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INTERMARRIAGE ATTITUDES TOWARD TWO MAJORITY GROUPS: THE ROLE OF BICULTURAL IDENTITY INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

Hisham Jubran¹ and Gabriel Horenczyk²

¹Faculty of Education, Beit-Berl College, Israel. Email: afkar2005@gmail.com

²School of Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, gabriel.horenczyk@mail.huji.ac.il

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Corresponding Author: Hisham Jubran
(afkar2005@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This study sheds light on the relationship between intermarriage and multicultural identity. It examines whether integration between two identities influences attitudes toward intermarriage with two majority groups and whether cultural identification influences the association between identity integration and intermarriage. This study was conducted among Palestinian Christians in Israel who live in a unique context of multicultural identities (Arab identity, Israeli identity, and Christian identity). It was hypothesized that Arab-Christian integration is positively correlated with marriage to Muslims and negatively correlated with marriage to Jews. On the other hand, Israeli-Arab integration is positively correlated with marriage to Jews and negatively correlated with marriage to Muslims. It was also hypothesized that cultural identification plays a moderating role in the association between integration and intermarriage. The results confirmed the hypotheses: Arab-Christian integration was positively correlated with marriage to Muslims and negatively correlated with acceptance of marriage to Jews. Furthermore, Israeli-Arab integration was positively correlated with marriage to Jews and negatively correlated with marriage to Muslims. Identification with the culture moderated the association between integration and intermarriage. The results were discussed in relation to the conceptualization of bicultural identity integration (BII) and the social context of Palestinian Christians in Israel.

KEYWORDS: Intermarriage, Bicultural Identity Integration, Identification with Cultures, Palestinian Christians, Israel.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of intermarriage has aroused the interest of various disciplines (Osanami Törngren et al., 2016). Many studies analyzed intermarriage in terms of intergroup relationships (Gaines et al., 2015; Qian et al., 2012; Rodriguez-Garcia 2015;). Others examined intermarriage in terms of religious beliefs (Niekerk & Verkuyten, 2018) and in terms of the crossing of boundaries between social groups (Rodriguez-Garcia 2015; Karkabi-Sabbah, 2017). In addition, much of intermarriage research has focused on marriages between immigrants and natives (Dion & Dion, 2004). More recently, a number of studies have examined intermarriage between indigenous groups, particularly between groups living in ongoing conflict or in divided societies (Mrdjen & Bahnik, 2018; Sabbah-Karkabi, 2021). In this sense, the present study sheds light on an indigenous group in a conflictual context, namely the Palestinian Christian Arabs in Israel. The uniqueness of this study lies in examining the attitudes of minority intermarriage toward two majority groups who live in a conflictual context. The conceptualization of bicultural identity integration (BII) (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005) and its conceptual extension (Jubran et al., 2020) serve as a theoretical basis for attempting to understand intermarriage with two majority groups. Although BII has been correlated with psychological variables (Benet-Martinez, Lee & Cheng, 2021), less attention has been paid to the relationship between BII and attitudes toward intermarriage.

1.1. Bicultural Identity Integration (Bii)

The Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) model examines how multicultural people experience the integration of their cultural identities. It explains individuals' experiences of their cultural identities as harmonious or conflictual (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Xiao, 2024 for review). It should be noted that later studies (Benet-Martínez et al., 2005; Miramontez et al., 2008) have found that the BII consists of two separate psychological dimensions: The cultural distance dimension expresses the perception of distance versus blending two cultural identities (blendedness vs. distance). The second dimension (cultural conflict) expresses the degree of tension or harmony that the individual perceives and experiences between two cultural identities (harmony or conflict). These two dimensions are independent structures (Benet-Martínez, 2012). Therefore, behaviors, attitudes, and feelings described as "low BII" (e.g., a sense of gap between the two cultures) reflect the cultural experience

resulting from the conflict between the two cultures (Huynh et al., 2011).

Over the past decade, the BII has been studied and established as a valid, psychologically significant construct (Benet-Martinez et al., 2021; Benet-Martinez, 2018). High levels of BII have been found to be associated with a variety of benefits, such as better psychological adjustment (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Bond, 2008) and positive social assimilation (Repke & Benet-Martinez, 2018). Although these studies mainly examine immigrants, it should be noted that a lot of research has recently developed that looks at the non-immigrant population living in a particular context (Sam & Berry, 2016,).

In the most recent study, the BII model was extended to consider integration between and across three identities in an ethnoreligious population of Palestinian Christians in Israel who possess three identities: First, national identity (Arab), second, religious identity (Christian), and third, civic identity (Israeli). On the basis of these identities, three integration pairs were perceived: Israeli-Arab, Arab-Christian and Israeli-Christian (Jubran et al., 2020). Two integration pairs were considered in this study.

1.2. Identification With Cultures

There is a consensus among researchers that identification with social groups is generally associated with positive psychological variables (Verkuyten, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that low identifiers are more likely to dissociate themselves from the group when their identity is threatened (e.g. Branscombe et al., 1993; Doosje & Ellemers, 1997; Ellemers et al., 2002). In contrast, high identifiers are more willing than low identifiers to work for the group, prioritize group goals, conform to group standards and norms, and pay attention to the needs of other group members (Triandis, 1989).

In light of the above research insights, there is a similarity between identification with the social group and identification with the culture in the case of multicultural identities. It has been shown that people who have been exposed to more than one culture and have internalized elements from more than one culture tend to develop multicultural identities (Benet-Martinez et al., 2021). On the other hand, experience with more than one culture does not necessarily guarantee a multicultural identity. Being a multicultural person requires the expression of a sense of belonging to more than one culture. Furthermore, adopting the values and norms of a culture does not guarantee identification with that culture (Hong et al., 2007). Therefore, identification

with a culture can play an important role in the perception of the relationship between cultural identities. For example, a person showing a multicultural identity does not feel equally identified with all cultures (Benet-Martinez et al., 2021). This assumption is in line with the social identity literature, which states that people who identify strongly with a culture are more likely to follow the norms and values of that culture (Jetten, Postmes, & Mcauliffe, 2002). Therefore, the current study addresses the relationship between identification with culture and the BII variables in intermarriage situations.

1.3. *Ethnic Intermarriage*

It is clear that social scientists usually consider intermarriage as an indicator of social integration of groups (Gaines et al., 2015). More recently, studies have looked at mixed couples in specific cultural contexts, such as Quebec in Canada (Le Gall & Meintel, 2015) and British-Chinese couples in the United Kingdom (Hu, 2016). Although intermarriage is considered a sign of integration of ethnic groups, it remains controversial in some cultures, leading to many challenges for mixed couples (Osanami Törnngren et al., 2016).

Noticeably, interfaith marriages are becoming more common in Western countries, but are still considered deviant behavior and even a threat to the culture itself in some cultures (Sewenet et al., 2017). In another study, the attitude of Muslim majority countries toward interfaith marriages was negative (Van Neikerk & Verkuyten, 2018). In summary, it can be said that the phenomenon of mixed marriages is very complex and has a great affinity with the cultural context in which the marriage takes place.

In the Israeli context, ethnic intermarriage became more common after the establishment of Israel, as the Jewish group includes immigrants from a variety of ethnicities and cultures, such as Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, as well as Jews who emigrated mainly from the former Soviet Union (DellaPergola, 2017). Thus, Israeli research has paid more attention to intermarriage between ethnic groups within the Jewish community (Benjamin & Barash, 2004; Lomsky-Feder & Leibovitz 2010; Okun & Khait-Mareilly, 2010;). On the other hand, Karkabi-Sabbah (2017) examined intermarriage between Palestinian citizens of Israel and Jewish citizens of Israel, emphasizing the conflictual context in Israel between Jews and Arabs and how intermarriage takes place between Palestinian citizens of Israel and Jewish citizens of Israel. Considering that the entire Israeli society is deeply divided, and despite the social and

political differences between Palestinians and Jewish citizens of Israel, the ethnic and religious group boundaries are fragmented in the case of intermarriage between Palestinians and Jewish citizens of Israel (Karkabi-Sabbah, 2017). In addition, belonging to a particular group in Israeli Jewish society and the degree of belonging to the dominant group in Israeli Jewish society leads to different perceptions when they cross group boundaries (Sabbah-Karkabi, 2021). In particular, the marriage of a Jewish woman who immigrated from the former Soviet Union to a Palestinian man is perceived as less threatening to group hegemony than the marriage of an Ashkenazi woman who belongs to a dominant group in Israeli society

1.4. *Palestinian Christians in Israel*

Palestinian Christians in Israel are an integral part of the Palestinian population, represent 9% of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel and 1.6% of the population in Israel (Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2014). Their group identity is formed through identification with both ethnic and religious minority groups. From an ethnic perspective, this group is part of the Palestinian Arab minority, which makes up 20% of Israel's total population. From a religious perspective, it is often seen as a minority within a minority, distinct from both the Jewish majority and the Muslim majority within the Palestinian Arab group (Munayer & Horenczyk, 2014). From an identity perspective, Palestinian Christians have three identities: The Israeli identity (civic identity), the Palestinian Arab identity (national identity) and the Christian identity (religious identity). These identities are clearly the result of longstanding historical and political transformations (Peleg & Waxman, 2011). Palestinian Christians can thus be considered a minority within minority (Tsimhoni, 2002). Following this logic, Palestinian Christians live within two majority groups: the Palestinian Muslims in Israel and the Jewish population in Israel.

1.5. *The Present Study*

This study addresses the question of whether integration between identities affects attitudes toward intermarriage with two majority groups – Jews and Muslims – and whether cultural identification influences the association between identity integration and intermarriage. Previous studies were mainly conducted to compare the attitudes of immigrants or minority groups toward marriage with members of the majority population (Kalmijn & van Tubergen 2006; Rodriguez-Garcia 2015). It examined attitudes toward intermarriage

through a dual prism, in group versus out group. This study examines intermarriage toward two majority groups which highlights the dynamics between identities. This unique constellation suggested by Jubran et al. (2020). So, it is possible to construct a set of integrations in the case of three identities. In the present study, however, we have chosen the highest and the lowest identity integration: Arab-Christian integration is the highest and the lowest integration is Israeli-Arab integration. In the BII conceptualization, there is a high degree of conflict between Arab and Israeli identities and a low degree of conflict between Arab and Christian identities (Benet-Martinez et al., 2021).

Three hypotheses have been put forward. First: Arab-Christian integration is positively related to marriage with Muslims and negatively related to marriage with Jews. Second: Israeli-Arab integration is positively correlated with marriage to Jews and negatively correlated with marriage to Muslims. Thirdly, identification with the culture moderates the association between integration and intermarriage.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

Data were collected from 383 young Palestinian Christians living in Israel (mean age $M = 19.16$, $SD = 3.66$), of whom 139 (36%) were men. Half (49%) of the participants were college and university students, and the rest (48%) were high school students. The sample was drawn from 27 towns and villages in Israel.

2.2. Measures

The Bicultural Identity Integration Scale - Version 2 (BIIS-2; Benet-Martinez, 2018). This questionnaire was taken from an earlier study who examined BII among Palestinian Christians in Israel (Jubran et al., 2020). The items were rephrased to refer to the *two* aspects of identity integration. The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*highly agree*). For example, "I feel both Arab and Christian at the same time"; or "I find it difficult to connect Arab culture and Christian culture". The respondents were asked to complete the 12-item scales separate for each type of identity integration: Arab-Christian and Israeli Arab (thus a total of 24 items).

Identification with cultures was assessed by single items ("How much do you identify with and feel about the following cultural communities: a) Israeli culture. b) Arab culture based on the research of Postmes and others (2012), rated on a scale ranging

from 0 (does not identify at all) to 6 (identify very strongly).

Intermarriage preference was assessed by using a single item, similar to various studies (e.g. Campbell & Herman, 2015). This item was shown twice. For the first time it examined the preference for marriage with Muslims ("I prefer to marry Muslim, not Jew, due to the cultural closeness between Muslims and Christians") and the second examined the preference for marriage with Jews ("I prefer to marry Jew, not Muslim, due to the cultural closeness between Jews and Christians). The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (highly agree). Although the limitation of the use of a single-item measure, which does not allow the assessment of internal reliability and may capture the construct with less precision, in this case single-item measure is appropriate because intermarriage attitudes are global evaluative orientation toward specific out-groups and do not necessarily require multiple indicators. In a similar field, Huijnk, Verkuyten, and Coenders (2010) measured intermarriage attitudes using the same question format with different out-groups. In this study, respondents indicated their preferences using a direct comparative item, and each item was analyzed separately to examine how identity components relate to intermarriage attitudes. This wording was chosen because intermarriage is the most intimate form of intergroup boundary crossing and a valid indicator of social distance and identity boundaries (Kalmijn, 1998).

The BII scales yielded satisfactory internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha values for the Arab-Christian, and Israeli-Arab identity integration were high (0.82 and 0.83 respectively). All questionnaires were in Arabic, which translated from and then translated back into English.

2.3. Data Analysis

Our analysis strategy consisted of two phases. In the first phase, we examined the means, standard deviations and correlations between the research variables. In the second phase, we conducted a series of hierarchical regressions to assess whether marriage preference varies as a function of identity integration, identification with cultures, and the interaction of identity integration X identification with cultures. Since there is no theoretical model to guide us as to which interaction is relevant, we decided to include all possible interactions to determine the final interaction. The models were run separately for each of the preferred marriages (with

Jews and with Muslims). Each model was evaluated hierarchically (Cohen et al., 2002). Potential multicollinearity was rejected since the tolerance and VIF ranged from 0.25-1.00 and 1.00-1.49, respectively. After finding the significant interactions between the integration and identification variables, we examined the moderating effect using Model 1 of the PROCESS 3.4 macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018).

3. RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, marriage to a Jew (M=2.4, SD= 1.64) is positively correlated with Israeli-Arab integration (M=2.67, SD= .85; r=.18, p<.001) and negatively correlated with Arab-Christian integration (M=4.16, SD= .86; r= -.32, p<.001). On the other hand, marriage with Muslim (M=2.4, SD= 1.52) was positively correlated with Arab-Christian integration (r=.14, p<.001) and negatively correlated with Israeli-Arab integration (r= -.21, p<.001).

Table 1: Pearson Correlations Between the Marriage, Identity Integration and Identification with Cultures (N=383).

Variables	M	SD	N	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Marriage with Jew	2.40	1.64	377	1	-.14**	.36**	-.39**	-.32**	.18**
2. Marriage with Muslim	2.41	1.52	379		1	-.35**	.10	.14**	-.21**
3. Identification with Israeli culture	2.33	1.78	377			1	-.15**	-.16**	.45**
4. Identification with Arab culture	3.95	1.53	373				1	.44**	-.05
5. Arab-Christian integration	4.16	0.86	383					1	.04
6. Israeli-Arab integration	2.67	0.85	381						1

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

In line with the first hypothesis, the regression model revealed a significant main effect for Arab-Christian integration (B= -.62, SE= .09, β= -.32, p<

.001), when the dependent variable is marriage with Jew (see table 2).

Table 2: Regression Coefficients for Predicting Marriage with Jew (N=383).

	Predictor	ΔR ²	B	SE	β	t	P
Step 1		.14**					
	Arab-Christian integration		-0.62	0.09	-0.32	-6.7	<.001
Step 2	Israeli-Arab integration		0.39	0.09	0.20	4.20	<.001
		.12**					
step 3	Identification-Israeli cultural		0.251	0.04	0.27	5.23	<.001
	Identification-Arab cultural		-0.30	0.05	-0.28	-5.69	<.001
Total □ ²	Arab-Christian integration X Identification-Israeli cultural		0.01	0.04	0.04	0.20	>.05
	Arab-Christian integration X Identification-Arab cultural		0.09	0.05	0.471	1.845	>.05
	Israeli-Arab integration X Identification-Israeli cultural		-0.12	0.04	-0.50	-2.7	<.001
	Israeli -Arab integration X Identification-Arab cultural		-0.07	0.05	-0.25	-1.35	>.05
Total □ ²		.290					

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

On the other hand, in case marriage with Muslim served as a dependent variable, the regression model revealed a significant main for Arab-Christian integration (B=.26, SE= .08, β=.15, p< .001) (see table 3). The second hypothesis, suggesting the Israeli-Arab integration is positively correlated with marriage with Jews and negatively correlated with marriage Muslims, was also supported. The

regression model revealed a significant main effect for Israeli Arab- integration (B=.39, SE= .09, β=.20, p< .001), when the dependent variable is marriage with Jew (see table 2). On the other hand, in case marriage with Muslim served as a dependent variable, the regression model revealed a significant main Israeli Arab integration (B= -.40, SE= .08, β=-.22, p< .001), (see table 3).

Table 3: Regression Coefficients for Predicting Marriage with Muslim (N=383).

	Predictor	ΔR ²	B	SE	β	t	P
Step 1		.072**					
	Arab-Christian integration		0.26	0.08	0.15	3.0	<.001

	Israeli-Arab integration		-0.40	0.08	-0.22	-4.51	<.001
Step 2		.067**					
	Identification-Israeli cultural		-0.25	0.04	-0.29	-5.30	<.001
	Identification-Arab cultural		0.01	0.05	0.01	0.32	>.05
Step 3		.022					>.05
	Arab-Christian integration X Identification-Israeli cultural		-0.06	0.04	-0.29	-1.24	>.05
	Arab-Christian integration X Identification-Arab cultural		-0.05	0.05	-0.31	-1.11	>.05
	Israeli-Arab integration X Identification-Israeli cultural		0.04	0.04	0.18	0.95	=.05
	Israeli-Arab integration X Identification-Arab cultural		-0.11	0.05	-0.40	-1.99	<.05
Total χ^2		.161					

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Additional findings were found related to the association between marriage with Jew and Muslim and identification with Arab culture and Israeli culture (see table 2 and 3 for more details).

We predicted in the third hypothesis that the identification with culture plays a moderating role regarding the association between integration and intermarriage. Table 2 reveals that the Israeli-Arab integration X identification with Israeli culture predicted, significantly, marriage with Jew ($B = -.12, SE = .04, \beta = -.50, p < .001$), whereas the rest of the interactions were not significant. On the other hand, marriage with Muslim was predicted by significant interaction: Israeli-Arab integration X identification with Arab culture ($B = -.11, SE = .05, \beta = -.40, p < .05$). The other interactions were not significant (see table 3).

It is noteworthy that step 3 in the regression model in case of marriage with Muslim is a dependent variable, the interaction "Israeli-Arab integration X Identification-Israeli cultural" is almost

significant ($p \text{ value} = .05$, see table 3), this yielded due to the decision putting all of interactions in this step. As mentioned above, the lack of a theoretical model forced us to include all interactions in order to identify the relevant interactions. In parallel analysis, we found that removing an interaction that is considered less relevant to the relationship between the variables yielded much stronger significance.

After identifying the significant interactions, PROCESS model 1 (Hayes, 2018) was used for testing in depth the significant interactions. When the dependent variable is preferred marriage with Jew, we found that under the condition of high level of Israeli-Arab integration, individual who have higher identification with Israeli culture tend to prefer marriage with Jew ($Effect = -.24, SE = .12, LLCI = -.47, ULCI = -.001, p < .005$) more than individuals who have low identification with Israeli culture ($Effect = .47, SE = .14, LLCI = .19, ULCI = .75, p < .005$); see Figure 1.

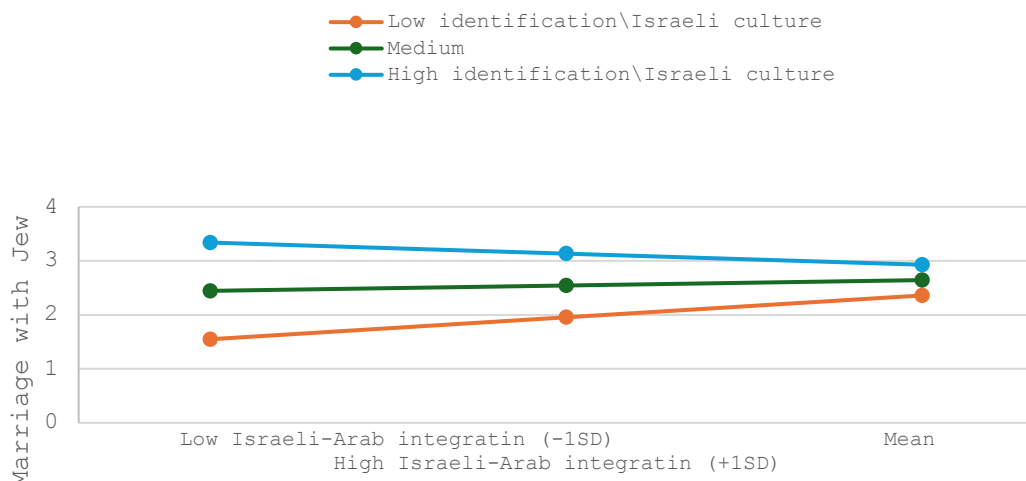


Figure 1: The Interaction Between Israeli-Arab Integration and Identification with Israeli Culture in Predicting Marriage with Jew.

Where the dependent variable was marriage with Muslim, we discovered that under the condition of

low level of Israeli-Arab integration, individual who have higher identification with Arab culture tend to

prefer marriage with Muslim ($Effect = -.67$, $SE = .11$, $LLCI = -.90$, $ULCI = -.44$, $p < .001$) more than individuals who have medium identification with Arab culture ($Effect = -.34$, $SE = .08$, $LLCI = -.52$, $ULCI =$

$-.1$, $p < .001$). As shown Figure 2, it can be identified that there is no significant effect in case of low identification with Arab culture.

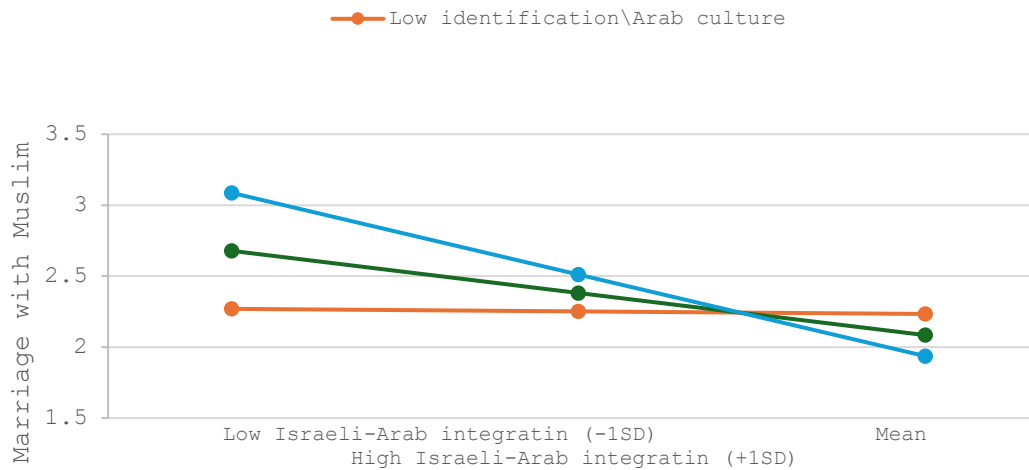


Figure 2: The Interaction Between Israeli-Arab Integration and Identification with Arab Culture in Predicting Marriage with Muslim.

4. DISCUSSION

There is sufficient evidence that the integration is the most promising strategy for promoting psychological adaptation compared to the other acculturation strategies (separation, assimilation, marginalization) (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Based on these findings, it is plausible to argue that high levels of integration between different identities are likely to provide greater support for issues related to shared values, shared identities, and intermarriage. The results of this study show that integration is correlated with supportive attitudes toward intermarriage. Arab-Christian integration is positively correlated with intermarriage with Muslims and negatively correlated with intermarriage with Jews. On the other hand, Israeli-Arab integration is positively correlated with marriage to Jews and negatively correlated with intermarriage with Muslims.

It can be argued that this pattern points to two different directions of Arab and Israeli identity. When integration includes Israeli identity, it becomes clear that attitudes toward intermarriage with Jews are positive and with Muslims negative. On the other hand, when integration includes Arab (Palestinian) identity, attitudes toward intermarriage with Muslims are positive and toward intermarriage with Jews are negative. These findings are challenging and

require interpretation from a sociological perspective. Many studies conducted in the United States (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008) and Europe (Kalmijn, 1998), as well as studies in the Israeli context (Lavee & Krivosh, 2012), clearly indicated that mixed couples tend to experience conflict and low relationship quality and have a high risk of divorce. In the literature, these conclusions point to several factors that threaten the quality and stability of marriage: cultural difference, different values and norms, and different social and cultural identities (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). However, there is another perspective assumes that people tend to choose a partner based on social similarity. Similar couples are less likely to feel conflict and incomprehension for each other. In addition, it turns out that mixed couples are subject to the sanctions of the social groups to which they belong, arguing that this mixing can threaten the unity, solidarity and boundaries of the group (Kalmijn, 1998). In line with social similarity, it can be said that people with a high level of integration between the Christian identity and the Arab identity, it would be acceptable to assume that they see a similarity between the two identities. Since Muslims also experience Arab identity, it is logical to assume that the willingness to marry Muslims is higher among those with Arab-Christian integration. On the other hand, those who experience a high level of

integration between the Arab and Israeli identities are more likely to marry Jews than Muslims.

Another interpretation that can shed light on these results comes from the hypothesis about the modernity of Palestinian Christians in Israel (Tsimhoni, 2002: 132). She believes that Christians are characterized by a Western-modern lifestyle that manifests itself in various forms. Together with their tendency to socialize with Jews, she came to the conclusion that Christians are integrating into Israeli society. Schueftan (2011) explains the difficulties faced by minorities in Israel and sees Christians as a group that has adopted a lifestyle similar to that of secular Jews, unlike Muslims and the ultra-orthodox, they strive to improve their living conditions. It seems that the modernity hypothesis, as described above, is consistent with the perspective of social similarity between people, as described above in the context of intermarriage.

This study not only highlights the relationship between BII and intermarriage but also adds to the research literature by introducing identification with cultures as a potential moderator in the relationship between BII and intermarriage. However, this moderating relationship acted on integrations that are characterized as conflictual and not on integrations that are characterized as harmonious (Jubran et al., 2020). The current results show that in the case of Arab-Christian integration, the identification with culture did not play a moderating role. However, in the case of Israeli-Arab integration, which is characterized as conflictual, identification with culture plays a moderating role. As hypothesized, we found that identification with Arab culture plays a moderating role in the relationship between Israeli-Arab integration and marriage to a Muslim, while identification with Israeli culture plays a moderating role in the relationship between Israeli-Arab integration and marriage to a Jews.

Not surprisingly, that Israeli-Arab integration has produced two moderating models. We believe that this is due to the perceived distance between the Israeli and Arab groups. Evidence for this conclusion can be found in Suleiman's study of Arabs in Israel, who found that the label "Arab Israeli" is more distant than the label "self" (Suleiman, 2002). Another view that explains the tenuous relationship between Arab and Israeli identities relies on the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which contributes to the deterioration of relations between Jews and Arabs inside the State of Israel (Peleg & Waxman, 2011). These clashes have created an ethos of conflict for Israeli society and an additional ethos for

Palestinian society (Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin & Zafran, 2012). A conflictual situation emerged suggesting that integration between Arab and Israeli identities is very difficult and socially costly. Indeed, Arabs who feel close to the Palestinian\Arab ethos tend to express a conflict between their Arab and Israeli identities (Horenczyk, Bergman & Abu-Katish, 2018).

Furthermore, it turns out that the conflictual nature of Israeli-Arab integration provides an important space in which the individual sees identification with the culture as a critical issue when it comes to intermarriages. Those who feel close to the Israeli culture and norms and feel less conflict between their Arab identity and Israeli identity, tend to prefer to marry Jew. In contrast, those who feel close to the Arab culture and norms, which is a common culture for both Muslims and Christians and there is high conflict between their Arab identity and Israeli identity tend to prefer to marry Muslim. This pattern of findings raises some ideas from the traditional research literature on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). There is substantial literature that defines group identification as the feeling of inclusion and belonging to the group (see Ellemers et al., 2002, for a review).

Intermarriage is not only a phenomenon focused on personal choice, but it gives an opportunity to observe the relationship between groups. Although intermarriage literature has emphasized sociological processes such as assimilation or crossing group boundaries (Lichter, Qian & Tumin, 2015; Rodriguez-Garcia 2015), the present study offered additional contributions. The first, how intermarriages are manifested when it comes with *two* out groups. This constellation allows us to understand the identity dynamics behind the preference for marriage with a Muslim person and at the same time to compare it with the preference for marriage with a Jewish person. The second contribution is exploring the role of identification with culture in explaining the phenomenon of intermarriage in conflictual situations. Finally, this study provides an initial attempt for examining intermarriage in the terms of the theoretical model of the bicultural identity integration (BII).

Future research is needed to examine cultural identification more broadly in case of Palestinian Christians in Israel. Theoretically, strength of identification explains the relationship between individual and his or her social group. However, identification with a group can be denied, as sometimes people do not want to belong to that group, a process known as dis-identification

(Verkuyten & Yildis, 2007). It will be assumed that individuals who have a high level of integration between two identities may feel dissatisfied with Israeli culture or Arab culture. Relatedly, future research can also use the categorization dimension (Yampolsky, Amiot & De La Sablonniere, 2016), examining which identity is the prominent and which is the secondary. Third, like all nation-based studies, it is unclear to what extent our findings can

be generalized to other conflictual contexts and groups beyond Palestinian Christians in Israel. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that samples with different age categories will create additional insights. Despite these limitations, this study contributes significant and promising insights to the growing literature providing a systematic approach to examine identity aspects in relation to intermarriage.

Ethical Compliance Section

Funding: The authors have no funding to disclose.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

Compliance with Ethical Standards: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee at [anonymized for review] and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data available on request from the authors

None of the authors have a conflict of interest to disclose.

The Ethics committee of the Chief Scientist at the Israeli Ministry of Education gave permission to carry out the research.

An informed consent form was provided to all the participants.

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