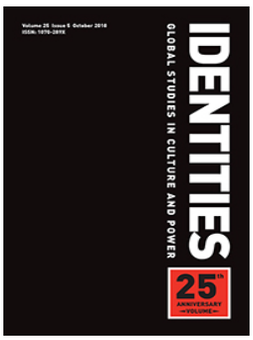

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Collective action of ethno-national minority groups and the cost of inaction: Arab Palestinians in Israel

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ABSTRACT

Collective action requires resources, organization, leaders and political opportunities. In the case of disadvantaged minority groups, long-standing conflict with the majority, a closed political opportunity structure and the difficulty of acquiring resources, increases the costs and risks of the action. We argue that the development of such an action is a function of leaders' perceptions about the cost of inaction (COI) and symbolic resources of the group, such as solidarity. Combining these evaluations creates three trajectories: growth, restriction and decline. We examine this argument by four collective actions carried out by Arab Palestinians citizens in Israel to improve education. The findings show that leaders increased efforts even if they assessed opportunities are limited when they thought that COI is high, since inaction means not only the loss of instrumental costs but also the loss of potential symbolic gains such as recognition of the group collective identity.

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Introduction

Extensive research on ethnic conflicts has mostly focused on mechanisms leading to political mobilisation and collective action (Gurr 2015; Hechter and Okamoto 2001). Since Olson (1965) raised the 'problem of collective action', theorists struggle to explain individuals' participation in concerted efforts to produce a public good (Sandler 2015). This question is of great interest particularly with regard to disadvantaged minority groups, who must overcome not only "free rider" problems and the difficulty of acquiring resources, but also long-standing conflicts with the majority and difficulty to influence the political system (Burstein 1991; Della Porta and Diani 2006; Hechter, Friedman and Appelbaum 1982; Hechter and Okamoto 2001).

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Under what circumstances are minorities able to overcome these obstacles and act collectively to achieve common goals? In this paper, we develop a theoretical argument that focuses on the cost of inaction (COI) and symbolic incentives perceived by the group leaders as factors motivating collective action among minorities. An empirical investigation of various attempts by Palestinian citizens in Israel to improve their local education systems allows us to explore how leaders assess chances of success and the choices and strategies they adopt. Our findings demonstrate that even when those leaders believed opportunities were limited, they attempted to mobilise collective action when *the cost of inaction* (COI) was regarded high and believed that group efforts will create symbolic gains. Combining these evaluations creates three different collective action trajectories: growth, restriction and decline.

Collective action and social choice

Collective action is a concerted activity carried out by groups of individuals in pursuit of public goods and common objectives (Tilly 1978). Relative deprivation of disadvantaged groups, real and perceived, can motivate them to act collectively (Gurr 2015). Discrimination and perceptions of severe disadvantage, however, can also create learned helplessness, characterised by avoidance of action, even under conditions where the potential for change exists (Brender 2005). In light of these obstacles, and given that disadvantaged minority groups must deal with strong internal and external barriers and the high cost of collective action, what motivates them to act collectively when resources are scarce and the state resists their claims?

Social choice theory which focuses on individuals' calculations of costs and benefits explains when and why individuals participate in collective action (Loveman 1998; Lubell et al. 2016; Opp 2013). Under conditions of risk, uncertainty and unstable preferences former rational explanations of maximising utility are replaced by alternative rationales that emphasise intergroup relationships and collective identity as factors that shape collective action choices (Calhoun 1991; Calvert 2002; Opp 2012; Smelser 1998; Wintrobe 2006).

Varshney (2003) argues that Ethnic conflict is best understood when combining 'value rationality' and 'instrumental rationality'. While Instrumental rationality entails a strict cost-benefit calculus, necessitating the abandonment or adjustment of goals if the costs of realising them are too high, value-rational behaviour is produced by a conscious ethical, religious or other belief, independently of its prospects of success. The values may range from pure pride to goals like dignity and commitment to a group or ideals. Likewise, value-rational acts can range from long-run sacrifices for distant goals to violent expressions of prejudice or status. This latter group of studies often overlooks the cost of

group inaction as individuals and leaders consider not only the potential gains of collective action but also potential losses of not acting together, negatively impacting group identity.

Prior to Olson (1965) inaction was explained by a lack of common interest or by difficulties to organise. While most social scientists after Olson assumed that collective **inaction** is natural (Oliver 1993), others argued that when the COI and the value attached to collective action are high, collective action can be expected (Muller and Opp 1986). Accordingly, individuals may take part in collective action not only when they calculate material benefits (Olson 1965), but also for symbolic benefits they value (Silver 1974). 'Relational goods' can motivate the development of collective action, even when material benefits are less likely, these include social approval, a desire to be recognised or accepted by others and beneficial friendships. Relational goods, that can be enjoyed only if shared with others, create the commitment to act collectively (Uhlaner 1989; Varshney 2003). Thus, when inaction threatens relational goods and symbolic benefits its costs can be perceived high and collective action is more likely.

The ability to mobilise relies also on the extent of the resources under collective control (Tilly 1978), material or symbolic (Canel 1997). Focusing on structural factors and resources, the political opportunity structure approach emphasises resources external to the group, while resource mobilisation approach focuses on internal structural factors, organisational, human and material resources (McAdam 1996; Tarrow 2011). However, these theories stress processes and pay less attention to how grievances and beliefs of groups promote engagement in collective action (Gurr 2015).

The collective use of resources requires coordination, strategic effort (Edwards and McCarthy 2004) and effective leadership (Canel, 1997; Harrell and Brent 2016) using their personal capacities, group experiences, cultural traditions and available social networks (Morris and Staggenborg 2004). Leaders, therefore, play an important role in recognising and acting on opportunities, as well as in framing the subjective, action-oriented sets of beliefs that inspire and legitimate collective actions (Benford and Snow 2000). Collective action leaders, like political entrepreneurs (Lobo, Velez, and Puerto 2016), can be motivated by personal potential benefits (Cohen 2012), but also by emotional incentives like appreciation (Chong 1991; Polletta and Jasper 2001) and considerations of self-image (Nozick 1993). Thus, to estimate COI correctly, agents must be embedded in a circle of recognition (Pizzorno 2006) and feel that the level of group solidarity and collective identity is sufficiently strong.

Most definitions of *solidarity* emphasise the affective bonds that unite members of the group, norms that define group obligations, and patterns of interaction in which ties within the group are denser than those across groups (Heckathorn and Rosenstein 2002). Identification with a group prompts investment in its activity and promotes the commitment required

for mobilisation (Hunt and Benford 2004). Thus, mobilisation requires collective identity, a shared sense of 'we-ness' (Snow 2001) of imagined and concrete communities, and involves the perception and construction of interests and boundaries (Polletta and Jasper 2001)

The need to explore the influence of symbolic resources on cost-benefit considerations is greater when it comes to disadvantaged minority groups who face sustained risks, fear and limited opportunities and resources. Scholars of new social movements (NSM) tend to focus on struggles over cultural resources, and explain participation in collective action through symbolic benefits (Buechler 1995; Canel 1997; Edelman 2001). But, these theories generally pay less attention to the COI, often high for disadvantaged minority groups that depend on collective action to achieve common goals. For these groups, acting collectively, even if success is unlikely, may carry a value in itself and, consequently, take place if leaders are able and willing to play their part.

Dynamics of collective action

We argue that when leaders of minority groups believe that the available opportunities for promoting change are limited and ineffective, their willingness to mobilise collective action depends on perceptions of the COI and their evaluation of the *symbolic resources* such as solidarity and collective identity available to the group.

While political opportunity structures have often been viewed as objective, scholars have increasingly recognised the importance of subjective interpretations, as the source of mobilisation (Alimi 2007; Tarrow 2011). In addition to identifying opportunities, we argue that the leaders' perceptions about the level of the COI and the *symbolic resources* create three different trajectories through which collective action processes develop: **growth, restricted development, and decline**. In other words, we claim that the COI combined with symbolism influence mobilisation patterns.

Collective action growth occurs when COI and symbolic resources are both perceived high. Under these circumstances, leaders believe that given members' active support and commitment, they can intensify the action. A sense of strong reciprocity and proximity in the group, accompanied by commitment due to the high COI, helps the group overcome hard times, obstacles and potential divisions. Furthermore, mutual encouragement between members and leaders promotes the mobilisation of resources. In this trajectory, a circular process is created that sustains action despite high costs and risks.

Restricted development arises when the leaders believe that one of the two conditions (the COI or the symbolic resources) is high and the other is low. This situation limits the ability to overcome barriers and requires more

effort to mobilise resources. Under these circumstances, collective action does not necessarily decline, but its potential to evolve is limited.

Decline occurs when leaders believe that the COI and symbolic resources are declining. Under such circumstances, the burden of the collective action is on the leaders themselves. In the absence of group solidarity and with a weak collective identity, they cannot expect group members to participate in collective action and it is difficult to intensify action if necessary. They also find it difficult to overcome crisis within the group. All of these factors make it likely that collective action will eventually dissipate.

A change in the leaders' perceptions about one or both of the conditions during the process can explain the transformation from one type of action to another and can be described by the continuum presented in Figure 1.

This model contributes to the existing literature by integrating several explanations: cost-benefit consideration of symbolic utility (COI) with the group's symbolic resources (solidarity and collective identity) to explain motives for action and its development, even when material resources and the opportunity structure are limited. We test this model using the case study of the collective action of Palestinian Citizens in Israel.

Collective actions of Israeli Palestinians to improve education

Education is an arena where resources, power and ideology, specific to policy, finance, curriculum and pedagogy are engaged. Thus, education is both cause and effect, determining and determined (Apple 2005). Minority groups often understand the implications of education for creating collective identity and for their future ability to overcome the social and economic inequalities. Since education is indicative of status, rights and, consequently, of ethnic and national relations (Levy 2005), the cost-benefit analysis, in this case, goes beyond education and elucidates the difficulties of the Palestinian minority in Israel. In other words, education cannot be treated as detached from the wider context of the relations between the state and Palestinian citizens and their political, social, economic and national status (Dahan 2018).

Scholars describe Israel as an 'ethnic democracy', where the state privileges the Jewish ethnic majority identified with the nation-state. The Palestinian minority, which constitutes close to one-fifth of Israel's population can be viewed as a distinct national minority. It is also an ethnic, linguistic and a religious minority, subdivided into Muslim, Christian, and Druze (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998). Although Palestinians citizens enjoy formal social, civil and political rights, they are incomplete and not properly protected. The key consequences of these attitudes toward Palestinians are

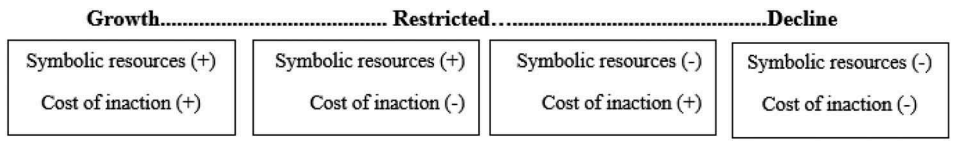

Figure 1. Dynamics of collective action.

reflected in social and economic gaps in infrastructure, employment, social services and education (Kook 2017; Smooha and Jarve 2005).

Studies dealing with Palestinian in Israel explain the lack of action and limitations of this minority to struggles for equality as a function of state control patterns over it. Lustick (1980) describes a 'system' that includes co-optation and minority's dependence on the dominant group that leads to internal fragmentation within it. Moreover, these majority–minority relations are rooted in the state's refusal to recognise Palestinians as an indigenous and a national minority, entitled to collective rights beyond the regular claims of distributive justice and policies of allocation (Jamal 2011).

Nevertheless, Palestinian ethnonational political activism in Israel increased dramatically since the 1990s: parties and organisations emerged, making claims on the state for the adoption of a 'discourse of right'" alongside extensive civil society activity (Rudnizky 2014; Jamal 2017). Haklai (2011) explains the transitions in the character and scope of Palestinian citizens' actions as a result of changes in the institutional structure of the state, a product of internal contestation within the dominant Jewish majority. Jamal (2011) explains it through politics of indigeneity, also stressing the role of structural opportunities and the reframing process changing the relationship between the state and Palestinian minority, the latter responding to the challenges imposed by the state (Jamal 2011).

The educational system in Israel is subdivided into an Arab and a Jewish system, further subdivided into secular and religious schools. Over the years, the Arab Palestinian public, scholars and political leaders have expressed great discontent with the educational system, claiming that it is directed by the Jewish majority and governed by a set of political criteria that aims to control and marginalise the Palestinians and suppress the processes of identity formation. This approach that stemmed from suspicion and hostility practically excluded Palestinian leadership from education policy-making and was used to ensure that Arab – Palestinian education is empties of any nationalist content, since the narrative of the Arab as Palestinian national minority in Israel is not officially recognised, and perceived a threat to state security (Arar 2012). Moreover, unequal funding created significant gaps in the quality of Arab and Jewish education, to the latter's advantage. As a result, a large part of the Arab population cannot obtain admission to institutions of higher education, limiting the possibility of future socio-economic mobility (Abu-Saad 2006; Jabareen 2006).

The political limitations and the concerns with education's quality underscore the motivations of Palestinian citizens to improve education in different ways: establishment of Christian and Muslim private schools (Levy and Massalha 2012), NGO' appeals to the courts (Jabareen 2006), and attempts to create a unified clear vision of where Arab education needs to go in the coming years, including demands for recognition (Jabareen and Agbaria

2010). Thus, collective actions to improve education are part of a wider struggle, intended to achieve formal and substantive equality as citizens of the State.

Indeed, cases of collective educational activity aimed not only to improve grades but also empowerment of the minority and realisation of collective identity, can be found among Black supplementary schools at the USA. These organic grassroots organisations not only respond to mainstream educational exclusion and poor provisions but also create a space where being black is normative. Through their strategies, black supplementary schools represent the genesis of a new social movement (Mirza and Reay 2000)

Method

We conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews during 2012–2013 with 16 leaders of four collective actions mounted by Arab Palestinian in Israel. Two of them took place in northern Israel, and the others in the southern part of the state. All of the cases dealt with educational issues, occurred in the past decade, and involved struggles between parents and the local authority and the Ministry of Education.

The choice of the cases was based on the representation of the three patterns of collective action: growth, restricted development and decline, and in order to analyse how the COI and symbolic resources influenced motivations of the leaders. Since the analysis is based on these subjective evaluations, rather than an objective analysis, the differences in the background and of economic, social and political conditions do not suffice for an alternative explanation.

The interviews were composed of open-ended questions regarding threats and opportunities, COI, instrumental and symbolic resources (collective identity and solidarity). The goal was to develop a subjective, rather than an objective, picture of the collective action dynamics, and understand leaders' assessments of the variables we consider in this study.

Scholars differ in their definition and operationalisation of the term '*solidarity*'. Based on the common properties in the literature, we measured the level of solidarity as perceived by the group's leaders using the following criteria: (1) the level of strong bonds that unite members of the group, (2) members' identification with the group's objectives and the ways to achieve them and (3) the degree of obligation group's members feel to the group's norms and their willingness to participate and lend their active support.

The leaders' evaluation of the COI includes the instrumental cost of the status quo combined with the cost of giving up on symbolic goals such as recognition of collective identity and the symbolic benefits expected from the action such as friendship and social influence, whether or not the action is successful. We assessed the COI as high only when the leaders defined it

as such and explained why. Using the data from our interviews, collective actions were classified into our proposed categories of growth, restricted development or decline.

Yasif – growth

Yasif is an Arab village in northern Israel composed of Muslims (44%), Christians (53%) and Druze (3%) with two elementary schools (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics 2011). In 2004, the church council tried to establish an Orthodox Christian school, but both the director general of the Ministry of Education and the local authority denied the request and issued an order to close the school. Since then, the church council and parents struggled to re-open this school. The five leaders of this collective action we interviewed stated that the objectives were improving educational achievement, discipline and teaching methods, and providing an education reflecting the Church's values, culture and beliefs. Thus, the COI was both instrumental (better quality education) and supportive of the Orthodox Christian collective identity.

Political opportunity structure

The leaders believed that the strong opposition from the local authority and the Ministry of Education was not based on educational considerations:

> It is about politics and money. … The local authority and education ministry cooperated in order to keep education under the state's control.

Despite the state's refusal to approve the establishment of the school, the leaders operated it without a license or financial support from the state, but expenses and risks constantly rose:

> We have lost more than $300,000. We were very worried about it, because if our action fails, there is nothing more dangerous for the church.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education threatened police would expel the students from the school. That threat raised the COI, especially in view of their feelings:

> If I were a religious Jew, I wouldn't have a problem opening a religious school. But Arabs fear and feel discriminated against by the state.

Despite the perception that as a minority their ability to defy the unified forces of state authorities was limited, the leaders invested a great deal of time and efforts organising protests, petitioning courts, planning pedagogic issues, mobilising resources and gaining public sympathy for their struggle.

All of these activities, which went on for several years and were entirely voluntary, entailed very high costs.

The COI and symbolic resources

Given the closed political opportunity structure, the high costs and risks for an extended period of time, and the fact that in that period their own children graduated and therefore would not enjoy the fruits of their actions, why did they continue the struggle?

The answer lies in the cost of not acting together for their collective identity:

> Struggle was important because of our position in Israel- An Orthodox minority within a Christian Catholic minority, within an Arab Muslim minority, within a Jewish state.… The cost of inaction is a threat to our collective identity. The thing that pushed us in hard times was the cost that we would pay if the school shuts down..…This sublime aim kept all of us together, continuing on struggling and there is much more than education involved.

The leaders stressed that until recently their village prided itself to have the largest number of academics among Arab villages in Israel. But, as the level of education significantly deteriorated they wanted to restore their 'unique pride' and become a symbol of excellence once again. Thus, pride was an important part of the collective identity, which increased the COI.

Shared demographic or economic traits do not necessarily add up to a perception of the preexisting 'groupness' of collective identity. Only political activity provides that kind of solidarity (Jasper 1997). Indeed, these parents wanted to demonstrate they could become a symbol of success for other Arab parents, generally regarded as passive. In other words, in this case, the primordial collective identity was already strong, but the mutual activity to preserve it created symbolic benefits and relational goods in a way that encouraged group solidarity:

> Where would you find so many people acting together, volunteering and lending support day and night?…this sense of unification led to mutual support among us and strengthened the group.

Opponents in the community contended that opening the church's school would lead to the departure of Christian students from the public schools, which until then were shared by all the village's religious communities. Therefore, not only would the state budget for these schools decrease, but it would also harm the long-standing relationship between the groups in the community. Consequently, the leaders felt an obligation to continue the struggle and show that their opponents were wrong. This perception increased the COI. However, as time passed and the resources that had

already been invested increased, they feared that the other parents would be angry and disappointed about the loss of time and money. This factor raised the COI too.

Given this situation, another strategy to encourage solidarity was a petition, declaring that although the school did not have a valid license, they intended to keep on sending their children to it. The parents also arrived en masse to protests expressing their support. The leaders managed to maintain the pressure, moving between strategies, coping with difficulties both inside and outside the group for a long period of time, and overcoming financial difficulties and a split in the group. Those on the church council who did not support the struggle were shamed and finally resigned from their duties. After years of struggling, they received legal permission to run the school.

In sum, in this case, we can identify a *unique local collective identity*, which included both the Christian identity of the parents and their desire to restore their pride in the village's educational system. This collective identity was strengthened during the action and delineated the boundaries not only between the minority and the Jewish majority but also among different groups within Arab Palestinian society itself. With this strong unique collective identity, the resistance of the authorities challenged the leaders to strengthen the group's solidarity. The COI increased, encouraging the development and the growth of the struggle through various strategies and intensifying the recruitment of instrumental resources.

Manda – decline

Manda is a village of 16,500 residents, all Muslims. The interviewees were members of the village committee that led the collective action, an organised group of people living in the village whose goal is to improve public services and promote social and cultural activities for the local community.

The COI

According to the interviewees, in recent years the level of high school education in the village had reached its nadir. Achievement rates were down, but dropout rates, damage to school property and other inappropriate behaviours were all on the rise. Moreover, they said:

> Boys and girls came to school to impress each other, behaving in disturbing ways that plagued us because it doesn't suit our values as a Muslim and Arabic society.

Therefore, the COI for them was high both in instrumental terms (low level of education) and symbolic ones (damage to the Muslim collective identity).

Political opportunity structure

After a few failed attempts to solve the problems with the school board, the village committee members came to the conclusion that the best way was separating boys and girls in high school. They presented their idea to parents and promoted it through house calls and during Friday prayers in the mosques, with the sheikhs' support. Out of 180 parents, 163 signed a petition in which they indicated their desire for separation. With the local authority's initial approval and the positive feedback of the parents, leaders were sure that success was within reach. However, the local authority refused, arguing that:

> The Ministry of Education will disapprove. People there will see it as a radical dangerous direction…In addition, we don't have financial resources for it and moreover, the separation can have negative consequences for the youngsters' development.

Leaders assumed security officials and senior officials in the Ministry of Education instructed the local authority not to proceed with the move, fearing it would lead to religious extremism. Second, the Israeli government delegate appointed to run the municipality that was in financial difficulty disregarded their interests. Leader's arguments that Arab citizens have the same right to separated schools just as religious Jewish groups have, particularly for educational reasons, not religious radicalisation, fell on deaf ears.

Symbolic resources

Although most of the parents supported the leaders' demand, few actively engaged in the action. The interviewees explained it as indicative of a low level of group solidarity and a weak collective identity:

> We live in a very complicated situation, in which religion and secularism are mixed together. Meaning, apparently, many parents didn't really support our idea, but they signed the petition because they didn't want to be judged by others (e.g. neighbors, family) as acting against the Muslim religion that demands a separation between genders.

They also stressed that as a minority forced to struggle for daily survival, parents were passive and tired of struggles. Furthermore, the absence of consensus among the PTA members regarding the collective action was perceived as an obstacle to solidarity. Discontent, bitter disappointment with the parents and problems within the village committee led to its dissolution and broke the leaders' spirit:

> We couldn't continue on struggling alone. In order to struggle you need to have everybody with you. When there are a lot of people by your side, it gives you energy.

Even among the sheikhs, there was an internal split over personal interests that also worked against unified action.

In sum, the COI, which was perceived as high at the beginning of the struggle, declined in the leaders' eyes when they understood that the parents were not really interested in the separation. In fact, there was no strong unique collective identity and there was little solidarity regarding the ways to improve education. Faced with a closed political opportunity structure, passive adherents, some of whom had a political interest in the committee, and few symbolic resources, the leaders felt they could no longer sustain the collective action by themselves, and thus it died.

The unrecognised Bedouin settlements – restricted actions

The two following collective actions took place in Bedouin settlements in the Naqab (Negev) region in the south of Israel, and which are unrecognised by the state. Bedouins are a subgroup within the Arab minority in Israel whose culture, history and society are unique. Over 200,000 Arab Bedouin live in the Naqab. After the establishment of the State in 1948, almost all of the land was declared state land, and Israel tried to limit the Negev Bedouins to seven towns established for them. Bedouin attempts to reclaim or return to their lands failed, leading to a continuous land dispute with the state. Today, about 100,000 Bedouins live in villages unrecognised by the state without basic services such as electricity, water, clinics, sanitation, roads, public transportation and education (Abu-Saad 2008; Yiftachel, Roded, and Kedar 2016).

The COI

Given that there are no schools in the unrecognised settlements, children travel by bus to schools in other settlements. According to the parents, these buses are old and unsafe, and the roads are dangerous. Several children were killed on the way to school on the so-called 'death roads'. Furthermore, some of the schools the children are supposed to attend were unwilling to accept them, leaving parents desperately looking for schools for their children. In addition, in the wintertime, children must cross areas prone to flooding in order to get to the buses, making their trip very dangerous. As a result, the parents demanded establishment of schools in their unrecognised villages, claiming that the right of education should be accessible to every child.

The COI in *instrumental* terms was not only the continuing threat to the lives of the children but also the poor achievement and high dropout rates due to the difficulty in concentrating in school after a long and unsafe trip. Given that the Bedouin population is growing, with high rates of

unemployment and poverty (Knesset-The Israeli Parliament, 2010), the COI for the future socio-economic mobility of the children was high. With regard to the symbolic aspect, the COI was the continuing lack of recognition of their indigenous collective identity and rights, with implications for the civil status in Israel (Yiftachel, Roded, and Kedar 2016).

Abu Tlul – a high level of solidarity and the low COI

Abu Tlul is an unrecognised area where12,000 Bedouins reside. The dropout rate from school stands at 77%, partly because due to religious sensitivities girls could not ride the same bus with boys. The forced choice between sharing buses and giving up on education was perceived discriminatory. During 2002, Abu Tlul's residents organised and filed a request with the state authorities to establish a school in the settlement. We interviewed the three leaders of the collective action, the chairmen of the PTAs in the junior high schools in the area.

Political opportunity structure

Since the settlement was about to receive formal recognition, the Ministry of Education promised to accede to the residents' request, but the school was not established. In 2005 and again in 2007, the parents of 35 girls appealed to the Supreme Court. During the struggle, they received free legal support from Adalah, an independent human rights organisation, and cooperated with other NGOs, which gave them moral support and information and supplied a place to organise. As with the previous cases, here too, the leaders said: *'Politics is always part of the story*'. However, living in an unrecognised settlement made them more vulnerable:

> the state had radicalized its attitude toward us. This is reflected in the increasing demolitions, discriminatory rules and lack of treatment of our problems.… The state wants us to move to the recognized settlements and therefore makes things difficult for us, even if the outcome is that our children will not have schools to go to.

Symbolic resources

In the beginning, the leaders felt they had broad support from the parents and that group solidarity was strong. However, after seven years of struggling the parents began to feel desperate, and in response, leaders implemented a new strategy to strengthen solidarity by organising other social activities. But, intensifying the struggle was feared to lead to clashes with the police that could become violent and risk the village recognition. Given

the deep conflict between the Jewish majority and the Bedouins, whom the former regard as outlaws due to their many property crimes and their refusal to vacate the unrecognised settlements, moderation was favoured as the less costly option. Although solidarity and collective identity were strong in the beginning, the COI declined. Thus, while there was collective action, it was restricted and did not develop.

Sawawin – a low level of solidarity and high COI

Sawawin is an unrecognised village where 1,200 Bedouins live. Beginning at age seven, children travel by bus on the 'death roads' to a school in another village. When the local authority decided to move only the small children to another very crowded school farther away from the village, parents decided to act. In October 2010, the parents started a strike, taking children out of school and demanding that the state establishes a school in their village. With the legal support of Adalah and the high COI, they felt they had nothing to lose. Four leaders were interviewed: the attorney who represented the group, and three representatives of the major families in the village.

Political opportunity structure

After two months of strike with almost 300 pupils not attending school, the case reached the Education Committee of the Israeli parliament. The committee chairman said that the problem was not money, as transportation costs more than building a school. The parents understood from these words that the state's goal was to force them to move to the recognised towns against their wishes. If forced to move, they feared, violence would erupt. Therefore, they felt they had no other choice but to continue their struggle.

One of the main reasons, in their opinion, that the local authority was not interested in building them a school and preferred having the children go by bus to distant schools was because:

> driving the children with those buses was a convenient solution, which creates jobs and a livelihood for the people around here. The local authority receives a budget for the buses from the government. Officials in the local authority take part of this money for their pockets and arrange low cost transportation for the children, giving this job (of driving the buses) to their relatives. That's why people in the local authorities turn a blind eye to the rickety buses. This is a catastrophe for our children's lives.

Given that inaction meant surrender to corruption and risking their children's lives, the parents set up a protest tent at the entrance to the village

where they met every day and kept the children who were not going to school.

Symbolic resources

After few months of striking, some of the parents who began to understand that the situation could last for a long time abandoned the struggle and sent their children back to school. The group split and the leaders felt they could not rely on the parents. In addition, there were parents who thought that the struggle was not well organised. All of these internal difficulties eroded the group's solidarity, and two more leaders quit and sent their children to school. With only one leader left, the parents just waited for Adalah to represent them in court, while they continued sitting in the tent, not trying to vary their strategies. In February 2012, the Court ruled that the school would not be opened.

This case, as in previous cases, shows that solidarity is related not just to the goals of the collective action, but also to the methods of achieving them. Although the parents thought the COI was high, disagreements about how to achieve their goals split the group apart. Gathering in the tent created a sense that there was a collective activity, but in fact, the action did not evolve. Indeed, gathering in a certain 'free spaces', that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, does not necessarily channel the efforts needed to develop the collective action. That development depends upon the existence of free spaces where social relationships produce collective identities, create opportunities and devise strategies for obtaining resources and support (Polletta 1999).

Discussion

This study aim was to explain what motivates disadvantaged minority group members to act collectively and develop their struggle when the odds of success seem to be against them. Literature in this field explains the motivation to participate in such collective activities even under oppressive conditions with limited chances of success using the factors of collective identity and group solidarity (Buechler 1995; Calhoun 1991; Hunt and Benford 2004; Laitin 1995; Loveman 1998; Opp 2012; Polletta and Jasper 2001). However, our study shows that a general collective identity as a minority group, such as 'Arabs in Israel', is not always sufficient to develop the action. Rather, when a unique local collective identity formed and evolved in the specific context of the action, it challenged the leaders to ensure the success of the action.

An analysis of the cases shows that the failure to strengthen the unique collective identity makes it difficult for the leaders to mobilise resources and adherents for active participation, preventing the development of the action. The cases of Sawawin and Manda are illustrative of this situation. However, Manda's collective action declined while Sawawin's collective action was

restricted, but did not decline. Therefore, collective identity does not provide a full explanation of how the collective action evolves. Our findings show that we have to add the value of the COI to the explanation.

The new social movement approach, which focuses on collective identity on one hand, and recent version of rational choice theory, which emphasises intergroup relationships as factors shaping interests in collective action on the other hand (Gurr 2015; Opp 2012), do not take into account the COI. However, as the case of Abu Tlul illustrates, even if the unique collective identity and solidarity are both strong, when the COI declines over time, the collective action will be more limited. When both the unique collective identity and the COI are at low levels, collective action declines (Manda). In contrast, when both of them are at high levels, collective action blossoms (Yasif). In other words, when the COI threatens relational goods and symbolic benefits, which relate to the ability to cement a unique collective identity, it motivates the development of collective action. This insight complements existing explanations of cost-benefit considerations regarding the motives of minority group members to develop collective action, and how 'value rationality' which adds to instrumental rationality, stimulates minority groups to act, even when the risks and barriers are high.

Resources are also needed for collective action to develop. Since minority groups often lack such resources, the assistance of civil society organisations may provide the money, organisation and knowledge needed for action. Our study shows that when the COI is high, the presence of these material resources helps the struggle to continue, but a lack of symbolic resources such as solidarity and collective identity prevents its development. Therefore, the contribution of our study is in linking the level of symbolic resources with the COI as a factor that motivates the recruitment of instrumental resources, even when it comes to disadvantaged groups.

Nevertheless, when the COI declines and the leaders find it difficult to create consensus over the best ways to achieve the collective goals, the action is stymied and even ends. Examples include the cases of Manda and Sawawin. Such cases show that the collective action of minority groups does not necessarily end because of a closed political opportunity structure or the lack of resources. The decline is the result of the inability to cope with internal barriers within the group and the assessment of the cost of inaction. Given that the leaders' assessment of the COI and the availability of symbolic resources may change over time and lead to a different pattern of development, another contribution of the model is that it helps explain the various responses of minority groups over time using a dynamic rather than a static view.

In the face of long-standing repression, it is very difficult for group members to mobilise resources and increase contention. Therefore, the resource mobilisation approach can hardly contribute to explanations of such processes. However, when repressive measures, whether overt or

covert, are an integral part of activists' daily lives, they do not necessarily perceive repression as a threat or an opportunity (Alimi 2007). In that case, our focus on the leaders' perceptions about the internal symbolic conditions in the group and the COI helps explain the collective action of a minority group in a limited opportunity structure.

Finally, it should be noted that struggles over education represent a claim for recognition and equality in other areas too. Therefore, collective action in this area reflects struggles influenced by personal and collective interests but is rooted in political, ideological and social conflicts on the local and national level. As many interviewees said: 'It's not just education. It's much more than that' .

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