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CULTURAL HEGEMONY, RESISTANCE AND RECONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AMONG PALESTINIAN STUDENTS IN ISRAEL

Ibrahim Makkawi

INTRODUCTION

IN THIS ESSAY, I FOCUS ON the experience of the Palestinians who fell under Israel's control in 1948 and their struggle to maintain and preserve their national identity despite systematic Israeli efforts to create a state of hegemony through the control of the economy, society, the media and educational institutions. More specifically, I discuss ways in which the formal educational system for Palestinian students in Israel is designed to control, shape and manipulate their national identity. Also, discussed is their ongoing struggle and resistance against such a colonizing education.

COLONIZED NATIONAL MINORITY

The most fundamental myth created and advanced by the Zionist movement in its attempt to establish a Jewish state in Palestine has been its systematic denial of the existence of the Palestinian people (Schoenman, 1988). Palestine was "a land without people for people without land," goes the Zionist argument. However, within their internal circles, the Zionists were well aware of the fact that the native Arab people of Palestine aspiring for their own independence and self-determination had populated the country for centuries. Addressing an audience of Israeli students, Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Defense Minister at that time stated that, "... we came to this country, which was already populated by Arabs, and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is a Jewish state here. Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages ... there is no single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population" (Haaretz, 4 April 1969). Just three months latter, Golda Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister, was quoted in the press arguing that, "... it is not that there were Palestinian people in Palestine considering themselves as Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist," (*London Sunday Times*, 7 June 1969).

The inevitable clash between the Zionist colonial endeavors and the national aspirations of the indigenous people of Palestine resulted in the majority of Palestinians being into refugees (number about five million today), the destruction of nearly five hundred of their towns and villages and the

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construction of new Jewish settlements on their ruins. The Palestinian people, who remained in their homeland and became Israeli citizens after 1948, constitute the last challenge for the Zionist myth of Palestine as a land without people. The systematic ethnic cleansing campaign conducted against the Palestinian people by Zionist organizations, which have resulted in the capture of their homeland and the creation of the refugee problem is documented by a group of Israeli new historians (e.g., Pappé, 1994; Morris, 1989; Beit-Hallahmi, 1998).

The second myth fashioned by Zionist propaganda is Israel's claim of being a Western democracy (Davis, 1987). The common practice among Western scholars studying the Israeli political system is their tendency to single it out as the exception in a region otherwise lacking in democratic regimes. It is a strange hypocrisy for Israel to claim itself as a Jewish state and a democracy at the same time. According to Rouhana (1989), "a state that is defined as belonging to only one people, when its population is composed of two, cannot offer equal opportunities to all its citizens" (p. 40). More succinctly, the Jewish-Zionist nature of the state of Israel exposes its Palestinian citizens to an inherent conflict between their national identity as Arab-Palestinians and their civic status as Israeli citizens (Rouhana, 1997).

Unlike many Third World minorities living in Western societies, the Palestinians in Israel did not immigrate to the new system; rather, the system was imposed on them resulting in the destruction of their society and the disposition of the rest of their people (Makkawi, 2004). From the perspective of the Palestinians, it is clear that the state of Israel was established to serve the goals and objectives of another colonialist group, which could be achieved only at the expense of their own national goals and aspirations for self determination (Rouhana & Ghanem, 1993). Before the conquest of 1948, Palestine was far from the image of an empty or underdeveloped land waiting to be "civilized" by Jewish settlers. Palestine was a highly developed Arab region during the British Mandate. Urban cities such as Haifa, Yafa, Akka, Nazereth and Jerusalem, were the centers of vibrant and widespread economical and intellectual activities. The fragmentation of the Arab homeland by the European colonialists into more than twenty regional states run by dependent monarchs, could not be completed without carving Palestine out and handing it over to the Zionist settlers who would establish a colonialist post dividing the eastern and western parts of the Arab homeland.

Today, the Palestinians in Israel live as a second-class citizen in a colonial-apartheid regime that does not lose any opportunity to marginalize, exploit, and manipulate their collective identity and existence according to the needs of the Jewish majority (Makkawi, 2000, 2004). Although one can make a clear analogy between the Israeli regime and the Apartheid regime of South Africa with regard to the status of the Palestinians in Israel (Zureik, 1979), one must remember that while the entire native population of South Africa remained in their homeland, the native Palestinians were forced into exile leaving a small minority of them behind. As a colonial entity claiming to represent the national aspirations of the world Jewry, the Jewish state in Palestine has been unable to draft a constitution which would simultaneously define its relationship with its non-Jewish

Palestinian citizens and non-citizen Jews, the world over, let alone the Palestinian refugees insisting on their right to return to their homeland.

Instead, Israel has what is called "basic laws", two of which illustrate the essence of its apartheid structure. First, the "law of return" applies only to Jews. Any Jewish person, anywhere in the world, by religious-ethnic definition, is entitled to immigrate to the state of Israel and acquire citizenship. The same right is denied to Palestinian refugees who were expelled from the territory on which Israel was established in 1948. Second, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) which was established by the Zionist movement before the creation of Israel itself, is the only authority in charge of land. Only Jews can buy, own or lease land from the JNF, a right, which is denied to the Palestinians who are also citizens of Israel (Davis, 1987).

Social scientists who study the Palestinians in Israel have been limited in the research questions they ask and subsequently in the conclusions they reach; not only by the scope of their academic disciplines, but more importantly by their ideological and political views regarding the conflict in Palestine. The most important and obviously the most controversial issue in discussing Palestinians in Israel has been the definition of their collective-national identity. It is sufficient to briefly examine the different names or labels given to this group of Palestinians by different scholars in order to understand the inherent relationship between the researchers' political ideology and their scholarship. Israeli Arabs, Arabs in Israel, Israeli Palestinians, Arabs of the inside and Arabs of 1948, are all labels given to the same group -- Arab-Palestinians who are formal citizens of the state of Israel. In official Israeli statements the term "non-Jews" is used very often in referring to these Palestinians, as if they have no culture or national identity. Apparently, they are defined only in relation to the Jewish majority!

Arab-Palestinian society during the British Mandate over Palestine (1917-1948) was composed of three socioeconomic classes. The majority of the indigenous Palestinian population was found in the lower class, including rural landless peasants and urban proletariat. The middle class included different groups whose occupations required some level of formal education. They included shopkeepers, teachers, minor government clerks, artisans, and liberal professionals. The upper class consisted of landowners, business people, the wealthy, and the social and religious notables of a countrywide level (Nashif, 1979). The size of the clan and its economic power, mainly land ownership, formed an important aspect of the social and political structure of Palestinian society. Large and influential clans were found in the upper class and hence controlled most of the political power in the country. Political leadership in Palestinian society at that time "was largely concentrated at the upper tip of the socioeconomic pyramid composed of a small group of heads of old and influential clans, other members of the land owning aristocracy, wealthy merchants and traders and some professionals" (Nashif, 1977, 114).

Needless to reiterate that in 1948, the state of Israel was established as a result of a war and conquest leading to a mass expulsion of more than two thirds of the indigenous Arab-Palestinian people. All of the Palestinian leadership and intellectual elite were expelled, leaving 160,000 leaderless and mainly poor people under the control of the newly created colonialist state. The sudden

change in the status of the Palestinians who fell under Israel's control was very traumatic. It took them a few years to realize its impact on their collective existence. Mari (1978) describes candidly this collective trauma of becoming a Palestinian minority in Israel.

The Arabs who remained within the boundaries of the newly created state of Israel can best be characterized as emotionally wounded, socially rural, politically lost, economically poverty-stricken and nationally hurt. They suddenly became a minority ruled by a powerful, sophisticated majority against whom they fought to retain their country and land. It was an agonizing experience, for every family, which remained had immediate relatives on the other side of the border. Arabs in Israel were left without political leadership and educated elite (18).

Under such circumstances, existence and physical survival became the main concern for Palestinians in Israel. Immediately following its establishment in 1948, Israel imposed Military Government on the Palestinian population within its borders, which restricted their movement to certain areas and often to their home villages (Rosenfeld and Al-Haj, 1989). The Military Government was terminated in 1966, after eighteen years of tight control, during which the majority of Palestinian lands were confiscated under different types of self-made Israeli laws and regulations. One year later, in another wave of expansionist conquest, the West Bank and Gaza fell under the Israeli occupation and the same Military Government was imposed on this newly occupied Palestinian land and population.

Despite its traditional and conservative outlook, Palestinian leadership that existed before 1948 was able to provide some form of security and maintain the social structure of the community. Now that this leadership was gone, the Palestinians who remained in Israel were disoriented. They were not only lacking any kind of national leadership, but the potential to develop such a leadership did not even exist during the first decade of Israeli occupation. Following the confiscation of their lands, the Palestinians were transformed from a peasant community and land owners into a proletariat class working mainly in low-skill jobs in the Israeli economy, living in overgrown villages with no economical structure of their own (Graham-Brown, 1984). This economical dependency of the Palestinians on the colonialist majority increased through the years.

During the first decade of Israel's establishment the Palestinian community lacked any form of political leadership which would represent and advocate their collective interests. The gradual process of national awakening among Palestinians in Israel was due to local developments such as the rapid population growth of the community, drastic changes in their economical system as well as the influence of the Palestinian National Movement in exile. Since 1948 the Palestinian population has more than quadrupled. Now it numbers almost one million. Based on this rapid growth, Touma (1985) commented more than two decades ago that "the Palestinian Arabs are no longer the demoralized,

alienated, broken branches of the Arab national minority of 1948, but a strong, compact people, militant in their struggle on both internal and foreign issues, and proud of their national identity" (76).

The economic control of the Palestinian community and the dependency relationship inherent in Israeli policy kept the Palestinian population economically and politically under control. However, too much pressure and oppression led to the exact opposite result. The massive confiscation of their lands and their subsequent transformation into a proletariat class lead to major social changes and developments among Palestinians in Israel. One such change was the development of a new Palestinian intelligentsia that filled the leadership vacuum.

One of the main characteristics of community organizations and political behavior amongst the Palestinians in Israel is the fact that they became a natural extension of ideological and political developments between Palestinians in exile and those Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In fact, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with its different political factions became a reference point for political organization among Palestinians everywhere, including the Palestinians in Israel. Ironically, while this national minority experienced a growing development in political and national awareness since 1948, the educational system controlled by the Israeli government still lagged behind. In fact, one of the colonizing functions of the educational system of Palestinians in Israel was to impede the progress of such development. In the following section, I will discuss the Palestinian collective-national identity and then critically describe and analyze the Israeli educational system and its impact on Palestinian students' collective-national identity.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF PALESTINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

A significant body of research about the collective identity of the Palestinians in Israel, led by a group of Israeli-Jewish social psychologists from Haifa University, focused mainly on the label chosen by participants to indicate their collective identification and then considered this label as a collective identity itself (e.g., Hofman, 1977; Hofman and Beit-Hallahmi, 1979; Hofman, Beit-Hallahmi and Hetz-Lazarowitz, 1982; Hofman and Rouhana, 1976; Zak, 1976). The majority of these researchers agree on four basic elements: (a) a small number of Palestinians will choose the term "Israeli" or "Israeli Arab" to describe themselves; (b) there has been an increased tendency among Palestinians in Israel to choose the term "Palestinian" to describe themselves since the mid 1970s; (c) national identity is the most important component of the collective identity structure; (d) the terms "Palestinian" and "Israeli" are negatively correlated in their use by research participants (Rouhana, 1987). Furthermore, the most common comparison in this research has been between the use of the labels "Palestinian" and "Israeli" in an attempt to explain the degree to which the Palestinians in Israel have accepted Israeli identity.

Two major models have been used in the study of collective identity among Palestinians. First, the conflict model assumes that the Palestinian and Israeli sub-identities are in conflict. Palestinian social psychologist Rouhana

(1985) rejects this model and argues that by being a "Jewish state" by definition, the state of Israel cannot offer its Palestinian citizens a true opportunity to adopt an Israeli identity. However, Rouhana (1985, 1997) distinguishes between the instrumental and sentimental aspects of collective identity. Instrumental identification refers to the fact that people depend on the state of which they are citizens for basic services such as education, employment and health-care. Sentimental identification on the other hand, includes the emotional attachment to the state and its people and a sense of national pride. Since the state of Israel only offers instrumental identification for its Palestinian citizens, there is no basis for sentimental identification for the Palestinian people; with the state of Israel or the Jewish people (Rouraha, 1997). Second, the accommodation model assumes that Palestinization and Israelization are not mutually exclusive and can develop among the Palestinians in Israel at the same time. The Israelization component is mistakenly, and sometimes intentionally, applied to the struggle of the Palestinians in Israel for equal rights within the Israeli system -- the only official system legally responsible for them. This political struggle for equal rights within the Israeli system does not mean an acceptance of the Israeli identity by these Palestinians. The political developments and identity composition among the Palestinians in Israel are largely influenced by the Palestinian cause as a whole. Their political behavior and the definition of their collective-national identity correspond to the broader developments among the rest of the Palestinian people (Rouhana, 1997; Makkawi, 2004).

The founder of social identity theory, Tajfel (1977) stated that, "any society which contains power, status, prestige and social group differentials (and they all do), places each of us in a number of social categories which become an integral part of our self-definition" (66). Social identity (or national identity in our case) is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, 255). This notion of group identity is imperative to our understanding of the situation of the Palestinians in Israel in which not only group differentials and power relations is at stake, but also the right of the dominated group to nurture and foster the development of identity among its youth. Based on the above definition, collective-national identity has been conceptualized as a developmental process most dominant during adolescence (Phinney, 1989). Furthermore, from an educational perspective, we must recognize and celebrate the student's cultural, ethnic, and national background in order to create equal opportunities for achievement and success especially for ethnic minority students (Aboud & Doyle, 1993).

While most of the research mentioned above focuses on the content and structure of the Palestinian collective identity, the process by which the national component of this identity is developed, constructed or manipulated seems to receive less attention. On the macro level of analysis we can identify the social and political processes, which aim at manipulating and shaping collective-national identity among the Palestinians in Israel so that it does not challenge the status quo. The most oppressive tool used in this manipulation is the formal educational system. It is used as a political instrument for the transmission of a

“politically defined” content of collective-national identity of Palestinian students. The other extreme level of analysis focuses on the individual student with little regard of the impact of larger social and political process. This individualistic approach to education has little significance on complex sociopolitical problems for Palestinians in Israel. The interactionist approach used in this paper is concerned with the way by which larger social issues and group membership influence the development of collective-national identity with students as active human agents in this process. In order to grasp the way in which Palestinian students construct their collective-national identity in spite of their education of collective submissiveness, it is essential to understand the colonizing role assigned to the Palestinian educational system in Israel. The following is a critical discussion of the Palestinian formal educational system and its role in the larger intergroup conflict.

HEGEMONIC EDUCATION AND NATIONAL CONTROL

A review of the literature reveals two contradictory expectations from the system of education and the role it plays in serving the collective needs of society. First, the functionalist approach maintains that one of the main roles of education is to pass on traditions and cultural values to the younger generation. The argument against this approach is that education has been involved in perpetuating existing structures and distributions of power and privilege in society. As such the educational institutions are enforcing and maintaining the status quo rather than promoting change (Mari, 1978).

Second, contrary to this, there appears to be a strong relationship between education and social change. It is apparent that generally education has been considered one of the main channels of upward social mobility and cultural change leading to social development and modernization (Nakhleh, 1979). Here, education is viewed from a conflict perspective, according to which the dominant group uses (and abuses) the formal educational system for purposes of control and domination of the minority groups. A conflict of interest is an inherent component of the education of the Palestinians in Israel where a discrepancy between the goals of the majority and the minority groups prevail. In his critical review of the “reproduction” theories, Giroux (1983) points out the limitations of these theories by overemphasizing the idea of “domination” and consequently neglecting the importance of the “human agent” in resisting this domination. The resistance theory provides better insights into the process by which Palestinian students, especially in college, actively reject the Israelization process imposed on them and reassert their Palestinian national identity and culture.

Arab education in Palestine has never been independent from political control and manipulation by external rulers. During the British Mandate period, and more so during the Turkish rule over Palestine, it was controlled by colonizing authorities that represented dominating cultures and worldviews. The situation involving Palestinian education in Israel is even more polarized. In the current state of affairs, Palestinian education in Israel is nothing less than political in nature. While the Palestinians try to use their educational process in order to preserve their collective-national identity and instill national pride in their youth,

the Israeli authorities retain antithetical goals. The Israeli authorities have used formal education in order to repress national awareness among the Palestinian students. The importance of the educational system in shaping the Palestinian collective consciousness lead the Israeli authorities to insist on maintaining tight control over the entire educational process and its content.

While Israel declares itself to be a democratic state, its concealed policy towards the education of its Palestinian citizens is characterized by systematic discrimination, oppression and cultural impoverishment. Mr. Uri Lubrani, former Advisor to the Prime Minister for Arab Affairs expressed this policy in a statement he made more than two decades ago.

If there were no pupils the situation would be better and more stable. If the Arabs remained hewers of wood it might be easier for us to control them. But there are certain things that are beyond our control. This is unavoidable. All we can do is to place our advice on record and suggest how the problems are to be dealt with (Abed Elrazik, Amin and Davis, 1977, 96).

Lubrani's recommendations and the consequential discriminatory policies of his government are reflected in the relative disadvantaged situation of the Palestinian educational system on all levels. Intentional neglect and poor investment in Palestinian education is a well-known practice of the Israeli Ministry of Education. Whenever there is any attempt to improve the situation it is always past, rather than future oriented (Mari, 1985). The system only responds when a severe crisis situation is caused by accumulated negligence. Rather than develop a strategic plan for improvement and development of the Palestinian educational system.

This state of relative deprivation in the domain of education among the Palestinians in Israel when compared to the Israeli Jewish population can also be understood in light of the educational achievements of the rest of the Palestinian people on the West Bank and in exile. While subjected to a series of political, economic, and social crises stemming from their uprooting and dispersion, the Palestinian people placed much emphasis on the value of education. If for whatever reason they were forced to move again, education would be the only thing they can easily carry with them to their new destination. For the majority, education has been a means of survival, for only through their educational training and skills were they able to obtain jobs in their host countries (Anabtawi, 1986). Palestinians in Israel were subject to all of these experiences, and their longing for educational achievement is no less than the rest of their brethren. But their low achievement in this area sets them apart from the rest of the Palestinian people. One can only attribute this huge difference to their direct control by the Israeli political system.

Time and again, Israel compliments itself for the relatively high level of educational achievement among the Palestinians in its midst. This is true when they are compared to some Arab and Third World countries or to their own situation in Palestine before 1948. But these comparisons are essentially invalid and lack merit. Instead, two more pertinent comparisons regarding the

educational achievements of this group of Palestinians need to be conducted. First, we should compare the educational achievements of the Palestinians in Israel to that of the Israeli Jewish population. It is the Jewish population in Israel who, in terms of occupational and educational attainment, are considered to be a reference point for them. Second, if we carry out the comparison cross-nationally, it should be between the Palestinians inside Israel and the Palestinians in Diaspora (Zureik, 1979). Both Israel's Jewish population and the Palestinians in Diaspora have better educational opportunities than the Palestinians in Israel.

Education in pluralistic societies is used in order to create a shared collective identity that encompasses the various groups while maintaining their cultural differences. This is true when all ethnic groups can identify with the national and ideological goals of the larger society and a state they consider theirs. But Israel is not a pluralistic society. As a colonialist project in Palestine, Israel is devoted to the collective needs of the Jews, which could be served only at the expense of the collective needs of the indigenous Palestinian people of the land. As a Jewish state, Israel cannot offer the Palestinians a full and genuine partnership. Due to the pervasive nature of the state's Zionist ideology, the Palestinians within Israel cannot fully be Israelis. Under these circumstances, education becomes a source of conflict rather than a nation-building institution. The government carefully manipulates their Palestinian educational system and its goals, aiming to create a quiescent and politically impotent minority group with no history and national roots to identify with.

During the early years of the state's existence, Israeli curriculum planners for the Palestinian schools had to deal with a critical dilemma regarding the goals of Palestinian education. One of the Israeli curricular planners posed a critical question regarding educating Palestinian children: "How can we encourage loyalty to Israel among Israeli Arabs without demanding a negation of Arab yearning on the one hand, and without permitting the development of hostile Arab nationalism on the other?" (Peres, Erlich and Yuval-Davis, 1970, 148). Stated differently, the Zionist educators wanted to create a Palestinian youth who can "see his path clearly and mold his own identity in a way which maintains a reasonable balance in his Arab nationalism and loyalty to the state in which he lives" (Nakhleh, 1977, 30). This strange education discloses the essence of cultural colonialism inflicted on the indigenous Palestinian people from the outset of their occupation. Nakhleh further argues that "however ambiguous these criteria are, explicitly they are very political in nature. 'Arab nationalism,' 'identity,' etc. were to be defined by Jewish Israeli planners, whose existence was in negation to these concepts!" (30).

Because of the conflictive nature of Palestinian education in Israel and the difficulty in defining educational goals satisfied both the Palestinian community and the state, official policy in this regard suspended decisions (Landau, 1993). Failing to define formal goals for the Palestinian education did not prevent the Israeli political system from striving to empty it of its cultural and national content. According to Mari (1987), the de-facto goals of Palestinian education in Israel set by the government are threefold: "to instill feelings of self-disparagement and inferiority in Arab youth; to de-nationalize them, and particularly to de-Palestinize them; and to teach them to glorify the history,

culture, and achievements of the Jewish majority" (37). Given the choice, the Palestinians would assign the exact opposite goals for their educational system. They would expect their educational system to "preserve and reinforce Arab national identity - particularly their Palestinian identity - and to instill pride in their own culture, heritage, and nationality; and if it were up to them, the education of their youth would engage in condemning Zionism, rather than praising and glorifying it" (Mari, 1987, 37). In my study with Palestinian students in Israeli universities, 59.9% said that their high school education was not relevant to their national identity at all, 48.2% said their family was very important, 45.5% said community organizations were somewhat important, and 43.9% said the student movement was somewhat important (Makkawi, 1999).

A study comparing the Palestinian and Jewish school curricula in Israel was conducted by a group of Israeli researchers (Peres, Ehrlich & Yuval-Davis, 1970). The authors compared the stated educational goals of both groups in four different subject matters: history, literature and language, religious studies, and civic studies. These subjects were selected because they relate to the field of "instilling values." The researchers selected secondary school for a comparative study because it is in this level that "education makes it possible to deal with social, historical, and political problems in a mature and complete way" (149). The researchers concluded that "whereas the Arabs are required to take an example from the great men of Israel, the great figures of the Arab world are not deemed worthy of special attention in the Jewish curriculum, but lumped together with the world's great men" (150-153). The results of the study clearly indicate that the Israeli educational policy for the Palestinians strip them of their Palestinian national identity.

The same goals for teaching history in Arab and Jewish schools in Israel were cited by Al-Haj (1995, 129-130) more than twenty-five years later. Whereas Jewish students are taught to "regard the culture of mankind as the result of the combined efforts of the Jewish people and the nations of the world, and to evaluate our share in creating it," Palestinian students, on the other hand, are taught to "regard the culture of mankind as the result of the combined effort of the nations of the world, and to evaluate the part played by the Jewish and Arab nations and by other nations in creating it." Furthermore, whereas teaching history to Jewish students is intended to "implant a Jewish national consciousness, and strengthen the feeling of a common Jewish destiny; to sow in the students' hearts a love of the Jewish people - throughout the world, [and] to strengthen their spiritual lives with the nation as a whole," one finds no parallel paragraph in the goals for teaching history to Palestinian students. What national consciousness and what kind of love for their people would a colonialist system teach the children who are its subjects? And finally, teaching history in Jewish schools would "mold the character of the pupils after the deeds of the great men of our people and of the peoples of the world," whereas the parallel goal for Palestinian students is "mold the character of pupils after the deeds of the great men of the world, and in particular the Jews and Arabs."

The penetrating theme that runs across these different types of educational goals rest on the fact that Israel, as a Jewish state, is concerned first and foremost with the collective-national identity of its Jewish student

population. Palestinian students are deprived of this essential national education. Not only that, but they are taught to respect and glorify the national experience of the Jewish students as the legitimate owners of the state in which they both live. Jewish students are not required to study Palestinian history.

Obviously, there is a conflict of interest between the state educational system and the cultural, economic, and national needs of the indigenous Palestinian people. Under this asymmetrical power structure in which all educational institutions in Israel, from pre-school to university, are run by the government "it was evident that the priorities of the Zionist state would determine how Palestinians should be educated" (Graham-Brown, 1984, 41). Demands for improvement in the educational system of the Palestinians in Israel and its goals have been repeatedly expressed by the Palestinian leadership organizations. These demands have never exceeded mere political protest from within the Israeli political system and according to rules of protest defined by the state.

The conflict between the state of Israel and its Palestinian citizens over their educational system is a specific type of intergroup conflict (Deutsch, 1973). This type of conflict takes place between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Most pertinent to the case under discussion is Deutsch's analysis of the reasons "why class conflict did not develop into the intensely competitive process predicted by Marx's theory?" (95). Similarly, the conflict between the Israeli political system and the Palestinian population over education has never developed into direct confrontation and competition. As Deutsch (1973) predicts, the group in power prevents the conflict from intense competition by employing a variety of defense mechanisms. Two of these defense mechanisms are useful to the understanding of Palestinian education in Israel. First, there is *tokenism*, which attempts to appease the frustrated group by providing it with token benefits and gains. It is true that Palestinian education has improved under the Israeli system in comparison to its situation before 1948, but the Palestinians are comparing their situation to that of the Israeli Jews, citizens of the same state. Second, there is *sublimation*, which is the attempt to find a substitute solution. The Israeli system provides more facilities for the Palestinian schools rather than giving them control over their educational system and its goals.

What the indigenous Palestinian people need is the development of a "liberation-prone mentality" (Nakhleh, 1980, 9), which is a collective consciousness created over time, and manifested in their daily behavior. Under normal circumstances, education would have played a major role in this "cultural revolution" where the conservative aspects of Palestinian society are changed and transformed from within in order to withstand Zionist oppression and exploitation. In order to create this type of mentality, Nakhleh (1980), further illuminates the essential role of the educational system in such a process: "we simply need to have full control over our educational processes, from pre-school nurseries to the university. Our educational goals cannot be attained by restricting our demands to an addition of classroom here and a laboratory there" (13). For oppressed minorities to gain control over their educational system and to have it guided by their collective consciousness demands action. Change in the Palestinian educational system with regard to their national aspirations

would have to come from their own initiative, not the dominant majority. Changes in the goals of Palestinian education that restores their national identity are not feasible under the current state of political affairs therefore there is no solution to the conflict over these goals within the formal educational system.

Since the Palestinians in Israel realize their inability to impact their formal educational system, they established their own non-formal education organizations to foster national identity and culture in their youth. The repression of their national identity through the formal educational system does not suppress students' aspirations. The colonialist formal educational system is incapable of producing a submissive generation of Palestinian youth who would accept the status quo. As outlined by Mari (1987), "in community and cultural centers, clubs, and other ad hoc activities - as well as consistent effort by political groups and parties - the relevant content of identity, nationality and culture have been transmitted to a younger generation hungry for such knowledge" (38).

Palestinian indigenous organizations involved in community building and non-formal education are neither established, or recognized by the government. According to Nakhleh (1991), "these organizations emerged in order to fill the huge gap in the services offered in the social, educational, health and economic spheres, thus becoming a means of liberation and struggle against a strategy of deprivation and oppression" (4). As of 1991, there were 228 such Palestinian organizations in Israel. Out of these, 92% were established during the decade of the 1980s (Nakhleh, 1991). This trend of self-organizing and community empowerment has been increasing over the past decade. The growing number of an increasingly frustrated generation of Palestinian college graduates who are well aware of their state of collective relative deprivation as members of a national minority, lead to the wide spread community indigenous organizations. The conflict over the nationalistic content of Palestinian education is not limited to the formal school setting, where the Israeli authorities retain full control. Non-formal education has become another ideological "battleground". The Israeli government systematically harasses Palestinian community organizations and their educational work is subject to tight censorship.

Another source of identity building among Palestinians is the various political organizations active throughout the community. There are some major differences among these political parties and organizations in their political programs. However, the main concern for most of them is to preserve the national identity of the Palestinian community as an integral part of the Palestinian people. In his survey of indigenous organizations in Palestine, Nakhleh (1991) argues, "a number of national level organizations were established on factional or sectarian bases, whose objective is to advance the views or programs of their specific political faction or religious sect, locally or regionally" (12). Although most of the programs of these organizations are limited to the advancement of their political views and agendas, their contribution to the general process of Palestinian national identity development, especially among their younger participants, is very important.

Two contradicting educational processes are in competition over the Palestinian students' national identity: identity blurring through formal

education, and identity enhancement through non-formal education. In this conflict, it seems that the latter has gotten the upper hand. Palestinian indigenous organizations of non-formal education did not only fill the gap created by the school system, but actively re-built and sustained a strong sense of Palestinian national identity. Mari (1987) concluded more than a decade ago that "as far as this specific point is concerned, the struggle is over, from the Arab viewpoint: identity is maintained and reinforced" (39).

Despite all this, the Israeli government is still applying a "computer model" to the Palestinian educational process. By controlling the input of the formal education, it is believed that the output is guaranteed: a quiescent and nationally impotent Palestinian minority. The curricula used in the Palestinian schools are still empty of any content about Palestinian national identity and culture. The pool of high school graduates from which Palestinian university students are selected "is molded to a large degree by this [educational] system" (Nakhleh, 1977, 35).

PALESTINIAN STUDENTS RECLAIM NATIONAL IDENTITY

The ratio of Palestinian university students to the total student population is very low in relation to the larger Palestinian population. There are approximately 6,000 Palestinian students attending five Israeli universities, constituting 5.7% of the total student population whereas the Palestinians in Israel constitute about 20% of the total population (Makkawi, 1999). The fact that less than one third of potential Palestinian students go to the university must be viewed within the political context of their minority status. More specifically, we need to consider factors such as their poor level of high school education, the selection processes used by the universities for admission and the economical return of higher education.

Higher education has two major domains of values: socioeconomic and sociopolitical (Mari, 1979). The economic value prevails when higher education provides the individual with potential chances for upward socioeconomic mobility. The economic reward of higher education among the Palestinians in Israel contrasts most markedly with their brethren in the West Bank. Mari (1979) found that the average income of the university graduate in the West Bank was 285% than that of a peer who did not attend a university, while in Israel a Palestinian university graduate earned only 109% of his or her non graduate peer. The misery of unemployment among Palestinian university graduates in Israel is a well-documented reality (Al-Haj, 1988; Rekhess, 1987, 1988; Smootha, 1988). Higher education is valued when it is relevant to the sociopolitical needs of the larger community. According to Mari (1979), "non-economic values of higher education seem to have special significance to developing societies as they try to develop national and political identification with their respective nation state" (435). In the struggle to maintain their national identity and identification with their own people, the Palestinians in Israel assign a great sociopolitical value to the attainment of higher education.

Lack of economic reward is not the only reason behind the low ratio of Palestinian university students in Israel. The poor level of high school education

and the university entrance exams create an additional set of barriers for them. It has been argued that the university entrance exam "has been criticized in some quarters in the West as containing inbuilt cultural assumptions which favor those who come from the dominant culture or social class" (Graham-Brown, 1984, 57). Also, many of the technologically oriented fields of study, and the jobs for which they prepare their graduates, are classified as "security sensitive" and require military service. Consequently, Palestinian students are under-represented in these fields of study and over-represented in the humanities and social sciences.

Universities are the only educational institutions in Israel where Palestinian and Jewish students are fully integrated. In fact, it is the only situation in which Palestinians and Jews, as individuals, engage in direct interaction with each other on a presumably equal base as students. It is because of this "integration" that the universities find it difficult to apply double standards in their attempt to repress Palestinian students' political activism while at the same time allowing the majority Jewish students the freedom of political organization. However, the relationship between the Palestinian students and the university authorities is conflictive and corresponds to the government's oppressive policy towards the Palestinian population at large. Nakhleh (1979) maintains that Palestinian students are politically alienated due to the educational context of the universities being in contradiction with their national aspirations. He further argues that the "Israeli universities are dominated by Jewish-Zionist ideology, and this ideological basis frequently gets reinforced by rituals. Such context places heavy sanctions on an Arab nationalist expression" (113).

Palestinian students in the Israel universities see this oppressive context as a challenge leading their involvement in political activism, which in turn illuminates their collective-national identity and political awareness. Despite the low proportion of Palestinian students, their existence is intensely noticeable on all campuses due to their high level of political activism. This complicated sociopolitical context led Palestinian students from the beginning of their organization in the late 1950s to "express themselves in organized, intense political activity. They react to anything they consider relates to the Arab population in Israel" (Landau, 1969, 51).

Palestinian students maintain their rights to organize themselves in independent frameworks separate from the General Student Union (GSU). Embedded in the nature and reality of the Israeli universities, the GSU is "dominated by the majority Jewish students who do not cater to the specific needs of Arab students so that separation between Arabs and Jews is equally visible in the university" (Zureik, 1979, 176). Despite their legitimate argument that as a national minority group, they have different national and cultural needs, which are not on the agenda of the GSU, the university authorities still do not recognize the Palestinian students' organizations. This strange situation of being neither illegal nor recognized is illustrated in the statement of Amir Machul, the head of the National Union of Arab Students (NUAS). In an interview, he told *New-Outlook* that "the national union is not formally recognized by the university authorities, but there is de-facto recognition: they approach us when

there are problems, and we approach them" (Machul, 1984, 61). University recognition of their organizations implies an explicit recognition of their national identity as Palestinians a reality which is systematically denied and suppressed by the Israeli universities.

It was at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where Palestinian students first organized the Arab Student Committee (ASC) in the 1958/59 school-year. Similar committees have since mushroomed in other Israeli universities. Following the Hebrew University, more ASCs were established in Tel-Aviv University in 1968 in the University of Haifa and the Technion Institute in 1973, and in Ben-Gurion University and Bar-Ilan University in 1975. The National Union of Arab Students (NUAS), as an umbrella organization representing their committees in the various universities, was established in 1974/75 (Salim, 1983). Palestinian students in each university elect their ASC annually in direct and democratic elections, in which several student political organizations take part.

Palestinian student groups linked themselves with political organizations throughout the community who shared their political references and ideological affiliations. In fact, the student movement is considered an extension of the larger Palestinian social movement in Israel, which in turn considers itself as part of the Palestinian national movement as a whole. The main goal of the student organizations has been to maintain and assert their national and cultural identity as part of the Palestinian people within the parameters of their social and political reality. As such, the student activities in the university can be viewed as one of the most comprehensive national and political educational process Palestinian youth experience.

In this concluding section, I will describe some of the major findings and my conclusions from a comprehensive research project that I conducted with Palestinian student activists in Israel (Makkawi, 1999, 2000, 2004). As indicated earlier, education among the Palestinians in Israel is one of the most sensitive and conflictive political tools used against them within the current state of political affairs. The Israeli government has manipulated the formal educational system in order to shape Palestinian students' collective-national identity according to the interests of the majority. Furthermore, there has been an indication of growing resistance among Palestinian students to this colonizing educational process. Students' resistance to this colonizing education has been facilitated by the work of several political and grassroots organizations active throughout the Palestinian community. To some degree, Palestinian students in Israel are shaped by these contradictions between their community and their schools. Within this state of affairs, Palestinian student activism in the universities is considered a pivotal link in the process of national socialization among Palestinian youth in Israel. My research with Palestinian students in the Israeli universities (Makkawi, 1999) revealed that for a great number of them, an intense process of national awareness and social development takes place through their involvement in the Palestinian Student Movement in the universities.

Palestinian students' involvement in activism is not only an expression of their collective-national identity, but is also guided by their deep awareness of

the need to explore, develop and maintain this sense of national identity among the Palestinians in Israel in general. Motivated by their awareness of the planned attempt (by the government) to eradicate their Palestinian national identity, students commit themselves to student activities in the universities directed specifically towards raising national awareness and national identity among the general Palestinian student population. As active agents in such an educational process, Palestinian student activists themselves refine and develop their own sense of collective-national identity. Collective-national identity is viewed as a cause and effect of the political involvement of Palestinian student participants.

Having a strong sense of collective-national identity for Palestinian students does not develop in a vacuum or in a conflict free environment. It is precisely because of the intergroup power relations and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that Palestinian national identity becomes most salient for the Palestinians in Israel. Realizing that the Israeli authorities have consistently targeted Palestinian national identity, Palestinian student activists make it their mission to counter this process by helping develop this identity among the broader population of Palestinian students.

Israeli universities as academic institutions are still controlled by the political system and the dominant Zionist ideology. As such, they take upon themselves the mission of protecting the status quo from the "threat" stemming from Palestinian students' national identity. Palestinian student organizations are still not recognized by the universities and their activities, especially those addressing their Palestinian national identity, are still to a large extent censored and repressed by the university authorities. It is precisely because of this repression of their national identity by university authorities that Palestinian students persist in their activism. A strongly committed Palestinian male student activist puts it this way: "problems like these motivate us to work even harder. Indirectly, by creating these problems they give us incentives for more resistance and work against them."

In as much as it constitutes a source of motivation for involvement in student activism, Palestinian national identity is shaped, developed and enhanced through the process of student activism itself. This dialectical relationship between collective-national identity and activism leads to the conclusion that involvement in student activism during college years is in fact, a process of national education and development for Palestinian student activists themselves. This healthy educational process of national development is not only neglected but also suppressed through the formal educational system. The relationship between Palestinian students' commitment to the broader Palestinian national cause and their struggle for equality within the Israeli system uncovers the enigma inherent in their status as a national minority. In other words, there is a clear relationship between their national identity as Palestinians and their collective relative-deprivation in comparison to the Jewish majority. The pressure to "trade" our Palestinian national belonging with only limited civil rights as second class citizens, is clearly manifested in the use of service in the Israeli army as a precondition for civil rights. For obvious reasons (e.g. national identity, religion, and loyalty) the Palestinians in Israel cannot and will not serve in the Israeli army, which is a mandatory requirement for the

Jewish citizens. However, using this as legal bases for educational and economical opportunities is a core ingredient of the apartheid colonial state.

Their awareness of their relative deprivation as a group is associated with their feelings of injustice, anger and frustration, which in turn led to involvement in political action on behalf of their group. To recognize their collective-national identity as Palestinians raises the last, and probably the most important challenge to Israel as a Jewish state in Palestine.

There is clear evidence that the more Palestinian students became involved in the student activism the stronger becomes their sense of collective-national identity as Palestinians. Furthermore, the value or emotional significance they attached to their national identity also increased as a function of the level of their involvement in student activism. Another interesting finding pertains to the students' feeling of inequality and relative deprivation. The more they became involved in student activism, the less they were concerned with their individual state of relative deprivation. Instead they became more aware of the fact that their disadvantaged situation stems from the national oppression and collective discrimination practiced against their group, the Arab-Palestinians in Israel. As such, it is not surprising that the Israeli security services as well as the universities themselves apply harsh measures against Palestinian student activists. The students were aware of all this, but their human needs for this national identification and belonging were so fundamental that they risked their own safety and future.

This collective sentiment is considered an integral part of an individual's self concept, (Tajfel, 1981). Its nurture, expression and open manifestation make a positive contribution a student's overall psychological well being.

Palestinian families today are more involved in political activism in comparison to earlier generations. Unlike early generations of Palestinian student activists, who did not receive support from their families (Nakhleh, 1979), today's Palestinian student activists are more likely to come from families that are involved in political activism. The reflection of this on the larger Palestinian population in Israel indicates an increase in their political involvement in comparison to the earlier years of occupation. Unless the formal educational system for Palestinians in Israel adjusts itself so that students experience consistency between their "home culture" and "school culture" formal education will continue to alienate them. Until the school system begins to respond to the collective-national needs of its Palestinian students this vicious cycle of chronic failure in the educational system will continue.

CONCLUSION

Collective national identity of the Palestinian people has been the core issue in the Palestinian-Zionist conflict since the turn of the century. After all, the Zionist agenda for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was based on the myth that "Palestinian people simply did not exist." Since their uprooting in 1948, maintaining their collective-national identity has been one of the main concerns for the Palestinian people. The argument here is concerned with

student activism as a process by which Palestinian youth develop and maintain their sense of collective-national identity as well as the social and psychological implications of such an identity.

In conclusion, any political arrangement in the region that does not address the collective-national needs of the Palestinians in Israel and guarantee them full equality and partnership is unlikely to be effective.

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