

# Chapter 3

## Belonging and Otherness: Teachers of Ethiopian and Russian Origins in Israeli Schools



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**Abstract** This chapter investigates minority teachers' experience in light of the power relations in society and their expression in schools. The study population included 20 teachers from an Ethiopian background and 34 Russian-speaking teachers in Israeli schools. The teachers responded to an online questionnaire about what made them work at their school, and about feelings of otherness and belonging toward it. The analysis revealed similarities in the issues that contributed to a sense of belonging in both groups, while the issues that contributed to a sense of otherness were different. Teachers described their sense of belonging on three levels: national belonging (e.g., holidays, war times), organizational belonging (professional merit, roles at school, care for students, and school events), and personal belonging (comradeship and team spirit). When it comes to otherness, Russian-speaking teachers noted cultural gaps, slight school involvement, and professional gaps, while teachers of Ethiopian origin emphasized prejudice and feeling patronized. It is noteworthy that all the sources of belonging and otherness are determined by the minority's resemblance to the majority demonstrating the power relations between minorities and the hegemony. The differences in the symbolic assets that each of the minority groups import, point to the "diversity of diversity" among Israeli minorities. We conclude that the hegemonic group use symbolic assets that minority groups have difficulty acquiring fully (language, Jewishness, skin color), and that construct teachers' experiences.

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on two immigrant populations and their relationship with the majority group. We chose to examine this relationship within the educational field by studying minority teachers' experiences of belonging and otherness within schools in Israel. These groups provide a glimpse into minority-majority relations

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in general, which is examined through a sociological lens using the theories of social fields, exclusion, and symbolic capital. We outline the theoretical underpinning, followed by a sketch of the Israeli context, before presenting the empirical work that serves as the basis for this study.

## *Integration of Minorities into the Workplace*

Observations on minority integration in the workplace suggest that some minority groups find it more difficult to integrate than others (Shdema, 2013). Moreover, differences are often explained by the extent of similarity between the minority group and the majority group, and especially by the way the minority group is perceived by the majority group. The more a majority group views a minority group as similar to it, the simpler the integration process will be and vice versa (Johnston et al., 2010; Khattab, 2003).

This study seeks to examine two immigrant groups through their workplace experience. The staffroom is a microcosm of social gatherings. With teachers' personal descriptions of their sense of belonging at school, and revealing the motives behind their choice and acceptance into the school, we can gain a better understanding of the degree of integration, inner experience and discourse that exists around their identity. Based on the premise that social fields shape everyday experiences, we seek the meeting point of the formal and informal that builds their everyday experience. The research examines the way individuals draw on external categorizations of otherness, and the characteristics of the organization they work in, to make sense of their experiences. We explore the meaning that these experiences acquire in different minority groups, the variations in individuals' experiences and understanding, and how they lead to different formulations of belonging and otherness between the two immigrant groups, thus constituting an opportunity for an original examination of a new discourse concerning skin color and religiosity in relation to the dominant group. The two immigrant groups have a broad common denominator: a common religion and nationality that gave them the legitimacy and possibility to immigrate to Israel. At the same time, Ethiopian immigrants are of different skin color, high religiosity, and originate from the African continent; whereas, former Soviet Union immigrants came from a European, Soviet culture, and were less closely related to religion.

## *Social Fields*

Theory and research have shown how social fields are created around many different lines including class (Bourdieu, 1984), race (Wallace, 2017), ethnicity (Brubaker et al., 2006), national belonging (Halfman, 2019), citizenship (Wood, 2015), immigrant status (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016; Lamont, 2000), and religion (Edgell et al., 2006).

The research is rich with data and theory about the way people demarcate social fields that, in turn, form power relations and distinctions internalized by social actors. Less attention and insight, however, has been generated when it comes to the question of how social fields shape individuals' life experiences. Specifically, do people 'belong' and experience 'otherness' differently depending on the social fields that outline their exclusion?

Bourdieu (1990) argued that there are several forms of capital: cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital that individuals can use to cope with exclusion and power relations. According to Bourdieu (1990), practices of 'taste' and 'distinction' serve as tools of control, exclusion and subordination in the symbolic social market of assets. He considered this control 'symbolic violence', since it is not the result of choice and consent, but is created by symbolic categories.

### ***Israel as an Immigrant Society***

Israel presents a thought-provoking case for understanding immigrants' experience of belonging/otherness. It was founded based on the Jewish *Yishuv* that comprised Zionist Jews who came mostly from European countries. Throughout its years of existence, Israel has encouraged the emigration of diaspora Jews on the basis of the Law of Return. Israel has been accepting Jewish immigrants that constitute (along with their descendants) most of the Israeli population (Rajzman, 2009). The first decades following the establishment of the state were characterized by a policy of cultural unification and renunciation of cultures of origin. This tendency has been changing in recent decades to social and cultural pluralism, i.e., recognizing the existing differences between cultural groups and legitimizing them (Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005). The national-religious basis that is common to all immigrant groups provides an entry ticket to Israeli society, but those who arrive, like immigrants everywhere in the world, face challenges. There is an expectation of the dominant majority group that immigrants acquire the local habitus comprised of language, local history, and behavior.

### ***Immigration from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and from Ethiopia***

The Ethiopian and FSU immigration in the 1980s and 1990s is central for understanding the immigrant-host relationships in Israel. While the dialogue between the FSU immigration and Israeli society changed both the immigrant community and Israeli society, by and large, the Ethiopian immigration was not successful and stirs frustration to this day. The two waves of immigration are vastly different. To name just a few major differences, the immigration from the Soviet Union to Israel was

massive – one million immigrants up to the year 2000, while the Ethiopian immigration was only around 35,000 people during the same period (Kaplan & Salamon, 2004). Secondly, one cannot ignore the skin color of the Ethiopian Jews, that is unfortunately connected to discrimination in many countries and cultures around the world including Israel (e.g., Hochschild & Weaver, 2007). Finally, the FSU immigration was characterized by professionals, people with academic degrees and specializations, primarily in the sciences, while the Ethiopian immigration was mostly from rural areas with limited education. This last point is also connected to these communities' respective incorporation as teachers in Israel.

The socioeconomic status of these two groups is significantly different to this day, with the Ethiopian population (hereafter EO) being one of the lowest in Israel in many indices. For example, a 2018 report showed that EO individuals experienced higher proportions of residential segregation and workplace discrimination (Hendels, 2013), and their household income was 55% of the rest of the population's average income. Only about 20% of high school graduates attended university (compared to about 40% of the general population), and 88% of the marriages were within the community (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Finally, there was a higher rate of police arrests and cruelty toward EO citizens leading to a number of mass demonstrations (Abu et al., 2017). In comparison, a 2016 report indicated that the income of FSU households was 67% of veteran Israelis' average income, their attendance at universities was higher than the national average, and only 59% of their marriages were within their community, with lower unemployment rates than veteran Israelis (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

### *FSU Teachers in Israel*

Approximately 5% of the million immigrants who came in the late 1980s and 1990s were qualified teachers in their home countries (Michael et al., 2004). The teaching profession was one of the only ones allowed Jews under the anti-Semitic Soviet regime, and was therefore common (Remennick, 2002). The immigrants nonetheless encountered difficulties as Israeli institutions do not readily acknowledge foreign teaching qualifications.

FSU teachers have encountered various barriers over the years with language issues being paramount. Language is a teacher's main instruction tool, as well as a major vehicle to interact with students, parents and colleagues, and language barriers proved to be difficult for many FSU teachers to overcome. FSU teachers were often made to understand that they should abandon Russian at school and adhere to Hebrew (Putjata, 2019). The attitude to Hebrew and Russian is especially important because of many immigrants' pride in the Russian culture and language on one hand (Epstein & Kheimets, 2000), and their negative attitude to Hebrew on the other hand (Putjata, 2019).

The differences between the Israeli school system and the education systems that characterized the Soviet Union also proved challenging for FSU teachers

(Remennick, 2002). For example, there were considerable disparities between FSU teachers and their native-born colleagues with regards to educational perceptions in teaching sciences and mathematics (Amit, 2010). In the FSU, the study regime that they were used to was typically structured and rigid, with a uniform textbook that did not allow teachers any freedom. In Israel, various approaches and styles are used with a variety of textbooks. As a result, they were labeled by their colleagues and students stereotypically as authoritative and inflexible (Remennick, 2002).

Michael (2006) found that FSU teachers' enrolment in professional organizations, participation in decision-making forums at school and in professional courses were significantly lower than veteran Israeli teachers. The study concluded that despite the general perception that the FSU immigration was a national priority, the education system found it difficult to incorporate immigrant teachers, and did not make the most of their potential contribution.

### *Teachers of Ethiopian Origin (EO)*

In the Jewish society in Israel, Ethiopian immigrants stand out as excluded from various social frameworks and low socio-economic status (Ben-Eliezer, 2008; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018; Dayan, 2014). This situation is reflected in the lack of representation of Ethiopian immigrants in various institutions and frameworks. In addition, Ethiopian immigrants live in a predominantly white Jewish public space that lacks socio-cultural representations of their heritage and culture. These limitations are manifest also in the educational system and in various educational settings. Until recently, it was rare to find Ethiopian young people educated by Ethiopian teachers. This situation has implications for Ethiopian immigrants – the way they perceive themselves and their social status (Avishar & Bernner, 2017). Examining the condition of Ethiopian immigrants exposes the social power relations in Israel, which, among other things, are organized according to skin tone, and produce 'white privilege' (McIntosh, 1990). Various studies demonstrated the white hegemony's bearing on Ethiopian Jews' experiences, which emphasizes the significance and consequences of skin tone and the racial and discriminatory treatment that follows (Ringel et al., 2005; Walsh & Tuval-Mashiach, 2012).

In a retrospective study among EO teachers, they reported that their training had not adequately taken into consideration some of the barriers and academic gaps. Pre-service EO teachers perceived their starting point as different and often at a disadvantage socially, culturally, and academically. Many found it difficult to adjust to the academic environment, and many dropped out. Those who did not drop out were often overworked, and often felt lonely (Avishar & Bernner, 2017).

Avishar and Bernner (2017) further found that EO teachers who had succeeded in overcoming the cultural transition, and integrated into teaching positions, found great value for themselves, for their immediate environment, and for Israeli society as a whole. EO teachers indicated that they spoke 'two languages': they represented

the educational system and at the same time represented the social margins, and thus became change agents and role models (Ran, 2017).

Ran (2017) noted that today, in the field of teacher training in Israel, six colleges of education offer unique training programs for Ethiopian Israeli students in addition to the standard curricula available at universities and colleges of education. Few EO teachers are graduates of university programs, and data on the number of substitute teachers among them are unclear.

For reasons that will be outlined below, some EO teachers teach part-time or are not considered official education workers, but NGO employees.

### *Discriminatory Practices Toward FSU and EO Israeli Citizens*

The initial admission ticket to Israeli society is being Jewish. Because of Israel's unique status as a state that defines its nationalism in accordance with its religion, this has further significance (Gindi & Erlich Ron, 2020). Often, a complex debate develops regarding the Jewishness of the FSU immigrants, coming from a culture that was influenced by communist ideology for many years, which did not allow them to maintain their religion. Many Soviet Union Jews married non-Jews over the years, and many adopted Christian holidays (Rajman & Pinsky, 2013). Similarly, the question arises from time to time about the Jewishness of Ethiopian immigrants, some of whom came to Israel with cross tattoos from Christian missionaries, and testified to experiences of religious coercion (Kaplan & Salamon, 2004). The questions surrounding their Judaism undermine these two groups' legitimacy for emigrating to Israel, and cause great difficulty marrying outside their community.

Israeli society is largely a mosaic of immigrants who have arrived at different stages of local history, and there have always been cultural differences based on countries of origin. The first migrant groups to come from Europe became the dominant group that held symbolic capital and the desired local habitus. Within this symbolic pyramid, religion and nationality are followed by the Hebrew language. Language is a significant symbolic capital to which social exclusion is associated. Hebrew-speakers command much greater symbolic capital than speakers of other languages, and Russian or Amharic accents denote inferior status in most social fields (Ben-Rafael & Peres, 2005).

### *Sense of Belonging/Otherness*

Belonging has far greater implications than its dictionary definition 'being a member or part of a group' implies. There is wide consensus that belonging is a basic human motivation, and teachers' sense of belonging to their school is no exception (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). For example, teacher-trainees' sense of belonging to

their college or university was found to promote the development of their new professional identity (Williams et al., 2012).

There is a close link between belonging and identity. In one relevant study that examined Arab, EO, and FSU Israelis, Tannenbaum (2009) noted the importance of their native language to their self-identity. There are many interface points between language, identity and conflict, and they can be investigated in various contexts and with various tools. FSU immigrants view the Russian language as a way to maintain access to the cultural treasures that they came from, and as a tool of self-definition versus other parts of Israeli society, while immigrants from Ethiopia see their language as a means of communication and preservation of key values such as honor and family values.

The flip side of belonging – otherness – has been the focus of sociological research for many decades (e.g., Lee & Brown, 1994). It is important to note that feelings of otherness are significant beyond denoting a lack of sense of belonging. The concept of otherness has helped formulate how a perception of ‘we’ is structured, and how a concept of ‘others’ is built into it in different societies. In the field of psychology, as well, the concept of otherness has increasingly been used as one of the elements of the constitution of the self and of becoming singular subjects (Laplanche, 2005). Thus, feelings of otherness do not merely represent one’s lack of belonging, but also processes of self- definition.

In the present study, we examine immigrant teachers’ senses of belonging and otherness among FSU and EO teachers in Israel. These groups of teachers were chosen with the intent of highlighting two aspects of diversity: skin color and religiosity. Both groups have much in common with one another and with the majority, but their otherness from the majority is different. FSU immigrants’ Judaism is questioned by the Jewish majority, while EO immigrants have a different skin color. We examined teachers’ experience in the wider institutional context of the education system, and not in their day-to-day social and professional relationships.

## Methodology

The present research is based on a larger study that included 1197 post-primary education teachers from all districts and educational streams in Israel (Gindi & Erlich Ron, 2019). From this sample, this study uses the answers to the optional qualitative questions in the survey completed by 20 teachers from an Ethiopian background and 34 FSU teachers. The three open-ended questions were: (1) Describe an event where you felt you belonged in the staffroom; (2) Describe an event where you felt different in the staffroom; and (3) What motivated you to choose to teach at your school?

The responses were uploaded to qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti, version 7.5.6.), and the information was analyzed thematically in accordance with Braun and Clarke’s guidelines (Braun et al., 2019). First, the writers each studied the information and read the material several times. Subsequently, initial codes were

produced, and themes and subthemes were identified, reviewed and compared. The responses were reviewed one by one, and the results of the two analyses were compared to reach the final theme matrix. This triangulation method is designed to strengthen the validity of the findings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

## ***Population***

The sample characteristics, presented in Table 3.1, demonstrate the vast differences between the two groups studied. First, the FSU teachers seem to have actually been born in the FSU, while the EO teachers were mostly born in Israel. The questionnaire did not include questions about place of birth, but we can deduce it from the teachers' age and their first language. The mean age for EO teachers was 33.1 years with a standard deviation of 5.9 years. They had been working as teachers for 5.65 years on average (SD = 4.9). The mean age for the FSU teachers was 49.5 (SD = 11.2) and they had been working as teachers for 23.7 years on average (SD = 12.7). In addition, the proportion of first language Hebrew-speakers was 30% among EO teachers compared to only 9% among FSU teachers.

The two groups also differ in their academic background: FSU teachers have a higher proportion of Master's degree graduates. There is a much higher proportion of EO homeroom teachers than FSU homeroom teachers. Finally, FSU teachers in the sample were distributed among different districts, while most EO teachers were concentrated in the Jerusalem district. The groups were also similar on a few variables. The proportion of men to women, as well as the distribution among the different educational tracks, was similar in the two groups. The majority of teachers in both groups taught exact sciences.

## **Research Findings**

### ***Open-Ended Question Analysis: When Do You Feel That You Belong?***

Before delving into the themes that emerged in the qualitative analysis, it should be noted that most of the responses received reflected a sense of belonging. For example, many teachers' response to the question "Describe an event where you felt different" was that they did not feel otherness at all: "I never felt this way"; "None"; "I do not feel different in the staffroom"; and so on. In the summary of the responses, 33 responses expressed belonging, while only 15 related to otherness. Moreover, both EO and FSU teachers exhibited similar themes regarding their feelings of belonging.



**Table 3.1** Sample characteristics

Characteristic	FSU teachers	EO teachers
	(N = 35)	(N = 20)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	13 (23%)	6 (32%)
Women	44 (77%)	13 (68%)
<b>Education</b>		
BA	17 (30%)	13 (65%)
MA	39 (68%)	7 (35%)
Other	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
<b>1st language</b>		
Hebrew	3 (9%)	6 (30%)
Russian	32 (91%)	0 (0%)
Amharic	0 (0%)	12 (60%)
Tigrinya	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
<b>Homeroom teacher</b>		
Yes	11 (19%)	14 (70%)
No	46 (81%)	6 (30%)
<b>Education track</b>		
State	31 (55%)	12 (60%)
State-religious	8 (14%)	5 (25%)
Settlement admin.	15 (26%)	2 (10%)
Arab	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Orthodox	1 (2%)	1 (5%)
Other	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
<b>Heterogeneity of training college</b>		
1 – Very homogenous	5 (9%)	3 (16%)
2	5 (9%)	2 (11%)
3	13 (23%)	3 (16%)
4	19 (35%)	6 (31%)
5 – Very heterogeneous	13 (23%)	5 (26%)
<b>District</b>		
North	12 (21%)	2 (10%)
Haifa	6 (11%)	3 (15%)
Center	14 (25%)	3 (15%)
Tel Aviv	7 (12%)	1 (5%)
Jerusalem	5 (9%)	10 (50%)
South	13 (23%)	1 (5%)
<b>Teaching discipline<sup>a</sup></b>		
Exact sciences	30 (53%)	7 (39%)
Humanities	10 (18%)	3 (17%)
Social sciences	4 (7%)	1 (6%)
Languages	5 (9%)	4 (22%)
Technology	3 (5%)	1 (6%)
Arts	3 (5%)	1 (6%)
Physical education	3 (5%)	1 (6%)
Computer sciences	5 (9%)	0 (0%)

<sup>a</sup>Percentage adds up to more than 100%; some teachers reported more than one teaching discipline

The qualitative analysis of belonging revealed sub-themes on three levels: (1) national belonging; (2) organizational relationship; (3) personal relationship. In terms of national belonging, teachers cited holidays and wartime as unifying factors that contributed to their sense of belonging. For example, an FSU teacher noted a sense of belonging on “all holidays, celebrating the first day of the Jewish month”. Interestingly, EO teachers not only mentioned their feelings of belonging on all Jewish holidays but also on the Ethiopian Jewish holiday (*Sigd*) marking the yearning for Jerusalem: “Truthfully, I feel I belong and am part of the teachers and the staffroom throughout the year, but the *Sigd* period can be mentioned as an event when I feel I particularly belong”. Another EO teacher wrote about the feeling of belonging on “the Israeli Defense Forces’ memorial days.” The teachers’ shared fate also reinforces their sense of belonging, as this FSU teacher said: “Identifying with the fighting spirit over the defense of the State of Israel.”

At the organizational level, teachers’ sense of belonging was expressed in various ways: in school roles, in concern for students, and in school events. Despite the low percentage of office holders among FSU teachers, some respondents reported key positions. In the following quote an EO teacher wrote how her leadership in preparing a school event made her feel that she belonged: “After my class performance for the Pentecost (*Shavuot*) holiday that I prepared - the teachers were in total shock how it (the performance) turned out perfect, and I proved that I’m like everyone else and can do anything.” The teachers’ struggle against feelings of inferiority (or perhaps the environment’s manifest superiority) is almost palpable in this quote, and connected to the prejudice that EO teachers feel, which will be elaborated upon below.

One teacher from the FSU noted that she chaired the teachers’ union at her school, and another FSU teacher wrote: “Each time I turn to teachers and ask for help with things that are not in their role definition, they decisively tell me: ‘Whatever you need.’” An EO teacher wrote: “This (belonging) is a feeling that accompanies me from the first instance I began working at the school. I have countless examples. Team meetings, pedagogical conferences, leading activities, etc. etc.”

The teachers unite around helping students, as one FSU teacher said: “When we talk about students, the concern for them, the difficulties working with them.” School events that acknowledged teachers’ contribution were another factor that contributed to teachers’ feeling of belonging.

The third sub-theme was that of personal friendship. The vast majority of teachers wrote about the sense of team spirit that exists in the school, beyond working relationships. For example, an EO teacher was excited about a surprise birthday party organized by the other teachers, and an FSU teacher wrote of a peak event on a trip to Poland: “The pinnacle for me was at the second time I accompanied a trip to Poland with problem students. On Friday night, I received a big package of surprises and letters from teachers I did not expect to receive.” Many teachers noted the sociable and pleasant atmosphere in the staffroom: “The laughs at recess - laughter among us, for all kinds of situations.” Contrary to the veteran teachers-young teachers tension that will be referred to below, there was an FSU teacher who found the

age gap between veteran and new teachers to be an advantage: “End-of-year breaks and conversations, they accepted me as their son.”

One unique example should be mentioned, in which a teacher cited her advantage as a teacher who immigrated from the FSU when working with immigrant students. This advantage increased her sense of belonging to the entire staff, as she felt she belonged “when teachers contact me and consult about new Russian-speaking students.” Naturally, there were also teachers who noted their sense of belonging in several environments at the same time as one FSU teacher wrote: “The warm attitude in the staffroom, full support of the professional coordinator, attentive ear in management and a pleasant atmosphere in general.”

### ***Open-Ended Question Analysis: When Do You Feel Otherness?***

The responses of EO teachers to the above question were all about prejudice, while teachers from the FSU wrote about four topics, prejudice being only one. The sub-themes included: (1) prejudice; (2) cultural gaps; (3) little involvement in school; (4) professional gaps.

Prejudice against EO teachers was evident in five teachers writing about others feeling surprised when they found out their profession. Several teachers were thought to be janitors: “When I (first) arrived they thought I was a student’s mother or a cleaning lady”; “Sometimes when parents get confused and think that I’m the janitor.” Another teacher was dismissed as a teaching aide and felt disrespected: “When I was called an assistant the first time they met me, without asking or trying to get to know me, while I fought tooth and nail to become a teacher, equal among equals.” Yet other EO teachers wrote about the implicit ways people exhibit their surprise. For example, when they are treated as unique: “When they talk about me as an exceptional case for Ethiopians: ‘You don’t represent, you’re not like everyone’.” Some teachers reported prejudice in the way others look at them: “People’s looks of amazement. Racism comes up implicitly when they admire the way that you talk excellent Hebrew, and ask when you immigrated.”

EO teachers felt otherness when they spoke to other teachers about the broader picture of racism and prejudice against Ethiopian Jews in Israel. This EO teacher felt that her colleagues were disconnected from the wider context: “When there is police violence against Israelis of EO. I often feel that the other teachers don’t understand the kind of racism that exists in Israeli society.” Police prejudice against black people led to several large “Black Lives Matter” demonstrations in Israel. These demonstrations are referred to in the following quotation: “In discussing the demonstrations, other teachers don’t understand what it means to be Ethiopian. As a woman, I feel racism less, but young Ethiopian men, who walk in the street and get arrested, feel humiliated.”

The prejudice against FSU teachers reflected the stereotype of veteran Israelis who perceive FSU immigrants as loosely connected to Judaism: “When you make a refreshment list for a meeting, and you’re told to buy something, without even

asking if my kitchen is *kosher*, and it is!” FSU teachers also noted being perceived as cold and having a high work ethic: “When I put in a lot of work and was told I was a ‘Russian’, and all that interests me is work.”

In terms of cultural disparities, one FSU teacher noted her difficulty getting involved in the discussion due to a lack of knowledge about Israeli society, and noted that she felt different “when differences between groups in Israeli society were discussed”. Two other FSU teachers referred to the cultural gaps arising from *Novi God* (the Russian New Year’s Eve celebration), for example: “When there is no time off for the civic New Year, because I celebrate.”

The following quotation includes a reference to the disparity that results from the low participation of FSU teachers in administrative roles and their consequent small impact on the school:

*We have minimal impact on the school climate. We are less aware of our rights. In our city, there is no principal or vice principal who is from the Russian sector, and in our district, there is not one teacher from the Russian sector with a significant role, except for some profession coordinators.*

This quote coincides with other studies, showing FSU teachers’ low involvement in education and management roles (Michael, 2006), which is also reflected in the low proportion of homeroom FSU teachers in this study. Despite the positive findings about FSU integration, the barrier to organizational influence has persisted for years. It should be noted that in Israel, being a homeroom teacher is a prerequisite for many promotional channels in the system.

The feeling of otherness of some of the FSU teachers had a prosaic and familiar background, disconnected from their origin. Teachers mentioned seniority, personal characteristics or teaching profession as making them feel otherness. The issue of seniority is reflected in the following quotation: “Veterans allow themselves to raise their voices at young women.” Another teacher describes herself as a non-conformist and emphasizes that it has nothing to do with her origin: “I felt differently because I was a non-conformist person, not because I was Ukrainian.” Another teacher complains about the sense of otherness that comes from teaching different subjects: “They don’t like to talk about math, those who don’t teach the subject.” These descriptions are like teachers’ descriptions all over the world, regardless of ethnicity.

## Discussion

The present study focuses on minority-majority relations using teachers’ reports about their senses of belonging and otherness. On the face of it, it would seem that the sources of otherness were different between the two groups, while the sources of belonging were similar. Nonetheless, if we look at it from a bird’s eye view, we can see that all the sources of belonging and otherness are determined by the minority’s resemblance to the majority (Johnston et al., 2010; Khattab, 2003). Similarities are used as markers of inclusion, while differences are used as markers of exclusion

(Bourdieu, 1984). We can see how, in many instances, the power relations are manifested in response to an external characteristic a priori to any interaction taking place, defining the hierarchy in minority-majority relations.

EO teachers differ from the majority group by their skin color (Kaplan & Salamon, 2004). While teachers did not report direct comments about their skin color, they did describe events in which their different appearance provoked reactions that they found upsetting. In addition, there was evidence of micro-aggression in response to their appearance. The discriminatory micro-aggressive practices are often subtle, and merely raising the issue of ethnicity (“When did you immigrate?”) in response to the teachers’ experience can be used to remind the teacher of the power hierarchy.

It is also noteworthy that despite the sociological research that indicates religion as another marker of exclusion for Israeli EO citizens (Kaplan & Salamon, 2004), the EO respondents never mentioned this issue, in contrast to FSU teachers. FSU teachers are different from the majority group in their lack of religious upbringing, which they are often upbraided for (Raijman & Pinsky, 2013). Other markers of exclusion included FSU teachers’ stigmatization as rigid, cold, and too hard-working.

The themes that emerged concerning the belonging questions indicated that the sources for belonging are similar for both groups, and include their professionalism and their social and professional relations with other teachers. Professionalism – being teachers – is a currency of great value that both FSU and EO teachers noted as bridging the gaps between them and their colleagues. The symbolic capital that teachers bring with them includes their social proficiencies, and both FSU and EO teachers mentioned social relationships as an important source of belonging. It is noteworthy that the sources of belonging were similar despite exceeding differences between the groups. The FSU teachers were mostly born in the FSU, and were on average 16 years older than the EO teachers. The EO teachers were most likely born in Israel (second generation), were much younger and less experienced in the education system. Nonetheless, these two groups found that their sense of belonging stemmed from the same sources.

## Conclusions and Implications

Minorities struggle with many discriminatory practices and use different inclusion strategies in order to restore equality. The findings indicated that they face different discriminatory practices, with ethnicity and language being salient in the experience of EO teachers. The mechanisms of exclusion that FSU teachers confront include devaluing their religious status, their language, teaching habits, and other stereotypes. The sources of symbolic capital, on the other hand, are quite similar and mostly related to the teaching profession. Given the power of the national narrative in Israel, EO and FSU teachers subjugate their ethnic identities to their professional identity. We propose that professional identity gives minorities an anchor, and can serve as an important source of symbolic capital for minority teachers worldwide.

A comprehensive look at the two research groups shows that each of the groups has a different starting point. Each group has come equipped with a different set of symbolic assets within the Israeli context. The question of FSU immigrants' Judaism is poised to linger as much as Ethiopian immigrants cannot change their skin color. FSU immigrants' academic education is an asset, while Ethiopian immigrants have the benefit of being a more religious community within an Israeli context that values that. Both groups suffer from stereotypes, and have a significant deficit in mastering the local language. The different starting points are an important aspect of understanding diversity within diversity. Parallel lines can be seen between commanding the macro-level symbolic assets and belonging at the micro-level. The dominant group serves as a gatekeeper that reminds immigrants that they did not acquire, and perhaps may never acquire, the full inventory of symbolic assets (language, Jewishness, skin color), and indirectly produces each teacher's private, individual sense of otherness (Bourdieu, 1984).

This study demonstrates that professional identity is a moderating tool that enables participation in a social arena of partnership. In addition to the research focus on the importance of minority teachers for students, we propose to explore the shared environment of role partners and the social forces at work within these fields. This study brings to the front a social arena that provokes a meeting and discourse between ethnic, lingual and religious identities, from which much can be learned about the experience of immigrants and minorities as a part of our project on boundary-crossing teachers. In this project, we have explored beyond the Ethiopian background and the Russian speaking teachers focused on in the chapter, also Arab teachers in Jewish schools, religious teachers in secular schools, and ethnic diversity in staffrooms. We suggest further study and research of sense of belonging and otherness of minority groups and the relationships with the majority group. On the practical side, the research paved the way for the formation of the cross-teach program in various institutions and research studies.

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