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TRAIL-BLAZING: ARAB STUDENTS AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM DURING THE MILITARY REGIME (1948-1966) IN ISRAEL

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ABSTRACT

When Arab citizens of Israel (ACI) began to study in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (HUJ) in the 1950s, under the military regime (1948-1966), this phenomenon had various effects. The present research topics on sociology, anthropology and history of higher education (HE) aimed to examine this phenomenon of trail-blazing ACI, who set out to acquire further education in the HUJ. Data were collected from semi-structured in-depth ethnographic interviews with a number of ACI, who graduated from the HUJ during the military regime. The interviews gathered data on the reasons that motivated these ACI, and the academic, social and cultural difficulties with which they coped on the liberal campus. Findings showed that these students were exposed to a foreign modern culture and essentially underwent a culture shock generating incumbent assimilation difficulties. Most of the ACI eventually succeeded in integrating into campus society and adjusted to its requirements and values. They graduated successfully but faced additional difficulties on their return to their villages.

KEYWORDS

- Higher education
- Integration
- Arab students
- Military regime
- Hebrew University

1. Introduction

This pioneer study traces the phenomenon of the first Arab citizens of Israel (ACI) who studied in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ)^[1] during the period of the military regime. The study aimed to answer several questions concerning this phenomenon and its context and to use the resulting data as a springboard for further studies on the subject. The main motivation for the choice of the research topic was a desire to understand the daily life of these first ACI on the university campus during the difficult period of the military regime, and this is the first study that discusses this issue from the testimony of those early Arab graduates.

Arab university graduates from Higher Education (HE) institutions in Israel and abroad are considered to be an elite stratum of their society and they are seen as a cadre that can contribute to the socio-ethical-economic development of ACI society towards various goals (Al-Haj: 1996), (Haj-Yehia, Arar: 2014), (Mar'i: 1978). This is in line with previous research, which has shown that minority populations tend to value

¹ Although there were other pioneer Arab students who studied in teaching seminars and nursing schools during the same period, their experiences remain outside it.

HE more than majority populations (Connor, 2004). HE helps bridge gaps between the majority and minorities in various life domains and empowers the minority (Kettley: 2007). For this reason, ACI society in Israel views HE as a positive factor in their national and political struggle in the State of Israel (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016), and as a factor that assists absorption and integration of ACI in the jobs market in Israel.

Apart from illuminating the lives of ACI academics, this sociological-anthropological study also contributes to the history of HE in Israel in general, and in ACI society in particular. In addition to the cultural and political changes that it engendered, the establishment of the State of Israel and the imposition of the military regime on ACI society in Israel led to changes in access to HE for the ACI population. Geographical, cultural and political separation of ACI society in Israel from the Arab world following the establishment of the state meant that graduates of the few Arab high schools that existed during the military regime could no longer apply to Arab universities abroad and they began to apply to study HE in Israel. Despite educational gaps between them and Jewish students and a scarcity of resources these students aspired to cope with a high academic standard, with either Hebrew or English as the language of instruction and with experiences of culture shock from the moment of their first encounter with Jewish students (Al-Haj: 2003). Changes in the political map arising with the application of Israeli citizenship to the ACI population and their inclusion within the Israeli education system, acted as catalysts for the entry of Arab school graduates to HE institutes in Israel to acquire academic qualifications.

The current study depicts the ACI students' academic and cultural integration on HE campuses in Israel, and the interpersonal relations that developed even during the military regime between young ACI and Jewish students. It also draws conclusions concerning the impact of campus life on ACI graduates' integration. Conclusions relating to the period of the military regime can also be compared with data from new studies conducted among ACI on Israeli campuses in recent years. The findings of this study could also assist academic institutions in better serving students from diverse backgrounds.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The historical context

As a result of the 1948 war between Jews and Arabs in post-Mandate Palestine and the continuation of a state of war between Israel and the Arab states after the establishment of the State of Israel, Israel viewed the Arab population that remained within its borders as a security problem, a sort of "fifth column", actual or coerced. The main tool for the implementation of the security policy was the imposition of the "military regime" as a mechanism for military and civil supervision of the ACI (21 October 1948). It was imposed by force, under the Mandatory Defense and State of Emergency Regulations (Ghanim: 2001), (Jiryis: 1976). The main purpose of the military administration was to act as a deterrent force against hostile acts by ACI, to control and supervise movements of this population and to prevent the return of refugees to their villages and lands, which were assigned for settlement by Jewish

immigrants (Abu-Saad: 2003), (Kabha: 2011), (Ozacky-Lazar: 2002).

As part of the policies of the regime, ACI society was partitioned into different minority groups according to religious affiliation and ethnic origin. Under the military administration, Arab residents were required to present travel permits in order to travel outside their villages; until 1959 both during the day and night, and from 1963 only at night, when the ACI were under curfew. Special permits were sometimes attained for those who provided services to the security services (Bäuml: 2007).

The regime supervised the Arab villages and towns and appointed the Mukhtars (village heads) and local councils (Ghanim: 2001), (Ozacky-Lazar: 2010). Education, health and local government employees in Arab villages were appointed with the approval of the security services. Although, the military regime aimed to ensure Israeli control of the land resources within its borders and administered the appropriation of lands owned by Arabs, liberal-egalitarian considerations helped to develop a democratic facet of the state's character and gave birth to policies of gradual integration of Arabs as citizens with equal rights (Bäuml: 2007), (Ozacky-Lazar: 2010).

In 1966 the military regime was abolished as a result of legislation proposed by the Maki, Mapam, Ahdut Haavoda-Poalei Zion and Herut political parties. The ACI saw the military regime as a hated mechanism that had penetrated their social and private lives. It symbolized the true relations of the state towards them and prevented their civil assimilation and use of their basic human rights (Abu-Saad: 2006b). The era of the military regime was considered a period of isolation for Arab communities in Israel, but also the beginning of the formation of a specific ACI society. During this period the unique behavioral patterns of this society crystallized, treading a tightrope between affiliation to the Arab people and an aspiration to achieve equality in the State of Israel.

2.2. HE among the Arab minority under the military regime

During the British Mandate period a few ACI were able to acquire HE in the universities of neighboring Arab states, especially in Egypt and Lebanon. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, Arabs were no longer able to cross the borders to continue their studies in these states. During the military regime, from 1948, a few ACI therefore invested special efforts to study in Israeli HE institutions, including seminars, teacher-training colleges, nursing schools and the universities (Abu-Saad: 2006b).

From 1948, and with the passing of the Compulsory Education Act in 1949, there was an obvious increase in the level of education for the ACI (Mustafa: 2007). Nevertheless, the military regime restricted movements of ACI who wished to study in Israeli universities. They needed to obtain permits and passes from the military administration which they were required to present to the authorities whenever and wherever they travelled. This severely hindered ACI's access to HE (Mar'i: 1978).

Many Arab families could not afford to allow their children to go on to HE, and most school students were forced to leave their studies after high school to help finance their family, working mainly in their farms or the villages (Knaana: 2005). Even for the few families who were able to overcome all these obstacles, their children

found it difficult to gain admission to prestigious faculties (Mar'i: 1978). Yet, after the establishment of the state, and despite these obstacles, Arabs encouraged their children to acquire HE since they understood that an academic degree could enhance socio-economic status and would constitute cultural capital in the State of Israel (Nakhleh: 1979).

Only a few ACI acquired degrees in Israeli universities during the military regime, but after that period the proportion of ACI in HE institutions gradually increased and recently there has also been an increase in the numbers of ACI studying abroad (Haj-Yehia: 2013), (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016). Among the factors for the increase in the proportion of ACI in Israeli universities are the increase in the numbers of girls entering the Arab education system and the increase in the number of girls attaining matriculation certificates (Abu-Rabia-Queder: 2008).

2.3. ACI in the HUJ during the military regime

There has been very little research discussing the issue of ACI students in HE institutes. More specifically, there are few accurate resources recording the number of ACI studying in HE institutions in Israel during the military regime. During this difficult period, many graduates of the few then existing Arab high schools were employed as teachers in Arab elementary schools and only a small number of high school graduates managed to enter the HUJ in Jerusalem, mainly those from families who were economically and socially well-established (Al-Haj: 1996), (Mar'i: 1978), (Zadek: 2014). A matriculation certificate was considered a significant factor for admittance to the HUJ during the military regime. However, the proportion of ACI school graduates eligible for a matriculation certificate was very low during the decade after the state's establishment (Nakhleh: 1979).

At the beginning of the military regime one of the difficulties that deterred ACI from studies in the HUJ was the difficulty in obtaining travel permits from the military governor and restriction of students' geographical movement, especially travel to Jerusalem. For this and other reasons ACI preferred to study in teacher-training colleges in Israel and for those who were financially privileged in Europe or the USA (Haj-Yehia: 2002), (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016).

Among those ACI who decided to overcome the difficulties and apply for an Israeli university, the HUJ was the preferred university because of the lack of other academic institutions; the only alternative was the Technion Sciences University in Haifa and the University of Haifa was only established in 1968 (Mar'i: 1978), (Mustafa: 2007). In the academic year 1951-1952 there were ten ACI at the HUJ, in a campus with 3,686 Jewish students (Al-Haj: 1996). By the academic year 1956-1957, 45 ACI were studying at the HUJ, including just one female student (Al-Haj: 1996), (Saria: 1973). At the end of the military regime in 1966 the number of ACI at the HUJ was reported as 200 to 208 (Bentwich: 1960), (Al-Haj: 1966), (Saria: 1973). In the academic year 1966-1967, the number of female ACI in the HUJ rose to 12 and they were just 5% of all ACI students in the HUJ in that year (Saria: 1973). ACI preferred the disciplines of social sciences and humanities, since entry requirements were easier in comparison with other disciplines.

3. A conceptual analysis: The integration of minority students in the university

The under-representation of minority students and difficulties involved in their integration into HE institutions are not unique phenomena. These phenomena appear in many public systems throughout the world in the past and today. The terms “diversity”, “integration” and “inclusion” are terms customarily used when discussing the access of minority group members to HE (Hendin: 2009).” Integration” is the acceptance of a target culture by a minority group in parallel to maintenance of their own culture of origin. “Integration” can only succeed when the minority group is interested in integrating, and when the majority society is interested in including the minority group, and favors the formation of a multicultural society (Berry: 1997). “Diversity” is used to refer to a varied social and cultural composition of students in HE institutions and depends on the institution’s preferences and policies in support of the involvement of a composition of students drawn from different socio-cultural backgrounds (Gurtin et al.: 2002). “Inclusion” entails that an institutional policy provides access to the system to groups who until now have not participated in it (Ross: 2003).

With regard to implications of such concepts for ACI students in HE institutions in Israel, who come from a traditional patriarchal society, research shows that the individual student’s immaturity, low level of life experience, sense of isolation and low self-esteem were factors influencing their integration in Israeli academic campuses (Abu Saad: 1999), (Hendin: 2009), (Roer-Strier, Haj-Yehia: 1998). Mastery of the majority’s language is also considered a possible major obstacle to integration. ACI students arrive at the university where the instruction and textbook reading is not in their first language and they are required to quickly familiarize themselves with different learning challenges (Amara, Abd el-Rahman: 2002).

A further term used when discussing social aspects of integration is “marginality”. This refers to a situation in which minority groups attempt to integrate within the majority group and to adopt its culture but find this is impossible, and in parallel to their efforts to integrate within the majority group, the minority group becomes distanced from its society of origin (Hendin: 2009).

The “contact hypothesis” explains relations of reciprocity between different social groups in a state of conflict such as the Arab minority opposite the Jewish majority in Israeli universities. Encounters between the groups in conflict lead to reduction in prejudices under the condition that there are conditions of equal status at the time of the encounter, joint work to achieve the common goal, personal connections between members of the different groups and the existence of social norms supported by both groups that serve as a foundation underpinning the encounter (Hendin: 2009).

The meeting between ACI students who come from a traditional society with the foreign academic environment engenders tension between their original traditional values and norms and those of modernism. In this sense, the ACI students can be considered to endure dual marginality: both in respect of the Jewish majority society and also in respect of their traditional society of origin, from which they find themselves distanced (Erdreich: 2006) (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

Finally, a significant characteristic affecting ACI students’ integration in HE

both in the past and present is the presence of the national conflict. The influence of this dispute on ACI students' HE is felt in personal, cultural and academic dimensions of their studies (Slone et al.: 1998).

4. Methodology

The phenomenon of ACI who studied in the HUJ during the military regime in Israel is revealed in response to the following research question:

1. How ACI explain at that time their integration into the campus of the Hebrew University and how did they make it a successful integration?

From the main research question were derived the following secondary research questions:

2. What role did HE play in the lives of ACI during the difficult military regime in Israel?
3. What was the role played by the academic space and the encounter with Jewish students in the HUJ?
4. What experiences did the ACI undergo in the HUJ? And which factors influenced their perceptions of their culture of origin?
5. And what were their socio-cultural norms when they returned to their society of origin?

Qualitative research was employed to enable the researcher to produce a thick holistic and comprehensive picture of the components of the studied phenomenon. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to understand the narratives of the ACI in their own words, eliciting stories and events that had influenced them and been meaningful for their lives, including their thoughts and feelings and the meanings they gave to their experiences as some of the first ACI in the HUJ (Patton: 1990), (Denzin, Lincoln: 1994). The interviews consisted of 12 open questions. All interviewees were interviewed individually for approximately two hours in Arabic and the interviews were recorded with their consent and transcribed. Content analysis was applied to the data to describe the interviewees' perceptions and attitudes concerning their experiences during their academic studies in the period of the military regime.

This study gathered data from 11 ACI academics, now pensioners (all men in their seventies and older), who studied in the HUJ in Jerusalem in the 1950s during the military regime in Israel. To comply with ethical requirements, the interviewees received a full explanation of the purposes of the research and were promised full privacy. Their personal details remained confidential and they are identified in the findings with fictive names (see Appendix 1).

5. Data analysis

The content analysis was performed by categorization – connecting pieces of information relating to the same phenomenon through fragmentation and reconstruction of the data. After the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the interviewee texts were read several times to go as deep as possible into the interview contents and form. Texts were reread to identify meaningful sentences and point up main common themes voiced by interviewees, then analyzed according to content categories (Creswell: 2004). After the categorization process, the next stage involved conceptualization. Finally, the different themes were integrated within a descriptive narrative to succinctly express the meanings of the experiences described by the interviewees (Unra, Coleman: 1997).

5.1. “Our aspiration was to acquire HE”

As a minority within the Arab minority in Israel, a few Arab high school graduates decided to become the first to study in the only Israeli academic institution offering their preferred disciplines at the beginning of the 1950s. The interviewees found the HUJ daunting since it was their first academic experience and they feared they would be seen as a hostile element, just as they feared hostility might be turned towards them. Abed Al-Manan, who studied history and political sciences from 1955-1958 at the university added:

HE was very important for us. But we hesitated because we were not yet mature enough to deal with it and we didn't know Hebrew. The level of the Arab schools in that period was unsuitable for academic studies, especially when those studies were in Hebrew and English. The difficult conditions of travel, financial expenses, lodgings and costs of books also played a major part in our perception of HE. Our ability to overcome those difficulties indicates how important HE was for us.

Other interviewees stressed their sense of impotence in HE and some of them talked about a sense of competition that they developed regarding HE. Jassar, born in 1934, studied history and Middle Eastern Studies from 1955-1959. He explained:

Despite the common notion prevalent in our time that HE was important, the truth is that we did not have any idea what university involved! We did not know its purpose, apart from the training that it provided so that we could become school teachers when we returned to our villages. We had heard a lot about how important HE was for our traditional society but we didn't know anything about it.

In general, the interviewees, as the first generation of ACI that studied at the HUJ, were considered to be the vanguard of Arab society that set out to acquire HE outside their villages and they felt it was their responsibility to help to advance their weak traditional society in socio-economic terms, a sort of national social mission.

5.2. *The students' motivations for studies in the HUJ during the military regime*

The HUJ was part of the society that imposed a military regime on their society and the ACI students saw this regime as their main enemy during the first years of the State of Israel and just a few years after the Nakhba that had dispersed their people throughout the world. First of all, they had to convince their parents to agree to their studies in a Jewish town, and they had to attain travel permits to Jerusalem, which were very cautiously assigned by the military administration.

Mahsen describes his motivation to study in the HUJ:

I always felt that my father had a strong will for this and with his continuous encouragement I succeeded in going on to HE despite the economic and political difficulties during that period, and despite the fear and anxiety regarding the military regime that pursued anyone who was travelling and did not distinguish between those who were travelling for studies and those who travelled for other reasons.

Wahid explains the factors that persuaded him to study at the HUJ:

In that period there was no other university where we could study apart from the HUJ. My brothers pushed me to study there because they had begun to study there before me. I was scared to live among Jews, whom I did not know and the only thing that I knew about them was that they supported the military regime imposed upon us. I could not travel abroad for HE because my oldest brother had already gone to the USA and my family could not afford to fund two sons studying abroad, especially not in the USA.

Many of the interviewees noted that they were motivated by the desire to acquire academic knowledge and their aspiration to develop academically and professionally so that they could return to their traditional society that needed to develop and advance after the events of the Nakhba and the war of 1948. Abed Al-Kader, born in 1934 studied geography, education and Middle East studies in the HUJ. He explained:

We did not know what university entailed. However, we knew that studies at the HUJ could distance us from the problems of the military regime, especially since most of the students' families were not close to the military administration. During that period there was a sort of flow of students from our village to Jerusalem to study at the HUJ. In 1954 there were 18 students from one village who studied there.

The interviewees indicated several factors that led them to study at the HUJ in the 1950s during the military regime. The common denominator underlying these factors was described by the interviewees as the effect of the military regime on their lives and the lack of an alternative to the HUJ at that time.

5.3. *The initial encounter with the university: Difficulties and challenges*

Since the large majority of Israeli universities are not located in the proximity of the Arab population, most ACI students need to leave their homes and spend time distant from home, often for the first time, on a campus with a new culture and atmosphere, in order to continue their academic studies. Research has shown that it is

essential to find culturally and socially suitable residence for the students' successful integration in Israeli universities. ACI students experienced a lack of sensitivity concerning their unique culture on the Israeli campus, expressed in the absence of religious and linguistic features and symbols on the campus (Maayan; 2013), (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

Being a member of a minority on an academic campus constitutes an obstacle. Research has shown that during the transition to academic institutions, the ACI student must cross over between two different cultures: their own community and that of the campus. They move from the Arab community, which despite modernization still maintained many traditional features, to a new socio-cultural environment in which the Jewish-Western culture predominates. Research has shown that this could be confusing for the ACI students creating questions regarding their personal and cultural identity; it creates a sort of "culture shock" considered an additional burden hindering successful integration (Hendin: 2011), (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

Most of the interviewees reported that they encountered multiple difficulties in their adaptation to their new campus life. Abed Al-Fatah talked about these difficulties

We encountered problems regarding language and lodgings. There was a large difference between our educational level and that of the Jewish students, especially noticeable in the comprehension of concepts and analysis of texts and academic ideas. In the Arab school, learning was then based on memorization and we did not know what it meant to analyze learning material. This was a serious obstacle for us.

Abed Al-Rahman detailed several difficulties, especially difficulties involved in attaining travel permits and the complexity of the journey to Jerusalem from the villages of the Triangle region:

We found it difficult to find lodgings; most of the students' residences were allotted to Jewish students. It was also difficult to get a travel permit and permits to remain outside our villages. The military governor granted us travel permits and permits to stay in Jerusalem for the purpose of our studies, but these were limited to one month and we needed help from someone with influence to get them renewed. It was very difficult to cope with this bureaucracy and often we had to cease our studies because of those permits. It was difficult to reach Jerusalem during that period because of the restrictions on movement, and difficulties with transport. We went by car from our village to Netanya (Jewish town) and by bus from Netanya to Tel Aviv and from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; it took a whole day to get to Jerusalem. Sometimes we had to go by train from Eyal to Jerusalem.

Yunis was lucky; he obtained residence in the university and coped well with the travel difficulties and the high costs of the university. But he encountered other difficulties when living in the university halls:

I received a room in the university residences, they were comfortable, but the main problem was that all the residence buildings were very far from the university, something I wasn't familiar with in my village. I would walk all day from building to building. I also didn't have a problem with the permits for travel and staying in Jerusalem, I had a permit as a resident of Jerusalem and only had to renew it once every half year.

Mohsan, mentioned problems concerning his political affiliation, when he

studied at the university:

We encountered many financial and social problems involved in our assimilation, especially in our freshman year. The serious problems were political. Our teachers at school were forbidden to talk about politics, and so they could not raise our political awareness. Those students who were involved in politics did this outside the school, in the Israeli communist party. The military regime began to track party members in the village and this continued when they went to the university. In the university there was a sort of political supervision of all the ACI who belonged to left-wing streams, like the communist party.

Jassar described his difficulty in finding lodgings and other problems:

It was difficult to get a place in the university residences; the university housed us at first in an abandoned British army camp, "Allenby Camp", Four of us lived in a small room in the camp and we could only take a shower once a week. After that we had to move to an Arab neighborhood "Al-Bakaa", where I lived in a room with my friend. It was owned by an Arab from Jerusalem, it was in a better condition than the British camp. Other friends of mine lived in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem. Life was difficult and many products were unavailable. Sometimes we had an opportunity to eat at the university where it was cheaper.

Thus, the ACI encountered many difficulties in the HUJ: academic difficulties, coping with new languages, restricted travel, difficulties finding lodgings, social alienation, economic and political difficulties, which all made it difficult to adapt and assimilate into campus life.

Inequality between Arab and Jewish students is therefore associated not only with inferior resources but also lack of information and support concerning higher education in their areas of residence that could encourage the access of ACI students to the universities (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

5.4. *The first encounter with Jewish students*

Restrictions on Arab travel and the atmosphere of conflict that pervaded the country made it difficult to forge relations between Jews and Arabs. The relations between the two groups: the minority Arab and majority Jewish, are problematic and sensitive, reciprocal relations take place in a complex reality in which there are areas of co-existence, closeness and cooperation alongside deep separation and even hostility and conflict (Smooha: 2001), (Al-Haj: 2002).

In this state of tension and conflict during the military regime, most of the interviewees reported that their first meetings with Jewish students were difficult and even traumatic. Yet, some of them succeeded in coping well with this experience, they broke the ice and formed good relationships with "left-wing" Jewish students. Wahid described his experiences:

In my first meeting with Jewish students, I felt rather foreign. Most of the Jewish students held negative stereotypes of Arabs. They thought they were superior to ACI and to Arab society in general. We shared our difficulties with the military administration with them and told them how the regime behaved towards us with regard to the restriction of freedom of movement and the appropriation of our lands. At first the Jewish students denied this

and rejected what we told them, refusing to recognize it. But over time some of them began to understand our distress, and we also began to understand their difficulty concerning us. We found that we had similar problems as human beings. Some of us formed positive relations with some of the Jewish students and especially with those who advocated political views of fraternity and peace between different peoples. Although we thought that Israeli students represented the military regime, we felt that they could nevertheless become our friends. Because I was tall, I played basketball with the university team and I became a good friend with the coach.

Other interviewees, such as Abed Al-Manan described friendships between ACI and “left-wing” Jewish students and towards Jewish students from different origins, describing how these relationships developed:

There was a difference between the different student groups in the university: Jewish students, who came from Arab countries, accepted us and we assimilated with them, as did students who had left-wing opinions. Students belonging to the Mapai faction [Labor party] tended to come to get to know us. Other groups of Jewish students didn't want to know us or have any contact with us.

Mazan also spoke about relations with Jewish students, male and female:

At first we had many difficulties with the Jewish students. It was a loaded encounter. But we began to become familiar with them and slowly integrated, and since some of us joined the Sons of Shem Association and some of us joined the university football team and some joined the ethnic folk dance ensemble, we soon began to mingle with female students too. Here we began to get to know the “other sex”.

Jassar encountered several difficulties in his contact with Jewish students. But, despite an initial trauma, contact with them improved over the academic period:

It was a time of war: 1948, 1956. The hostile atmosphere from the war continued to influence the encounter between the two groups and especially the feelings of the Jews towards the Arabs. They were suspicious and saw us as enemies and we feared them and did not trust them. Yet, despite that, we developed friendships with some of them, especially the female students, just collegial relations. I taught Arabic to a Jewish girl and she gave me a book as a present.

The students' testimony indicates that their initial contacts with Jewish students were difficult. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees developed positive relations during their academic studies with some Jewish students especially those with left-wing views who advocated peace and friendship with others, with Jewish students from Arab countries and with students specializing in Arabic, Islam and Middle Eastern studies.

ACI students enter HE at a far younger age than their Jewish counterparts. Almost all Jewish students serve in compulsory military service before arriving in the universities. In contrast with Jewish students this is the first experience for ACI of living outside their home. Research has shown that they suddenly find themselves coping with the need to balance several activities simultaneously, research, homemaking, social activities, management of finances etc. while they also attempt to cope with the demanding structured academic environment. Moreover, in most cases this is the

first meaningful encounter of ACI students with the dominant Jewish-Israeli society, a situation that can pose additional academic, social and cultural challenges (Hagar, Jabareen: 2016), (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016).

5.5. Integration, daily life and adapting to the campus

Most of the interviewees who studied at the HUJ were male, young, single and socially and financially dependent upon their families in the Arab villages. Their transition to the campus involved frustration and a sense that they did not belong to the new location. They felt rejected and on the margins or outside student society. Most tended to withdraw within their own group in their lodgings or on campus. Since they were given no special assistance by the university, they had to cope with and overcome their difficulties and challenges alone or with the help of friends and students that they knew from their villages, and their integration was slow and gradual.

Araf described the daily life of ACI in the university during that period:

Most of us lived in lodgings geographically close to one another. At first, we couldn't assimilate so we mixed with our group. There was a lot of free time and we spent it together, speaking about our village, with a lot of gossip and wasting time. Our practices differ from those of the Jews and we have a traditional life style. We felt a strong culture shock when we saw male and female Jewish students dancing together on the Sabbath and we were amazed by their romantic relationships. We also differed from them in our musical taste – they liked noisy or classical music. We treated them with contempt and were surprised how they could admire that sort of music and could not admire Arab music: "Ala Dalona and Ataba and Mijana."² We were also very shocked by their dress: short trousers and the girls with their thighs exposed. It was really strange for us.

Other interviewees talked about the differences between them and the Jewish students and the culture shock that made it more difficult for them to integrate. It was only over time that they gradually became accustomed to these unfamiliar behaviors. Abed Al-Manan explains:

There were many cultural differences between us. The way that the Jewish students and lecturers dressed was more sportive and liberal and their food was very different and the men had very free relations with the women. In comparison we were very shy, we were embarrassed to talk with a woman or even to look at her. So in the main we socialized with ACI, in most of the social events the ACI kept together. We were almost in social isolation since they initially saw us as their enemies. It was surprising that there were Jewish lecturers who wanted to help us and some of them empathized with us. But despite the cultural and educational differences (deep thinking skills, skills for text analysis) over time we overcame that culture shock.

Hani talked about the tools that helped him to acclimatize to the university and to integrate in its social life:

At first, we experienced culture shock. First, we had to get to know the other ACI, especially since we were a small group and we came from different Arab villages throughout Israel. We were initially afraid of the Jewish students. Our social activities were mostly with the other ACI students, with almost no contact with Jewish students. I

2 Popular music.

would almost say in isolation, at first we looked at them with hatred and hostility and wanted to distance ourselves from them. Afterwards we plucked up courage and began to integrate in this new social life. I joined a club called "Sons of Shem" for Arab-Jewish understanding and that helped me to improve my Hebrew. I also participated in a sports club and folk dancing and I was in the university football team. That helped me to overcome my assimilation difficulties in my new life at the university, before that I had cried each time I got on the bus and I was ashamed to go into the restaurants and cinemas and found it difficult to prepare food.

Each of the interviewees felt the culture shock and assimilation difficulties in a different way. All the interviewees agreed that over time they succeeded in gradually integrating into the cultural and political activities of the university and succeeded in overcoming their social isolation, even forming friendships, despite the difficult conditions of the military regime.

Since most ACI students in Israeli universities were the first generation in their family to enter academia, ACI students do not have a model for imitation that could shape their aspirations and make their entry into HE easier. The lack of models for imitation and lack of family support on the campus make their integration in the university more difficult.

Academic and professional forerunners could not only serve for imitation but could also guide the students in their initial contact with academia, and when they do not exist ACI students have an unequal point of entry and this may constitute a serious obstacle to their integration (Roer-Strier, Haj-Yehia: 1998), (Khatab: 2005), (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

5.6. Returning to the villages after graduation

After graduation, the ACI returned to their villages to integrate in local employment, and especially in teaching as school teachers in Arab schools. ACI graduates mainly chose teaching because of the lack of alternatives and the lack of skilled teachers in the Arab schools during the military regime (Al-Haj: 1996), (Haj-Yehia: 2007). Their families and local village society expected them to become social leaders, while the military government set obstacles in their path and tightly supervised their work in the schools, this made it difficult for them to promote their ideas.

Most of the interviewees reported that on their return to their villages after graduation during the 1950s and early 1960s, they underwent a form of reverse socialization and acculturation, different from that which they had undergone when they reached the university. The interviewees described how they were received by the villagers and the difficulties they now encountered in the village, especially socio-cultural difficulties, as Wahid explained:

When we returned to the village we had to readopt traditional values and we were frustrated that we could not engender change. Some of the villagers saw us as people who had relinquished traditional values and they thought we had become part of the Jewish society, so different in culture, which fiercely ruled them. But since we did not have the courage to voice our new ideas publicly their suspicion soon died down, and we could not change anything or even think of changing it.

Abed Al-Manan described how difficult it was for these groundbreaking academics to change something in the socio-cultural weave of traditional Arab society in 1958 and the results of their attempts:

When we returned to our village, we had strong motivation to criticize certain traditional practices, but we felt that we could not realize this and it was also difficult for us to readjust to traditional norms of the village. In our circles, we tried to introduce new social and cultural contents that had not been seen in the village. It was frustrating.

Most of the interviewees, who returned to the village, were received with much respect by the villagers due to their academic studies and their new social status. Despite this reception the interviewees were frustrated that they were unable to engender social and cultural change in the village because of the deep-seated conservatism and traditionalism of village society. Nevertheless, some of the interviewees tried to contribute from their academic experience to enrich the village and to some extent succeeded in introducing new ideas.

6. Discussion

The research dealt with the main issues involved in the studies of groundbreaking ACI in the HUJ in Israel during the military regime (1948-1966). The findings of this exploratory study indicate that these pioneers, who studied in the HUJ during the military regime perceived HE as an important socio-economic lever and an important tool for various areas of their lives during this difficult period for Arab society in Israel. It is important to note that all the interviewees were born before the establishment of Israel and acquired their school education during the British Mandate. They were not educated in the atmosphere of a fundamental dispute between two cultures with different values and different basic perceptions. Moreover, they were young men aged 19 and 20 when they entered the HUJ and had to sleep away from their homes. In general, they constituted a small homogenous group of students within the foreign Israeli campus, a situation that largely reflects the situation of ACI students in Israeli HE institutes today (Haj-Yehia: 2007), (Haj-Yehia, Arar: 2014), (Modood: 2006).

The findings show that the transition of ACI students in the 1950s from the low level of education prevalent in Arab villages at that time to the very high academic standard of the university, disadvantaged by underdeveloped mastery of Hebrew, demanded strong personal skills and motivation from those students. The ACI also arrived at the university less well equipped with learning resources and skills than the Jewish student. For the ACI, the university is considered a unique experience. It is seen as almost the only space where Jews and Arabs meet as equals (Arar: 2014), (Mar'i: 1978). A culture gap was exposed between the two groups that increased the students' difficulty; in particular, the campus was democratic and liberal but the ACI had come from a traditional society which was neither democratic nor liberal.

Sixty years on, many of these difficulties are still reflected in the experiences of ACI students in HE institutes in Israel today (Al-Haj: 2003), (Haj-Yehia, Arar: 2014), (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016). According to the findings, in the 1950s, ACI students

needed to invest strong efforts in order to reduce the gaps between them and the Jewish students, and they did not always succeed. Even today, the academic campus experience of ACI in Israeli campuses can be described as complex and full of obstacles and competitiveness, a very challenging and, for them, a foreign experience (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016).

Concerning integration, the research has shown that ACI often experience depression in Israeli universities more than their Jewish colleagues, and this is largely related to their academic lives. ACI are less well prepared academically in comparison to Jewish students, who experience non-academic related depression (for example: personal, social and cultural depressions). Since they come from a different traditional background and speak a different mother tongue, ACI students may feel socially alienated and be the victims of discrimination and prejudices (Zeidner: 1992). Until now there have been limited studies investigating different aspects of discrimination against ACI students in Israel's HE institutes (Maayan; 2013), (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

As noted above, the first encounter with campus life of the interviewees, who broke open the path to the HUI for future generations of ACI, was complex and strewn with difficulties due largely to socio-cultural differences between their society of origin and the modern Westernized society of the university campus. Israeli HE institutions are usually represented as open and multi-cultural, and the universities do indeed include students from different social strata, ethnic groups, both sexes and various political and religious persuasions. However, this secular space is an alien environment for most ACI and especially for female ACI (Abu-Rabia-Queder, Weiner-Levy: 2008), (Geiger: 2013).

The culture prevalent in Jewish towns and on university campuses differs from Arab culture; this difference is emphasized because of the separate spaces inhabited by Jews and Arabs in the state (Masry-Harzallah, Razin, Hoshen: 2011). Consequently, Arab society is often concerned that its students may embrace the "foreign", Westernized and more modern Israeli culture they discover on HE campuses (Abu-Rabia-Queder, Weiner-Levy: 2008).

The first ACI to study in the HUI left their homes for the first time in their lives and encountered difficulties in the integration to academic life. They needed to construct a new network of social relations and to learn how to interact with students who were foreign and culturally different from them (Zadek: 2014) as usually happens with new students entering a foreign campus for the first time (Day, Livingston: 2004). The ACI came from a village culture that can be characterized as collectivist, patriarchal and authoritarian, which was significantly different from the Jewish Israeli campus culture. Research has shown, for example, that ACI enter the university with marked collectivist ideals (Peleg-Popko, Klingman, Abu-Hanna Nahhas: 2003). In the university they mostly kept together as a homogenous group that represented traditional Arab society in Israel. Assimilation problems, cultural influences and the sense of isolation on the university campus led them to become a close and cohesive social group. Till today, the transition from a traditional society to modern society arouses anxiety. The ACI may feel alienated, both on the campus and in the adjacent town where they lodge. Ambivalent relations with the predominant majority on the campus develop: on the one hand the majority constitutes a reference and comparison

group, while on the other hand they may be excluded by this group and sense that they are inferior within the university community (Arar: 2014).

Throughout their studies, ACI students usually maintain a strong connection with their families in the villages (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016). In order to overcome the culture shock that they experienced at the HUJ, the interviewees tried to find lodgings close to other ACI so that they could retain a sense of home and receive guidance from friends in times of distress. The findings show that some of the students tried to overcome the sense of alienation and culture shock by integrating within the new society and trying to understand the mentality and behavior of Jewish students up close. Berry (1997) pointed up that members of minority cultures cope with the fundamental issue of maintenance of their traditional culture while at the same time they need to maintain relationships and contact with the hegemonic culture in their environment. During the period of the military regime, traditional Arab society in Israel had not yet reached a stage of transition to modernization as it has done in recent years and had not attained the same level of freedom and lack of social supervision as existed in Jerusalem in the HUJ (Al-Haj: 1996), (Knaana: 2005). Similarly, more recent research shows that after one or two years at university, ACI begin to undergo changes in their lifestyle, tending to adopt a more modern outlook, distancing themselves from the traditional values on which they had been raised (Arar, Haj-Yehia: 2016).

Research findings have shown that the university stimulates ACI students' politicization (Arar: 2014), (Miari, Diab: 2005), (Mustafa: 2007). It is reasonable to assume, that because of the prohibition of political organization during the military regime, ACI at the university in that period were unable to participate in this politicization. It was only in 1959, that the ACI Students' Committee was established at the HUJ; the committee, which started by offering advice to new students on academic issues, and gradually expanded its agenda to include social and political matters (Shoughry: 2012).

The ACI student's personality was shaped and evolved within the walls of the HUJ. Since this was a predominantly Jewish space, this sharpened the ACI's sense of alienation and created a gap between the familiar traditional social reality of his home and the reality that he experienced as a student. However, they also wished to maintain their traditional mother culture. They sometimes became confused or felt a conflict of identity when they were exposed to norms and values identified with a Western mentality, totally different from their own. Since the students were involved in continuous daily exposure to this culture both in the university and outside, their basic values including for example their attitudes towards women and attitudes on education of children and the need for food were influenced by this other culture (Zadek: 2014). They were torn between their commitment to the values of the traditional society that supported their studies and their desire to create a new more modern self-identity in line with their new environment, although that environment often rejected them because of the political circumstances.

This encounter is an important component in the ACI student's consideration towards the Jewish majority and also towards Arab society (Abu-Rabia-Queder, Weiner-Levy: 2008) and was the basis for the relations that developed between Arabs and Jews at the university. Studies describe the Israeli university as a multi-cultural space and a body that in addition to providing an arena for academic studies, knowledge and

education (Peleg, Benjamin: 1977), also provides a place for socio-cultural encounters in various activities that influence the individual's identity building. Identity is mainly shaped through the acquisition of academic knowledge, supplemented by acquaintance with new cultures and values which bring the students to reexamine their own personal set of values and viewpoints and to adopt or not to adopt new values and attitudes (Arar: 2014).

The present research findings indicate also that these pioneer ACI at the HUJ eventually overcame the various obstacles they encountered and most of them returned to their village with academic degrees. Since they had been exposed to a world of different values and acquired academic knowledge, their return to their villages was not easy and necessitated a process of re-adaptation to their traditional society.

Usually, the ACI studying in universities miss their homes (Haj-Yehia, Arar: 2014), yet re-assimilation in their villages is often a process accompanied by crises and problems. One difficulty reported by most of the interviewees was having to correlate the mature world-wise awareness they had attained through academic education with the traditional norms of the village. Returning graduates were torn between the values on which they had been raised and modern "Westernized" values expressed in their life in the university in Jewish society. Scholars have suggested that these students are actually a group in transition between tradition and modernization (Smootha: 1975), (Nakhleh: 1979); a group that mediates between the center and the periphery, between the modern Jewish and traditional Arab societies. They learn to live in a world of abstract conceptualization that contradicts the more concrete world view of local villagers (Peleg, Benjamin: 1977).

Arab and Jewish students who have grown up in separate social, cultural and educational settings have limited opportunities to mingle before their academic studies. Previous studies have shown that time spent in the universities has the potential to alter this situation: learning together for several years provides a window of opportunity for Arab and Jewish students to share activities. Accordingly, the institution of HE can serve as a catalyst promoting work towards equality and inclusion (Lev Ari, Laron: 2014), (Hager, Jabareen: 2016).

7. Conclusions

One of the conclusions of the research is that ACI were integrated and exposed to and adopted some modernization processes at the HUJ during the military regime. Some scholars characterize the phenomenon of modernization among ACI as a process of Israelization (Smootha: 1975), (Smootha: 1992). Oplatka and Tevel (2006) consider that the modernization of traditional Arab society in Israel, is due to certain factors which contribute to alteration of a system of beliefs and values: mainly, the acquisition of education, contact with a population with a Western orientation and also living in an urban environment and the geographical proximity of the Arab community to Jewish communities. The adaptation to modernization that the ACI underwent during studies at the HUJ involved changes stimulated by continuous contact with the campus's modern culture (Smootha: 1975).

Other conclusions of the present findings indicate that the ACI saw the Jewish

students as representing the military regime sternly imposed on their society, which did not allow them to travel freely for work and studies. Nevertheless, their first encounter with Jewish students did not stimulate questions regarding the situation of national conflict and in fact a large proportion of the interviewees tried to overcome the obstacles and to form relationships with Jewish students. However, they faced difficult dilemmas since they encountered modern social norms and values so different from the values that they knew from their homes, and there was tension due to the difference in power between the dominated minority group and the hegemonic majority group (Abu-Nimer: 2004), (Rouhana, Korper: 1997). The surprising findings of the research are that despite the hostile and tense atmosphere that prevailed between the two groups during the military regime and only a few years after the establishment of the state, ACI and Jewish students developed direct relationships and even friendships. Relationships with Jewish students were usually formed through ACI students' participation in informal activities far from politics such as folk dancing, music, sport and visits to Jewish colleagues' homes.

Finally, the graduation of these students from the HUJ during the military regime marked the success of their integration at the university and the beginning of a social, cultural and political awakening for Arab society in Israel and a turning point in the policies of the Israeli establishment concerning the phenomenon of HE for ACI. It should however be remembered that the success of integration and the reduction of the sense of alienation and foreignness that ACI initially feel on entering HE institutes in Israel and formation of friendships with Jewish students does not only depend on the ACI students' attitudes towards the new culture that they encounter in the university but also depends on the extent of acceptance and support that they receive.

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Appendix 1

Fictive Name	Date of birth	Univ.	Year of start of studies	Year of graduation	Discipline studied	Occupation after graduation
Mohsan	1935	HUJ	1955	1959-1964 M.A.	Education and Sociology	Teacher, Social Worker
Salim	1930	HUJ	1952	1955-1962 M.A.	Agriculture & Physiology	Teacher, Lecturer
Jassar	1934	HUJ	1955	1959	History of the Middle East	Teacher
Hani	1931	HUJ	1955	1961	History of the Middle East & Education	Teacher, Principal
Wahid	1936	HUJ	1955	-	Sociology	Teacher, former Member of Knesset
Abed-Alrahman	1936	HUJ	1955	1958	History of the Middle East	Teacher
Maazan	1934	HUJ	1955	1959	Arabic & International Relations	Teacher, Education Department Manager
Abed-Alkhadar	1934	HUJ	1954	1962	History of the Middle East & Education	Teacher, Principal
Abed Al-Fatah	1933	HUJ	1950	1955	History of the Middle East & Education	Teacher, Principal
Yunis	1934	HUJ	1955	-	Arabic & General History	Teacher
Araf	1934	HUJ	1955	-	Economics & Politics	Teacher, Official in Office of Ombudsman