

# The Listening Guide and a Visual Method to Learn About the Self-Performances of Palestinian Adolescent Girls

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This article demonstrates the power of using two qualitative research methods, namely, the Listening Guide and art-based methods, to learn about the selfhood of Palestinian adolescents. Both methods were embedded within ethnographic fieldwork that took place at the Friends School in Ramallah. Participants created expressive self-portraits, which were used to facilitate an interview or dialogue, the Listening Guide Method was then used to analyze the narratives. This article specifically presents one case example of Lubna, a 15-year-old Palestinian girl. Lubna's visual and narrative represent the struggle of dissociation and entering the adult world (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 2011). By applying the Listening Guide to the narrative, a strong voice of "knowing" about the "system," "culture," and "order" could be heard throughout Lubna's narrative, in which she responded to and resisted through creating a body that looked different in her expressive self-portrait, heard in the voice of wanting to be "humanized." At the same time her constructed body was partially connected to that system, hence embodying the struggle of dissociation. This contribution provides an example of how relational approaches to doing research create alternative knowledge about adolescents and more specifically about Palestinian adolescent girls.

*Keywords:* the listening guide method, art-based research, self-performance, Palestinian adolescent girls

International psychological research on Palestinian adolescents seems to focus on the psychosocial consequences of the Israeli occupation. A great amount of literature has focused on the pathogenic

impact of the ongoing political conflict on children and adolescents living in the West Bank and Gaza. Several studies have examined the relationship between exposure to war trauma and the development of posttraumatic stress disorder among other disorders (Abu Nada et al., 2010; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2012; Baker & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1999; Dubow et al., 2012; Elbedour et al., 2007; Haj-Yahia, 2008; Khamis, 2015; Pat-Horenczyk et al., 2009; Qouta et al., 2003; Rosshandler et al., 2016, Thabet & Vostanis, 2000). Within this salutogenic<sup>1</sup> framework, fewer studies have examined resilience and protective factors that support adolescents' health and well-being (Aitcheson et al., 2017; Peltonen et al., 2014; Punamäki et al., 2011), which made Nguyen-Gillham et al. (2008)

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<sup>1</sup> Is a framework that focuses on the study of sources of health; on factors that help people survive and maintain well-being in the midst of stressful situations (Lindström & Eriksson, 2006).

conclude that “a survey of the literature reveals a population at risk with Palestinian youth cast as objects of anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder . . . they are represented as pathological adolescents who resort to senseless acts of violence” (p. 292). Meari argued that when trauma discourses were introduced to the Palestinian context “they have been framed as knowledge-based discourses, that is, promoting neutral scientific knowledge and hence excluding the political field of anticolonial struggle” (Meari, 2015, p. 79). In addition to the content and the theoretical frameworks, most studies were based on quantitative methodologies, which further objectified and stigmatized Palestinian adolescents, and contributed to distorting the social suffering of war into individual illnesses, in a way that created certain expectations from research conducted with Palestinian adolescents. Therefore, the aim of this article is to show, through the case example of Lubna, the powerful use of two qualitative research methods to learn about the selfhood of Palestinian adolescents. Both the Listening Guide and the art-based methods were embedded within ethnographic fieldwork. This contribution demonstrates how the relational reframing of psychological inquiry empowers the voices of participants, and establishes a rich contextual framework to understanding (Gilligan, 2015).

### Investigating Selfhood

During the academic year of 2012/2013 I<sup>2</sup> was a researcher at the Friends School in Ramallah and I was interested to learn about the different aspects of Palestinian adolescents’ selfhood, which is a psychological construct that cannot be described directly. So, a challenging issue we<sup>3</sup> faced at the beginning was how to investigate selfhood, hence questioning the potentiality of a regular interview to capture it. However, things started to look different when we approached selfhood as an act of construction within narratives. Through telling stories about ourselves and about our world we construct and reconstruct parts of our selfhood and identity (Josselson, 2017). We started to see self and identity as interrelated constructs. When using the word “self” or “selfhood” we do not refer to an inner isolated core self, but to a relational dialogical self that is in a process of being created, as an intersubjective phenomenon (Anderson, 2007a, p. 16). Identity can be considered as part of the

evolving self. It refers to the various ways of being in the world (Josselson, 2017) and of locating, positioning and repositioning ourselves in relation to others, events, issues, and ideas. Hermans (2012) went a step further and proposed the notion of self as a “society of mind.” According to this view, the self and society are inside one another, the “self is society-inclusive, and, in its turn, society is self-inclusive” (p. 4).

Viewing selfhood as narrative highlights its dynamic and multilayered nature. Sermijn et al. (2008) demonstrated how the narrative self connects with the postmodern “untamed” story that is not synthesized around one plot or central point, but is horizontal, nonlinear, with no clear beginning, middle, and end. This postmodern lens creates space for “alternative story structures” and for alternative representations of selfhood “that connect better with the daily narrative practices we come in contact with as researchers” (p. 636). Particularly, this notion helped me to be more open to the kinds of narratives that participants constructed. This brings up the realization that narratives are constructed for others and with others and are told under very particular circumstances. Therefore, they can be considered as “performances.”

The performativity of selfhood could be traced back to Erving Goffman (1956). His dramaturgical metaphor of selfhood has transformed understanding of identity. We as individuals, and when in the presence of others, are continuously performing ourselves. Based on that notion, when individuals behave in a certain way, it is never purely a reflection of “who they are,” as Goffman (1956) noted, “in thinking about a performance it is easy to assume that the content of the presentation is merely an expressive extension of the character of the performer and to see the function of the performance in these personal terms” (p. 47). However, a performance carries within it the characteristics of the situation and the context. Riessman (2003) showed how “approaching identities performatively [has opened up] analytic possibilities that [can be] missed with static conceptions of identity, and by essentializing theories that assume the unity of an inner self” (p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> Pronouns in the 1st person refer to the experiences of the first author who conducted the fieldwork.

<sup>3</sup> The 2nd person pronouns refer to both authors’ thoughts and ideas.

## A Mixed-Method Approach to Selfhood

A good method is also an ethical method. With the relational reframing of psychological inquiry, the ethics of research becomes an ethics of relationships. This effects every aspect of the research encounter from how one approaches people to participate in the project to how one writes about them when writing it up (Gilligan, 2015, p. 73)

## Art-Based Research

It was highly essential to spend time with participants and become part of their school environment in an attempt to find methods that are creative, interesting, respectful, and involving both young participants and myself in a collaborative way. An 8-month research journey started with communicating with students and teachers, participating in classes and other school activities, building relationships, experiencing, and learning about the school context. I participated particularly in the school life of students attending 10th grade, especially during art classes, this is where I mainly discussed my research approach and initial plans. I noticed that art was far more than just learning to draw and to paint; it was a space to learn about different art periods, art schools, artists, and cultures. It was also a space to explore and to reflect on the self, and to work on the self through art. Therefore, using art as a medium for self-performance was just in harmony with the school life and culture.

This research is positioned within the traditions of both art-based and narrative inquiry. Our research participants produced visual data in the form of expressive self-portraits, later on interviews that took the form of dialogues were conducted through which narratives related to the visuals were produced. The methods were not used in isolation, but embedded within ethnographic fieldwork. Being in the field created spaces for participant observations, unstructured dialogues, and building relationships, as methods of data production were negotiated and collaboratively constructed with research participants. Situating visual techniques within an ethnographic framework helps in creating more meaningful and relevant methods of data production, as well as offers the potential for developing better understandings of social realities (Mannay, 2016).

Bringing art into research provides new ways of seeing, thinking, and communicating. Art

offers new and multiple ways of creating meaning and knowing. It is argued that art-based research “offers ways to tap into what otherwise be inaccessible and makes connections and interconnections that are otherwise out of reach” (Leavy, 2017, p. 9).

“Defamiliarization” is another power of art-based research (Mannay, 2016, p. 27), which involves making the familiar strange and interesting again for both the researcher and participants. The process of creation allows participants to gain new perspectives on their understanding of their subjective worlds and selves; it also opens different and new ways of talking about the familiar. It can disrupt conventional ways of seeing for the researcher as well. The school context I worked in was very familiar to me, if I planned only to use regular interviews to question adolescent girls about their selfhood, my prepared questions would be limited to my prior knowledge about the school, and their answers would be limited to those prepared questions of mine. However, the visual productions created an enriched experience for me as well as for the participants. Each participant entered the interview setting with their own ideas guided by what they had created. During the interviews, participants brought issues (content) and ways of talking (process) that I would not have thought of or asked about in a regular interview setting (Rose, 2014).

The visual method at the same time created spaces for the self to be constructed and performed (Dawani & Loots, 2015), in a way that Riessman (2008) described as “making art and making selves” (p. 164). We wanted to learn about the selfhood of Palestinian adolescents through visual performance, through the creation of a visual to perform the self. This is quite similar to what Luttrell (2003) did to explore teenage girls’ experiences of themselves and of society while being pregnant.

In the spirit of a cultural-oriented approach to narratives, we did not collect narratives, but instead jointly participated in their construction and creation (Loots et al., 2013). As such, the data were created together with the participants.

## The Listening Guide Method

The Listening Guide is a qualitative feminist approach to narrative analysis (Tolman, 2001). It can be used to analyze texts or interview transcripts where a first-person voice is expected

(Gilligan, 2015). The research relationship established before and during an interview; the way the researcher listens, responds, and be in this interactive setting with the participant; shapes what will be said, how it is said, and what is left unsaid (Josselson, 2013). “In coming from a place of genuine curiosity or not knowing, the researcher becomes open not only to surprise or discovery but also to having one’s view of the world shaken” (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 77). This means it is important during an interview to question what we think we know, to question normative assumptions, this encourages participants to voice what they “really” think and feel (Gilligan, 2015). Relational approaches to doing research facilitate the creation of rich narratives.

The Listening Guide Method strengthens the researcher’s relationship with the text through multiple readings of the same narrative. It tunes our ears to attend to voices in the text, “in particular to pay attention to the multiplicity of what appears on the surface as a single voice” (Koelsch, 2015, p. 97). Listening to the polyphony of voices in a narrative allows us to come to know the inner world, the psyche, of another person, “to less linear dimensions of human experience, especially more marginalized dimensions” (Sorsoli & Tolman, 2008, p. 496). With that said, the Listening Guide is a psychological method, it attends to the inner psychological processes, and also to the social discourses that influence what can and cannot be said (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

The method involves multiple listenings. The first listening is listening for the plot. This listening is descriptive; we attend to the content and the context of the narrative and to the dynamics of the research relationship. We describe the features of the psychological landscape of the text, the stories being told and the larger social and cultural context within which they were told. In this section, in particular, I described how art was used in creating narratives and the context of the expressive self-portraits. As listeners, our relationship to the narrative is responsive; we bring our subjectivities to the process of interpretation, by making explicit the emotions and thoughts provoked by the text, and to where they do and do not line up with the narrative. During the second listening, we listen for the “I,” the self-voice, by attending to the first-person voice of the participant. During this step, we listen to how the participant is speaking about and representing herself within the narrative. Each “I” phrase is

made separate (I + verb + important accompanying word/s) then an I-poem is composed while maintaining the same order of the “I” phrases as they appeared in the text. Listening for contrapuntal voices is the third and last listening, this is where the research focus and question is brought back into attention. Here we do not look for themes, rather we listen to the different strands, melody lines, or voices in the text, especially those that speak to our research question. Then the relationship, the interplay, between the different voices is examined, in addition to how each voice moves in relation to the self-voice (Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan & Eddy, 2017; Gilligan et al., 2006). In conclusion, the Listening Guide “establishes a contextual framework for understanding or interpretation. As voice is embodied and resides in language, it grounds psychological inquiry in physical and cultural space” (Gilligan, 2015, p. 69).

The Listening Guide and art-based methods are powerful on their own. However, combining both created a rich research experience that started from data production to analysis and interpretation. I believe that the visual in the form of expressive self-portraits did encourage and inspire the voices. The process participants went through while creating their visuals facilitated thinking and reflecting on the self in the world. Those visual embodiments afterward facilitated a narrative about the self where it was verbally constructed and co-constructed. The fact that the whole process was embedded within ethnographic fieldwork allowed the research relationship to evolve, the relational aspect matters for it impacts the quality of the constructed narratives. The Listening Guide Method allowed me to dive into those narratives and attend to the multiple voices and how they move in relation to one another in the text. The expressive self-portraits provided another medium for the voices to be vividly embodied and seen.

### Introducing Lubna

In listening for the plot, we hear Lubna, a 15-year-old Palestinian teenage girl, talking about her expressive self-portrait (Shown in Figure 1).

Lubna grew up in the city of Ramallah and was living there at the time of the study. Being in convenient proximity with school meant that she did not have to cross-checkpoints to be there every morning. Living within the city of Ramallah provides different experiences when

**Figure 1***Lubna's Expressive Self-Portrait*

compared to other Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank. Like any other city, Ramallah combines various atmospheres ranging from the traditional to the more liberal styles of living. While many people enjoy its diverse national and international cultural (arts, music, and film) social events and nightlife, yet mobility to other parts of the occupied land may be restricted and pose constant humiliation. All of which adds to the sociopolitical contextual complexity.

### Context of the Visual Creation

My relationship and interaction with Lubna started at the Friends School in Ramallah/West Bank when I was doing ethnography for my PhD research project. I was looking for ways that enable adolescents to construct and embody their selfhood, and then use these embodiments to learn about the different ways Palestinian adolescents talk about themselves and the world.

The expressive self-portraits were created for a shared project between 10th-grade art classes at the school and my research. Through this project we were inviting students to go beyond what is usually seen in a self-portrait, it was an invitation to reflectivity, and to express visual thoughts,

ideas, issues, and emotions in relation to the self and the world.

During several art classes, students were exposed to various art and reflective activities. Frida Kahlo was a major corner stone in that process. Students were introduced to her life and artwork, especially to her self-portraits, they were also exposed to symbolism in the work of Paul Gauguin; “the two faces of Paul Gauguin.” Students also had the chance to see and discuss visuals created by a group of 11th-grade students from their school, with whom I first explored the use of art-based methods.

Students worked on their expressive self-portraits by use of symbolism and through manipulating and transforming materials to represent thoughts, ideas, issues, and concerns related to themselves and who they are and want to be. Participants chose to use both collage and paint. Collage as a medium is all about bringing in, collecting, contrasting, and combining different pieces and transforming, composing, and constructing. It could be a metaphorical embodiment of selfhood, which is also multiple, varied, and in construction.

Lubna created her expressive self-portrait within a small group of students who met for a couple of hours in a public venue over the period of 2 days. Being there with the group, I noticed that Lubna first created her body and just towards the end she came up with the whole idea of the brick wall, and Pink Floyd’s theme was a perfect fit. Some of the students were looking for songs on internet. They played one video called “Music Evolution” for Pentatonix, a group of five vocalists performing a medley of music and songs starting from the 11th century up till 2010. They were amazing in how they shifted smoothly between the different beats, rhythms, and genre. Although Pink Floyd’s “Another Brick in the Wall” did not come up when Pentatonix shifted to the 70’s, but the thought of 70’s music brought up Pink Floyd to Lubna. With enthusiasm, she played the song on her mobile and started drawing a brick wall behind her body. It was like a revelation to her, suddenly all the pieces of her work synced in.

### Creation of the Narrative

The expressive self-portraits were visuals created by participants and later used to facilitate an interview or dialogue (Mannay, 2016). Dialogues

emerged naturally while bringing in the self and identity through the visual. This was another space for participants to construct and perform themselves and identities (Anderson, 2007b). The dialogical spaces we created were similar to day-to-day natural conversations. There was no set of questions or agenda. I came to each encounter with curiosity and interest to know the persons and to create an understanding of their visual together with them.

Although I had many face-to-face conversations with Lubna during the school year and during the creation of her portrait, unfortunately, we could not find a focused moment to talk about the visual due to the hectic final exam schedule. Lubna decided to write about her portrait, and in July 2013 I received an email with her narrative. The narrative was written in English, thus the excerpts presented in this article are in their original form. Just as other participants, Lubna was the main creator of the narrative, choosing what to talk about and how. In the original text, I inserted my questions and comments, some of which were paraphrases to check my understanding. This is how the written dialogue was created, with Lubna writing an initial narrative, and later answering my questions, clarifying meanings, and providing more details. The written exchange was done on the same document, at the end we had a written piece with several different colors referring to whom is speaking and when.

### The General Landscape of the Narrative

Lubna started her narrative by telling about the process of creating her expressive self-portrait, then she went into more details explaining the symbols of some of its parts and colors, finally, she brought up the main theme of her visual which was based on Pink Floyd's song "Another Brick in the Wall."

It was central to Lubna to visually create her body "I wanted to define my body." She was telling how she wanted to recreate her body with things that are found in nature. She used magazines of images of nature, and then her ideas evolved into creating the organs of her body using scraps of paper. She created the head in a way to show that she is smart, fierce, and tranquil at the same time. She used images of animals to create her lungs. She wanted to show a part of her that is "all nature." During the time of creation, she

enjoyed playing with colors and with pieces of magazines and only used some of them to construct and fill the gaps between her organs. The red bundle of flowers at her reproductive area is to show that she is not ashamed of who she is, of being a woman. Here Lubna brought up the issue of society and how she saw women to be underappreciated and how society rejects everything that is different. The navy-blue color at her shoulder area resembles feelings associated with difficult experiences, at the same time the color stands for lessons learned from life and from those experiences, holding on, and fighting. Toward the end of the narrative, Lubna explained her ultimate theme, which is based on Pink Floyd's song "Another Brick in the Wall." She told more about the song, which addresses the corrupt educational system, and the shaping of minds so that all turn to be the same, like a rigid limited brick. She believed that the educational system should focus more on "human nature" on what is inside each person, on personal thoughts and emotions. She explained that her body is with the other bricks, yet it looks different from the other bricks, and that she is choosing not to be like other bricks and not to be another brick in the wall. She stated that one could change the world by confronting and breaking the rules. At the same time, she painted her hands as fading into the wall, implying that she is part of the wall, however, she can change the wall and choose not to be like another brick in it.

There are at least five metaphors in Lubna's narrative, all of which can be seen in her expressive self-portrait. The first is the metaphor of the "wall," which may be interpreted to represent society, the system, the educational system, and other oppressive systems. The second is the "brick" or the "bricks" and these represent the bodies, people in society, they may be students, or other oppressed bodies/people. The third is "nature" or "human nature," and this according to Lubna represents feelings, emotions, and creativity, things that make humans human. The last is the "fading hands," and these represent being part of the wall, part of the system. The different body Lubna constructed as a "whole" can be seen as a metaphor for resistance.

### The Researcher's Response

I was 31 years old at the time of the fieldwork, wearing casual clothes with Marten's boots and

a backpack with my laptop and a notebook. I definitely looked younger than my age. I felt very comfortable in my body within the school space, the school that was once my school. Having an eyebrow piercing caught the attention of many students, who were curious to know about where such piercings can be done and how painful it was. This is from where many conversations have started.

I had a very interactive relationship with Lubna from the moment I entered the school and participated in art classes. Her unique presence made a difference whether in classes or during other activities. You can feel a depth in her, a motivation to learn and to share, rich in knowledge, and a young active, spontaneous, bold yet a respectful person. With a smile on her face and shining eyes, for me she was always an interesting person to know more about, have conversations with, and to learn from. From the way she dresses, chooses colors, mixes things, and from the way she talks and chooses her words, her issues of interest all gave me an impression about her unique individuality.

It was Lubna who guided me and suggested that I also participate in their English classes, “come to our English classes, we are fun and we do important stuff in English.” Those spaces turned out to be important for me as well, for my research. English classes were empowering for those students and I described them as “spaces of growth.” This meant that Lubna understood well why I was there and what I was looking for.

I was in 10th grade when I left the Friends School for another school because of the checkpoints between Ramallah and Jerusalem. It was in 1998 just after my 16th birthday when I had to leave my beloved school and classmates without having a choice, or maybe without standing up for myself and strongly speaking of what I really wanted. Sadness and anger are feelings I remember. I wanted to continue the journey with my friends and I wanted to be a graduate of that school. I knew that with my grades I would have been able to get a scholarship and study in the United States and build a life for myself. Instead of that I went to a completely different school with a different school culture and atmosphere. A place where every “girl” should be the same, and is expected to behave in the same order, a place where there is no room for diversity, no room to express yourself, a place where you only

have to obey the rules and study and keep your thoughts to yourself, a place where it is “normal” to see others being constantly humiliated. I remember feeling traumatized and helpless; I was stuck and not able to change anything.

Reflecting back on what it meant to me to stay at the Friends School at that time, I am ashamed to admit that it made me feel and perhaps “look” better than everybody else who was not attending that school. I felt superior to be in a school system that was nothing like other Palestinian schools, learning English at a very young age, being exposed to teachers from abroad, learning basic subjects in a foreign language, having textbooks from the U.S. and the U.K., being disciplined the “western” way with negative points and detentions. I am now aware that this is the legacy of a colonial system or systems, to excessively value the language and the culture of colonizers and devalue that of ours.

Lubna’s expressive self-portrait speaks to me of that time and reminds me of the time when I did not want to be “another brick in the wall,” and yet I was. Her portrait speaks to me differently today; I see resistance, power, and pride that I see in myself finally choosing not to be “another brick in the wall.”

I came back in 2013 to 10th grade at the Friends School as a participant–researcher reliving some of the past moments, bringing alive others, and creating new enjoyable moments with others in the exact same place. I am emotionally attached to that place and choosing to do research there was such a valuable and meaningful experience, and maybe it brought a kind of closure to me.

## Results

In the following section, I present four contrapuntal voices, their relationship to one another and with the self-voice. The first voice presented is the voice of “I am a brick,” which was almost always followed by the voice of “I am nothing like another brick.” The voice of “knowing” is then presented, which Lubna responded to by the voice of “wanting to be a human.”

### **The Contrapuntal Voices of “I am a Brick,” but “I am Nothing Like Another Brick”**

These contrapuntal voices speak of Lubna’s relationship to the “wall,” and how she sees her

body in comparison to the other bodies/bricks. The first of the two voices speaks of being part of the wall, the self that is part of the wall, the “I am a brick” voice. Through this voice, Lubna appears conscious of the idea that she is, despite trying not to be, part of the system, of the culture, a shaped being, a brick. This voice is followed by the “I am nothing like another brick” voice; which is loud bold and angry, through which Lubna is resisting the wall, and resisting to be like another brick, “I am nothing like another brick,” “I can choose not to be.”

The voice of “I am a brick” is shown in italics in the text below, and the voice of “I am nothing like another brick” is in bold. This provides a visual way of examining the relationship between the voices, and their relationship with the self-voice. Attending to the movement between these two voices in the context of the full narrative is an important step that allows us to hear how they are moving in relationship with one another (Gilligan et al., 2006).

These two voices in Lubna’s narrative are closely related to one another, they seem to take turns, when the voice of “being part of the wall” speaks the voice of “refusing to be part of the wall” follows and responds strongly. The voice of “being part of the wall” first appeared when Lubna was telling about the process of creating and constructing her body. Lubna spoke about herself through the visual, through her expressive self-portrait, and this makes her script unique from my perspective, because as she is speaking, she refers to the different parts and colors in her visual and to the decisions she made throughout the construction process. In other words, she was not only telling about herself but she was also showing her embodied self, “I wanted to define my body by whatever I can find out there in nature,” “I wanted to show that I’m smart,” “I wanted to show that part of me.”

“The fading” and the “Fading hands” is a major visual theme in her portrait. Lubna collaged most of her body organs by combining scraps of paper from magazines; however, she used different shades of blue paint to paint the lower parts of her arms, which evolved into her hands. Both hands are cloudy, a mixture of blue and white paint, almost fading into the white background, into the “wall.” This is where the “I am part of the wall” voice appeared first (in italics)

My idea was to combine scraps of paper to make the shape of my body, but that idea evolved into using those scraps as organs to my body. As I cut out pictures from the magazine, I wasn’t really thinking about that whole organ thing. I wanted the pieces to go together naturally. As for the head, I wanted to show that I’m smart, but I can also be fierce. And between them will be serenity and calmness. I really tried to enjoy the colors I found and the landscape and used them to fill the void between the organs, *which then evolved into my hands, which faded into the background because my body was part of that wall.*

Later in the narrative, the interplay and the movement between the two voices become clear. When for the second time Lubna explained the “fading” of her body into the background as being part of the wall, the voice of resisting being a brick in that wall responded strongly. Lubna is aware that she can never be completely detached from the wall, and that the wall will remain on existing, but she is also aware of the fact that she can do something about it, she can either change the “wall,” or choose not to be another brick in it. In several instances the self-voice is strongly moving with the voice resisting the wall, “I can change the wall, and I can choose not to be . . . I tried to break that idea.” (the self-voice is underlined) However later in the narrative when Lubna said, “because some of us can bend the rules,” the self-voice disappeared and Lubna was speaking in a passive voice. This way of speaking, that is including herself with others by not voicing directly the potentiality of her breaking the rules, may have felt safer at that point.

*I made sure that my body faded into the background because of my ultimate theme, which is based on Pink Floyd’s album “Another Brick on the Wall.” The fading is to show that I am part of the wall no matter how hard I try but I can change the wall and I can choose not to be another brick on the wall.* The album and the songs talk about how in this world we are all treated the same and everyone thinks it’s okay because it’s “equality” when it’s not, this norm attitude from the world limits creativity; thus, productivity. The album focuses a lot on the corrupt educational system that shapes the minds of tomorrow in a way that there is no individuality; hence, another brick on the wall. I tried to break that idea but at the same time agree with it. I cannot argue with the fact that the educational system, or any system, treat us as the same but just because we all take the same input doesn’t mean that we will all have the same output. Yes!! That’s exactly what I meant because some of us can bend the rules.

In another encounter between these two voices, Lubna again and for the third time

described her collaged body to be another brick in the wall, she said, “I’m physically a brick,” however, it (referring to her body) “did not look like one . . . I am nothing like another brick . . . I don’t want that.” Lubna is resisting; she does not want to be the exact same brick as others, the product of the “corrupt educational system” or “any other system,” she is resisting that by constructing a different body, one that is colorful, transparent, bold, and humanized. The voice that is resisting and insisting on “not to be like another brick” is loud again, but now addressing her audiences (the other bricks), with a pronoun shift to the “you” (underlined in orange), to do something about it, about the “wall,” “you only change the world when you change the colors . . . and you change those by confronting them and breaking them if needed.” Lubna was not trying to appear in the image of the “perfect girl” especially when she stated that rules must be broken or confronted if needed, for her a disruption and interruption of order must be made when necessary. Using “colors” to refer to rules and limits is fascinating, as rules (can also be seen as power) do penetrate our lives they color how we behave, feel, and see things, thus can be limiting creativity. The following excerpt shows the movement and the interplay between these two voices.

*The body I put together was another brick on the wall but it didn’t look like one, and that was my main point. Yes. I’m physically a brick but I am nothing like another brick. All the ones (I mean brick which is I guess the same as bodies) around might be the usual and the same and I don’t want that because you only change the world when you change the colors. Here I meant by colors the rules and limits and you change those by confronting them and breaking them if needed.*

### **The Voice of “Wanting to be a Human” and the Voice of “Knowing”**

There is the “wanting” voice (shown in green), a desire to be seen/heard and to be humanized. This voice is closely related to the process of embodiment, of constructing her body, of creating her expressive self-portrait. Lubna wanted to “define” and to “make the shape” of her body, she was certain about that right from the beginning, and while allowing herself to enjoy the process through experimenting with colors and with the pieces, her ideas

evolved and the major theme of her portrait matured. Lubna wanted to be seen; “I wanted to show,” and she wanted to show a part of her that was “all nature.” “Nature” and “human nature” were repeated several times in Lubna’s narrative. She literally used images of nature from magazines to recreate her body. “Nature” is a huge metaphor here, for Lubna it is an embodiment of feelings, emotions, and creativity, “the things that make us human.” The body she constructed looked different than the other bodies, the other bricks; Lubna was trying to become a human.

As soon as we were handed our assignments, I wanted to define my body by whatever I can find out there; in nature. Nature is a huge scope to work on and I used magazines. It is filled with human nature. A magazine is like pieces of lives, decisions and emotions.

My idea was to combine scraps of paper to make the shape of my body, but that idea evolved into using those scraps as organs to my body. As I cut out pictures from the magazine, I wasn’t really thinking about that whole organ thing. I wanted the pieces to go together naturally. As for the head, I wanted to show that I’m smart, but I can also be fierce. And between them will be serenity and calmness. I really tried to enjoy the colors I found and the landscape and used them to fill the void between the organs, *which then evolved into my hands, which faded into the background because my body was part of that wall.*

I tried to put animals for the lungs because I wanted to show that part of me; the part that is all nature. One of the scraps were ambiguous and I put them just for the sake of the colors. I used a bright red and surrounded it with flowers because I am not ashamed of who I am. The society I live in is completely blind of female importance. Females are not looked at as an equal part of society. Society wants you to be yourself within limits. You can be a female but not be proud about it. And placing the flowers on the female reproductive area is to prove this point. I don’t like living in a society that rejects everything different and only wants to progress by ignoring important issues. I mean you can wear completely conservative clothes yet be judged because the colors are not usual.

The rest of the colors were not organs rather feelings and that’s what this is all about.

In contrast to the “fading” hands, comes in a bright deep “red bundle of flowers . . . on the female reproductive area,” visually the bundle is on the same horizontal line of the “fading hands” and almost centering the portrait. It is the only red used in the portrait, combined collectively in one bundle, visible and prominent, as is the voice of “wanting to be humanized.” Lubna said “I am not ashamed of who I am,” on its own this statement could take up multiple meanings based on the notion of

identity as intersectional. However, in the context of this narrative and the visual, Lubna chose to represent the dimension of gender, of being a woman in a patriarchal society, in a gendered society. She celebrated femininity when it should be ashamed of. Lubna did not say “I am proud of who I am,” rather she used the phrase “not ashamed,” which implies that this is how women should feel about themselves in a society that is “completely blind of female importance” and one “that rejects everything different.” The use of the word “shame” is the result of the “fading hands” of being part of the wall.

Lubna is longing for a part of herself that seems to be in danger now, in danger of disappearing and or of being lost. Lubna is aware that the educational system is socializing young people and turning them into “bricks,” which is done through ignoring and splitting off important parts of our humanity, an act of dehumanization. Lubna created a transparent body that embraces and brings together the splits and the fractures. She is resisting dissociation and dehumanization by visually voicing a body that combines different aspects. She said, “I wanted to show that I’m smart, but I can also be fierce.” When women voice what they really think and feel they may be described as “mad” and “fierce.” By being “fierce” Lubna is reclaiming her humanity, a part of her that should be silenced in order to be a “good” girl that is nice and smiling all the time (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). However, with the tiger’s face Lubna is showing that she has a voice that disagrees with how society is functioning, “I don’t like living in a society that rejects everything different, and only wants to progress by ignoring important issues.”

When examining the relationship between this particular voice of “wanting to be a human” and the self-voice, we can notice that this voice is in full alignment with the self-voice, they are almost at all times moving together, the self is highly represented through this voice, which means that Lubna owns it.

The “voice of knowing” is Lubna’s embodied experience about the world and about the self in the world, about being a woman, a student, about people with depression, and about people who are different. Lubna is aware of the existence of the “wall” and of the way it functions. This voice is shown in orange.

I tried to put animals for the lungs because I wanted to show that part of me; the part that is all nature. One of the scraps were ambiguous and I put them just for the sake of the colors. I used a bright red and surrounded it with flowers because I am not ashamed of who I am. The society I live in is completely blind of female importance. Females are not looked at as an equal part of society. Society wants you to be yourself within limits. You can be a female but not be proud about it. And placing the flowers on the female reproductive area is to prove this point. I don’t like living in a society that rejects everything different and only wants to progress by ignoring important issues. I mean you can wear completely conservative clothes yet be judged because the colors are not usual.

The rest of the colors were not organs rather feelings and that’s what this is all about. I think everyone out there at some point in their life hits depression and I don’t think it’s such a bad thing because I know you get past that and things are okay again. These colors are lessons I learnt; they’re pills to fight any disease life throws at you.

I made sure that my body faded into the background because of my ultimate theme, which is based on Pink Floyd’s album “Another Brick on the Wall.” The fading is to show that I am part of the wall no matter how hard I try but I can change the wall and I can choose not to be another brick on the wall. The album and the songs talk about how in this world we are all treated the same and everyone thinks it’s okay because it’s “equality” when it’s not, this norm attitude from the world limits creativity; thus, productivity. The album focuses a lot on the corrupt educational system that shapes the minds of tomorrow in a way that there is no individuality; hence, another brick on the wall. I tried to break that idea but at the same time agree with it. I cannot argue with the fact that the educational system, or any system, treat us as the same but just because we all take the same input doesn’t mean that we will all have the same output. Yes!! That’s exactly what I meant because some of us can bend the rules.

I think human nature is our feelings and emotions because after all those are what determine our actions. The educational system should treat us like we have those feelings and not (like you said) like machines. The educational system puts you in this limited environment and at the end asks you to be creative. Being creative these days has become harder because we are not put in an environment that stimulates creativity or feelings. I mean by human nature the things that make us human.

Lubna started by criticizing the way society perceives women, she knows how women are expected to feel about themselves, “you can be a female but not be proud about it.” Lubna is aware that not only women are “othered,” but also those who are “different.” The voice of knowing shifts to the “you” at this point, “society wants you to be yourself within limits. You can be a female but not be proud about it. You can wear completely conservative clothes yet be judged because the colors are not usual,” thus making her experience

of living in a patriarchal society relevant to every woman and to every person that does not fit into society's accepted norms.

Lubna then voiced what she knows about how the educational system is functioning, guided by Pink Floyd's song. Lubna described the system to be "corrupt." She is aware that education is supposed to be inspirational, mind opening, and where creativity is stimulated. However, she depicted a one-dimensional system with "inputs" and "outputs" working like a "machine" to "shape the minds of tomorrow" into bricks that fit into the wall. Thus education's only purpose here is to preserve the status quo to create people who fit into the world as it is.

Toward the end of the narrative and in this voice of knowing, Lubna revealed how the educational system is working by ignoring an important part of human nature, and that is the emotional part. For Lubna, the emotional part is important for learning, for knowing, and for creativity. To become human is when the divisions and the dissociations between different parts of the self-reconcile and come together. The question is to what extent does Lubna own this voice? Looking at its alignment with the self-voice we notice that they are often moving separately.

Through a bold constructed body Lubna voiced how she wants to be in the context of what she "knows" about the "wall." This is how she engaged with about what she "knows," in interplay with the voice of "wanting to be human." This body is the result of this "knowing"; it is a response to it. Through the "voice of knowing," although sounding passive, Lubna builds a context for her resisting body. The voice of "wanting to be a human" is literally linked to the visually constructed body that looks different, because it refuses to be like another brick in the wall, yet it is still connected, but consciously, to that wall.

Lubna tried to solve the struggle by choosing to be "mostly" a different brick in the wall, with only the hands fading for now.

## Discussion

Lubna constructed and performed a self within the world and in relation to the world. The voices heard in her narrative were embodied and relational. They responded to the world and they were also responding to one another. Also, her collaged body is not standing on its own; it is relationally standing against the wall of bricks. Her body is

part of the wall, but it did not look like any other brick. Compared to the rest of the bricks, the other bodies, she constructed a body that looked different from how she knows she should be, from how the world expected her to be. The different body on a plain brick wall is an embodiment of knowledge and resistance. Knowledge about and resistance to how the world is operating, what the world expects from her, and how the world wants her to look like. She resisted through creating a bold, transparent, colorful, and diverse body. She used aspects of nature to emphasize what goes inside of her, her thoughts and feelings, something that is silenced by society or the educational system. The educational system is "dehumanizing" young people and through this collaged body she resisted and claimed back her humanity. At the same time, Lubna is aware that the "wall" is still important, it has a function; to be in agreement with the "wall," to fade into it, is necessary for social survival for maintaining harmony and relationships. The voice of "wanting to be human" reveals Lubna's strong ownership of the "body" she created, even though that "body" was debating and constantly was moving in and out of the "wall."

Lubna revealed how a teenage girl experiences society and the world in general and how she wants to be and to live. She also revealed what a teenage girl knows. Lubna wanted to show that she has a voice and that she knows about the world and about life and that she has a different vision of being, and that she knows how to be a human. She wanted to show that although she is a female, a teenager, a Palestinian living in the Palestinian society, yet she has a voice that is determined and confident, and that she is smart and creative. It is true that she is living in a colonized, sexist, and patriarchal society (Makkawi, 2011) yet she wants to be a woman and she wants to be a human being. "To have a voice is to be a human" (Gilligan, 1993, p. xvi). Activism restores dignity; "being politically involved is a way of life for Palestinian youth" (Nguyen-Gillham et al., 2008, p. 295). It may take different forms and shapes depending on one's positionality, context, and experiences. Lubna chose at this point to speak up for women, for students being oppressed by the educational system, and for people who are different from society's accepted norms. On one hand, living in the city of Ramallah and attending the Friends school (which reflects a good socioeconomic

status) shaped and made those forms of resistance possible and important to Lubna, on the other hand, she depicted a struggle that is similar to that of other teenage girls in the world.

Lubna criticized the educational system, while being in a remarkable open school space. The Friends School in Ramallah is not a typical school when compared to other private and public schools in the West Bank, however, it is worthwhile to mention that while the general atmosphere of the school is liberal, yet there are spaces and classes that are less so. Students there are exposed to diverse educational traditions, some of which are more attractive and empowering than others. Students at the Friends School are very much aware of how the world is operating outside their school gates; therefore, Lubna may be referring to the general Palestinian educational system, but also to other social systems and institutions operating in a similar way in society. In her narrative, she always referred to “the system” and “the educational system,” transcending the boundaries by making the personal political. Philosophically speaking, a system is a system and power is everywhere (Foucault, 1978) it might look different and it might feel different, less coercive in the case of the Friends School, and it might appear to be “right” and “moral”; however, it still exists. The educational system is one of the most powerful forces in producing “the types of bodies that society requires” (Pylypa, 1998, p. 22).

Cultural expectations, especially where patriarchy is involved, create dissociations within the self and with one another (Gilligan, 2011). Patriarchal scripts dictate clearly what it means to be a boy, a girl, a woman, a man, old, young, rich, poor, etc. It is a system that genders, that orders, and that create hierarchy. During adolescence girls and boys are being prepared to enter the “adult world” as “real men” and “good women”; a process Carol Gilligan called “initiation.” This is the start of dissociation. Both girls and boys are encouraged to dissociate from themselves at a certain point. Humanity must be broken to serve hierarchy and patriarchy.

The notion of the “good” woman, for example, is selfless and only cares about what others want. As Gilligan (2011) stated, this means that women have silenced themselves for the sake of keeping relationships. They learned not to know what they know, feel, and think. With patriarchy, which is a highly gendered structure, both women and men

are oppressed and dehumanized, women by silencing their knowledge and voices, and men by silencing their desire for relationship. To become a “good” woman and a “real” man both women and men are encouraged to dissociate themselves from their humanity. As long as human qualities are divided into masculine and feminine, we will be alienated from one another and from ourselves.

The struggle of dissociation is represented in Lubna’s narrative through the two contrapuntal voices of “I am a brick” and “I am nothing like another brick,” a struggle between surrendering to the “wall,” meeting its expectations to fit in, and between refusing to become like another brick in it. However, Lubna did not leave the narrative undecided, at the same time she did not take one side over another. She decided to combine both. Visually the larger portion of her body, the one containing the vital organs looked vividly prominent and “different,” leaving only her hands fading and melting into the wall.

Gilligan (2011) reminds us that our capacities for mutual understanding, cooperation, empathy, and care are deeply human; they are human ethics and not exclusively feminine ethics. They keep us connected with others and with ourselves, with our bodies and minds, with our thoughts and emotions. These connections are horizontal in structure and therefore are obstacles to patriarchy. Patriarchy strives to turn relationships vertical to establish binaries, divisions, and splits; “with higher and lower, good and bad, a series of splits are essential” (p. 67). This serves as the basis of how young people are expected to be in the world. This is one perspective framing our understanding of Lubna’s emphasis on restoring “human nature.” Further on, these splits, divisions, and dissociations are what created “knowledge” about human development, about women and men that became as their absolute nature. “Culture was being misread as nature, and a process of initiation interpreted as a stage in human development” (Gilligan, 2011, p. 82).

Listening to the voices of teenage girls, Brown and Gilligan (1992) created a pathway to psychological knowledge about girls’ development but also about human development. Adolescent girls’ voices conveyed various forms of resistance. To protect themselves, some girls take what they think, feel, and know to the underground. They know, but they pretend not to know in some situations and contexts, a double existence. Internalizing the image of the

“perfect girl,” some girls struggle to attain feminine ideals of perfection, they resist connection with what they know and think; they evade touch with their experiential reality (Tolman & Brown, 2001) and they struggle to fit in the cultural expectations of the “good girl.” Lubna at this point seems to be a “political resister”; she challenged openly and resisted power and authority of systems that are denying human nature, by creating a “humanized” body. She performed alternative voices, ones she embraced. Her collaged body is transparent and bold not minding being with and connected to other “popular” accepted bodies. With this integrating body, Lubna was trying to resist dissociation by “undoing patriarchal splits.” Her visual is an embodiment of connectedness between mind and body, reason and emotion, and between self and others (Gilligan, 2011, p. 24). However, the voice of “knowing” that is now passively voiced may be in danger of “fading,” of going underground at some point in the future. If the voice of “knowing” starts to move underground there is a possibility that more parts of Lubna’s constructed body will be fading as well into the wall.

To dehumanize according to Freire (1993) is to deprive people from being human, that is of thinking, of reflecting, of feeling, of questioning and of inquiring, of learning, of creating and transforming, of having a voice, and of being with others and the world. To dehumanize, as Freire (1993) emphasized, is to treat people as objects, to impose certain knowledge and “reality” that serves the dominant culture that is often oppressive.

Oppression and dehumanization exist easily in practices that involve human interaction. Educational spaces are one example, research is another. Lubna was aware of how the educational system is functioning as she strongly responded to it both visually and verbally. The shaping of minds into bricks to fit into the wall is the main goal of “banking” education, to prepare individuals to adapt to the world as it is. The educated individual becomes the adapted individual, better fit to this world. “The more the students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (Freire, 1993, p. 73). Similar notions are emphasized in more recent literature, McNamee (2007) for instance stated, “when we look at the dominant activities that constitute what we call “education,” we see forms of practice that are conducive to conveying knowledge thereby

providing mechanisms to support our already existing structures” (p. 315). Education in such terms attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness and thus inhibits creative power. In this case, the student–teacher relationship or in our Palestinian case the system–student and teacher relationship (teachers are also oppressed when they are never consulted in the design of the curriculum) resembles a power–relationship, a hierarchal one.

The good news is that things can be made different. Many have talked about the power of relationship, of being together, of conversation, and of dialogue whether in research, in therapy, in education, or in life in general, in creating new meanings, possibilities, and actions and in bringing out genuine voices (Anderson, 2007b, 2007c; Barclay, 2000; Debold et al., 1999; Fattore et al., 2007; Freire, 1993; Gehart et al., 2007; Gilligan, 1993, 2015; Hoffman, 2007, Mason & Hood, 2011; McNamee, 2007). The power lies in the spaces we create together, especially with adolescents, “the time of opportunity” when both girls and boys are resisting dissociation (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 2011). Thus, the relational context seems to be of great importance. Dialogical spaces and genuine relationships can help people to stay connected with themselves and with others. Brown and Gilligan (1992) realized in their interviews that “when women moved with girls, girls brought themselves into relationship with women and began to speak openly rather than trying to be good or bad girls” (p. 219). Relational and responsive spaces that question normative assumptions and cultural ideals, and therefore allow for a healthy resistance to take place, are healthy spaces for both adolescents and adults. They open up possibilities for performing selfhoods, identities, and making life choices that are connected and grounded.

It is through the unique mixture of art-based research and the Listening Guide Method that we have created empowering research spaces of dialogue and relationship that were essential in constructing and performing critical voices, and in creating contextualized understanding of how a Palestinian adolescent girl embodied herself in relation to the world.

### Concluding Thoughts

The aim of this contribution is to demonstrate the powerful combination of the Listening Guide

Method and of expressive self-portraits as a narrative art-based research method, to generate knowledge that offers a unique perspective on the psychosocial life world of Palestinian adolescents. The produced knowledge, as demonstrated in the case example of Lubna, provided another dimension into Palestinian adolescence that is different from the large amount of trauma-focused studies. Starting from a feminist post-modern lens (Frost & Elichaooff, 2014) the creation of expressive self-portraits is perceived as part of a relational process of performative acts that constructs a sense of self, others and the world, and psychosocial well-being within ongoing narratives. We integrated several research methods to ensure that the use of expressive self-portraits became an optimal moment to generate rich self-performances. The Listening Guide Method was used to grasp and to learn from the multiple richness of these performances, with the aim to gain richer and alternative insights into the life of Palestinian adolescents, than currently available by psychological research.

These methods were used in context, the power of the research relationship that evolved over the period of a school year, created a trustworthy relationship respectful of adolescents' experiences and knowledge that was embedded in an empowering school environment. These conditions enabled Lubna's healthy embodied resistance, which later on found a "creative voice or expression" in a narrative (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 183). The expressive self-portrait did inspire the voices; the voices within the narrative were a response to what was seen visually. Using the Listening Guide allowed me to know the different layers of Lubna's psyche, specifically the recurrent movement between being and not being part of the "wall" embedded within a voice of "knowing", representing the struggle into adolescence.

The fact that participants worked on visually embodying their selfhood through expressive self-portraits, they realized someone was always looking. Each of them performed him/herself with audience in mind. Looking at selfhood as performance framed the experience of the visual method within a relational and interactive context. As visuals, the expressive self-portraits referred to much more audiences when compared to the narratives (Rose, 2007). In addition, the self-portraits and narratives did not necessarily match. Dialogue is also a performance and participants may choose not to disclose everything of their visual, or to partially talk about

something. At the same time, the dialogue may open new insight and new constructions into what was visually embodied, and into what was absent.

The world may have certain expectations of Palestinian teenagers living under occupation; certain audiences may wonder about the place of occupation in the life of this teenager, and we can ask, "What is not performed? What is not said? What is missing?" The fact that narration always happens in a context in response to and together with an audience, narratives and selfhood become performances related to time and space and thus are fluid, multiple, and always in process. Narratives are not a reflection but a construction of the inner world and not a representation of but a response to life, thus embedded in a relational context (Squire et al., 2013). As a rhizome, there are multiple "entryways" to the self. Each encounter, each interview is but one entryway of many possible others, with no main entryway or a starting point. "The truth," or "the reality" does not exist within rhizomatic thinking. There are always many possible truths and realities that can all be viewed as social constructs (Sermijn et al., 2008, p. 637). As researchers, we become part of the rhizomatic self and the constructed narrative of the participants. Taking these notions into consideration make the question of who is listening an important one. The fact that we were all Palestinians (me and the research participants) made the occupation a constant shared reality. Being an insider on that particular dimension was an advantage as it enabled their self-performances to go to places beyond the occupation. At the same time, it is legitimate to question whether the occupation has become so "normal" that it is deeply rooted into their lives that they no longer mention it. Taking this discussion to a philosophical stance, the occupation in the lives of Palestinians is a "power" that has become over the course of many years more than just a top-down domination. Based on Foucault's notions on power, the occupation has become everywhere; it has influenced all aspects of our lives and identity and our very existence, it has "produced" us and in return we are reproducing it thus empowering it (Foucault, 1978). If power/occupation is "everywhere" then it is "nowhere" at least on a conscious level. If the occupation is not directly mentioned in Lubna's narrative and not directly seen in her visual it does not mean that it is not there. Yet the narrative can be read from the perspective of "resilience." One study has reframed the concept of resilience as "a dynamic process embedded in agency and

everyday practices ... For Palestinian youth, resiliency is rooted in the capacity to make life as normal as possible" (Nguyen-Gillham et al., 2008, p. 296). They learn to be resilient, to be "normal," within abnormal living conditions.

Using a narrative and idiographic approach to study the life stories of Palestinian youth, specifically how they engage with the master narrative of Palestinian history and identity, Hammack (2010a) found that the narratives of youth of this particular study were at some points in line with the master narrative of identity and at others diverted from it. Which led him to conclude that those narratives "sensitize[s] us to the idiographic complexity of young lives and their relationship to a complex social ecology characterized by the social structures of conflict and occupation" (p. 529). Hammack (2010b) has pointed out the importance of studying narrative engagement; of how individuals negotiate the available dominant discourses. Master narratives are often described as static, however, much could be learned when attention is given to "individual subjectivity in the processes of social and cultural development" (p. 180). Palestinian adolescents cannot be reduced to one single category. Differences in location, gender, education, social class, belief system, and political affiliation can create different and diverse experiences. Such an approach takes context very seriously, and most importantly it legitimizes and encourages alternative narratives and discourses to come to surface.

One way to read Lubna's performance is as a core resistance that speaks to every human being experiencing different kinds of oppression, occupation being one form; she made it relevant to a wider audience. Lubna is trying to be a human being (her version of authenticity) within the educational system and within an oppressive society, this is visually performed in the construction of a different and a transparent body against other oppressed featureless bodies (the bricks). The body itself is not a unified whole, it is a construction that combines several different features of images, shades, and colors, constructed like an open system to include aspects of femininity, of masculinity, of nature, of animals, of open spaces of colors and of life framed in the figure of one being, and therefore multiplicity and authenticity of being is also performed visually, with hands that merge and fade into the wall to show that bodies are related to other bodies. The body that Lubna performed as her own one, may be also representing other desiring bodies.

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