Teachers as agents of political influence in the Israeli high schools

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Abstract

On the assumption that schools serve as agents of political socialization, the present study was designed first to identify those teachers who exert influence on the political attitudes of their high school students and second, to characterize them. In the first phase of the study, 866 high school students in the three main cities of Israel were asked to identify those teachers who influenced their political attitudes. Five hundred ninety-one students reported to be politically influenced by 86 teachers, who were compared with 81 noninfluential teachers. The results showed that, compared to noninfluential teachers, influencial teachers are more often males, of Israeli origin, with a master's degree, teaching social sciences and humanities. Also the influential teachers hold more progressive, democratic, dovish and Zionist attitudes than the noninfluential teachers, support more political education and tend to be more aware of and involved in politics. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Although there is controversy among social scientists about the extent of school's influence on students' political attitudes, in general, they agree that the school fulfills the role of a political socialization agent (e.g., Almond & Verba, 1963; Dawson, Prewitt, & Dawson, 1977; Dreeben, 1970; Ehman, 1980; Heater & Gillespie, 1981; Hess & Torney, 1967; Patrick, 1977; Westholm,

Lindquist, & Niemi, 1990). The school functions as a formal organization whose objectives also include imparting cultural tradition and providing knowledge about the political structure, institutions and processes of the society (Heater & Gillespie, 1981). In so far as it resembles a political organization more than the family, the school also provides experiences that prepare the students to function in their political system.

Within the school, teachers play a determinative role in the political influence exerted on the students. They are in direct and continuous interaction with the students during the long school days, transmitting and mediating knowledge to the students and preparing them to act as members of society. The present study, therefore,

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examines those teachers who can be identified to have a political influence on their students, in an attempt to outline the characteristics that typify them.

The school carries out political socialization through three major channels. First of all, both curricula and school textbooks touch political themes, directly, as well as indirectly. Of special importance are curricula that contain topics of direct political relevance, among them civic studies, social sciences, or history. Other subjects, such as literature, Bible, or languages, are also likely to refer to political themes. Indeed research reporting analysis of school textbooks has shown that they contain direct reference to political themes (e.g., Bar-Gal, 1993; Bar-Tal, 1998; Firer, 1985; Torney, Oppenheim, & Farnen, 1975). It is assumed, thus, that through exposure to the contents of curricula and school textbooks students acquire knowledge about political matters and form attitudes towards various political issues.

Another channel of political socialization in the school is through what has often been called the "hidden curriculum" or "school climate" (Merelman, 1971; Torney et al., 1975). This notion refers to the school's educational and social practices, such as the quality of student–teacher interaction, the level of teachers' openness and tolerance towards students, the level of autonomy granted to students, or the extent of students' participation in school-related decision making. School climate is often evaluated on the open–closed dimension. The open climate, propagated by the progressive educational ideology, as will be later noted, is characterized by relations of warmth, autonomy, openness, tolerance, support, and trust between teachers and students. In this climate teachers encourage criticism, skepticism and creativity, accept alternative answers, direct students to various channels of information and allow students to participate in decisions related to school life. In contrast, in a closed climate, typical of a more traditional educational ideology, teachers serve as ultimate authorities on knowledge, maintain formal and hierarchical relations with their students and emphasize discipline as a means to maintain order (Biber & Menuchin, 1970; Dewey, 1938; Moos, 1979). The school climate represents students' main experience of life in a social system

on the basis of which they acquire skills and attitudes which are relevant to life in the social–political world. In this vein, for example, studies have shown that students who studied in open climate schools develop attitudes and skills which are more compatible to life in democratic societies than students who studied in schools with a closed climate (e.g., Armento, 1986; Ehman, 1969; Goldenberg, 1998; Greenberg, 1985; Hedges & Giacconia, 1981; Johnson, 1981). In contrast, in the closed climate the students may acquire different beliefs and skills, since their experiences imply different lessons.

Teachers, too, serve as agents of political socialization. They directly provide information about political issues, either through the content of the subject matters they teach (e.g., civic studies or history), or by reference to current political events. Moreover, teachers also to a large extent determine the nature of the climate in their classrooms. Finally, teachers may serve as role models to their students by exhibiting their own social and political awareness and involvement in their school, community and society at large. With regard to the first function, studies show that teachers are perceived by their students as sources of information (e.g., Kutnick, 1980; Longstreat, 1989; Nucci, 1984). They provide students with knowledge, not only about the subject matter they teach, but also about various topics relevant to students' lives, and this is likely to include information that is related to politics. Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv, and Peleg (1990), who studied the reliance of children and adolescents on various sources of information, found that especially in the last years of high school, teachers become specialized espistemic authorities in science and politics. Twelfth graders tend to rely on teachers' knowledge in science and politics as much as they rely in this matter on their fathers and more than on their mothers and peers.

1.1. Variables and hypotheses

The present study examines the characteristics of teachers who exert influence on the political attitudes of their students. However, the first question in this investigation is how to identify these teachers. We decided to rely on students'

judgment of their teachers. The assumption was that students in the higher grades would be able to identify teachers who they believed influence their political attitudes. In this attempt, we also relied on students' definition of political influence in order to avoid imposition of researchers' view (see Connell, 1987). In addition, the students were asked to report how these teachers exerted their influence. This part of the study allowed us to assess the characteristics of effective political influence, as students see it. It also enabled us to compare direct with indirect influence of teachers.

Once students identified the influential teachers, it was possible to characterize them in comparison to teachers who did not have influence. It was assumed that the two groups of teachers differ, since the former group possesses particular qualities, which enable them to exert the political influence.

The following four categories of variables were selected for the comparison between the two groups of teachers: socio-demographic, professional, ideological and political. Among the socio-demographic variables, sex, age, and ethnic origin were selected. Research done in Israel indicates that male teachers, younger teachers and teachers of European-American origin are more liked and have higher status in schools than female teachers, older teachers, and teachers of Asian-African origin (Zak & Horowitz, 1985). Male teachers constitute a minority of wage earners in the Israeli educational system. Only 34.6% of the teachers in secondary education were males, according to the 1993 census (Sprinzak, Segev, Bar, & Levi-Mazloum, 1996). Nevertheless men occupy the majority of the administrative positions (68.9% of the principals in high schools in 1989 were males (Goldring & Chen, 1993)). With regard to age, studies show that students identify more with younger teachers than with older ones (e.g., Shamgar, 1980). As for ethnic origin, it serves in Israel as an indicator of socioeconomic status (SES): more Jews of Asian-African origin occupy lower status positions than Jews of European-American origin. Also Jews of Asian-African origin are perceived stereotypically as possessing a lower educational level than Jews of European-American origin (e.g., Ben-Rafael, 1982; Rim & Aloni, 1969).

Among the professional variables, seniority, subject matter of instruction, level of higher education, scope of teaching position, additional roles in school, and level of job satisfaction were selected. Studies show that teachers, who have teaching experience, who teach social sciences and humanities, who have high academic education, and take additional responsibilities in schools, are viewed generally as having a wider perspective and therefore are more frequently perceived as epistemic authorities in general fields of knowledge than teachers who don't have these characteristics (Almozlino, 1996; Barnes, 1975; Lomsky-Feder & Kahane, 1988; Shamgar, 1980; Zak & Horowitz, 1985).

The ideological variables assessed progressive educational attitudes, traditional educational attitudes, democratic attitudes, dovish attitudes, Zionist attitudes, stratification attitudes, and support for political education in schools. The distinction between progressive and traditional attitudes is based on the educational philosophy of Dewey (1938), who pointed out that the two approaches differ in the following:

> To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the opportunities of present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world (pp. 19–20).

On this basis, Kerlinger (1958, 1967) conceptualized two factors of educational attitudes (progressive and traditional) and constructed a scale for measuring them. These two factors are also accepted in the Israeli educational culture (e.g., Kremer, 1978).

The next three attitudinal themes are from the political realm. The democratic scale assessed the degree of support for the democratic system. The "dovish attitudes" scale measured the degree

of support for peaceful resolution of the Israeli–Arab conflict, which would require serious compromises, and especially Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the 1967 war. "Zionist attitudes" refers to a national approach which views Israel as a homeland that Jews should immigrate to. The two last ideological variables concern educational practices. The first, "stratification attitudes", refers to views about ethnic discrimination with the Jewish society. The second concerns the extent of support for conducting political education in schools. Finally, political variables include political involvement and political awareness of the teachers.

Past empirical research showed relationships between the investigated variables. For example, an extensive study of a national sample of Israeli high school teachers revealed that progressive educational attitudes highly correlate with democratic attitudes, dovish attitudes and support for political education (Bar-Tal, Darom, & Sorek, 1978). Other studies showed that teachers with strongly progressive education attitudes maintain a more open classroom climate than teachers with less strong attitudes of this type (Kremer, 1978; Lightfoot, 1973; Sontag, 1968).

In sum, the hypothesis of the present study is that teachers identified as having influence on their students will be younger, will tend to be males and of European-American origin, be more experienced, and have a higher level of academic education. More of them will be teachers of social sciences and humanities, evince stronger progressive educational attitudes, democratic attitudes, dovish attitudes, Zionistic attitudes, anti-stratification attitudes, propolitical socialization attitudes, and more political involvement and awareness than teachers who do not have political influence on their students.

2. Phase I

2.1. Methods

2.1.1. Population of students

The study was conducted with 866 twelfth grade participants (401 females and 465 males) from 37

classes at 11 high schools in Jerusalem (10 classes at 3 schools), Tel Aviv (16 classes at 4 schools) and Haifa (11 classes at 4 schools). The schools and classes selected for the study represented the heterogeneity of the Israeli school system, in the three main cities.

2.1.2. Questionnaire's construction

The questionnaire for the students was constructed on the basis of a pretest with 35 students (20 males and 15 females) of the 11th grade. The students were asked in opened–ended questions to write how they would define political influence of teachers and what are the ways that teachers politically influence their students. The answers to the first question showed 80% of agreement. The students noted that the political influence refers to imparting new political opinions, strengthening held political opinions, or changing political opinions. On the basis of the answers to the second question, a list was compiled of ways that teachers use to influence their students politically. Eleven ways were mentioned by at least five students and they corresponded to the ways noted in the literature on political influence in the classrooms (Ben Sira, 1990; Ichilov, 1989).

2.1.3. Questionnaire

Based on these responses, a questionnaire was constructed for the identification of teachers who, according to students, exerted political influence. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. First, each student was asked with an open-ended question to indicate two teachers who had taught him/her in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade and had somehow influenced his/her political attitudes; that is, "had somehow influenced the formation of new political attitudes, or strengthened your existing attitudes, or changed your previously existing political attitudes". The students were asked to rank the two teachers according to strength of influence. Students were also asked to indicate the grade (10th, 11th, or 12th) and the subject matter which the teacher had taught.

Next, the students were asked in what ways each of these teachers had influenced them. The questionnaire included eleven options and students were instructed to evaluate the extent of use of

each of these on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 (*much use*) to 3 (*little use*). The eleven possible ways of influencing students were: initiating discussions about political issues in class; giving political interpretations to studied topics; encouraging autonomous and original thinking; participating in political discussions among students during breaks; encouraging students to be involved in social life of the school and community; answering students' political questions; inviting political figures to classes; encouraging and enabling students to give creative answers to teacher's questions; creating open relations with students; setting an example by participating in social life of the school and community; setting an example by being politically active. In addition, students were asked to indicate whether or not they had clear political opinions. Finally, each student was asked to evaluate all his/her school years from first to twelfth grade, and to indicate which teacher, in what grade and teaching what subject, had most influenced his/her political attitudes.

2.1.4. Procedure

Students were asked to fill in the questionnaire in their classrooms. A male investigator presented the study as an examination of political knowledge formation. The anonymity of the respondents was assured, since no identifiable details were asked for.

3. Results

Out of the 866 students participating in the study only 591 (280 females and 311 males) noted that at least one teacher had influenced their political attitude. These students did not differ in any identifiable variable that the study used from students who did not note political influence of their teachers. Of those 591 students, 355 reported to have clear political opinions, while the rest, 236, reported not to have them. Since no major sex differences were observed, the combined data of males and females were analyzed and are reported as below. Table 1 shows the distribution of students' responses regarding the questions about the grade when they were taught by the influential teachers. The results clearly show that the most influential teachers taught them in the high school, mostly in the 12th grade.

An examination of the influential teachers' subject areas showed that 540 (91.4%) students mentioned humanities or social sciences and only 51 (8.6%) students referred to biological, or technological sciences. History teachers were mentioned by 209 (35.4%) students, civic studies teachers by 141 (23.8%) students, Bible teachers by 48 (8.1%) students and literature teachers by 33 (5.6%) students. Similar results were obtained with regard to the second most influential teacher. Of the 432 respondents, 406 (92.7%) identified

Table 1
Distributions of students' responses to questions regarding grades of being taught by the influential teachers

Grades taught	n	Percentage
The most influential teacher in the high school		
12th grade	262	44.7
11th grade	178	30.4
10th grade	146	24.9
The second most influential teacher in the high school		
12th grade	183	43
11th grade	153	35.9
10th grade	90	21.1
The most influential teacher through all the school years		
High school (grades 10–12)	488	82.6
Junior high school (grades 7–9)	92	15.6
Elementary school (grades 1–7)	11	1.9

this teacher as teaching humanities or social sciences.

Of special interest were the reported ways of teachers' influence. The scores of the reports were factor analyzed by means of principal component analysis, and this yielded three factors: (a) *indirect influence* consisting of encouraging autonomous and original thinking; encouraging creative answers, and creating open relations (23.2% explained variance); (b) *direct influence* consisting of initiating political discussions, giving political interpretations, participating in political discussions, answering students' questions (14.8% explained variance); and (c) *modeling and participation* consisting of inviting political figures, participating in social life of the school and community, encouraging students to participate in this life, and being politically active (12.0% explained variance).

Comparisons among the factors show that ways of indirect influence received the highest use score, in the case of the most influential teacher ($M = 2.16$, s.d. $= 0.57$). *Direct influence* was rated next ($M = 2.10$, s.d. $= 0.49$) and *modeling and participation* was rated last ($M = 1.53$, s.d. $= 0.49$). The difference between the reported use of the three categories was significant, $F(2591)$, 4.64 $p < 0.01$. Also, the results showed that those students who did not have clear political opinions rated *direct influence* higher than *indirect influence* ($M = 2.12$ vs. $M = 2/02$, $t(559) = 2.29$, $p < 0.05$), while those students who had clear political opinions rated them similarly ($M = 2.15$ and $M = 2.12$). Both groups rated *modeling and participation* significantly lower ($M = 1.50$ and $M = 1.56$, respectively).

4. Phase II

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Population of teachers

In this part of the study participants were 167 teachers of the 10th, 11th and 12th grades from the 11 participant high schools. Eighty-six of these teachers had been identified by students as having affected their political attitudes. These teachers were selected on the basis of two criteria: they were mentioned either as the most influential teachers by at least 40% of the students in the class, or as second most influential teachers by at least 60% of the students. (The influential teachers were identified on the basis of the students' reported grade and the subject matter of the teachers in question.)

Eighty-one teachers, who were identified as not being influential, were selected in the following way. A list was prepared of 378 teachers teaching in the 37 high school classes that participated in the study. The list excluded those teachers who were identified by students as being influential on their political attitudes, and the noninfluential teachers were randomly selected from this list.

4.1.2. Instruments

The questionnaire given to teachers consisted of the three following parts. First, they were asked to provide personal information about sex, age, ethnic origin, familial status, year of immigration to Israel, ethnic origin of each parent, level of religiousness, subject matter taught, seniority in education, type of higher education, number of instructional hours per week, and special functions they fulfilled in the school.

In the second part, the teachers were asked about their educational, social and political attitudes. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 53 items and the answers were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *absolutely do not agree* to (5) *absolutely agree*. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

(a) *The educational ideology scale*, measuring progressive and traditional attitudes, included 21 items taken from Bar-Tal et al. (1978) and Kerlinger (1967). Examples of items measuring traditional attitudes are: "Children need more discipline than they usually get", "Children should be educated to obey adults' instruction" (Cronbach's alpha of these items was 0.82). Examples of items measuring progressive attitudes are: "Teacher should emphasize equality between him/her and the students", "Students should be encouraged to

reach the answers to their own questions by themselves'' (Cronbach's alpha of these items was 0.76).

(b) *The social–political ideology scale*, measuring attitudes towards democracy, Israeli–Arab conflict, Zionism, and social stratification, included 23 items taken from the work of Arian, Talmud, and Herman (1988), Bar-Tal et al. (1978), Ben-Sira (1990) and Tzemah and Tzin (1984). Examples of items are: ''The rights of people who do not recognize Israel as a Jewish state should be limited'', ''People should obey all the laws including those which clash with their conscience'', ''Arab citizens of Israel threaten the existence of the state'', ''The Arabs' goal is not to reach an agreement in the region, but to annihilate Israel'', ''The solution of the Israeli–Arab conflict is peace for land'', ''All the Jews should immigrate to Israel'', and ''The economic gap in Israel has been growing'' (Cronbach's alphas of the subscales range between 0.80 and 0.86).

(c) *Political education scale*, measuring attitudes towards political education in schools, included 9 items taken from the work of Firer (1986, 1987). Examples of items are ''Political education should be part of the high school curriculum'', and ''Teachers should have the right to express political attitudes during a lesson'' (Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.87).

In the last part of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked about their own political involvement and awareness. With regard to political involvement, they were asked four questions: whether they were currently members of a political party, whether they were currently members of any extraparliamentary political organization, whether they were taking part in political activities such as demonstrations, and whether they talked about politics with friends and/or family members. The answers to the latter three questions were given on a 5-point scale (Cronbach alpha is 0.77). With regard to political awareness, they were asked four questions concerning interest in political issues, reading about political events in daily newspapers, listening to radio news, and watching TV news.

The answers to these questions were also given on a 5-point scale (Cronbach alpha is 0.68).

4.1.3. Procedure

Teachers who were selected for the study were contacted via the telephone and asked to agree to fill in a questionnaire. In the first phase, the questionnaire was sent to teachers' home by mail. Those teachers who did not return the questionnaire were called two times to be reminded about their commitment. Eventually all 167 teachers returned their questionnaires (86 of whose were identified as being influential).

5. Results

In order to find any differences between those teachers who were identified as having influence on high school students' political attitudes and those who were not identified as having influence, comparisons were made between the two groups.

5.1. Comparisons of personal characteristics

Comparative tests were performed on the socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the two groups of teachers. Table 2 presents significant results, indicating that in the influential group of teachers were more males, more of Israeli origin, fewer of Asian/African origin, more teaching humanities and social sciences, and more with Masters degrees than in the noninfluential group. Also the former group was found to be younger, more experienced professionally and more satisfied with their teaching work than the latter group.

5.2. Comparisons of attitudinal scales

Comparisons between the two groups of teachers, those who had political influence on students and those who did not, using Bonferoni's method for t tests on each of the attitudinal scales, showed major significant differences on almost all the variables. Table 3 depicts the means of the attitudinal scales and the results of the tests. The analyses in Table 3 show that teachers who were identified as having influence on students' political

Table 2
Comparisons between influential and noninfluential teachers on personal characteristics

	Influential teachers	Noninfluential teachers
Gender		
Males	38.4%	22.5%
Females	61.6%	77.5%
$\chi^2(1) = 4.19, p < 0.05$		
Father's ethnic origin		
Israel	18.8%	8.6%
Asia/Africa	12.9%	25.9%
Europe/Americas	68.2%	65.4%
$\chi^2(2) = 6.78, p < 0.05$		
Age	$M = 49$	$M = 52$
$t(1\,6\,2) = 2.16, p < 0.05$	s.d. $= 8.29$	s.d. $= 7.95$
Subject matter taught		
Humanities and social sciences	80.2%	63%
Exact, biological and technological sciences	19.8%	37%
$\chi^2(1) = 30.48, p < 0.01$		
Higher education		
Teacher's diploma	3.5%	13.6%
Bachelor degree	51.8%	60.5%
Masters degree	44.7%	25.9%
$\chi^2(5) = 11.79, p < 0.01$		
Seniority	$M = 17$	$M = 15$
$t(1\,6\,3) = 1.67, p < 0.05$	s.d. $= 8.92$	s.d. $= 8.80$
Satisfaction	$M = 3.55$	$M = 3.30$
$t(1\,6\,4) = 2.43, p < 0.05$	s.d. $= 0.63$	s.d. $= 0.73$

Table 3
Means, standard deviations and results of tests of the attitudinal scales

Scales	Influential teachers ($n = 86$)		Noninfluential teachers ($n = 81$)		t tests (df $= 165$)
	Means	s.d.	Means	s.d.	
Progressive attitudes	3.24	0.57	2.97	0.43	4.69[a]
Traditional attitudes	3.30	0.54	3.52	0.55	3.59[a]
Democratic attitudes	3.82	0.85	3.24	0.88	4.45[a]
Dovish attitudes	3.65	0.80	3.39	0.77	2.12[b]
Zionist attitudes	2.86	0.47	2.70	0.44	1.98[b]
Stratification attitudes	3.07	0.56	3.02	0.60	0.70
Political education attitudes	4.12	0.49	3.50	0.74	5.35[a]
Political involvement	3.46	0.44	3.25	0.55	2.03[a]
Political awareness	2.50	0.54	2.25	0.45	3.38[a]

[a] $p < 0.01$.
[b] $p < 0.05$.

attitudes had more progressive educational attitudes, less traditional educational attitudes, more prodemocratic attitudes, exhibited more dovish attitudes with regard to the resolution of the Israeli–Arab conflict, more Zionist attitudes, more propolitical education attitudes, more political involvement, and more political awareness, than teachers who were identified as not having influence on students' political attitudes. Following these analyses, more comparisons were performed with specific groups of investigated teachers, in order to elucidate those attitudes which characterize the influencing teachers. First, the attitudes of influential teachers of humanities and social sciences were compared with the attitudes of noninfluential teachers of the same subjects. The results showed that the former differed from the latter in the following attitudes: They held more progressive attitudes ($M = 3.29$ vs. M-3.04, $t(97) = 2.47$, $p < 0.05$), more democratic attitudes ($M = 3.98$ vs. $M = 3.49$, $t(97) = 2.84$, $p < 0.01$), more Zionist attitudes ($M = 2.92$ vs. $M = 2.78$, $t(97) = 1.95$, $p < 0.05$), and more propolitical education attitudes ($M = 4.15$ vs. $M = 3.81$, $t(97) = 2.34$, $p < 0.05$). They also were found to be more politically involved ($M = 2.52$ vs. $M = 2.29$, $t(97) = 2.95$, $p < 0.01$).

The influential humanities and social science teachers differed from their counterparts in exact, biological and technological sciences with regard to the following scales: The former held more progressive attitudes ($M = 3.29$ vs. $M = 3.02$, $t \times (84) = 2.0$, $p < 0.05$), less traditional ($M = 3.18$ vs. $M = 3.60$, $t(84) = -2.97$, $p < 0.01$), more democratic ($M = 3.98$ vs. $M = 3.18$, $t(84) = 3.40$, $p < 0.01$), more dovish ($M = 3.78$ vs. $M = 3.16$, $t \times (84) = 2.71$, $p < 0.05$) and more Zionist attitudes ($M = 2.92$ vs. $M = 2.62$, $t(84) = 2.13$, $p < 0.05$). Comparisons between the influential exact, biological, and technological science teachers and noninfluential humanities and social science teachers show that the former group held less traditional attitudes in education ($M = 3.18$ vs. $M = 3.55$, $t(45) = 2.35$, $p < 0.01$), less dovish attitudes ($M = 3.16$ vs. $M = 3.64$, $t(45) = 1.92$, $p < 0.05$), but more propolitical education attitudes ($M = 4.02$ vs. $M = 3.62$, $t(45) = 2.05$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, comparisons between the influential exact,

biological and technological sciences teachers with noninfluential teachers of the same subject matter showed the following: The former held more propolitical education attitudes ($M = 4.02$ vs. $M = 3.31$, $t(66) = 4.62$, $p < 0.01$), and had more political awareness ($M = 3.50$ vs. $M = 3.20$, $t \times (66) = 2.20$, $p < 0.05$), than the latter group.

5.2.1. Discriminant analysis

Discriminant analysis was conducted to see the relative importance of the differentiating variables between the two groups of teachers and identify the profile of each group on the basis of socioeconomic, professional and ideological variables. The results are presented in Table 4.

The analysis yielded one significant discriminant function (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.51$, $\chi^2(13) = 100.63$, $p < 0.001$). Table 4 shows the coefficients of the variables that appeared in the equation and the classification results by the discriminant analysis. On the basis of the variables, 83.13% of the subjects were classified correctly. The following variables differentiated between the two groups: subject matter of instruction, progressive attitudes, democratic attitudes, propolitical education attitudes, and political involvement. These results indicate clearly that teachers identified as being influential tend to teach humanities and social sciences, tend to be satisfied with their work, hold progressive, democratic, propolitical socialization attitudes and are politically involved. Moreover, the coefficients also indicate the relative strength of the variables that contribute to the differences. Propolitical socialization attitudes and subject matters of instruction are potent variables that differentiate between the two groups of teachers.

6. Discussion

The present study, which investigated teachers identified as exerting political influence on their students, touches on various issues related to political socialization in schools. Before discussing the core issue, we first refer to the question of identification of the influential teachers, the extent of their influence and its timing.

Table 4
Results of discriminant analysis predicting influence of teachers on students' political attitudes

Variables in equation	Standardized discriminant coefficient
Age	−0.15
Seniority	−0.10
Satisfaction at work	0.19
Sex	0.18
Subject matter of instruction	0.51
Progressive attitudes	0.38
Traditional attitudes	−0.21
Democratic attitudes	0.36
Dovish attitudes	0.17
Zionist attitudes	0.18
Propolitical education attitudes	0.55
Political involvement	0.42
Political awareness	0.30

Classification results

Actual group	Predicted group	
	Influential teachers	Noninfluential teachers
Influential teachers	88.9%	11.1%
Noninfluential teachers	22.8%	77.2%

In the present study, the students identified those teachers who exerted influence on their political attitudes. This method, based on students' evaluation, was used in various studies, which have shown that students are a reliable source for the identification of good teachers, the characterization of the climate in their classroom, or in reporting politically relevant aspects of schooling (Chavez, 1984; Kubovi, 1977; Meighan, 1981; Weinstein, 1983). It is thus also assumed that 12th grade students (age 17–18) are able to understand the notion of political influence and identify those teachers who influenced them politically. In this evaluation, students revealed a remarkable consensus in selecting a limited group of teachers as being influential. Also, the results indicate that the perception of the influence is differential. Sixty-eight percent reported that at least one teacher had influence on their political attitudes, while the rest (32%) did not think that any teacher had such influence on them. This finding shows that a majority of students recognize

the influence of teachers on their political attitudes. It provides unequivocal evidence to the role of teachers as agents of political socialization. This role is especially salient among high school teachers, as we can see that almost all the influencing teachers taught them in the higher grades of the high school. Obviously we can observe in this tendency a recency effect of impression or of recall of influence. But, besides these two explanations, it is also possible to claim that teachers of higher grades may more actively than others try to influence their students politically, on the one hand, and that the students in this period of their adolescence become interested in the political world and therefore more open to and aware of teachers' political influence, on the other hand. The latter explanation is supported by studies of adolescents' interests (e.g., Adelson, 1971; Connell, 1971; Furth, 1978; Sigel & Hoskin, 1981), which all show that interest in politics emerges mostly from age 15. Also relevant are other studies showing that during adolescence

teachers are perceived as reliable sources of information (i.e., epistemic authorities) about politics (e.g., Raviv et al., 1990).

After dealing with the general issues of teachers' political socialization, we now turn to the main focus of the present study, which concerns the profile of those teachers who are perceived by their students as exerting political influence. In other words, we are interested to reveal those of their characteristics which are conducive to their role as agents of political socialization. The analyses show that among the influential teachers were more males, more teachers whose fathers were born in Israel and fewer teachers whose fathers were born in Asia/Africa, more younger teachers, teachers with greater seniority, more teachers with a Master's degree, more teachers who were satisfied with their work and more teachers of social sciences and humanities, than among the noninfluential teachers. Also, as will be elaborated later, the two groups of teachers differ in their educational and political attitudes.

The findings regarding differences in socioeconomic and professional variables correspond to the results of various lines of research about teachers' status, their experience, "good" teachers and influential teachers: all point to the advantage of male teachers, teachers of Israeli origin, and teachers who are highly educated, experienced and young (Almozlino, 1996; Lomsky-Feder & Kahana, 1988; Zak & Horowitz, 1985). It is thus not surprising that teachers with these characteristics also tend to exert political influence.

Of special interest in the present study are the findings that show that influential teachers teach in social sciences and humanities and that they tend to hold certain attitudes regarding education and politics. With regard to the subject matter, it has to be noted that social sciences and humanities cover contents to which politics are directly relevant (Bernstein, 1972). Thus teachers of history, geography or civic studies frequently deal with topics touching on political issues, processes, systems or structures. Moreover, it can be assumed that teachers of social sciences and humanities while presenting their contents, may also refer to current political problems (Ichilov, 1989). In addition, the nature of social sciences and humanities

contributes to the exerted political influence by teachers, since these subjects, in comparison to the sciences, are considered to be more subjective, inaccurate in data collection, unable to generate exact rules, plagued by uncertainty and characterized by contradictory theories (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995; Kuhn, 1970; Yoels, 1974; Zuckerman & Merton, 1971). As a result, the teaching of social sciences and humanities tends to be characterized by more openness, presentation of alternatives, skepticism and an interdisciplinary approach (e.g., Lodahl & Gordon, 1972). This not only allows teachers to cover a wide range of topics, and amongst them those relevant to politics, but it also encourages an open classroom climate, which is conducive to political socialization (e.g., Ichilov, 1989). It is thus not surprising that a study by Biran (1998) found that high school students tend to rely more on the general knowledge of their humanities teachers than on that of their exact and biological science teachers. It was, moreover, also found in other studies that teachers of social sciences and humanities define their role more as that of "an educator", who has the responsibility to socialize students, rather than as "an expert", who transmits knowledge (Patrick, 1990). Teachers of sciences and technology, in contrast, tend to define their role more as that of "an expert" than as "an educator" (Bar-Tal et al. (1978); Yaakobi and Sharan, 1985).

As indicated, the analyses show that influential teachers tend to have a particular repertoire of attitudes. Specifically, they tend to be more progressive and less traditional in their educational attitudes, as well as more democratic, dovish, and Zionistic in their political attitudes, than noninfluential teachers. These two sets of attitudes, educational and political, were found to be positively interrelated (Bar-Tal et al., 1978). This interrelationship is not surprising since the first set of attitudes underlies educational practices, which encourage political socialization either through direct preoccupation with political issues, and/or indirectly, through the formation of an open climate. Both sets of attitudes cause teachers to act as agents of political socialization, who actively try to influence the political attitudes of the students. Similar findings were obtained by

Zeigler's (1966) extensive study on the political world of high school teachers. He administered a series of questionnaires to high school teachers and found that educationally progressive teachers hold more liberal political ideology and discuss more politics in their classrooms than traditional teachers.

Attitudes regarding political education touch directly on the political influence of teachers. The results show that these attitudes differentiated most strongly between the influential and noninfluential teachers. The support of active political education in classes was the most salient attitude among all the groups of influential teachers. They not only held these attitudes, but also probably practiced political education, as their influence indicates it.

Also, influential teachers were found to be more aware of and involved in politics. This finding seems to be in line with the assumption that teachers who are more interested in politics, follow it in the media, and are themselves involved in various activities in the community or school, are also perceived by students as having political influence. They probably touch more on political issues in classes. In turn, the involved teachers served as political models to their students. These findings complement Zeigler's (1966) results which show that teachers' active political involvement contributes toward a view of the classroom as a place where political opinions should be expressed.

Of special interest is the finding that the influence of teachers on their students' political attitudes is exerted through both indirect and direct ways. Students reported that the teachers influenced them indirectly through encouragement of autonomous and original thinking, encouragement of creative answers, and creating open relations, and more directly through initiating political discussions, giving political interpretations, participating in political discussions, and answering students' political questions. These findings suggest the importance of an open climate for political socialization, as was shown in other studies (e.g., Ehman, 1969; Goldenberg, 1998; Ichilov, 1989; Merelman, 1971; Walberg & Thomas, 1972), but they also suggest a major role for direct preoccupation with political issues.

These two types of reference complement each other and provide efficient tools for political socialization.

In conclusion, the present study adds evidence to the observation that the school takes an active role in students' political socialization. It focuses on the role of the teachers and examines their influence in the upper grades of high school. The study clearly indicates that the teachers' influence is differential. On the one hand, not all students report such influence, but on the other hand, not all teachers are perceived as being influential. A majority of students reported that they were influenced by a minority of teachers. Future research could investigate the characteristics of the influenced students and, in particular, elucidate the ways through which teachers influence their students.

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