

## **The Everyday Realities of Palestinian College Students Living and Studying in Israel: A Photovoice Study**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to allow Palestinian, primarily Muslim, college students to document, reflect, and critique, through photography and storytelling (photovoice), their everyday realities as Arab citizens living and studying in Israel. Sixty Palestinian, preservice, English teachers participated in this study, of whom 55 were female and 5 were male. The use of photovoice in this study provided opportunities for participants to write, own, validate, and share their voices and personal narratives and create new ways of thinking. Results from this study address social, economic, political, and cultural issues related to being a Palestinian living and studying in Israel rather than issues directly related to teacher preparation. Four main themes emerged from participants' photographs and stories. They included: (1) campus climate; (2) housing and land; (3) marriage and family; and (4) environment. Suggestions for further research are provided.

**Keywords:** Palestinian college students, photovoice, personal narratives, preservice teachers

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## Introduction

The Jewish-Palestinian conflict remains the most intense and explosive of conflicts in Israel, placing the Jewish majority and the primarily Muslim Palestinian minority at perpetual odds (McGlynn & Bekerman, 2007; Pinson, Levy, & Soker, 2010). The two groups differ in language, nationality, religion, and political aspirations (Al-Haj, 2005). For the most part, Palestinians live separate from Jews, either in their historic villages or in separate neighborhoods within shared cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or Haifa (Lemish, 2003). Israeli Palestinians, though officially offered full rights as citizens, have suffered chronically as a putatively hostile minority with little political representation (Ghanen, 1998) and have been denied equal opportunities in the economy, education, health, land use (Nasser & Nasser, 2008), and the legal system (Pinson, Levy, & Soker, 2010). In contrast to other countries where multiple identifications co-exist, the Palestinians in Israel view themselves as Arabs, Palestinians, and/or Muslims and less as Israelis (Rouhana, 1997). To date, there are approximately 1.6 million Arabs living in Israel.

The Israeli educational system is almost fully segregated regarding Palestinian and Jewish populations (Bekerman, 2005; Lemish, 2003). Such segregation is reflected in a segregated school curriculum (Al-Haj, 2005). The standard Jewish curriculum focuses on Jewish nation-building while the Palestinian curriculum is sanitized of any national Palestinian content. Jewish students are called to engage in collective Jewish national experience while the Palestinian students are expected to accept the definition of Israel as a Jewish democratic state (Al-Haj, 2005). Palestinian students' may resist the state's efforts to shape their identity and are left with an identity that is not well defined; their identity becomes a vessel empty of content or filled with contradictory images (Nasser & Nasser, 2008). Additional discrepancies exist between Palestinian and Jewish schools systems in terms of physical facilities, teacher qualifications, retention rates, and levels of special services (Rouhana, 1997).

For Palestinian teachers, there is a sense of conflict regarding their loyalty toward their employer, the Ministry of Education, and the Palestinian community. The Ministry of Education imposes curricular constraints on the Palestinian educational system by not allowing schools to freely choose their own narratives concerning issues related to their cultural and national histories (Bekerman, 2005). Thus, official history leaves little space for alternative narratives, recognized as a major part of a group's cultural rights (Bekerman, 2005). Although the Ministry of Education encourages competition between private publishers to prepare textbooks according to the Ministry's guidelines for the Jewish Israeli schools system, the overwhelming majority of textbooks for the Palestinian Israeli system have been published by the Ministry itself (Nasser & Nasser, 2008).

Higher education in Israel reflects power relations in society as a whole (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2008). "A gap exists between the social structure, which is divergent and multicultural, and the formal culture and higher education, which is basically Jewish, western-oriented and devoid of any multicultural concept" (Al-Haj, 2003, p. 352). At university, Arabs may sense various types of deprivation: financial difficulties, problems renting off-campus housing, adjusting to new demands, and gaining fluency in academic languages (Al-Haj, 2003).

Like all patriarchal societies, the traditional Palestinian society lends disproportionate weight to the role of the male and underestimates the influence of the female (Nasser, 2002). Though different factors have expanded educational opportunities for females in different settings, Alayan & Yair (2010) argue gender divisions and gaps are still apparent in Muslim educational systems (Howe, 1998). Many Arab countries still hold traditional views about

women's roles and express limitations through government policies, such as gender biased school curriculum (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2008).

Data from the Israeli national examination system show that Palestinian girls consistently outperform boys in all subject domains by a moderate margin (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007) and female representation outweighs males in higher education (Khattab, 2002). In a comparative study that analyzed the gender differences in the narrations of educational experiences of Palestinian students, Alayan and Yair (2010) found that Israeli schools and universities are effective in inculcating knowledge, the curricula that enables females to tread the same educational paths as men but females still express a submissive, feminine habitus. Updated projected trends forecast that girls in Middle Eastern societies are still likely to meet many obstacles on their way to equal education (Alayan & Yair, 2010).

Given the political, social, and educational climate in Israel, the author of this article set out to explore the daily lives and everyday realities of Palestinian college students attending an Arab teacher education college in Northern Israel. The purpose of this study was to allow Palestinian, primarily Muslim, college students to document, reflect, and critique, through photography and storytelling (photovoice), their everyday realities as Arab citizens living and studying in Israel.

### **Photovoice**

Photovoice is a form of participatory action research that utilizes documentary photography and storytelling to engage participants in documenting and critically reflecting upon their everyday lives. Participatory action research allows university researchers to partner with community members, young people, or members of other groups who do not usually have a role in the creation of knowledge but rather are more often the objects of study themselves (Smith, Bratini, & Appio, 2012).

Participants of photovoice projects are often selected from exploited or oppressed groups (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001), as they are most negatively affected by social problems and least likely to have input into the decisions that affect them (Morgan, Lower, Ibarra, Vardell, Kintner-Duffy, & Cecil-Dyrkacz, 2010). Photovoice participants are viewed as the source and creators of knowledge of their own experiences and become co-researchers (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007) who act and speak on their behalf (Lather, 1991). Through a collaborative process between the researcher and the participants, a shared meaning of the study's focus emerges (Krumer-Nevo, 2009).

Among the techniques used by social scientists to record and understand community life and social conditions, photography has been noted as being a rich and meaningful tool (Downey & Anyaegbunam, 2010). Visual data in the form of photographs have been historically used in anthropology, sociology, journalism, and public health. As with any participatory action research, photovoice advocates that local citizens are in the best position to define and articulate for their needs and they are the most suitable decision makers for addressing those needs. Photographs can be used to actualize what exists in the research, especially when local residents are involved in taking the pictures, telling the stories, and selecting the photographs that they feel are most pertinent (Downey & Anyaegbunam, 2010).

An advantage of photovoice is its flexibility. Photovoice can be used by a young person working alone, in collaboration with a parent, sibling, or friend and can be used to explore a range of topics (Bartlett, Lorenza, Rankin, Elias, Mustafa, & Weider, 2011). Marrow (2001) suggests that photography is cost-effective, easy, and an enjoyable way of gathering data from local citizens that can be used to stimulate further data in the form of dialogue. Dialogue is not just a technique, but a principle founded on the belief that shared

meaning and common definitions of a problem are necessary for planning and implementing change (Peterson & Dunnagan, 1998). Photovoice can offer an innovative way of inviting individuals to identify their community needs, local assets, and possible solutions (Downey & Anyaegbunam, 2010).

There are also disadvantages of photovoice. Although photovoice yields images, which can be analyzed to generate themes and obtain meaningful interpretation, data analysis from photographs is not an easy task. There can be multiple interpretations of the same photograph (Sharma, 2010). Sharma (2010) argues a photograph is a single snapshot of the reality. But the reality is dynamic and changing so the construction of the reality from a photograph is not always complete. Wang and Burris (1997) contend the outcome of participants' photographs on their family, friends, and communities is uncertain and unpredictable. Participants may be mindful of this, become fearful of those individuals with power and censor what they photograph.

Photovoice encompasses three theoretical frameworks: empowerment education (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987), feminist theory (hooks, 2000; Kramarae & Spender, 1992; Smith, 1987), and a participatory approach to documentary photography (Ewald, 2001, 2005; Hubbard, 1991, 1994; Spence, 1995). All three theoretical frameworks support representation and ownership of one's personal voice. The theoretical frameworks begin by first directing change at the individual level, transforming perceptions such as self-worth. The focus is then directed to the community level to improve quality of life and then finally to the institution level to enforce change through policies (Wang & Burris, 1994). The theoretical framework of photovoice served as the foundation of this study.

## **Method**

### **Researcher**

I, the researcher of this study, am a White, male teacher educator from a state teaching college in the southwest U.S.A. In the spring of 2012, I completed a three-week Fulbright Specialist teaching grant at an Arab teacher education college in Israel. My main duty was to teach four sections of a special topics course on photovoice and participatory action research, which I developed, to Palestinian, preservice teacher education students. I do not speak Arabic and had no prior connection with the college prior to acceptance into the Fulbright program. While in Israel, I lived in an Arab village where the college is located.

### **Participants**

During the spring 2012 semester, 60 preservice teacher education students from a small, Arab village north of Tel Aviv, Israel participated in this study, of whom 55 were female and 5 were male. Students were Palestinian, primarily Muslim, English majors working on their undergraduate teaching degree and were enrolled in other teacher education courses while enrolled in my course. All students spoke English as their third or fourth language and were either first, second, or third year students at the college. Students lived in same village as the college or nearby villages and commuted to the college by bus or car.

## **Procedure**

The following research question guided this study, what are the everyday realities and experiences of Palestinian college students living and studying as citizens of Israel? I relied on published Israeli/Palestinian academic literature before my arrival in Israel to write the research question. During the first week of the course, I provided an opportunity for students to revise or rewrite the research question based on their needs and interests. Students asked

questions on the photovoice process itself but no one offered revisions to the question or asked to rewrite it.

Each section of the course met twice a week for an hour and a half. During the first week of the course, students viewed online photovoice videos and completed photovoice projects. Students also read my own published research using photovoice with English language learners in elementary school (Graziano, 2011), secondary students enrolled in an economics course (Graziano & Herren, 2009), and first-year inner city teachers (Graziano & Litton, 2007). Throughout the course, students studied participatory action research, the methodology of photovoice, including how to use it as a tool for data collection, needs assessment, and curriculum instruction, the benefits and challenges of photovoice, ways photographs can be used to tell stories, and the ethics of photovoice.

The ethics of photovoice was introduced to students by Goodhart, Hsu, Baek, Coleman, Maresca, and Miller's (2006) photovoice work and was discussed early in the course before students began taking photographs. This involved capturing a person's image on film and protecting their privacy, not intruding on personal space, not placing someone in a false light, and not using a person's likeness for commercial gain. Ethics was reviewed throughout the course, as needed.

All students owned a cellular phone with a built-in camera and used their own phones to document their responses to the research question. The data collection process lasted two weeks. Since students and I met twice a week in class and participated in weekly photovoice lessons during the same time they were in the community collecting data, we decided not to place a limit on the number of photographs taken. Students made connections from the new knowledge obtained in class to their own stories and were often inspired to take additional photographs.

The storytelling component of this study involved written narratives on the following questions from the PHOTO acronym: Describe your *Picture*. What is *Happening* in your picture? Why did you take a picture *Of* this? What does this picture *Tell* us about you or your life as a Palestinian college student living and studying in Israel? How can this picture provide *Opportunities* for us to improve life with regard to Palestinian communities in Israel? Students decided to select four of their own photographs that best depicted their response to the research question. Students answered the questions from the PHOTO acronym for each of their four selected photographs. Students then created a PowerPoint slideshow of their photographs and stories and posted it to a class wiki (unlisted) site for other invited students, administrators, faculty, staff, family, and community members to view. We met in a computer lab on the last day of class to celebrate students' success with the study and to view each other's work.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed through constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) often referred to as coding (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). With coding, the analyst chunks the data into smaller segments and then attaches a descriptor or "code" for each segment (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). Coding allowed me to indicate recurring patterns in the data by categorically marking units of text with codes. The identified themes became the results of this study. Due to time constraints, students were not involved in the analysis of data.

## Results

This section discusses four themes that emerged from the photographs and stories captured by the students. These themes include: (1) campus climate; (2) housing and land; (3) marriage and family; and (4) environment.

### Campus Climate

At the time of this study, the college celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Many students photographed the conditions on and around the campus, currently comprised of two buildings. Students photographed the only parking lot on campus and argued it is often full and overcrowded. The only other alternative to the parking lot, argued one student, is street parking. She commented that it is stressful to park on the street, blocks from campus, because it means rushing to class to avoid being late. Another student photographed piles of debris in the parking lot and noted the debris occupies parking spaces allocated for faculty and students. She also noted, "the debris is unhealthy and not attractive for students and visitors to walk by every day."

Several students photographed the elevator in the main building on campus and argued it is too small. In fact, one student photographed a posted sign on the elevator that read "Danger. Elevator only holds four people at once." A student noted there is usually a wait time to take the elevator. "If you are pregnant, you have no choice but to wait," she said. Another student photographed the crowded stairs in the main building. She wrote, "Hundreds of students use the stairs. Even when only a few students use the stairs, they are crowded because the stairs are very narrow. This problem makes it difficult to get to class on time; it is also very dangerous because you could be pushed and fall on the stairs."

Students commented on the college's library policy to store personal belongings in lockers before entering the library. Many noted that the lockers do not lock. One student commented, "We are required to store our belongings outside the library because we are not allowed to bring them into the library...Sometimes we find things missing from our bags. This concerns me."

Others photographed classroom conditions and discussed the lack of air conditioning in the building, mainly on the top floor, and no restroom or water on the top floor. One student shared, "it is difficult to focus on my studies and learn when it is hot and we have no AC."

Several students photographed the outdoor common areas on campus and wished for green spaces with shade and more seating to study and socialize with others. One student wrote, "We don't have beautiful views or green gardens in front of our college. We don't have a good place to relax in our break. Actually, we have just one little yard with few desks in the sun. Beside that, there is a licensing car station next to our college, which commits too much noise and distracts us, and it affects our studies."

### Housing and Land

All five men in the study photographed images of houses and land in their village and neighboring villages and spoke about the limited land available in Israel and their alternatives to building a house.

One student photographed a pile of demolished concrete and said:

Those who decide to build a house on an unauthorized area will surely face a despicable outcome. This wreckage [in the photograph] is of a house, which was demolished recently in my village. Needless to mention that the house was built on the owner's own land; his land was and still is for agriculture use only. Since there is no place to build new houses in the village limits, many people decide to build their houses illegally hoping that one day the government will accept to expand the limits of the village and change their land type from agriculture use to construction use. You can see that their hopes and dreams were demolished and buried under these remains. If the government finds out that your house was built illegally they will send you an order to destroy it by yourself or they will come and destroy it for you. As a young male who is about to build a house I ask, where to go and how to improvise?

One student discussed how many individuals renovate family homes and add new floors above existing housing structures to compensate for the lack of land. He reflected on his photograph from the rooftop of a building overlooking his village and commented:

This picture [of the village] shows how people somehow succeed to improvise and build houses legally. The houses are built randomly. Everyone who gets a green light to build a house in his backyard or above the parents' house will start building at once. Some new houses are extremely close to each other and the houses are built hierarchically above the parents' house. Can you imagine how bothering and complicated this issue is? As a young man, I need to build a house and get married. I want my child to open his room window and see a tree in our garden not the neighbors' laundry hung on a rope.

Another student photographed a panoramic view of an empty field in a valley near his village. He noted, "It's a wonderful picture of my charming village. We are 1000 person in a space of 500 meters. We can see that there are an empty large spaces but our government doesn't want to give us the permission to build." He concluded his story with more questions than answers and noted, "Imagine yourself with three other families in one small building. You can't even breathe easily. You always hear your neighbors talking. You can't feel comfortable and we are still without a solution."

### **Marriage and Family**

The majority of female students photographed images of household related chores such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings and discussed their strong commitment to their parents. One student noted:

Lunchtime is precious in the Arab families. Mother prepares the food and everybody sits on one table to eat together. But, if mama isn't in the house it becomes one of the girls' duties. They have to prepare the food and of course wash the dishes afterwards. Home chores are likely to girls and that's a disadvantage I would like to change. Boys don't touch anything mostly. Girls do all the jobs and the oldest one does the cooking and most of the chores.

Another student commented on her family obligations and discussed a photograph of her brother working on the computer. She wrote:

My brother is working on the computer trying to do homework for school. As his big sister, I have two jobs. First, to help him get his homework done. Second, to teach him how to surf the Internet safely since both my parents don't know how to use it. They only hear the disadvantages of the Internet. So, they gave me the job to monitor my sibling's work on it and to know what sites they are looking at. It is a good thing

to watch out for your brothers and help your parents at the same time. But, it would be nice to have them know how to use the modern technology.”

Several female students echoed this sentiment of caring for younger siblings. One student wrote, you have to be the stepmother when your mom is not home especially if there is a baby in your family. You have to watch him and to take care of him carefully.

Female students also photographed and discussed images related to weddings and marriage and stressed the value of marriage and having children in their culture with an emphasis on household related chores mentioned earlier. One student commented that, “One of the most important responsibility for the married woman is preparing the food for her husband and cleaning the house.” In contrast, one student noted that young girls should only think about their schoolwork and their plans for the future. They are too young and irresponsible to get married and have children, she commented. She offered advice to others and said, “We invite people from all over the world to speak up and raise their voice to prevent this phenomenon from controlling our society. All we need is awareness campaign against marrying too young and let it start in our village.”

A female student juxtaposed images of a petite, underweight woman next to a larger, overweight woman and reflected on her views of marriage. She said:

When women are single, they take more care of their self to look younger and healthier. Once they get married they tend to go with the foods that their husband or children like, rather than eating what they prefer. Also, many of women end up eating foods that are left out at the end of the day, thinking it will go to waste.

## **Environment**

Students photographed environmental images from their villages such as dilapidated neighborhoods and buildings and argued for a cleaner and safer environment. One student noted that, “the sides of the streets and sidewalks are full of garbage. A person who has something to throw away doesn’t throw it in the bin. The street becomes a place for dumps not for the cars.” The trash in our communities is not healthy and may cause pollution and diseases, said another student.

Several students photographed children playing in empty fields with construction supplies and tools and photographed children playing in the street. One student stated, “we need parks and safe places in our villages for children to be children without harm.”

Another student photographed a bus stop in her village with no seats or shelter to comfort and protect passengers from the sun and elements. She noted that, “passengers stand in the heat for hours waiting for the bus. When the bus finally arrives, there are cars parked on the side of street so there’s no place for the bus to stop. This often causes a traffic jam.”

Students also photographed road conditions within and around their villages. One student commented that, “our villages are so small and the roads are narrow and often neglected by officials. Some streets have potholes that remain unfilled. Other neighborhoods have no traffic signs for those who are crossing the street. In addition, there are no sidewalks especially for the children in order to walk safely without any danger.”

Although not part of this photovoice study, a student enrolled in my course was inspired by the photovoice methodology and introduced it to a classroom teacher of the junior high school where she was a substitute teacher. Together my student and the classroom teacher taught a lesson on the environment and used photovoice with students to document their views on the environment. Students photographed similar images as participants of this



study such as trash, neighborhood pollution, and lack of recycling. They discussed and wrote narratives on the effects these items have on the environment and displayed their work in the lobby of the school. I visited the exhibit with three of my students from the college and met the junior high school students who participated in the project.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to allow Palestinian, primarily Muslim, college students to document, reflect, and critique, through photography and storytelling (photovoice), their everyday realities as Arab citizens living and studying in Israel.

Results from this study address social, economic, political, and cultural issues related to being a Palestinian living and studying in Israel rather than issues directly related to teacher preparation. As seen in this study, students are deeply concerned about land, the infrastructure of their villages and college, the environment, and their future. As one male student shared, "I need to build a house and get married. I want my child to open his room window and see a tree in our garden not the neighbors' laundry hung on a rope... As a young male who is about to build a house I ask, where to go and how to improvise?"

Roy (2004) argues the crux of the problem between Palestinians and Israelis is occupation and Israel's continued control of Palestinian lands and resources. The fragmentation of Palestinian land into geographically noncontiguous areas, with exit and entry tightly monitored and controlled by Israel, has had a devastating impact on the economy and society. Further, the destruction of Palestinian homes, businesses, buildings, agricultural land, and crops alienates the Palestinian worker from his/her source of livelihood and further weakens the possibility of living a normal life (Roy, 2004).

It is interesting to note that female students spoke about gender roles inside the house rather than the occupation of land outside of the house. Results from this study speak to traditional gender roles in Arab communities and support Nasser's (2002) claim that the traditional Palestinian societies lend disproportionate weight to the role of the male and underestimates the influence of the female. Alayan and Yair (2010, p. 834) report that many Palestinian women in Israel are pressed to be constantly aware of the collective meaning of their actions; they are often expected to weigh collective interests more heavily than their personal needs; and many are expected to censor their individual interests and aspirations when the latter conflicts with those of *Hamulah*, the extended family (Rapoport, Lomski-Feder, & Masalha, 1989). Further research is needed on female Palestinians' desires, interests, and aspirations to own land themselves and whether or not their desires are suppressed due to social pressures and cultural norms.

Researchers have noted that Palestinian families support the studies of females on the condition that they vow to study for a profession that will expand the family income and guarantee a local job, one that can be easily supervised by the *Hamulah* (Alayan & Yair, 2010). As such, females choose majors like education and nursing that are provided locally (Herzog & Bader-Araf, 2000). The impact of the *Hamulah* on females of this study who chose education as a major is unknown. More research is needed in this area. Future research should also investigate the impact of the *Hamulah* on male students and their desire to become teachers.

Researchers have also concluded that some Palestinian female students adopt feminist perspectives even against the resentment of elders and their extended families (Sa'ar, 2007). Many Palestinian females in Israel have taken steps towards celebrating their femininity opting for gender equalization (Erdreich & Rapoport, 2006). There was insignificant evidence of opting for gender equalization in this study by the single female student who spoke out

against marrying too young. I wonder if other female students of this study felt the same way and were fearful of sharing their views publically.

As seen in this study, photovoice can be a powerful key to cultural survival. It allows stories to be told without verbally speaking the message (Markus, 2012). Witherell and Noddings (1991) stress that storytelling can be a therapeutic endeavor and an emancipatory act. For disenfranchised populations whose voices and language have historically been oppressed and denied, photovoice can send a vital message to others (Markus, 2012). When people learn to analyze critically social structures and discover their capacity to effect change through engaged citizenship, oppressive sociocultural influences are no longer internalized to the same degree (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Though photovoice ultimately should connect participants with policy makers to influence and enact change, the display of participants' photographs and stories on the wiki site and an open-campus presentation of the study's results, which I facilitated before my return to the United States, provided an opportunity to share participants' experiences, concerns, and challenges with college administrators, faculty, staff, family, and other students. Due to time constraints, participants of this study and I did not identify policy makers in the community or state level to address the issues raised by participants. It is recommended that future researchers identify policy makers at the onset of their studies who have the authority to enact change and implement policy revisions or write new policies. Working closely with such individuals has the potential to strengthen the transformative goal of photovoice.

Students stated they enjoyed the use of photovoice as a teaching strategy. This was evident with the student who was a substitute teacher at a junior high school and implemented a photovoice project on the environment. Students of this study were able to make practical connections with photovoice as future English teachers. Students recommended using photovoice to study social issues that stem from literature and recommended using photovoice with elders and parents to examine generational differences among Palestinians. They also recommended that Jewish and Palestinian students participate in a photovoice study to understand and appreciate culture differences.

Photovoice can be used with an array of populations regardless of location and setting. Additional groups may include migrant workers, prison inmates, individuals with special needs, and international exchange students. Higher education faculty are encouraged to discuss photovoice in courses on critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, curriculum development, technology, research methods, the digital divide, inclusion, and social justice (Graziano & Litton, 2007).

The photographs produced and stories shared from this study should not be generalized to all Palestinian students attending Arab colleges or universities in Israel. A larger sample size is recommended with future studies. Educators should consider using the results of this study to enhance the national Palestinian curriculum in schools and communities across Israel. As studies have shown, exclusion of the minority from the process of decision-making about their curriculum is often an indication of their marginal social status. Lack of involvement of minority group educators in the process of decision-making leaves the curriculum subject to the mercy of the dominant group (Nasser & Nasser, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

While Palestinians view education...as a source of empowerment, the dominant groups have utilized the education system as a mechanism of social control...that is, they never viewed education as a vehicle for development and social change for the minority (Al-

Haj, 1995). The use of photovoice in this study provided opportunities for participants to write, own, validate, and share their voices and personal narratives and create new ways of thinking. Participants of this study identified and critically reflected on their experiences, values, and areas of concern such as an improved campus climate and environmental issues. Markus (2012) reminds us that providing a venue for young people to share their views in a safe environment allows for powerful messages to emerge that can lead to social change.

There is a critical need to examine the conception and status of democracy in nation-states and deeply conflicted societies, in particular with reference to majority-minority relations (Lemish; 2003). Results from this study support Lemish's claim. Palestinians from this study living and studying in Israel wish to strengthen their identity, seek justice, tolerance, human rights and representation in all areas of the public sector. They wish to promote peace and development and education for democracy from themselves and future Palestinian generations. This study is only one step toward enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the Palestinian culture in Israel. This study provides direction for future studies in this area and offers researchers the possibility of using photovoice as a form of needs assessment and data collection. Freire (1970) reminds us that one of the loftiest objectives is human liberation. Liberation cannot take place without awareness, without a conception or reality that incorporates a critical view toward itself. The liberating activity of education can occur only if it is directed against the ruling culture and authority of the repressors. Liberating education operates exclusively through creating dialogue with those it seeks to educate (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2008, pp. 396, 397).

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