 077-2703756
- جمعية عران – ער"ן:
  - تلفون: 1201
  - محادثة في الموقع: eran.org.il

هل سيبقى قرارك بالاشتراك بالبحث سرّيًا؟

كما ذكرت سابِقًا، لن اشارك ايّ معلومات عنك والمعلومات من البحث ستبقى سريّة. ايّ معلومات عنك ستحمل رقم بدل من اسمك بحيث فقط انا سأعلم ما هو رقمك وسأحافظ على ذلك سرّيًا.

مع هذا، بطبيعة الحال، سيعلم الطلاب الآخرين المُشترِكين في مجموعة النّقاش المُركّزة باشتراكك بالبحث. سأطلب من جميع المشتركين الا يتحدثوا مع آخرين خارج المجموعة عمّا تمّ نقاشه داخِل المجموعة، وابقاء مضمون محادثتنا سرّيًا. لكنّني لا أستطيع ان اضمن التزام جميع المُشترِكين بذلك ومنعهم من مشاركة امور قد تكون شخصيّة.

بالإضافة لذلك، قد يُعطى لأفراد مسؤولين من جامعة اوكسفورد امكانيّة الدخول للمعلومات من البحث بغرض المراقبة والتأكد من انّ البحث يلائم المعايير الأخلاقيّة المناسِبة.

ماذا سيحصُل للمعلومات المُستقاة من البحث؟

كما ذكرت سابِقًا، سيتمّ تسجيل النقاش في المجموعة. سيتمّ حفظ التسجيل على قرص صلب خارجي (external hard drive). المعلومات المُسجّلة سرّية ولن يتمّ ربطِها مع هويّتك. لن يتمّ اتاحة التسجيلات لأيّ شخص بإستثنائي وسيتمّ حذفها بعد نسخها كنصّ حيثُ سيُستبدَل اسمك برقم عشوائي للحفاظ على خصوصيّتك. سيتم تخزين الملف الذي يحوي الرابط بين اسمك ورقمك بشكل آمن على قرص صلب خارجي وسيُحذَف بعد ثلاث سنوات. ذات الرقم العشوائي سيُستخدم للاستمارات مما سينسح لي ان اربط بين النقاش واجابات الاستمارة مع المحافظة على خصوصيّتك.

ماذا سيحدُث إذا قرّرت انّك لا تريد الاستمرار في البحث؟

بإمكانك ايقاف اشتراكك بالبحث حينما شئت، بدون تزويدي بأي سبب لانسحابك. بإمكانك ايضًا ان تطلب ان يتم حذف المعلومات التي قمت بتزويدها للبحث.

ماذا سيحصل إن كانت هنالك مُشكلة؟

ان اردت الشكوى عن كيفيّة التوجّه لك، مُعامَلَتك او معامَلتك معلوماتك خلال البحث، بإمكانك الاتصال بالدكتور ديفيد همفريز عن طريق البريد الالكتروني David.humphreys@spi.ox.ac.uk او لجنة الأخلاقيات في ابحاث التدخل الاجتماعي والسياسات في جامعة اوكسفورد عن طريق البريد الالكتروني: ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

ماذا سيحصُل لنتائج هذا البحث؟

سأشارك استخلاصات البحث مع جميع المشتركين قبل نشرهم بأي طريقة اخرى حيث سيحصل كل مشترِك على تلخيص لنتائج البحث. سيتمّ استخدام نتائج البحث بشكل مجمَّع لتقديم أطروحتي للقب الثاني، وايّ اقتباسات من المشتركين ستبقى مجهولة الهويّة. قد تريد جامعة اوكسفورد اتاحة الاطروحة للجمهور العامّ.

مَن راجَع سيرورة البحث؟

تمّت مُراجعة والموافقة على اقتراح سيرورة البحث على يد لجنة اخلاقيّات البحث في قسم السياسة والتدخّل الاجتماعي في جامعة اوكسفورد، وهي لجنة مسؤوليتها ان تضمن حماية المشتركين من الضرر.

للمزيد من المعلومات

إن كان لديك ايّ سؤال او استفسار، بالإمكان التوجه لي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني lamma.mansour@gtc.ox.ac.uk

الموافقة على الاشتراك

☐اؤكِّد انّني قمت بقراءة المعلومات اعلاه بخصوص هذا البحث. كانت لديّ الفرصة ان آخذ هذه المعلومات بعين الاعتبار، الاستفسار عن ايّ امر غير مفهوم وتلقّي اجابة ملائِمة.

☐ادرِك انّ اشتراكي طوعيّ وانني حرّ للانسحاب من البحث حينما اردت بدون اعطاء سبب وبدون ان يؤثّر ذلك عليّ سلبًا.

☐ادرِك انّ مجموعة النقاش ستُسجَّل وبإمكاني ان اطفئ الكاميرا الخاصّة بي حينما شئت.

☐اوافق على الاشتراك بهذا البحث.

اسم المشترك: _____

البريد الإلكتروني للتواصل: _____

ان كنت لا تفحص بريدك الإلكتروني، الرجاء تزويد رقم الهاتف للتواصل معك:_____

تاريخ:_____

التوقيع: _____

Appendix 1.2A. Pre-session focus group participant questionnaire (English)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the upcoming focus group on students' experiences in university. Please take a moment to answer the following questions so we can better understand who you are and your preliminary thoughts on the topic.

- Gender:
- Age:
- Hometown:
- Religious affiliation:
- University:
- Year of study:
- Subject:

Students experience various challenges during their time at university. Please rank the degree of difficulty you had in facing the following challenges in university (1- very easy, 2- easy, 3- of average difficulty, 4- difficult, 5- very difficult, or not relevant):

	1	2	3	4	5	Not relevant
Adjusting to academic teaching method						
English language						
Hebrew language						
Selection of courses						
Housing						
Adjusting to the cultural atmosphere						
Relationship with Jewish peers						
Financial demands						
Time management						
Balancing work and learning						
Academic Calendar (lack of consideration of religious holidays)						
Communicating with professors						

Appendix 1.2B. Pre-session focus group participant questionnaire (Arabic)

شكرًا لموافقتك على الاشتراك في مجموعة النقاش المُركّزة بخصوص تجارِب الطلاب في الجامعة. الرجاء الإجابة على الاسئلة التالية كي اتعرّف عليك وعلى افكارك الأوّلية بخصوص موضوع النقاش:

- الجنس:
- العمر:
- الجامعة:
- البلدة الأُم:
- الديانة:
- سنة التّعليم:
- الموضوع:

يواجه الطلاب تحدّيات مُختلفة خلال وقتهم في الجامعة. الرجاء تقييم التحدّيات التاليّة بحسب صعوبة التعامُل معهم بحسب تجربتك (1- سهل جدًا، 2- سهل، 3- ذا صعوبة معقولة، 4- صعب، 5- صعب جدًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ):

	1	2	3	4	5	لا ينطبق عليّ
التأقلم لطريقة التعليم الاكاديميّة						
اللغة الإنجليزية						
اللغة العبريّة						
اختيار المساقات						
السكن						
التأقلم للجوّ الثقافي						
العلاقة مع الزملاء اليهود						
المتطلّبات الماليّة						
تنظيم الوقت						
التوازن بن العلم والتعلّم						
الرزنامة الاكاديمية (عدم اخد الاعياد الدينية بالاعتبار)						
التواصل مع المحاضِرين						

Appendix 1.3A. Focus group protocol (English)

Welcome & Establishing ground rules

Hi! My name is Lamma Mansour, a master's student studying social policy. I am conducting a study that explores students' experiences in higher education and I am so grateful you decided to participate. This session will last about 60-65 minutes.

As we are on Zoom, I will record our session, however, in using the data from this session I will keep your identities anonymous.

This will be a guided conversation, and I want to hear your honest opinions and experiences. To allow everyone to contribute and feel safe to share, let's establish a few ground rules.

- All group members have a right to their viewpoints and opinions.
- All group members have a right to speak without being interrupted or disrespected by other group members.
- Group members will avoid dominating the conversation and will allow others to speak.
- What is said in the group stays in the group. People may share personal experiences, so let's honour their vulnerability and keep their experiences confidential.
- Feel free to affirm other people's experiences (e.g., "that happened to me too," "I also struggle with that") or offer an alternative perspective (e.g., "I had a different experience," "I don't see it that way").
- The moderator has the right to guide the timing and flow of the session topics but will allow the group to determine the importance and focus of the conversation as appropriate.
- It is preferable to keep your camera on and microphone unmuted so that the conversation would feel as natural as possible. However, if your internet connection is

slow or you are not comfortable with your camera being on or there is a lot of noise around you- feel free to turn off your camera or mute yourself.

Guiding Questions

Type	Question	Time	Notes
Opening & Icebreaker	Introduce yourself: your name, your subject and how did you choose to enrol in this university?	1 min each	Structured questions, everyone answers
Introductory	Think back to your first semester on campus. How would you describe the transition into university? - Did the experience meet your expectations? - What surprised you the most?	1.5 min each	
Content #1	What are some of the challenges you face on campus? - Personal study, in lectures, after lectures, during office hours, with administrative staff	10 min	Free discussion
Content #2	What are some of your successes (and what do you owe them to)?	10 min	
Optional	How do you feel as an Israeli Palestinian student on campus? What is your response to these feelings?		
Content #3	Do you know if the university/department provides any support for Israeli Palestinian students? - If so, have you used them? why or why not? - If you have, what is your impression of them? (Are they helpful? In what ways?)	10 min	
Closing	If you were in charge of university policies and programs for a day, what would you do? Why?	6-7 min	Structured questions, everyone answers
Closing	Is there anything that we did not discuss that you think is important?	2 min	

Wrap up and thank you

Thank you so much for your time today, I appreciated hearing your thoughts on this topic and meeting all of you. I will send you a questionnaire to fill out when we close now- please fill it out over the next two days. If anybody has any more thoughts or questions regarding the topic, please feel free to contact me.

Appendix 1.3B. Focus group protocol (Arabic)

ترحيب والاتفاق على مبادئ التواصل

مرحبا! اسمي لمى منصور طالبة لقب تاني في السياسات الاجتماعية. بحثي، زي ما شفتوا، بختصّ بتجارب الطلاب في الجامعات بالبلاد. شكرًا كثير على اشتراككو، وانشالله لقاءنا اليوم يكون بين ال 60 و65 دقيقة. بما انه احنا على الزوم، رح اسجّل محادثنا، ولكن زي ما وضّحت من قبل، لمّا استخدم المعلومات من اللقاء مش رح استخدم اسمكو. لقاءنا هو محادثة مُهدّفة، وبدّي اسمع ارائكو وقصصكو الصادقة. عشان نسمح للكل انّه يشارك ويساهم، خلّينا نوضّح مبادئ التواصل اللي بتوقّع منا كلنا نلتزم فيها:

- كلّ اعضاء المجموعة عندهن الحقّ يعبّروا عن اراءهن ووجهة نظرهن.
- كل اعضاء المجموعة عندهن الحقّ يحكوا بدون ما حدا يقطّعهن وكلامهن يُحترَم.
- نحاول نعطي الكلّ المجال انّه يحكي، وما يوخد شخص واحد كل المساحة.
- اللي بنقال بالمجموعة ببقى بالمجموعة. ممكن اشخاص يشاركوا امور شخصيّة، فخلّينا نحترم صدقهن ونكون حسّاسين من خلال انّه نخلّي الامور اللي بقولها سرّية وما نحكي فيها لحدا غير الموجودين بالمجموعة.
- اشعروا بحرّيّة توافقوا مع تجارب الآخرين (متلًا: انا هيك صار معي كمان، انا كمان بستصعب بهاي الشغلة) او انّه تعطوا وجهة نظر مختلفة إذا ما بتشاركوا نفس الرأي او التجربة (متلًا: انا عندي تجربة مختلفة، انا بشوفش الاشي هيك..).
- انا رح اوجّه المحادثة من ناحية توقيت وانتبه ما نتشتتّ، بس انتو كمجموعة بتقدروا تحددوا اهميّة مواضيع معيّنة وتوجّه النقاش.
- بالنسبة للزوم: بفضّل، اللي بقدر، يخلّي الكاميرا والمايكروفون مفتوحات عشان نحسّ اكتر انّه المحادثة طبيعيّة. اللي قاعد بمحلّ ضجّة كتير بقدر يسكّر المايكرفون او اللي بحسّش بحرّية يفتح الكاميرا بنفع يطفيها.

الاسئلة المُوجِّهة:

اوّل سؤالين بحبّ الكلّ يجاوب عليهن بالدّور، بعدين رح تكون المحادثة اكتر مفتوحة واللي بحبّ يجاوب بقدر.

- عرّف عن حالك: اسمك، موضوعك بالجامعة وليش قررت تدرس بهاي الجامعة؟ (دقيقة)
- فكّر بأول سمستر الك بالجامعة. كيف كنت بتوصف النقلة للجامعة؟ (دقيقة، دقيقة ونص)
    - هل لائمت التجربة توقّعاتك؟
    - شو فاجئك؟
- شو في تحدّيات بتواجهها بالجامعة؟ (10 دقائق)
    - في دراستك الشخصيّة، اجتماعيًّا، في المحاضرات، بعد المحاضرات، بالשעות קבלה، مع الطاقم بالجامعة..
- شو امور بتعتبرها نجاح الك في الجامعة؟ لَمين\الشو بتعطي الفضل بهاد النجاح؟ (10 دقائق)

- كيف بتشعر كطالب عربي في الجامعة؟ كيف بتتفاعَل مع هاي المشاعر (كيف بتأثّر عليك هاي المشاعر)؟ (10 دقائق)
- هل بتعرف إذا الجامعة\القسم تبعك بعطي دعم للطلاب العرب؟ (10 دقائق)
    - إذا اا، هل مرّة استعنت بهذا الدعم؟ إذا لا، ليش؟ إذا اا، شو انطباعك؟
- إذا انت كنت مسؤول عن برامج وسياسات الجامعة لنهار، شو كنت بتعمل؟ (6-7 دقائق)
- هل في اشي بخصّ الموضوع برأيك مهمّ وما حكينا عنّه؟ (دقيقتين)

<u>تلخيص وشكر</u>

شكرًا كتير على وقتكو اليوم، بقدّر مساهمتكو كتير. رح ابعتلكو استمارة تعبّوها لمّا نخلّص اسا. إذا ممكن عبّوها خلال اليومين الجايات. انشالله خلال الاسبوع الجاي بنبعتلكو كود على التلفون\الايميل مع الكوبون اللي بتقدروا تستعملوه بعدّة محلّات. إذا حدا عنده اي استفسار او سؤال او اشي زيادة بحبّ يحكي عنه، تتردّدوش تتواصلوا معي.

Appendix 1.4A. Post-session focus group participant questionnaire (English)

Thank you, again, for taking the time to participate in the focus group. Your input is of utmost value to me. I would like to ask a few more questions to follow up on our discussion. Please feel free to share any thoughts, details, examples, or experiences that you believe will add to our discussion on this topic. Your insights and your perception are important and will add richness to this study's findings.

I would appreciate your response within the next few days, by [date]. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or wish to talk further.

- Now that you have had some time to reflect on your experience as a student in university, of all the things we have discussed, what to you was the most important?
- Is there anything that surprised you in the discussion?
- Is there anything that came up in the discussion that you did not agree with?
- Is there anything that we did not discuss that you think is important?
- Is there anything else you wish to share?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 1.4B. Post-session focus group participant questionnaire (Arabic)

شكرًا مرّة اخرى لمشاركتك في مجموعة النقاش المُركّزة. مساهمتك قيّمة جدًا بالنسبة لي. اودّ ان اسأل بعض الاسئلة بعد نقاشِنا.

اشعر بالحرّية في مشاركة افكارك مع تفاصيل، امثلة او قصص التي تعتقد انها ستساهم في توضيح ما تقصد واغناء نتائج البحث.

الرجاء تعبئة الاستمارة حتّى الموعد اقصاه <>.

بعد ان تسنح لك ان تفكّر بِتجربتك في الجامعة، ما هو اهمّ امر تمّ نقاشه في المجموعة؟

- هل هناك ما فاجئك في النقاش؟
- هل هناك امر ما ذُكِر في النقاش ولم توافق عليه؟
- هل هناك امر آخر لم نناقشه بخصوص الموضوع وتعتقد انّه مهمّ؟
- هل هناك امر آخر تريد اعلامي بِهِ؟

شكرًا على وقتك!

Appendix 1.5. Focus groups' qualitative codes

Code	Subcode(s)		Frequency
Disagreement between participants			8
Relationship with Jewish classmates	Desire for friendship		11
	Negative		2
	Positive		3
Feelings	Weakness		3
	Loneliness		5
	Overwhelm		6
	Proving oneself		7
	Fear		3
	Self-confidence		3
Challenges	Balance with work		3
	Lost		8
	Built-in difficulties		5
	Social challenge		5
	Young age		8
	Housing and travel	Challenges of independence	10
	Language	Academic vs spoken	34
	Financial challenges		10
	Professional guidance		8
	Societal pressure		8
	Cultural environment		11
	PAIs in university		15
	Relationship with lecturers	Approaching lecturers	
		Religious/secular approach	
		Political approach	13
		Apathy	2
	The courage to speak in class		13
	A new type of study		25
What would you change?	Academic support		9
	Financial support		1
	Social support		4
	Bureaucratic support		4
	Making rights and duties clear		3
	Dominant culture	holidays	11
	Separation or integration		2
	Respect		3
	Understanding needs		7
	Remote learning		2
What support are you receiving? What do you like/dislike about it?	Support needs to be accessible		12
	Tailoring support		4
	Learning/study groups	Designated space for PAI students	19
	Scholarships		3
	Mentorship		9
	Mental health support		3
	Additional time		9
How do you feel as a PAI on campus?	Political arguments		6
	Minority group	WhatsApp group	5

		Sense of resistance	2
		Gathered around each other	4
		Mutual help or competition	5
	Discrimination		21
What are your successes?	Academic success		10
	Giving back		3
	Language development		2
	Finishing the degree		4
	More than a degree	Self-development	13
		Enjoying the studies	4
		Identity formation	3
		Political work	3
	Social relations		6

Appendix 1.6A. Summary of focus groups' findings sent to participants (English)

*The following text was written in the masculine form but is intended for all genders.

Thank you for taking part in my research. Your contribution and time were very valuable to the study and to my understanding of the experience of Arab students in Israeli universities. As promised at the time, I want to share with you a summary of the study's findings for transparency. If you wanted to comment on my analysis of the findings, I am happy to listen, and if you wanted to read the entire analysis (which is available only in English, unfortunately), I am also happy to send it to you.

To understand the experience of Arab students in Israeli universities, seven focus groups were conducted, with a total of nineteen participants from the largest six universities in Israel. The findings show that the experiences of Arab students are coloured by disorientation since their entry into university, especially throughout the first year. This disorientation has multiple aspects: first, academically, higher education differs significantly from high school, necessitating Arab students to adjust to a new style of study, especially as it relates to the fast pace of study and its independent nature. Second, physically, Arab students must adjust to living in a new city after they have lived with their parents for most of their lives, in what is often their first time living independently. Third, culturally, Arab society is generally segregated from Jewish-Israeli society, especially when it comes to educational spaces, which makes university campuses the first place of prolonged contact between Arab students and the Jewish majority. To confront this multi-faceted disorientation, Arab students gather and support one another, by sharing study materials, revising together, and offering emotional and social support. As one participant put it, Arab students "huddle around each other."

After the first year, Arab students face several challenges in their academic journey due to four main factors: language, age, finances, and university environments. First, the linguistic

challenge constitutes a significant difficulty for Arab students, mainly as it relates to self-expression and speaking up in class. Participants understood the need for strong linguistic skills for working and living in Israel, which motivates them to work hard to overcome this hurdle. Second, Arab students are usually younger than their Jewish peers as the former do not conscript for the army when they reach the age of eighteen. This young age is generally viewed as an obstacle, with students feeling that they are underprepared for life at the university. However, some view this as an advantage, as Arab students can enter the workforce earlier than their Jewish-Israeli peers. Third, the scarcity of financial support offered by the universities causes additional stress for Arab students, especially if their families are also unable to financially support them, necessitating many Arab students to work alongside their studies which can negatively impact their academic performance. Fourth, university environments can often act as a barrier to Arab students, on an institutional level as well as on an individual level. Institutionally, participants recounted various incidents where they felt discriminated against by the university's rules and decisions, especially when it comes to respecting religious holidays and relying on Zionist-military content in the curriculum. Simultaneously, participants pointed to the support and warmth that some lecturers offer them and how important that is to them. On an individual level, participants shared several racist encounters they had with other students and emphasised that campuses are largely segregated, with relationships between Jewish and Arab students either non-existent or shallow, and that they very much wanted this reality to change and for them to build friendships with the Jewish students.

Finally, Arab students saw many successes in their journeys: first, academically, in persisting in their academic endeavours and not giving up, and in excelling in their subjects; second, personally, including nurturing their independence and widening their political, social, and academic horizons; and third, societally, as Arab students are steadfastly committed to giving

back to their community, especially in assisting the next generations of students in their studies.

Appendix 1.6B. Summary of focus groups' findings sent to participants (Arabic)

كُتِب النصّ ادناه بصيغة المُذكّر لكنه موجّه للذكور والإناث على حدّ سواء.

اودّ ان استهلّ رسالتي هذه بتقديم شكري لك على مشاركتك في بحثي. مساهمتك ووقتك كانا ثمينين جدًّا في البحث وفي فهمي لتجربة الطالب العربي في الجامعات الإسرائيلية بشكل اوسع وأعمق. ثانيًا، كما وعدت حينها، اريد ان اشارك معك نتائج البحث بشكل ملخّص للشفافية. إن اردت التعليق على امور معيّنة في تحليلي للنتائج، فأنا مُتاحة للإصغاء لذلك، وإن اردت ان تقرأ تحليل النتائج بأكمله (بالإنجليزيّة فقط للأسف)، فسيسعدني ان ارسلها لك ايضًا.

سعيًا وراء فهم تجربة الطالب العربي في الجامعات في اسرائيل، أُجريَ البحث مع سبعة مجموعات نقاش مُركّزة التي ضمّت تسعة عشر مُشارِك ومُشارِكة من الجامعات الستة الكُبرى في البلاد. تُفيد نتائج البحث ان تجربة الطالب العربي تصطبغ بالارتباك منذ دخوله للجامعة، خاصةً في السنة الاولى، ولِهذا الارتباك ابعاد مُختلفة: اوّلًا البُعد الأكاديمي، حيث ان التعليم العاليّ يختلف بشكل جوهري عن التعليم الثانويّ، ممّا يشكّل صعوبة للطالب العربي ان يتأقلم مع طريقة دراسة جديدة، خاصّةً بما يتعلّق بوتيرة التدريس السريعة والانتقال لأسلوب دراسة مُستقلّ؛ ثانيًا البُعد الجسماني\الفيزيائي، فإنه على الطالب العربي التأقلم للسكن في بلدة جديدة بعد ان سَكَن مع والديه معظم حياته، وغالبًا ما تكون هذه التجربة الأولى في العيش المستقلّ؛ ثالثًا البعد الثقافي، فالمجتمع العربي، بِشكل عام، يعيش منفصلًا عن المجتمع اليهودي الإسرائيلي، خاصّةً فيما يتعلّق بالأنظمة التعليمية، ممّا يجعل الحرم الجامعي بالنسبة لِعدد كبير من الطلاب العرب النقطة الأولى للقاء مُطوّل مع المجتمع اليهودي الإسرائيلي. لمواجهة هذا الارتباك المُتعدِّد الجوانب، غالِبًا ما يتجمّع الطلاب العرب سويّةً ويسندون بعضهم البعض عن طريق مشاركة الموادّ التعليميّة بينهم والدراسة معًا، بالإضافة للدعم المعنويّ والاجتماعي. وبحسب تعبير أحد المُشاركين في البحث، الطلاب العرب "بلمّوا على بعض". ما بعد السنة الاولى، يواجه الطالب العربي عدّة تحدّيات في مسيرته الأكاديميّة، وهذا بسبب اربعة عوامل اساسيّة: اللغة، الجيل، الماليّات والبيئة الجامعيّة. اوّلًا، يشكّل تحدّي اللغة صعوبة اساسيّة للطالب العربي، بالأساس فيما يتعلّق بالتعبير عن النفس والمقدرة على التكلم خلال الحصص. عبّر المشتركون في البحث عن إدراكهم للحاجة للغة العبريّة للعمل والعيش في البلاد، ممّا يدفعهم للاجتهاد في تحسين قدراتهم اللغوية والتغلّب على هذه الصعوبة. ثانيًا، غالِبًا ما يكون الطالب العربي أصغر سنًا من اترابِه اليهود (نظرًا لعدم تجنّده للجيش)، ممّا يشكّل عائقًا امامه إذ احيانًا ما يشعر بعدم الجهوزيّة الكافية للحياة الجامعيّة. مع هذا، رأى بعض المُشتركين ان بإمكان سنّ الطالب العربي الصغير ان يكون امرًا ايجابيًّا إذ يُتيح له الاندماج في سوق العمل مُبكّرًا. ثالِثًا، شحّة الدعم المالي مِن قبَل الجامعات يشكّل ضغطًا كبيرًا على الطالب العربي، بالأخصّ إذا لم يتوفّر له الدعم المادّي العائلي، ممّا يجبر بعض الطلاب ان يعملوا بموازاة لتعليمهم الجامعي – الامر الذي قد يؤثّر على تحصيلهم. رابِعًا، تُشكّل البيئة الجامعيّة عائِقًا على الطالب العربي في العديد من الأحيان، على المستوى المؤسساتي وعلى مستوى الأفراد. مؤسساتيًّا، ذكر المُشتركين في البحث حالات عديدة شعروا فيها أنّ قوانين الجامعة وقراراتها تميّز ضدّهم، بالأخصّ فيما يتعلّق بعدم احترام الأعياد الدينيّة والارتكاز على

مضامين تعليميّة صهيونيّة-عسكريّة. في ذات الوقت، اشاروا للدعم والدفء الذي يقدّمه بعض المحاضرين لهم ومدى اهمّية ذلك لهم شخصيًا. على مستوى الأفراد، افاد مشتركو البحث انّهم اختبروا عنصريّة من قِبَل البعض من زملائهم اليهود، وانّ الحرم الجامعي، في غالبيّته، فيه فصل بين العرب واليهود، بحيث انّ العلاقات بينهم امّا معدومة او سطحيّة، وعبّروا عن رغبتهم في تغيير هذا الواقع وبناء صداقات فيما بين الطلاب.

اخيرًا، يرى الطالب العربي في مسيرته نجاحات عديدة: اولًا في المجال الأكاديمي، بالأساس في استمراره في المسيرة التعليميّة وعدم الاستسلام، ومن ثمّ التميّز في موضوعه؛ ثانيًا في الجانب الشّخصي، هذا يشمل تطويره لاستقلاليّته وتوسيع افاقِه الاجتماعيّة، السياسيّة والأكاديميّة؛ وثالِثًا الناحية المُجتمعيّة، فإن الطالب العربي مُلتزِم أن يعود بالمنفعة على مجتمعه، وبالأخص مساعدة الأجيال القادمة في مسيرتهم التعليميّة.

APPENDIX 2. PHASE II

Appendix 2.1. Development of survey instrument: qualitative themes and questionnaire items corresponding to them

Scale	Response format	Item content	Quotes from phase I
Questionnaire section 2. Pertaining to the respondent's first semester in higher education			
General disorientation (2 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of their transition to higher education and their feelings of clarity or disorientation during this phase.	"I felt like the first semester was all tears. I couldn't understand where I am, everything was jumbled."
Academic disorientation (10 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of their academic adjustment, including whether they felt confident in their ability to persist in their studies, whether they understood what was required of them and their level of comfort during classes.	"Academically it was very difficult and demanding. The standard is very high." "I saw that many people dropped out, and I was scared that I would drop out too." "I used to understand what was said in class but to share or speak up when I have a question, to feel totally at ease like my Jewish classmates- that was very difficult. It took very long for me to start speaking in class."
Physical and cultural disorientation (7 items)	Reporting (yes, no, N/A); (3 items)	Whether the respondent left their parents' house to attend university, previous experience of living independently and moving cities.	"In the beginning, the challenge was the distance from home… I was 19 years old and alone among my Jewish classmates, and now coming to the centre while I had lived in the North my whole life. The first time I took a public bus was when I came to university."
	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree); (4 items)	The respondent's level of comfort in and their perceptions of the new city they moved into.	
Psychosocial disorientation (2 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of their social adjustment and knowledge of avenues for seeking psychological support if needed.	"It took me a long time to 'get into the atmosphere' and find friends." "The first two weeks I spent alone, going to the breaks by myself, not really knowing how to get to know someone new."

Finding solidarity with students from a similar background (4 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree); (2 items)	The respondent's level of camaraderie and identification with their PAI classmates, and their reliance on them for support.	"We would leave the lecture and see that we are all, simply, in the same place, and that helps mentally. The Arabs, I mean. To see that everyone doesn't understand what is happening, so we discovered things together. This is what built friendships… In our first semester, we studied for all the exams together. If I couldn't understand something, my friends would help me. I couldn't have made it on my own."
	Reporting percentage (from 0%-100%)	The respondent's perception of the percentage of PAI students in their department and institution.	

Scale	Response format	Item content	Quotes from phase I
Questionnaire section 3. Pertaining to the respondent's overall experience in HE			
Perception of own academic competence and orientation (5 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree); (3 items)	The respondent's perception of their ability to navigate and progress in the academic space, especially compared with their peers.	"I agree that we come with built-in difficulties… It's like [other students] are already ten steps further than you, and [they're] also walking at a faster pace than you."
	Likert pace; 1-5 (much slower to much faster); (2 items)		
Perception of the effect of language mastery on academic performance (4 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of their fluency in Hebrew and English and the way it influenced their academic journey.	"Language was a big barrier for me, and it even badly impacted my grades. It wasn't until the third year that I felt I could have the courage to ask questions in class."
Perception of the institutional environment (3 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's sense of belonging on campus, perception of its friendliness and fairness.	"It's really difficult when there are things that are taken for granted for lecturers or Jewish Israeli students concerning religious or political issues. You feel like they portray their own opinions as facts… they don't care if there are minorities or not because they are speaking 'pure science' and they don't give space for other opinions."
Perception of the institution's attitude towards one's identity (6 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's experience of discrimination on campus, and their perception of the institution's attitude towards their ethnic/national and religious identity.	"… Who assigns an exam on the first of January? … I mean it's an international date, have some consideration! ... In this instance, I felt the meanness of the university. The lowness. Especially the lecturer. Like how vile can you be? In the end, they decided to postpone it to the second of January. So, we weren't studying on New Year's Eve but on New Year's Day."
Relationships with Jewish Israeli peers (5 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of their relationship and contact with their Israeli Jewish peers.	"I have yet to see Arab and Jewish students sitting together on campus." "This relationship with the Jewish classmates- we can work on it. We can have shared activities, and [not focus only on] the things that separate us."

Financial situation (5 items)	Likert frequency; 1-5 (never to always)	The respondent's financial situation during their studies and whether they had financial support.	"Financially, it is a very big challenge. You need to study and work. I don't think a first-year student can work and do well academically… especially if their parents are not supportive."
Perception of own young age at HE (5 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of their young age, compared with their Jewish Israeli peers, during their studies and the effect it had on their academic trajectory.	"I feel like the biggest obstacle for me is age. [My Jewish classmates] are so much older, so much more mature. I made very stupid decisions when I first entered university. If I had been older, I would have made different decisions. They knew themselves more, what they like and what they don't like, what their strengths and weaknesses are. I didn't know these things about myself."

Scale	Response format	Item content	Quotes from phase I
Questionnaire section 4. Pertaining to the support systems available to the respondent at their HE institution			
Institutional services offered and their perceived importance/benefit (9 items)	Tick list for offered services & Likert importance; 1-5 (not important at all to very important)	Various support services offered at HE institutions and the respondent's perception of their importance.	-
Knowledge of support (1 item)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The extent of the respondent's knowledge of the support available to them through their institutions and the way to access it.	"The university offers peer mentors to first-year Arab students, but many students I know didn't get peer mentors because they didn't know this was available."
Use of support (1 item)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The extent to which the respondent has made use of the support available to them through their institutions.	"Sometimes we would organise revision groups and no Arab students would show up… So, I make it clear to students that if they do not say that they are facing difficulties and if they don't show up, we can't help them."
Perceived benefit and appropriateness of support (6 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of the support services offered by the institutions.	"They had the intent and the potential to help us, but they didn't know how."
Perceived adequacy of support (3 items)	Likert agreement; 1-5 (completely agree to completely disagree)	The respondent's perception of the adequacy of the various forms of institutional support.	-

Appendix 2.2A. Survey respondent information sheet and consent form (English)

*The following document was written in masculine form but is intended for all genders.

Introduction

My name is Lamma Mansour, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford, researching Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel students' experiences in Israeli higher education. I invite you to be a part of this research and contribute to our understanding of this issue.

Purpose of study

Attending university is a significant milestone in many people's lives. I am looking to understand this experience better, especially for Palestinian Arab students in Israeli universities and colleges. I believe you can help by sharing your perception of student life and your experiences during your studies.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a student at one of the organisations in which I am particularly interested (i.e., the ten largest higher education institutions in Israel).

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Your choice to participate or not will not cause you problems or have any negative consequences at your university/college.

You can withdraw from the study at any point by pressing the exit button or closing the browser, and the answers you have already submitted will be deleted. I have included a 'prefer not to say' option for the questions should you prefer not to answer a particular question.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You will be directed to respond to an online survey that enquires about your experiences in higher education. I estimate that this will take around 15 minutes. Your responses will remain anonymous, and no one will be able to link your responses to you.

Will my participation in this survey be kept confidential?

Yes. I will not collect any data that could directly identify you and your IP address will not be stored.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there is no immediate benefit to participating in this survey, it is my hope that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the student experience in Israeli higher education, and ultimately, the enactment of better, more sensitive policies.

I do not anticipate that your participation in this survey will cause you distress or discomfort. You can stop your participation at any time without giving me or anyone else a reason for your withdrawal.

In the unlikely event that you experience significant distress due to the questions posed in the survey, please seek help. Emotional support is available through your health insurance institution or other organisations. See details below:

Health services providers:

- Clalit: 2700* or 03-9405350
- Maccabi: 3555* or 1-700-50-53-53
- Leumit: 1-700-507-507
- Me'uhedet: 3833* or 077-2703756

ERAN Organisation (Emotional First Aid by Telephone & Internet):

- By phone: 1202
- Online chat: eran.org.il

What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain about any aspect of the way in which you have been approached or treated, or how your information is handled during the course of this study, you should contact Prof Jane Barlow by email at jane.barlow@spi.ox.ac.uk or you may contact the University of Oxford's Social Policy and Intervention's Research Ethics Committee by email at: ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

What will happen to the data collected in the survey?

The data will be stored securely in an external hard drive that only I will have access to. The data will then be deleted five years after the publication of the findings.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The data that I obtain from this research will contribute to the fulfilment of my doctoral thesis, which will be made available in the libraries of Oxford University. Following this, I might seek to publish the findings in academic journals or at conferences.

Who has reviewed the study?

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm.

For more information

If you have any further questions or queries, you can reach me by email:

lamma.mansour@gtc.ox.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in my research.

Consent form

☐ I certify that I am 18 years of age or over.

☐ I have read the information above and agree to participate with the understanding that the data I submit will be processed accordingly.

Appendix 2.2B. Survey respondent information sheet and consent form (Arabic)

*كُتِبَ نصّ المُستنَد بصيغة المُذكّر، ولكنّهُ موجّه للذكور والإناث على حدّ سواء.

مُقدِّمة

اسمي لمى منصور، طالبة دكتوراة بالسياسة والتدخُّل الاجتماعي في قسم السياسة والتدخّل الاجتماعي في جامعة اوكسفورد. بحثي يختصّ بتجارِب الطّلاب العرب الفلسطينيون في التعليم العالي الإسرائيلي. أدعوك للاشتراك والمُساهمة في هذا البحث.

هدف البحث

تُعتبَر الدّراسة في مؤسسة تعليم عالِ حدثًا ذا اهميّة في حياة العديد من الناس. هدف بحثي هو فهم هذه التجربة بشكل أعمق، خاصّةً تجربة الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيون في الجامِعات والكلّيات في اسرائيل. بإمكانك مساعدتي من خلال مشاركة انطباعك عن الحياة الجامِعيّة وتجاربك خلال التّعليم.

لماذا تمّ دعوتك؟

تمّ دعوتك للاشتراك بهذا البحث لأنّ تجربتك كطالِب جامعيّ عربيّ مُهمّة وبإمكانها ان تُساهِم في فهمي للمجال.

هل انت مُجبَر على الاشتراك؟

لا. قرارك بالاشتراك او عدم الاشتراك هو طوعيّ بالكامل، ورفضك بالاشتراك لن يؤثّر عليك سلبًا في جامعتك\كلّيتك. إذا قرّرت ان تشترك ومن ثمّ غيّرت رأيك، بإمكانك الانسحاب من البحث في ايّ مرحلة عن طريق ضغط زرّ الخروج من الاستمارة وعندها ستُحذف الإجابات التي قُمت بتقديمها. اضفت امكانيّة "افضّل عدم الإجابة" للأسئلة في حال لم ترغب بالإجابة عن سؤال مُعيّن.

ماذا سيحدث إذا قرّرت ان تشترك في البحث؟

سيتمّ توجيهك لاستمارة التي تسأل عن تجاربك في التعليم العالي. ستستغرق الإجابة على الاستمارة حوالي 15 دقيقة. اجاباتك ستبقى سرّية ولن يستطيع أحد ان يربط اجاباتك بِكَ.

هل سيبقى قرارك بالاشتراك بالبحث سرّيًا؟

نعم. لن يُطلب منك ان تزوّد اي معلومات التي بإمكانها ان تشير الى هويّتك بشكل مباشر، ولن يتمّ تخزين عنوان ال IP الخاصّ بِك.

ما هي الأبعاد الإيجابية والسلبية لاشتراكك بالبحث؟

لا توجد فائدة فوريّة للمشاركة في البحث، ولكنني آمل انّ تُساهم نتائج البحث لفهم أعمق للتجربة الطلابية في التعليم العاليّ في اسرائيل وتطبيق سياسات أفضل وأكثر حساسيّة.

لا اتوقّع ان يسبب اشتراكك في هذا البحث ايّ انزعاج او عدم ارتياح، وبإمكانك، كما ذكرت مسبقًا، ان تنسحب في اي مرحلة من تعبئة الاستمارة بدون ان تعطِ ايّ سبب لي او لأيّ شخص اخر.

بحالة سبّبت لك الاسئلة المطروحة في الاستمارة ضيق نفسي، رجاءًا اطلب مساعدة. بإمكانك الحصول على دعم نفسي من خلال صندوق المرضى الخاصّ بك او عن طريق جمعيّات اخرى. فيما يلي التفاصيل:

- صناديق المرضى:
  - كلاليت: 2700* او 03-9405350
  - مكابي: 3555* او 1-700-50-53-53
  - لئوميت: 1-700-507-507
  - مئوحيدت: 3833* او 077-2703756
- جمعية عران – ער"ן:
  - تلفون: 1201
  - محادثة في الموقع: eran.org.il

<u>ماذا سيحصل إن كانت هنالك مُشكلة؟</u>

ان اردت الشكوى عن كيفيّة التوجّه لك، مُعامَلَتك او معامَلتك معلوماتك خلال البحث، بإمكانك الاتصال بالباحثة بروفيسور جين بارلو عن طريق البريد الالكتروني: jane.barlow@spi.ox.ac.uk او لجنة الأخلاقيات في ابحاث التدخل الاجتماعي والسياسات في جامعة اوكسفورد عن طريق البريد الالكتروني: ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

<u>كيف سيتمّ التعامل مع البيانات المُستقاة من البحث؟</u>

سيتمّ تخزين بيانات المُشتركين في قرص صلب خارجي (external hard drive) المُتاح لي فقط. سيتمّ حذف جميع البيانات بعد خمس سنوات من نشر نتائج البحث.

<u>ماذا سيحصُل لنتائج هذا البحث؟</u>

ستساهم المعلومات التي سأستقيها من هذا البحث في اكمال رسالة الدكتوراة الخاصّة بي. في مراحل مُتقدّمة، قد تُقرّر جامعة اكسفورد ان تُتيح نتائج هذه الدراسة للجمهور العامّ، او قد اسعى انا لنشر النتائج في منصّات علميّة مُختلفة.

<u>مَن راجَع سيرورة البحث؟</u>

تمّت مُراجعة والموافقة على اقتراح سيرورة البحث على يد لجنة اخلاقيّات البحث في قسم السياسة والتدخّل الاجتماعي في جامعة اوكسفورد، وهي لجنة مسؤوليتها ان تضمن حماية المشتركين من الضرر.

<u>للمزيد من المعلومات</u>

إن كان لديك ايّ سؤال او استفسار، بالإمكان التوجه لي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني: lamma.mansour@gtc.ox.ac.uk

استمارة الموافقة

☐ اؤكّد انّني فوق سنّ الثامنة عشر

☐ اؤكّد انّني قرأت المعلومات اعلاه واوافق على المشاركة في الاستطلاع، علمًا بكيفيّة استخدام البيانات التي سأقدّمها.

Appendix 2.3A. Questionnaire (English)

The following questions refer to your experiences in higher education. Some questions refer to your specific course. As some students undertake dual degrees or have changed their courses – please answer about the course you spent the most time in or is most typical of your experiences.

Section 1. Sociodemographic & academic information

No	Item	Response format
1	Age	Numeric
2	Gender	Male, female, prefer not to say.
3	Hometown	Free text
4	Religious affiliation	Muslim, Christian, Druze, other, prefer not to say.
5	National definition	Arab, Israeli, Palestinian, Israeli citizen, other, prefer not to say (choose all that apply).
6	Academic institution	List of academic institutions recognised by CHE
7	Main language of instruction	Hebrew, English, Arabic.
8	Subject studied	Free text
9	Highest education level completed	High school, professional diploma, undergraduate, masters, doctorate, prefer not to say.
10	Type of high school qualification	Bagrut, Tawjihi, other.
11	Completion of undergraduate study	Yes, No - I stopped my studies before completion, No - I am currently still studying.
If answer to item 11 is currently studying		
11a	Year of study	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and over.
12	Change of course during studies	Yes, no.
13	Father's education level	Less than high school, high school, professional diploma, undergraduate, masters, doctorate, prefer not to say.
14	Mother's education level	

Section 2. Transition to higher education

Think of your first semester at university. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

No	Item	Response format
1	"I had a smooth transition to university"	Likert agreement scale (1-5): 1- Completely disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- I don't agree or disagree, 4- Agree, 5- Completely agree, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
2	"I often felt lost"	
3	"I felt anxious about my academic progress"	
4	"I was scared of dropping out"	
5	"I understood what the requirements were for my classes"	
6	"The pace of learning in university was challenging for me"	
7	"I seriously thought about changing my course"	
8	"I knew where to find academic help if I needed it"	
9	"I understood what was said in class"	
10	"I felt confident to ask and answer questions in class"	
11	"I felt confident expressing my opinions in class"	
12	"I felt comfortable approaching my professors and tutors"	
13	"I felt well-adjusted socially"	
14	"I knew where to find psychological help if I needed it"	
15	"I leaned on my Arab classmates for support"	
16	"I felt like my Arab classmates were dealing with similar difficulties as me"	
17	What is approximately the percentage of Arab students in your course?	<10, 10-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90, 90<
18	What is approximately the percentage of Arab students in your university?	
19	Did you move out of your parents' house to attend university?	Yes, no.
If yes to item 19 -		
19a	Was this your first time living independently?	Yes, no.
20	Did you move to a new city to attend university?	Yes, no.
20a	"I felt comfortable in the new city"	Likert agreement scale (1-5): 1- Completely disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- I don't agree or disagree, 4- Agree, 5- Completely agree, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
20b	"It was easy to use public transportation to move between my hometown and the new city"	
20c	"The lifestyle of people in the new city was significantly different than that of people in my hometown"	
20d	"I experienced discrimination because of my ethnicity/nationality or religion in the new city"	

Section 3. Student experience on campus

Think of your general experience at university (beyond the first semester). To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

No	Item	Response format
1	"I felt competent in my ability to persist to degree completion"	Likert agreement scale (1-5): 1- Completely disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- I don't agree or disagree, 4- Agree, 5- Completely agree, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
2	"I felt like I needed to prove myself (to my classmates, to my professors, to my family)"	
3	"I knew my rights as a student at university"	
4	"I felt that I progressed at a similar pace to my Arab classmates"	Likert pace scale (1-5): 1- Significantly slower, 2- Somewhat slower, 3- Similar pace, 4 - Somewhat faster, 5- Significantly faster, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
5	"I felt that I progressed at a similar pace to my Jewish classmates"	
6	"My language mastery badly impacted my grades/my performance"	Likert agreement scale (1-5): 1- Completely disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- I don't agree or disagree, 4- Agree, 5- Completely agree, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
7	"I felt that my Hebrew was strong enough for the academic environment"	
8	"I felt that my English was strong enough for the academic environment"	
9	"I felt that my Hebrew was strong enough to establish friendships with my Jewish classmates"	
10	"I felt like I belonged on campus"	
11	"The campus was a friendly place to me"	
12	"The university is a fair place"	
13	"I experienced hostility/discrimination from lecturers/tutors because of my ethnicity/nationality or religious identity"	
14	"I experienced hostility/discrimination from administrative staff because of my ethnicity/nationality or religious identity"	
15	"I experienced hostility/discrimination from other students because of my ethnicity/nationality or religious identity"	
16	"I felt that university decisions are inclusive for all students"	
17	"I felt that my ethnicity/nationality identity is respected"	
18	"I felt that my religious identity is respected"	
19	"I have Jewish Israeli friends on campus"	

20	“I have completed a group/pair project with a Jewish Israeli classmate”	
21	“I would like to be friends with more Jewish Israeli students on campus”	
22	“I think there are opportunities to meet and become friends with Jewish Israeli students on campus”	
23	“There is a segregation between Arabs and Jews on campus”	
24	“I struggled financially during my time as a student”	Likert frequency scale (1-5): 1 – Never, 2 – Few and far between, 3- Sometimes, 4- Frequently, 5- Always, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
25	“I had to work during my time as a student to finance my studies”	
26	“I had to work during my time as a student to support my family”	
27	“I have financial support from my family”	
28	“My financial situation causes me anxiety”	
29	Did you begin your academic studies between the ages of 18 and 21?	Yes, no.
If yes to item 29		
29a	“Most of my classmates were older than me”	Likert agreement scale (1-5): 1- Completely disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- I don’t agree or disagree, 4- Agree, 5- Completely agree, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
29b	“I felt pressured to enter university briefly after finishing high school”	
29c	“Being young was an obstacle for me at university”	
29d	“I was mature enough when I entered university”	
29d	“I wish I entered university later than I had”	

Section 4. Institutional support

Many academic institutions offer support for Arab students. What support does your university/department offer? Select all that apply and rank their importance of it to your experience.

No	Item	Response format
1	Extra time during assessments for non-native Hebrew speakers	Select if it applies and the Likert importance scale (1-5): 1- Very unimportant, 2- Unimportant, 3- Neutral, 4- Important, 5- Very important, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
2	Peer mentors	
3	Faculty mentors	
4	Tutoring sessions with a Hebrew-speaker	
5	Tutoring sessions with an Arabic-speaker	
6	Summer-bridge prep course	
7	Scholarships	
8	Low-interest loans	
9	Career advice	
10	Other: specify	Free text

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

No	Item	Response format
1	"I know what university support is available for me and how to access it"	Likert agreement scale (1-5): 1- Completely disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- I don't agree or disagree, 4- Agree, 5- Completely agree, or not applicable to me/prefer not to answer.
2	"I feel like the support is beneficial for me"	
3	"I feel like the support is beneficial for other Arab students"	
4	"I feel like the university understands my needs as an Arab student"	
5	"I made use of the university support during my time as a student"	
6	"I would have appreciated more academic support"	
7	"I would have appreciated more financial support"	
8	"I would have appreciated more emotional/social support"	
9	"I feel that the university is sincere in its attempt to support Arab students"	
10	"I feel pitied by the university"	
11	"I feel that the support is enough to give an equal opportunity for Arab students to succeed/thrive/realise their potential"	

Appendix 2.3B. Questionnaire (Arabic)

الاسئلة في هذه الاستمارة تتطرّق لتجربتك في التعليم العالي. بعض الأسئلة تتطرّق لتجربتك في القسم (מחלקה\חוג) الذي تتعلّم به. بِما انّ بعض الطلاب يدرسون للقب مزدوج ويتعلّمون في أكثر من قسم – الرجاء اختيار أحد الاقسام (مفضّل ان يكون القسم الذي قضيت فيه أكثر وقت) والإجابة عنه خلال الاستمارة.

القسم الأول: معلومات ديموغرافيّة

رقم	السؤال	الإجابات
1	الجيل	اجابة حرّة
2	الجنس	ذكر، انثى، افضّل عدم الإجابة
3	البلدة الأم	اجابة حرّة
4	الدّيانة	الإسلام، المسيحيّة، الدرزيّة، آخر، افضّل عدم الإجابة
5	الهويّة القوميّة (اشِر الى كلّ الإجابات الملائمة)	عربي، اسرائيلي، فلسطيني، مواطن اسرائيل\حامل هويّة اسرائيليّة، آخر، افضّل عدم الإجابة
6	المعهد الأكاديمي الذي ادرس\درست بِهِ للقب الأوّل	قائمة المعاهد الأكاديميّة المعترف بها من قبل مجلس التعليم العالي الإسرائيلي
7	لغة التدريس في المعهد	اللغة العبريّة، اللغة العربيّة، اللغة الانجليزية
8	الموضوع الدّراسيّ	اجابة حرّة
9	اعلى درجة اكاديميّة حصلت عليها\أكملتها	ثانويّة، شهادة مهنيّة (דיפלומה)، لقب اوّل، لقب ثاني، لقب ثالث (دكتوراة)، افضّل عدم الإجابة.
10	نظام الشّهادة الثانويّة	بجروت، توجيهي، آخر
11	هل اكملت دراستك للقب الأول؟	نعم، لا - اوقفت دراستي قبل الإكمال، لا - ما زلت ادرس
إن كانت الإجابة لسؤال رقم 11 هي انّك ما زلت تدرس		
11 أ	في ايّ عام انت لدراستك؟	الأولى، الثانية، الثالثة، الرابعة، الخامسة، السادسة، السابعة وما فوق
12	هل قمت بتغيير موضوعك خلال الدراسة؟	نعم، لا
13	مستوى تعليم الأب	اقلّ من الثانوية، الثانوية، شهادة مهنيّة (דיפלומה)، لقب اول، لقب ثاني، دكتوراة، افضّل عدم الإجابة
14	مستوى تعليم الأم	

القسم الثاني: الانتقال للتعليم العاليّ

تذكّر فصلك الأوّل في التعليم العاليّ. لأيّ حدّ توافق او لا توافق المقولات التالية؟

رقم	السؤال	الإجابات
1	"كانت مرحلة انتقالي للتعليم العاليّ سلسة\مُسهّلة"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- اعارض تمامًا، 2- اعارض لحدّ ما، 3- لا اوافق ولا اعارض، 4- اوافق لحدّ ما، 5- اوافق تمامًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ.
2	"كثيرًا ما شعرت أنّي ضائع"	
3	"شعرت بالقلق بخصوص تقدّمي الأكاديمي"	
4	"شعرت بالخوف من امكانيّة الا اتمكّن من اكمال دراستي"	
5	"فهمت ما المطلوب منّي في كلّ مساق"	
6	"وتيرة الدراسة والتّعلم في الجامعة\الكلّية كانت من تحدّياتي"	
7	"فكّرت في تغيير موضوعي بشكل جدّي"	
8	"كنت اعرف اين يمكنني ان أجد مساعدة اكاديمية إن احتجتها"	
9	"كنت افهم ما يُقال في الصف"	
10	"شعرت بثقة ان اسأل واجيب عن اسئلة في الصف"	
11	"شعرت بثقة ان اعبّر عن آرائي في الصف"	
12	"شعرت براحة ان اتوجّه للمحاضرين والمعلّمين المساعدين (מתרגלים)"	
13	"شعرت انّني مُندمج إجتماعيًا"	
14	"كنت اعرف اين بإمكاني ان أجد مساعدة معنويّة\نفسيّة إن احتجتها"	
15	"استعنت بدعم زملائي العرب"	
16	"شعرت انّ زملائي العرب يواجهون صعوبات مُشابهة للصعوبات التي اواجهها انا"	
17	ما هي نسبة الطلاب العرب في القسم الذي تتعلّم بِهِ حسب رأيك؟	اقل من 10، 10-20، 20-30، 30-40، 40-50، 50-60، 60-70، 70-80، 80-90، أكثر من 90
18	ما هي نسبة الطلاب العرب في الجامعة\الكلّية التي تتعلّم بِها حسب رأيك؟	
19	هل انتقلت من بيت اهلك من اجل الدراسة؟	نعم، لا
إن كانت الإجابة لسؤال رقم 19 هي نعم		
19 أ	هل كانت هذه اوّل تجربة لك بالسكن بشكل مُستقلّ؟	نعم، لا
20	هل انتقلت لبلدة جديدة من اجل الدراسة؟	
إن كانت الإجابة لسؤال رقم 20 هي نعم		
20 أ	"اشعر بالراحة في البلدة الجديدة"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- اعارض تمامًا، 2- اعارض لحدّ ما، 3- لا اوافق ولا اعارض، 4- اوافق لحدّ ما، 5- اوافق تمامًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ.
20ب	"استعمال المواصلات العامة للتنقل بين بلدتي الأم والبلدة الجديدة سهل"	
20ج	"طريقة حياة الناس في البلدة الجديدة تختلف عن طريقة حياة الناس في بلدتي الأم"	
20د	"اختبرت تمييزًا عنصريًا بسبب هويّتي الإثنيّة\القوميّة او الدّينيّة في البلدة الجديدة"	

القسم الثالث: التجربة الطلابية في التعليم العاليّ

فكّر في تجربتك بشكل عامّ في التعليم العاليّ (ما بعد الفصل الأول). لأيّ حدّ توافق او لا توافق المقولات التالية؟

رقم	السؤال	الإجابات
1	"شعرت بثقة بقدرتي على المثابرة لإكمال اللقب"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- اعارض تمامًا، 2- اعارض لحدّ ما، 3- لا اوافق ولا اعارض، 4- اوافق لحدّ ما، 5- اوافق تمامًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ.
2	"شعرت انّه عليّ ان اثبت نفسي (لزملائي، للمحاضرين، لعائلتي)"	
3	"علمت ما هي حقوقي كطالب"	
4	"شعرت انّني اتقدّم بوتيرة مُشابهة لوتيرة زملائي العرب"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- ابطأ بشكل كبير، 2- ابطأ، 3- وتيرة مشابهة، 4- أسرع، 5- أسرع بشكل كبير
5	"شعرت انّني اتقدّم بوتيرة مُشابهة لوتيرة زملائي اليهود"	
6	"تمكّني من اللغة\طلاقتي اللغويّة اثّرت بشكل سلبي على علاماتي\ادائي الأكاديمي"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- اعارض تمامًا، 2- اعارض لحدّ ما، 3- لا اوافق ولا اعارض، 4- اوافق لحدّ ما، 5- اوافق تمامًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ.
7	"شعرت انّني قويّ باللغة العبريّة بما فيه الكفاية للبيئة الاكاديمية"	
8	"شعرت انّني قويّ باللغة الإنجليزية بما فيه الكفاية للبيئة الاكاديمية"	
9	"شعرت انّني متمكّن باللغة العبريّة بما فيه الكفاية لتكوين صداقات مع زملائي اليهود"	
10	"شعرت بالانتماء في الحرم الجامعي"	
11	"كان الحرم الجامعي مكان ودودًا لي"	
12	"الجامعة هي مكان عادِل"	
13	"اختبرت تمييزًا عنصريًا من المحاضرين او المعلّمين المُساعدين بسبب هويّتي الإثنية\القومية او الدّينيّة"	
14	"اختبرت تمييزًا عنصريًا من طاقم الموظّفين التنفيذي (مثلًا سكرتير القسم التعليمي) بسبب هويّتي الإثنية\القومية او الدّينيّة"	
15	"اختبرت تمييزًا عنصريًا من طلّاب آخرين بسبب هويّتي الإثنية\القومية او الدّينيّة"	
16	"اشعر انّ قرارات الجامعة تُراعي جميع الطلاب"	
17	"اشعر انّ هويّتي الإثنيّة\القوميّة تُحتَرَم في الجامعة\الكلّية"	
18	"اشعر انّ هويّتي الدينية تُحتَرَم في الجامعة\الكلّية"	
19	"لديّ اصدقاء يهود في الحرم الجامعي"	
20	"عملت على وظيفة\مشروع مُشترك مع زميل يهودي في التعليم"	
21	"اريد ان اكوّن المزيد من الصداقات مع طلاب يهود في الحرم الجامعي"	
22	"اظنّ انّ هنالك فرص لمقابلة طلاب يهود وتكوين صداقات معهم في الحرم الجامعي"	
23	"هنالك فصل\بُعُد بين العرب واليهود في الحرم الجامعي"	
24	"كانت عندي صعوبات ماديّة خلال وقتي كطالب"	
25	"وضعي المالي سبّب لي القلق خلال وقتي كطالب"	

26	"كان عليّ العمل خلال دراستي لتمويل تكاليف التعليم"	
27	"كان عليّ العمل خلال دراستي لدعم عائلتي"	
28	"كان لديّ دعم ماليّ من عائلتي"	
29	هل بدأت دراستك الأكاديمية بجيل 18-21؟	نعم، لا
إن كانت الإجابة لسؤال رقم 19 هي نعم		
29أ	"اغلب زملائي في الدراسة أكبر منّي بالعمر"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- اعارض تمامًا، 2- اعارض لحدّ ما، 3- لا اوافق ولا اعارض، 4- اوافق لحدّ ما، 5- اوافق تمامًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ.
29ب	"شعرت بالضغط ان ادخل التعليم العاليّ فترة قصيرة بعد انهائي للثانوية"	
29ج	"جيلي الصغير شكّل عائقًا بالنسبة لي في التعليم العاليّ"	
29د	"كنت واع بما فيه الكفاية عند دخولي للتعليم"	
29هـ	"اتمنى لو دخلت التعليم العاليّ بوقت متأخر اكتر"	

القسم الرابع: نظام الدعم الجامعيّ

كثيرًا ما تقدّم مؤسسات التعليم العاليّ دعمًا للطلاب العرب. اي خدمات تُتيحها جامعتك\كلّيتك؟ اشِر الى جميع الخدمات المُتاحة وحدّد مدى اهمّيتها لك:

رقم	السؤال	الإجابات
1	وقت اضافي في الامتحانات لِمَن لُغتهم الأم ليست العبريّة	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- غير مهمّة ابدًا، 2- غير مهمّة، 3- حياديّ، 4- مهمّة، 5- مهمّة جدًّا
2	طالِب مُرشِد (חונך)	
3	مُحاضِر مُرشِد (מרצה מנטור\חונך)	
4	حِصَص تقوية مع مُرشِد مُتكلّم العبريّة	
5	حِصَص تقوية مع مُرشِد مُتكلّم العربيّة	
6	مساق تحضير ما قبل الدخول للجامعة	
7	مِنح دراسيّة	
8	قروض ماليّة ذات فائدة قليلة	
9	استشارة مهنيّة لسوق العمل (ייעוץ קריירה)	
10	آخر (فصِّل)	
11	"اعلم ما هو الدّعم الذي توفّره لي الجامعة\الكلّية وكيف بإمكاني الحصول عليه"	مقياس لايكرت 1-5: 1- اعارض تمامًا، 2- اعارض لحدّ ما، 3- لا اوافق ولا اعارض، 4- اوافق لحدّ ما، 5- اوافق تمامًا، او لا ينطبق عليّ.
12	"اشعر انّ الدعم الذي توفّره لي الجامعة\الكلّية يُفيدني"	
13	"اشعر انّ الدعم الذي توفّره الجامعة\الكلّية يُفيد الطلاب العرب بشكل عام"	
14	"اشعر ان الجامعة\الكلّية تفهم احتياجاتي كطالب عربي"	
15	"استعنت بالدّعم من جامعتي\كلّيتي خلال تعليمي"	
16	"كنت سأستفيد من المزيد من الدعم الأكاديمي"	
17	"كنت سأستفيد من المزيد من الدعم الماليّ"	
18	"كنت سأستفيد من المزيد من الدعم النفسي\المعنويّ"	
19	"اشعر انّ الجامعة\الكلّية صادقة في محاولتها لدعم الطلاب العرب"	
20	"اشعر ان الجامعة\الكلّية تشعر بالشفقة تجاهي"	
21	"اشعر انّ الدعم الذي توفّره الجامعة\الكلّية كافٍ لإعطاء فرصة عادِلة للنجاح للطلاب العرب"	

Appendix 2.4A. Distribution requests sent to institutions by email (English)

Greetings,

Hope you are well.

My name is Lamma Mansour, a doctorate student in social policy and intervention at the University of Oxford. My research concerns the experience of Arab students in higher education institutions in Israel.

To gain a clearer view of this issue, I am distributing a questionnaire that enquires about the challenges facing Arab students, their experiences on campus and the support they receive from their institutions. I would be grateful if you could help me distribute the survey in your institution. The questionnaire is intended for undergraduate students and new graduates (up to five years of graduation so that it might be relevant to master's students).

Attached is the link to the questionnaire.

Happy to answer any questions about the questionnaire or my research more generally.

Many thanks and have a great rest of your week,

Lamma Mansour

Appendix 2.4B. Distribution request sent to institutions by email (Hebrew)

שלום,

מקווה ששלומך טוב.

שמי למא מנסור - דוקטורנטית למדיניות חברתית באוניברסיטת אוקספורד שבאנגליה. המחקר שלי עוסק בחווייתם של סטודנטים ערבים במוסדות ההשכלה הגבוהה בישראל.

כדי לקבל תמונה ברורה לגבי מצב הסטודנטים, אני מפיצה היום שאלון בכל הנוגע לאתגרים העומדים בפני הסטודנטים הערבים, חוויתם בקמפוס והתמיכה שהם מקבלים מהמוסדות האקדמיים. אשמח אם תוכלו לעזור לי בהפצת השאלון לסטודנטים הערבים הלומדים אצלכם במכללה. השאלון מיועד לסטודנטים לתואר ראשון ולבוגרים חדשים (עד 5 שנים מסיום התואר כך שאולי יהיה רלוונטי לסטודנטים לתואר שני).

מצרפת את הלינק לשאלון.

אשמח לענות על כל שאלה לגבי השאלון, התוצאות שלו והמחקר שלי בכלל.

תודה רבה והמשך שבוע מצוין,

למא מנסור

Appendix 2.5. Responses to survey distribution request by institution

Name of institution	Contact	Response
University of Tel Aviv	Arab students' coordinator	No response.
Hebrew University of Jerusalem	Arab students' coordinator	No.
Ben Gurion University of the Negev	Student dean	No response.
Bar Ilan University	Student dean	No response.
Technion - Israel Institute of Technology	Arab students' coordinator	No response.
University of Haifa	Student dean	No formal distribution. Distributed informally.
Reichman University (previously Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya)	Arab students' coordinator	Yes.
Ono Academic College	Student dean	Yes.
Sapir Academic College	Student dean	No response.
Tel Hai Academic College	Student dean	Yes.
Holon Institute of Technology	Arab students' coordinator	No response.
Hadassah Academic College	Student dean	No.
The Max Stern Jezreel Valley College	Student dean	No formal distribution. Distributed informally.
Ruppin Academic Centre	Arab students' coordinator	Yes.
ORT Braude Academic College of Engineering	Arab students' coordinator	Yes.
Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art	Arab students' coordinator	No formal distribution. Distributed informally.
Kinneret Academic college	Arab students' coordinator	No.
Bezalel Academy of Art and Design	Arab students' coordinator	Yes.
Western Galilee College	Student dean	No formal distribution. Distributed informally.
Zefat Academic College	Student dean	No.
Ramat Gan College	Student dean	No.
Achva College	Student dean	No.
Gordon college	Student dean	No response.
Wizo College	Student dean	No response.
Sami Shimon College	Student dean	No response.
Ashkelon College	Student dean	No response.

APPENDIX 3. PHASE III

Appendix 3.1A. Interviewee information sheet and consent form (English)

Participant information sheet

This information sheet is intended for individuals invited to be interviewed to discuss their experiences as students or academics during the events of May 2021. This research is a part of doctoral research in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford.

Introduction & purpose of the study

My name is Lamma Mansour, a DPhil student of social policy and intervention. My research is exploring Palestinian Arab students' experiences in Israeli higher education. In this part of my studies, I am interested in finding out more about what was it like to be on campuses during the events of May 2021, especially for Palestinian Arab students. I believe you can help by sharing your perception of the atmosphere in your institution at the time, the relations among students, and the institution's response (or lack of) to these events.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Your choice to participate or not will not cause you problems or have any negative consequences. You can withdraw from the study at any point. For more information on withdrawal from the study, please refer to the 'What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?' section.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

I will invite you to an interview with me lasting up to 45 minutes where you can share your thoughts and experiences confidentially. The interview can take place online or in person at a public space of your choosing and will be audio-recorded for research purposes only. For information on how the data will be handled, please refer to the 'What will happen to my data?' section.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there is no immediate benefit to participating in this study, it is my hope that the findings of this research will contribute to a better understanding of the issues facing Palestinian Arab students in Israeli higher education, especially in times of heightened tension, and ultimately, the enactment of more sensitive policies.

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question if you feel it is too personal or if talking about certain issues makes you uncomfortable.

In the unlikely event that you experience significant distress due to the discussion, please seek help. Emotional support is available through your health insurance institution or other organizations. See details below:

Health insurance institutions:

- Clalit: 2700* or 03-9405350
- Macabbi: 3555* or 1-700-50-53-53
- Leumit: 1-700-507-507
- Me'uhedet: 3833* or 077-2703756

ERAN Organization (Emotional First Aid by Telephone & Internet):

- By phone: 1202
- Online chat: eran.org.il

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. I will not be sharing any information about you with anyone and the information I collect from you will remain confidential. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only I will know what your number is and will keep that information secure.

Responsible members of the University of Oxford may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

What will happen to the information I provide?

As previously stated, the interview will be recorded. The recording will be stored safely on an external hard drive. The recordings will not be accessed by anyone but me and will be deleted after they are transcribed (i.e., written down). In the transcribed text, your name will be replaced with a random number. The link between the random number and your name will be stored separately on a password-protected external hard drive and will be deleted three years after the interview. This allows me to link the interview to your characteristics (e.g., whether you are a student or a member of an academic) while protecting your identity.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can stop your participation at any point in time during the research if you change your mind without giving me or anyone else a reason for your withdrawal. You can also ask for the information you provided not to be used in the research and I will delete them.

What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain about any aspect of the way in which you have been approached or treated, or how your information is handled during the course of this study, you should contact Prof Jane Barlow by email at jane.barlow@spi.ox.ac.uk or you may contact the Social Policy and Intervention's Research Ethics Committee: University of Oxford, 32 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2ER, UK or by email at ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings of the research undertaken will contribute to the fulfilment of my doctoral thesis in an aggregated manner and any quotes will be used anonymously. The thesis will be made available in the libraries of Oxford University. Following this, I might seek to publish the findings in academic journals or at conferences.

Who has reviewed the study?

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm.

Further information

If you have any questions, you may contact me via this email: lamma.mansour@gtc.ox.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in my research.

Consent

☐ I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet regarding this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without repercussions. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded with my permission only.

☐ I agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Email address for correspondence: _____

Date:_____

Signature:_____

Appendix 3.1B. Interviewee information sheet and consent form (Arabic)

أُعِدَّت استمارة الموافقة التّالية للمدعوّين للاشتراك في مقابلات لمشاركة تجربتهم كطلاب او اكاديميّين خلال احداث أيّار سنة 2021. يتمّ هذا البحث بإطار اطروحة دكتوراة في قسم السياسة والتدخّل الاجتماعي في جامعة اوكسفورد.

مُقدِّمة وهدف البحث

اسمي لمى منصور، طالبة دكتوراة بالسياسة والتدخُّل الاجتماعي. بحثي يختصّ بتجارِب الطّلاب في التعليم العالي الإسرائيلي. في هذا القسم من دراستي، اريد ان اعرف المزيد عن تأثير احداث أيّار 2021 على حرم الجامعات والكلّيات، بالأخصّ بما يتعلّق بتجربة الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين. بإمكانك مساعدتي من خلال مشاركة انطباعاتك عن الجوّ العام في جامعتك\كلّيتك في تلك الفترة، العلاقات بين الطلاب وكيفيّة استجابة (او عدم استجابة) الجامعة او الكلّية لهذه الأحداث.

هل انت مُجبَر على الاشتراك؟

لا. قرارك بالاشتراك او عدم الاشتراك هو طوعيّ بالكامل، يعود لَك وحدك ورفض الاشتراك لن يؤثّر عليك سلبًا. إذا قرّرت ان تشترك ومن ثمّ غيّرت رأيك، بإمكانك الانسحاب من البحث في ايّ مرحلة. للمزيد عن هذه الامكانية، راجِع قسم "ماذا سيحدُث إذا قرّرت انّك لا تريد الاستمرار في البحث؟".

ماذا سيحدث إذا قرّرت ان تشترك في البحث؟

سيتمّ دعوتك لمقابلة معي مُدّتها حتّى 45 دقيقة حيث سيتسنّى لك مشاركة افكارك وتجربتك بشكل سرّي. بإمكاننا اللقاء عبر الزوم او وجه لِوجه. سيتمّ تسجيل المقابلة صوتيًّا لأغراض البحث. للمزيد من المعلومات عن كيفية استخدام المعلومات المُسجّلة، راجِع قسم "ماذا سيحصُل للمعلومات في البحث؟".

ما هي الأبعاد الإيجابيّة والسلبيّة لاشتراكك في البحث؟

لا توجد فائدة فوريّة للمشاركة في البحث، ولكنني آمل انّ تُساهم النتائج في فهم أعمق للتجربة الطلابية في التعليم العاليّ، خاصّةً في فترات توتّر متزايد، وتطبيق سياسات أكثر حساسيّة.

هنالك خطر ان تكشف بالصُّدفة عن معلومات شخصيّة او سرّية خلال المقابلة، او ان تشعر بعدم الارتياح خلال الحديث عن مواضيع مُعيّنة، لكنّني لا اريد ان يحدُث ذلك. انت غير مُجبَر بالإجابة ان كُنتَ تشعُر بأنّ السؤال شخصيّ او انّ الإجابة عنه غير مُريحة لك.

بحالة ولّدت محادثتنا لديك ضيق نفسي، رجاءًا اطلب مساعدة. بإمكانك الحصول على دعم نفسي من خلال صندوق المرضى الخاصّ بك او عن طريق جمعيّات اخرى. فيما يلي التفاصيل:

- صناديق المرضى:
  - كلاليت: 2700* او 03-9405350

- مكابي: 3555* او 1-700-50-53-53
- لئوميت: 1-700-507-507
- مئوحيدت: 3833* او 077-2703756

- جمعية عران – עד"ן:
  - تلفون: 1201
  - محادثة في الموقع: eran.org.il

<u>هل سيبقى قرارك بالاشتراك بالبحث سرّيًا؟</u>

نعم. لن اشارك ايّ معلومات عنك والمعلومات من البحث ستبقى سريّة. ايّ معلومات عنك ستحمل رقم بدل من اسمك بحيث فقط انا سأعلم ما هو رقمك وسأحافظ على ذلك سرّيًا. بالإضافة لذلك، قد يُعطى لأفراد مسؤولين من جامعة اوكسفورد امكانيّة الدخول للمعلومات من البحث بغرض المراقبة والتأكد من انّ البحث يلائم المعايير الأخلاقيّة المناسِبة.

<u>ماذا سيحصُل للمعلومات المُستقاة من البحث؟</u>

كما ذكرت سابِقًا، سيتمّ تسجيل المقابلة. سيتمّ حفظ التسجيل على قرص صلب خارجي (external hard drive). المعلومات المُسجّلة سرّية ولن يتمّ ربطِها مع هويّتك. لن يتمّ اتاحة التسجيلات لأيّ شخص بإستثنائي وسيتمّ حذفها بعد نسخها كنصّ حيثُ سيُستبدَل اسمك برقم عشوائي للحفاظ على خصوصيّتك. سيتم تخزين الملف الذي يحوي الرابط بين اسمك ورقمك بشكل آمن على قرص صلب خارجي وسيُحذَف بعد ثلاث سنوات. ذات الرقم العشوائي سيُستخدم للاستمارات مما سينسح لي ان اربط بين المقابلة وخصائصك (مثلًا إن كنت طالبًا او أكاديمي) مع المحافظة على خصوصيّتك.

<u>ماذا سيحدُث إذا قرّرت انّك لا تريد الاستمرار في البحث؟</u>

بإمكانك ايقاف اشتراكك بالبحث حينما شئت، بدون تزويدي بأي سبب لانسحابك. بإمكانك ايضًا ان تطلب ان يتم حذف المعلومات التي قمت بتزويدها للبحث.

<u>ماذا سيحصل إن كانت هنالك مُشكلة؟</u>

ان اردت الشكوى عن كيفيّة التوجّه لك، مُعامَلَتك او معامَلتك معلوماتك خلال البحث، بإمكانك الاتصال بالباحِثة بروفيسور جين بارلو على البريد الالكتروني jane.barlow@spi.ox.ac.uk او لجنة الأخلاقيات في ابحاث التدخل الاجتماعي والسياسات في جامعة اوكسفورد (Social Policy and Intervention's Research Ethics Committee) عن طريق البريد الالكتروني:

ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

<u>ماذا سيحصُل لنتائج هذا البحث؟</u>

سيتمّ استخدام نتائج البحث بشكل مجمَّع لتقديم أطروحتي للدكتوراة، وايّ اقتباسات من المشتركين ستبقى مجهولة الهويّة. سيتمّ إتاحة الاطروحة في مكتبات جامعة اوكسفورد عند تقديمها النهائي، وقد اسعى لنشر النتائج في منصّات علميّة مُختلفة.

مَن راجَع سيرورة البحث؟

تمّت مُراجعة والموافقة على اقتراح سيرورة البحث على يد لجنة اخلاقيّات البحث في قسم السياسة والتدخّل الاجتماعي في جامعة اوكسفورد، وهي لجنة مسؤوليتها ان تضمن حماية المشتركين من الضرر.

للمزيد من المعلومات

إن كان لديك ايّ سؤال او استفسار، بالإمكان التوجه لي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني: lamma.mansour@gtc.ox.ac.uk

شكرًا لك!

موافقة

☐ اؤكّد انّني قمت بقراءة المعلومات اعلاه بخصوص هذا البحث. كانت لديّ الفرصة ان آخذ هذه المعلومات بعين الاعتبار، الاستفسار عن ايّ امر غير مفهوم وتلقّي اجابة ملائِمة.

☐ ادرِك انّ اشتراكي طوعيّ وانّي حرّ للانسحاب من البحث حينما اردت بدون اعطاء سبب وبدون ان يؤثّر ذلك عليّ سلبًا. ادرِك انّ المقابلة ستُسجَّل صوتيًا بعد إذني فقط.

☐ اوافق على الاشتراك بهذا البحث.

اسم المشترك: _____

البريد الإلكتروني للتواصل: _____

ان كنت لا تفحص بريدك الإلكتروني، الرجاء تزويد رقم الهاتف للتواصل معك:_____

تاريخ:_____

Appendix 3.2A. Interview requests sent to academics by email (English)

Greetings,

Hope you are well.

My name is Lamma Mansour, a doctoral student of social policy at the University of Oxford. My research concerns the experience of Arab students in Israeli higher education, and in this stage I am focusing specifically on the time period of May 2021. In addition to interviewing students, I am also interviewing academics to understand the students' experiences through them. I would be grateful if you agree to be interviewed.

The interview would last about an hour and would be conducted online on Zoom. The questions refer to the responses and emotions of Arab students during the May 2021 events and their interactions with the academic institution. The interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed so that no identifiable personal characteristics will be saved and your identity will remain anonymous. If you prefer for the interview not to be recorded, I would be happy to interview you without recording and only taking notes. For more information about the research, I attached an information sheet, or you could write me directly.

I would be grateful for your cooperation and am happy to answer any questions.

Best wishes,

Lamma

Appendix 3.2B. Interview requests sent to academics by email (Hebrew)

שלום רב,

מקווה ששלומך טוב.

אני למא מנסור, דוקטורנטית למדיניות חברתית באוניברסיטת אוקספורד. המחקר שלי עוסק בחוויתם של סטודנטים ערבים בהשכלה הגבוהה בישראל, ובשלב הזה מתמקד באופן ספיציפי בתקופת אירועי מאי 2021. בנוסף לראיונות עם סטודנטים, אני גם מראיינת חברי סגל אקדמי כדי להבין את חווית הסטודנטים דרכם. אודה לך אם תסכים להשתתף במחקר.

הריאיון ייארך כחצי שעה וייערך בזום. השאלות יתייחסו לתגובותיהם ורגשותיהם של הסטודנטים הערבים במהלך אירועי מאי 2021 ואת האינטראקציות שלהם עם המוסד האקדמי. הריאיון יוקלט קולית, יתומלל ולא יישמר אף פרט מזהה שלך כך שתישאר אנונימי. במקרה שאתה מעדיף לא להקליט את הריאיון, אשמח לערוך את הריאיון בלי הקלטה ורק לרשום הערות. לפרטים נוספים על המחקר, אפשר לקרוא במסמך המצורף או לכתוב לי באופן ישיר.

אודה לשיתוף הפעולה ואשמח לענות על כל שאלה או בירור נוסף.

המשך שבוע מצוין,

למא

Appendix 3.3A. Interview requests sent to civil society organisations by email (English)

Greetings,

Hope this finds you well.

My name is Lamma Mansour, a DPhil researcher in Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation at the University of Oxford. My research explores the experiences of Palestinian Arab students in Israeli higher education, and in the third part (currently underway), I am seeking to understand the experiences of students during the May 2021 events. I am reaching out to you as your organisation has been mentioned by interviewees as a key body at that time. I would be grateful if I could interview one of your staff members in the next few weeks to speak in more detail about this.

Attached is a document with more information about the study.

I would be grateful for your cooperation, and I am happy to answer any questions or queries you might have.

Best wishes,

Lamma

Appendix 3.3B. Interview requests sent to civil society organisations by email (Arabic)

سلام،

آمل انكم بخير.

اسمي لمى منصور – باحثة للقب الثالث في السياسات الاجتماعية في جامعة اوكسفورد في بريطانيا. بحثي يختصّ بتجارب الطلاب العرب الفلسطينيّين في الجامعات الإسرائيلية، وفي القسم الأخير من البحث (الجاري حاليًا) ابحث تجارب الطُّلاب خلال احداث ايّار 2021. اتوجّه لكم اذ ان جمعيّتكم قد ذُكِرت أكثر من مرّة في المقابلات التي اجريتها مع الطلاب حتى الآن كجهة محوريّة في ذاك الآن. سأُسرّ ان كان بإمكاني مُقابلة (عبر الزوم) أحد اعضاء الطاقم خلال الاسابيع القادمة للتحدث بشكل موسّع عن دور وتجربة الطلاب الجامعيين في احداث أيّار 2021.

فيما يلي ملفّ يحوي المزيد من المعلومات عن البحث.

سأسرّ بتعاونكم، والإجابة على اي اسئلة او استفسارات عن البحث إن وُجِدَت.

شكرًا،

لمى

Appendix 3.4A. The interview guide (English)

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed for this study. I want to reiterate that what you say in this interview will remain confidential and your answers will be anonymized. You also have the right to not answer any questions I ask, without having to justify that.

Can you tell me a bit about yourself – where you're from, what you do currently?

Key questions

As you've read in the participant information sheet, I am interested in finding out more about the impact that the events of May 2021 had on students, specifically Palestinian Arab students.

1. Think back to the events of that month. Can you describe to me what was it like being at university/college? (On campus, in classrooms, on social media)
    - Did you do something differently due to these events?
    - What feelings were most prominent?
    - Were the relations between students different? If so, how?
2. Did your institution respond to these events?
    - Do you feel that that response was appropriate?
3. Do you feel like these events made a lasting impact?
    - If yes, what changed? If not, why not?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like me to know or that you feel is important to share?

Thank you again for your time and for sharing your experience. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or comments.

Appendix 3.4B. The interview guide (Arabic)

مقدّمة

شكرًا على استعدادك تشترك في البحث. بدّي اشدّد انّه كل اشي بتحكيه في هاي المقابلة رح يبقى سرّي وكلّ اشي بتحكيه، إذا بنتشر، مش رح يكون اسمك عليه او معلومات عنك. بتقدر تطلب مني ما تجاوب على سؤال معيّن، بدون ما تبرّر نفسك، ببساطة منكمّل للسؤال اللي بعده.

- ممكن تحكيلي شويّ عن حالك؟ من وين انت، شو بتعمل اسا؟

الاسئلة الاساسيّة

زيّ ما قرأت في الملفّ، بدّي اعرف اكتر عن تأثير احداث ايّار 2021 على الطلاب الجامعيين، بالاخص الطلاب العرب.

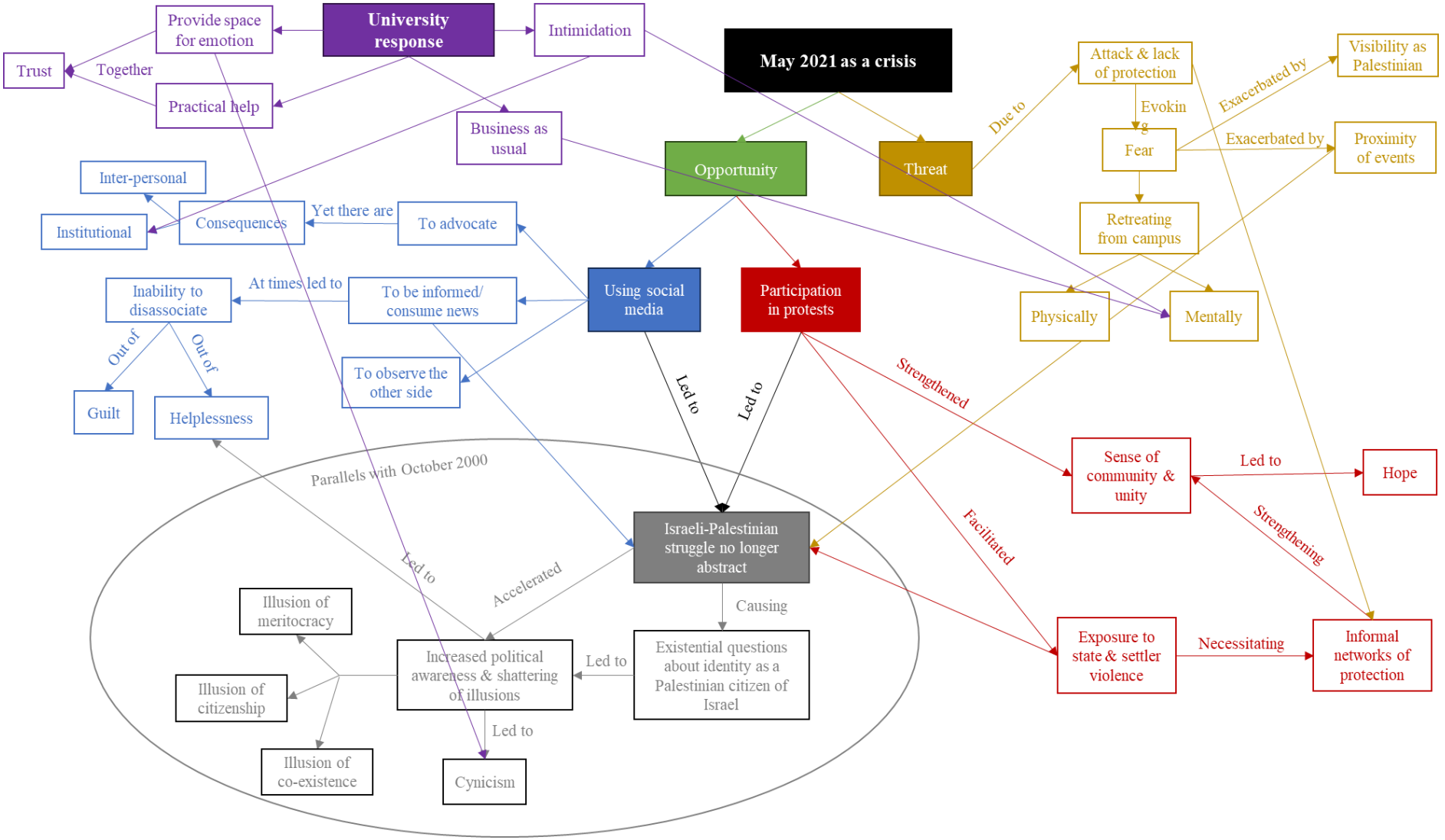
- إذا بتقدر ترجع بذهنك لهديك الفترة – بتقدر توصف لي كيف كان الجوّ في الجامعة/الكلّية؟ (في الحرم، في الصفوف، على مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي)
- هل عملت اشي بشكل مختلف بسبب هاي الاحداث؟
- اي مشاعر كانت بارزة بهديك الفترة؟
- كيف كانت العلاقات بين الطلاب؟ هل كان في اختلاف في التعامل؟ إذا نعم، كيف؟
- هل كان في ردّة فعل من جامعتك/كلّيتك على هاي الأحداث؟
  - هل بتحسّ انه ردّة الفعل كانت ملائمة؟
- هل بتحسّ انّه هاي الاحداث تركت أثر دائم؟
  - إذا نعم، شو اللي تغيّر؟ إذا لا، ليش لا؟

نهاية

هل في اشي تاني بتفكّر مهمّ اعرفه او بتحبّ تشاركني فيه؟

شكرًا كمان مرة على وقتك وإنك شاركتني تجربتك. تتردّدش تكون في تواصل معي إذا عندك اسئلة او تعليقات تانية.

Appendix 3.5. Initial data analysis diagram



Appendix 3.6. Intermediate data analysis diagram

