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State-Controlled Education and Identity Formation Among the Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel

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In many modern nation-states, national identity is not inclusive of all of the state's citizens; rather, it is limited (in varying degrees) to the members of the dominant group. Because such states are structurally unable to meet indigenous/minority groups' basic human needs for identity, inclusion, and equality, the formation of ethnically based identity and political organization is a natural alternative. To the extent that such alternatives are considered threatening to the state, it will deal with indigenous/minority groups by developing systems of control, based on varying degrees of force, depending on the state's claim (or lack thereof) to be "democratic." In this article, the author examines the role the state educational system plays in identity formation and the state's system of control among indigenous Palestinian youth in Israel.

Keywords: identity formation; Palestinian youth; public education; Israel; indigenous groups

The condition of the [Palestinian] Arabs in Israel does not awaken one's respect. . . . They don't educate the Arab [Palestinian] in Israel to be proud of himself. There is no self-assurance, or any sense of duty or consciousness that the injustice should be opposed in a determined way. They say that power corrupts, but so does lack of power, and weakness, maybe more than power does. We are not creating human beings who take their duties seriously. Education has created people who see no social challenges for which they would be willing to fight. They leave the fight to the parties, to the political forces. I think that what Israel did, connived to do, was to rule in this way—to intentionally create an Arab [Palestinian] society that would be quiet, that would not rise up. They did not educate it the way you educate free and thinking people.

—Dr. Zidani (as quoted in Grossman, 1993, p. 297)

The Jewish majority in Israel treats all its Palestinian citizens as absent presences.[1] This is how they are conceived, and how they are depicted in the media—as a collective absence, as a group that exists but is faceless and nameless, of uniform traits, most of them nega-

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tive. If in 1948 the Palestinians in Israel were "those that are not but actually are," they have over the years turned into "those who are but actually are not."

—Grossman (1993, p. 295)

Majority-controlled education in settler states has played an important role in the subjugation of minorities. Historically, the primary aim of education was to assimilate and "civilize" or in other words, obliterate minority identities through the replacement of their language, culture, religion, and pedagogy with that of the colonizing powers (Dyck, 1997; Halverson, Puig, & Byers, 2002; Peacock & Wisuri, 2002; Satzewich, 1996; Thorton, 2001).

Although in most modern nation-states with minority populations, the explicitly assimilationist agenda of the school system has been abandoned, government-run schools remain alienating places for all too many minority children (Magga, 2003). As a result, minority youth continue to drop out of the mainstream educational system in disproportionately high numbers (Abu-Saad, 2004; Champagne, 2004; Greene & Forster, 2003; Magga, 2003).

In this article, I examine the issue of state-controlled education and identity formation among the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel. I further make the case that part of the state's deliberate marginalization of the Palestinian minority is accomplished through the educational system and its repression of their collective culture, history, and identity.

Palestinian Arabs in Israel: The Context

As for other minority peoples in settler states, the identity of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel is complex. This minority is the part of the indigenous Palestinian people that remained in its homeland after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and they currently constitute 19% of Israel's population. Modern geopolitical boundaries and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict separate them from most of the rest of the Palestinian people. Although the indigenous Palestinian community in Israel is culturally Arab, it is largely disconnected from other Arab countries, with minimal acceptance, communication, and freedom of movement. As citizens of Israel, the Palestinian people in Israel are not integrated into Israeli society and are discriminated against socially, educationally, economically, and politically. As Dwairy (2004) stated,

> From its inception in 1948, the state of Israel has treated them [Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel] as foster citizens . . . their cultural and economic dispossession is translated into a general attitude of disrespect toward and rejection of the Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel's national identity and their cultural heritage on the part of the Jewish majority population. *Avodah 'aravit* ("an Arab job") and *'Arvi melukhlakh*! ("filthy Arab!") are only two of the many insulting but commonly used pejorative terms in the Hebrew language that bespeak the contempt Israeli Jews reserve for their Palestinian co-citizens. (pp. 423-424)

The Palestinian Arabs in Israel live in what has been termed an *ethnic* state or *ethnocracy* (Yiftachel, 1999) in which national identity is not inclusive of all of the state's citizens but rather, is limited (to varying degrees) to the members of one ethnic group. As a consequence, access to centers of power, government resources, and full political participation are also limited to the dominant ethnic group. Because an ethnic state is structurally unable to meet the indigenous people's basic human needs for identity, inclusion, and equality, the formation of ethnically based identity and political organization is a natural alternative. To the extent that such alternatives are considered threatening to the state, it will deal with the indigenous people by developing systems of control, based on varying degrees of force, depending on the state's claim (or lack thereof) to be "democratic" as well as "ethnic" (Horowitz, 1985; Lustick, 1980; Rouhana, 1998).

System of Control

The Israeli state developed an extensive system for marginalizing and controlling Palestinian people based on segmentation, dependence, and co-option (Lustick, 1980; McDowall, 1989; Seliktar, 1984). The government policy of segmentation involved keeping Palestinian Arabs separate from Jews socially, politically, and administratively. Unlike the experiences of many other indigenous peoples, the Palestinian Arabs were not subjected to assimilationist policies because the new Jewish immigrants were not interested in assimilating non-Jews into their society. The advantage of this is that no attempts were ever made to obliterate Palestinian Arabs' language or religions, and Palestinian children were not removed from their families to be "civilized" and integrated into Jewish society. The disadvantage of this approach is that despite having nominal civil rights, the Palestinian Arabs are forever considered as outsiders, foreigners, and an illegitimate and unwanted presence within "the Jewish state." They are excluded from the national identity of the state but not allowed to develop a national identity of their own, nor are they allowed any collective or treaty rights. Although they are allowed to practice their own religions, the government maintains control of who may provide certain religious services (e.g., marriage, divorce, mediation of domestic disputes) and imposes certain limitations (e.g., a prohibition against interfaith marriages). As far as language goes, the government maintains complete control of the content and delivery of Arabic programming in the schools, state media, and so forth.

In addition to the segmentation between the Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities, the government attempted to split the Palestinian Arab minority into a number of smaller groups by introducing new and mutually exclusive identities among them, based on religious (Moslem, Christian, Druze) or geographical distinctions (the "Galilee" northern region, the "Triangle" central region, and the "Negev" southern region; Lustick, 1980; McDowall, 1989; Seliktar, 1984; Zidani, 1997).

The second technique employed by the Israeli government to control the Palestinian Arab minority was to marginalize it economically and make it as dependent as possible on the majority Jewish infrastructure (Seliktar, 1984). This was accomplished

through massive confiscation of Palestinian Arab lands (Gavison, 1999; Lustick, 1980; McDowall, 1989). The loss of so much agricultural land and the displacement of so many communities made Palestinian Arabs acutely dependent on the Jewish sector for employment. In addition, strongly centralized government ministries with responsibility for education, housing, local planning and development, and so forth strengthened government control of the Palestinian Arab minority and kept it dependent on good relations with the government to obtain basic life necessities.

The third technique used by the government to control the Palestinian Arab minority was co-optation through the use of "side payments" to Palestinian Arab elites, or potential elites, with the aim of extracting resources and maintaining effective surveillance of the community (Lustick, 1980, p. 77). For many years, no teacher or civil servant could hope to be appointed without enjoying the favor of such agents of the state (McDowall, 1989).

As an outcome of these policies, the Palestinian community remains largely separate from and is currently subordinate to the Jewish majority in almost every aspect of stratification: residential districts, education, occupation, employment participation, and unemployment (Kraus & Hodge, 1990; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1992, 1993; Rabinowitz, Ghanem, & Yiftachel, 2000).

State-Controlled Education and Palestinian Arab Identity Formation

Israel's state-run educational system is subdivided into a Jewish system (which is also divided into a number of subsystems, e.g., secular schools, religious schools) and an Arab system, reflecting the ethnic divisions of the society. The school system is separate, even in towns that have a mixed Jewish/Arab population (e.g., Haifa, Acre, Lod, Ramle, Jaffa), and differs in language of instruction, curriculum (particularly in the humanities and social sciences), and budget allocations (Abu-Saad, 1991, 2004; Al-Haj, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Israeli State Comptroller's Report, 2002; Mar'i, 1978; Swirski, 1999). Although the subdivisions in the educational system give it an appearance of accommodation of cultural differences and educational pluralism, they exist more for the purpose of serving the interests of the dominant (Jewish) ethnic group while maintaining the marginalization of the indigenous Palestinian Arab community (Abu-Saad, 2001, 2004; Al-Haj, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Mar'i, 1978; Peres, Ehrlich, & Yuval-Davis, 1970; Swirski, 1999).

The educational system of the Palestinian Arabs has been, and continues to be, determined by a set of political criteria that they have no say in formulating. The 1953 Law of State Education specified the following aims for state-sponsored education in Israel:

> To base education on the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the Jewish people, on practice in agricultural work and handicraft, on pioneer training and on striving for a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance, and love of mankind. (as quoted in Mar'i, 1978, p. 50)

Although more than 50 years have passed since the enactment of this law, the aims it specified remain central to current Israeli state educational policy. The law was amended in 2000; however, it maintains educational objectives for state schools that emphasize only Jewish values, history, and culture while ignoring Palestinian values, history, and culture (Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel [Adalah], 2003). As an example of how deeply these aims permeate all official discourse about education in Israel, current Minister of Education Limor Livnat stated in June 2001 that she would like to see that "there is not a single child in Israel" who did not learn "Jewish knowledge and values" (Fisher-Ilan, 2001).

Like other settler states that consider themselves liberal democracies while at the same time discriminating against the indigenous inhabitants, government officials need not openly say that their goal is to provide an alienating and substandard education for indigenous people. The alienation comes from the fact that they say nothing at all about the minority. Their marginalization is further ensured by the fact that they do not exist where goals and policies are made and priorities set. As a Palestinian student stated,

> I am a Palestinian. At the same time, I live in Israel, and I must adapt to this, despite the fact that I'm made to feel as if I don't really belong. The state doesn't recognize me; it refuses to recognize me. I feel that I'm denied my rights. I see immigrants from Ethiopia and Russia coming here, and they are provided with everything, while I, who was born here, am denied basic services. I don't understand how an immigrant can come to my native land and end up ruling over me. This makes me recognize that I don't belong to the people of Israel, and that I'm really, truly Palestinian. (personal communication, May 2003)

In Jewish schools, there is clearly a strong emphasis on the development of national identity, active belonging to the Jewish people, and furthering of Zionist aspirations— all with extremely minor recognition of indigenous Palestinian Arab history (Adalah, 2003; Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978). Where the curriculum includes reference to Palestinian Arabs, it generally tends to take an Orientalist approach, portraying them and their culture in a negative light. Edward Said (1978) analyzed this phenomenon in his book *Orientalism* and numerous subsequent works in which he examined the way in which non-Western cultures are viewed, described, and represented by Western academic scholarship, politics, and literature. Said's main critique is aimed at how the Western economic, political, and academic powers have developed a dichotomized discourse in which an inherently superior West is juxtaposed with a non-Western Other according to terms and definitions determined by the West itself. Orientalism has created an image of the Orient as separate, backward, irrational, and passive. It is characterized by despotism and resistance to progress; and because the Orient's value is judged in terms of and in comparison to the West, it is always the inferior, marginalized Other.

Studies of Israeli Jewish textbooks and children's literature find Palestinians and Arabs to be portrayed in many instances as "murders," "rioters," "suspicious," gener-

ally backward, and unproductive (Bar-Tal, 1998; Cohen, 1985; Meehan, 1999). Bar-Tal (1998), who studied 124 elementary, middle, and high school textbooks on grammar and Hebrew literature, history, geography, and citizenship, found that Israeli Jewish textbooks present the view that Jews are involved in a justified, even humanitarian, war against an Arab enemy that refuses to accept and acknowledge the existence and rights of Jews in Israel. Even with the recent and much celebrated revisions in textbooks, Raz-Krakotzkin (1999) stated that

> in all the textbooks there is not one single geographical map which shows the [pre-1948 Palestinian] Arab settlements—only the Jewish settlements are shown. Generally speaking, the land itself has no history of its own, and the history of the land is presented as the history of the Jewish myth about it. The whole period, between the second temple and the Zionist settlement is not taught at all. But more precisely, the Israeli student has no idea whatsoever about the settlement of the country before '48, that is to say, has no idea about the history of the expelled themselves and of their life before the expulsion. And so the mythical image of the country was created as "the Promised Land of the Jews" and not as a cultural-geographical entity in which the [Jewish] colonization took place. (p. 5)

In a similar manner, Smith (1999) discussed how the negation of indigenous views of history plays a critical role in asserting colonial ideology, partly because indigenous minority views were regarded as incorrect or primitive, but primarily because "they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization" (p. 29). It is clear that the suppression of the history of indigenous minorities has survived through numerous textbook reforms because its repression is of key importance in teaching history to mainstream students to foster and maintain their support for the ideologies/actions of settler states. The success of the Israeli school system and curricula in doing so can be gauged by the way a 17-year-old Jewish high school student described the contents of the textbooks in Jewish schools and viewpoints expressed by some teachers:

> Our books basically tell us that everything the Jews do is fine and legitimate and Arabs are wrong and violent and are trying to exterminate us. . . . We are accustomed to hearing the same thing, only one side of the story. They teach us that Israel became a state in 1948 and that the Arabs started a war. They don't mention what happened to the Arabs—they never mention anything about refugees or Arabs having to leave their towns and homes. . . . Instead of tolerance and reconciliation, the books and some teachers' attitudes are increasing hatred for Arabs. (Meehan, 1999, p. 20)

The Jewish school system contributes to the marginalization of the Palestinian minority by giving Jewish students little, if any, exposure to Arab language and culture. Despite the fact that Arabic is one of the two official languages in Israel, the study of Arabic is not required in Jewish schools as a matriculation subject (e.g., a requirement for obtaining a high school diploma). Less than 4% of Jewish high school students voluntarily study Arabic as one of their matriculation subjects (Lev-Ari, 2003). According to Education Ministry Director General Ronit Tirosh, Jewish students feel antagonistic toward the Arabic language. Tirosh stated that

[Arabic] is a language that is identified with a population that makes your life difficult and endangers your security. Even so, students understand that knowing Arabic helps them to view life in Israel through the eyes of the Arabs. . . . We thought about making Arabic compulsory for matriculation, but concluded that if less than 10% of students learn it voluntarily, it would be impossible to force it on the rest. (Lev-Ari, 2003, paras. 6-7)

In the state-controlled Arab educational system, the marginalization process takes several forms, one of which is to emphasize the Zionist national project and identity that has dispossessed and continues to exclude them, while at the same time suppressing their knowledge of and identification with the Palestinian and broader Arab peoples/nations. For example, the 1953 Law of State Education and state-sponsored curricula strongly emphasized the development of Jewish identity and values, but no parallel aims were ever set forth for the education of Palestinian Arabs in Israel, although in the 1970s and 1980s some attempts were made by committees directed by Jewish educators (Al-Haj, 1995). Although the Arab school system has its own curriculum, it is designed and supervised by the Ministry of Education, where virtually no Arab educators or administrators have decision-making powers. This contrasts sharply with the state's Jewish religious school system, which is physically and administratively separate from the state's secular Jewish school system and maintains completely autonomous control of its curricula (Adalah, 2003; Swirski, 1999).

In the state-controlled Arab school system, the overall aims, as well as specific curricular goals, require Palestinian Arabs to learn about Jewish values and culture, and the results of this can be seen clearly in the government-sponsored curriculum for primary and secondary schools (Adalah, 2003; Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978, 1985; Peres et al., 1970). Indigenous Palestinian students are required to spend many class hours in the study of Jewish culture and history and the Hebrew language (and in total, more than they spend on Arabic literature and history). Thus, they are required to develop identification with Jewish values and further Zionist aspirations at the expense of the development of their own national awareness and sense of belonging to their own people. The Arab national identity is much less emphasized, and the Palestinian identity goes completely unrecognized (Abu-Saad, 2004; Al-Haj, 1995; Ma'ri, 1978). Although Arab students are required to read the literature and poetry of the Zionist movement, celebrating the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, their curriculum does not include the Palestinian Arab literary classics studied throughout the Arab world (Adalah, 2003).

The basic goal of Jewish studies in the state-controlled Palestinian schools is not the development of cultural competence in Jewish Israeli society as much as it is to make Palestinians understand and sympathize with Jewish/Zionist causes and suppress their own national identity in Israel (Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978, 1985; Swirski, 1999). A team of Jewish Israeli researchers, Peres et al. (1970), criticized the curriculum imposed on Arab schools by the Ministry of Education for attempting to instill patriotic sentiments in Palestinian Arab students through the study of Jewish history and pointed out the absurdity of the expectation that the "Arab pupil . . . serve the state

not because the latter is important to *him* and fulfills *his* needs, but because it is important to the Jewish people" (p. 151), an ethnic group from which the Palestinian Arab student is categorically excluded. It is only natural that the lack of culturally and nationally relevant subject content and experiences in the schools forces Palestinian Arab students to look to other sources for their identity development (e.g., radio, cable TV, and Internet).

Nevertheless, this lack of attention toward Palestinian Arab history, culture, and identity, and its contemporary political concerns, has incessantly been maintained in the curriculum for Palestinian Arab schools. Nor does the curriculum deal with the particular social, cultural, and educational needs of the indigenous Palestinian community in Israel as they are rapidly being transformed into an urbanized population within a modern, Westernized, hi-tech economy. This lack of emphasis on the contemporary social, political, and identity-development concerns of Palestinian Arab youth lessens the relevance of the educational experience to the point of seriously estranging them from school (Abu-Saad, 2001; Al-Haj, 1995; Brown, 1986; Mar'i, 1978). As a Palestinian Arab student stated,

> Everything we study is about the Jews. Everything is Jewish culture. We study Bialik [Jewish nationalist poet] and [the biblical] Rachel. Why do I have to study them? Why don't they teach me Mahmud Darwish [Palestinian nationalist poet]? Why don't they teach me Nizar Qabbani [Arab nationalist poet]? Why don't they teach me Edward Said? Why don't they teach me about Arab philosophers and Palestinian poets? . . . Schools, not individually, but the educational system as a whole has a very negative impact on our identity. . . . They don't want us, Palestinian Arabs, to develop an awareness of our national identity. (as quoted in Makkawi, 2002, p. 50)

Sami Mar'i (1978), the late Palestinian Arab educator and researcher, described the marginalizing function of Palestinian Arab education within the Israeli state school system in the following terms, which still provide an accurate description more than 20 years later:

> Arab education is a victim of Israeli pluralism not only in that it is directed and managed by the majority, but it is also a tool by which the whole minority is manipulated. . . . [It] is not only an example of the Israeli pluralism by which Arabs are denied power, it is also a means through which the lack of power can be maintained and perpetuated. Arab citizens are marginal, if not outsiders. . . . The Arab Education Department is directed by members of the Jewish majority, and curricula are decided upon by the authorities with little, if any, participation of Arabs. Arab participation does not exceed writing or translating books and materials according to carefully specified guidelines, nor does it extend beyond implementing the majority's policies. (p. 180)

Staffing and the Issue of Identity

Staffing in the state-sponsored education system for Palestinian Arabs is also determined, first and foremost, by considerations of maintaining the marginalization and control of the minority. The hiring of teachers, principals, and supervisory staff ulti-

mately lies in the hands of the central Ministry of Education office in Jerusalem. Qualifications and training alone are not enough for Palestinian Arab citizens in Israel to get a teaching job; rather, they must also undergo a security check—without their knowledge—to get the secret stamp of Shin Bet (General Security Services) approval before they can be hired. For jobs requiring a public tender, such as senior teaching, supervisory, or management posts, Jewish candidates need only to present their educational qualifications and experience. Palestinian Arab candidates, however, must also obtain the approval of the General Security Services representative, who is chair of the appointments committee for the Arab educational system, in a process from which they are completely excluded and have no means to appeal (Al-Haj, 1995; Ettinger, 2004; Lustick, 1980; Sa'ar, 2001; see also Golan-Agnon, 2006 [this issue]). On the eve of the 2004-2005 school year, Education Ministry Director General Ronit Tirosh publicly justified the necessity of the General Security Services check in the hiring process of staff in the Palestinian Arab schools (Ettinger, 2004). This security check is used to eliminate Palestinian Arab educators who openly express a Palestinian national identity from the school system. Thus, selective staffing is another means used to marginalize potential leaders, suppress identity formation, and make the school an alienating place for Palestinian Arab teachers and students alike. As a young Palestinian Arab teacher stated,

> I belong to the state of Israel only in the geographical sense. According to an agreement they imposed on me. I am an employee of the Ministry of Education. Receive a salary. Live here. But in the spirit, in the soul, I belong to the Palestinian people. So you tell me how I can educate children in these circumstances. A simple example—I've run into a lot of students here who draw, let's say, a Palestinian flag. Now I've got to tell the student that this is forbidden. But the student will consider me a traitor. And maybe I'll also feel that I'm a traitor. But if I show any approval of his drawing maybe they'll fire me, or summon me for an investigation. So what do I do? I don't tell him anything. I pretend that I don't notice. (as quoted in Grossman, 1992, p. 50)

Although the nature of the hiring and promotion processes means that views and expressions of the indigenous staff members in the Palestinian Arab school system are very tightly controlled, Jewish staff members may be openly hostile to the populations they serve, with impunity. The Jewish director of the Bedouin Education Authority (BEA), established by the Ministry of Education to manage the education system in the unrecognized Palestinian Arab villages in the Negev, provides an example of this. The BEA director, who has responsibility for physical facilities, also sits on the committees responsible for hiring teachers, principals, and professional staff for the schools in the unrecognized villages in the Negev. When a group of community leaders and parents from the unrecognized villages in the Negev organized to improve their schools, the BEA director called them "blood-thirsty [Bedouin] who commit polygamy, have 30 children and continue to expand their illegal settlements, taking over state land" (Berman, 2001, para. 1). When questioned about providing indoor plumbing in the schools, he responded, "In their culture they take care of their needs outdoors. They don't even know how to flush a toilet" (Berman, 2001, para. 3). In

response to a public outcry and lawsuit brought against the minister of education and the BEA director, the Ministry of Education's initial response was that it appreciated the BEA director's work with the community and had no authority to dismiss him. On the basis of an internal investigation, the Ministry of Education later announced that it planned to dismiss the BEA director not because of his racist statements but rather, because of financial irregularities in his administration (Adalah, 2003). Thus, the manner in which the Palestinian Arab schools and the higher echelons of the state school system are staffed plays an essential role in rewarding those who are quiet and complacent and marginalizing potential community leaders and movements.

Outcomes of State-Controlled Education

Despite the seeming recognition and accommodation of cultural differences by creating separate schools for the Palestinian Arab citizens if Israel, the state-sponsored Arab educational system has been, and continues to be, directed by members of the Jewish majority and governed by the same set of political criteria that aim to control and marginalize Palestinian Arabs and suppress the processes of identity formation.

A key component of the state educational system's success in marginalizing the Palestinian Arab minority has been its provision of a qualitatively substandard education, which has been well-documented elsewhere (Abu-Saad, 2004; Al-Haj, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Mar'i, 1978; see also Golan-Agnon, 2006; Jabareen, 2006 [this issue]). Approximately 31% of Palestinian Arab children drop out before graduating from high school, as compared to 16% in the Jewish sector (Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004; Swirski & Etkin, 2004). Those students who stay in school perform less well on national examinations, especially the matriculation examinations (*bagrut*)—the prerequisite for a high school diploma and university application.[2] Others are weeded out by a required "psychometric" examination—an aptitude test, which Palestinian Arab educators describe as a culturally weighted, direct translation of the test given to students of the Jewish school system. A consequence is that Arabs seeking admission to the university are rejected at a far higher rate than are Jewish applicants (Abu-Saad, 1996; Al-Haj, 1995, Human Rights Watch, 2001). At the point that the Palestinian Arab educational system merges with the Jewish system, the psychometric exam serves as a gatekeeper, barring Palestinian students from admittance or from entry into the field of their choice because they "are not good enough" or "not as good as" their Jewish counterparts. This also has implications for identity development of Palestinian students vis-à-vis their Jewish counterparts, who must make a conscious effort not to accept what this exam tells them about themselves and their abilities, as the following quote illustrates:

> The decision [of what subject I was admitted to] was just based on my psychometric score, which wasn't very good, even though my matriculation exam score was 97. I think that the Jews [who set the requirements] have to understand that we Arabs have a problem with the psychometric exam, and will never do as well on it as the Jewish students do. This doesn't mean that they are smarter than us, but rather that they get a different type and quality of education. (personal communication, May 2004)

However, the intentionally marginalizing role of the psychometric exam was made explicit when in the 2003-2004 academic year, the Ministry of Education, the Knesset (Parliament) Education Committee, and the heads of the universities agreed to experiment with canceling the psychometric exam requirement and base entrance requirements on matriculation scores in a effort to make universities more accessible to "peripheral" [e.g., Jewish] populations in Israel. As it turned out, the main benefactors of this admissions policy were Palestinian Arabs rather than the targeted Jewish youngsters from peripheral, low-income towns. For example, one university found that

> the percentage of [Palestinian] Arab students who were supposed to be accepted to the university's faculty of dental medicine under the new system was 52 percent; in the previous academic year, when psychometric results were part of the admissions policy, Arab students comprised just 29 percent of the first-year class. The same held true for the university's occupational therapy department: under the new admissions system, 56 percent of first-year students were to be Arabs; under last year's old admissions system, the figure was 19 percent. (Sa'ar, 2003, para. 4)

When Israel's top university administrators became aware of these results, they decided to revert back to the old admissions system, with the psychometric exam requirement (Sa'ar, 2003).

It is clear that the separate school system, together with other mechanisms of control and discrimination, has succeeded in keeping the vast majority of Palestinian Arabs in subordinate, marginal positions in Jewish Israeli society. This is not a matter of chance but rather a matter of policy, which is aimed at determining the place and defining the identity of Palestinians in the broader Israeli society. As a former advisor on Arab affairs to the prime minister of Israel explained, "Our policy towards the Arabs is to keep them illiterate by preventing the Arab students from reaching the universities. If they were educated, it would be difficult to rule them. We should make them wood-cutters and water-carriers" (as quoted in Khalifa, 2001, p. 25).

In line with these policies, there are no independent Palestinian universities in Israel. Since the early 1980s, many proposals for an independent Palestinian university have been submitted to the government, but all have been denied. All universities in Israel are located in Jewish cities, and Hebrew is the only language of instruction. Indigenous Palestinian academicians hold only 1% of the academic positions in the universities, and virtually none hold key administrative positions, despite the fact that the Palestinian minority constitutes 19% of the population in Israel. For example, at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, located in the southern district of Israel, where about 25% of the regional population is Palestinian (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004), out of 885 faculty members with tenure-track positions, only 11 (1.2%) are Palestinian Arabs (Slonim-Nevo, 2004), all of whom are men. As such, the academic experience of Palestinian students in Israeli universities can be highly alienating. As one student expressed,

Table 1
Students in Universities by Degree and Religion (2000/2001)

Degree	Religion	Percentage
First degree	Jewish	90.4
	Other	9.6
Second degree	Jewish	95.4
	Other	4.6
Third degree	Jewish	96.6
	Other	3.4

Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (2002, Table 8.35).

> I had a good basis for Middle East History because I had done a lot of reading in this field. The thing I did find difficult was that what I had read on my own was different from what I was reading and being taught in class . . . for example, in courses on the history and development of Islam. The professor would present us with his theses and interpretations, and had sources to support them; but they were very different from what I'd learned and my interpretations, which I also had sources to support. On my first exam, I wrote what I thought, and I got a failing grade—so I learned my lesson. I retook the exam and wrote it according to the professor's interpretations, and I got the highest score in the class. I remember that I had 11 Arab classmates in that course, and they all failed that exam. (personal communication, May 2003)

Only 5.6% of students receiving their bachelor's degree in the 2001-2002 school year were indigenous Palestinian Arabs (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002). In the 2000-2001 academic year, all but 9.6% of first degree students, 4.6% of second degree students, and 3.4% of third degree students were Jewish (see Table 1). Because the category of other religion includes not only Palestinian Arab students but also other non-Jewish students (e.g., resident Russian non-Jews, foreign students) enrolled in Israeli universities, the percentage of Palestinian Arab students registered in the universities is even lower than these figures indicate.

Thus, Palestinians make up a small minority of the student body at Israeli universities. The university also represents the first educational context in which Palestinians study together with Israeli Jews. Although this might be expected to provide a context for cross-cultural interaction, and even assimilation, the experience of Palestinian students has often been the opposite. As one student stated,

> I define myself first as a Palestinian Arab. . . . My university experience has actually confirmed this, and made it stronger. When I first came to the university, I was really looking forward to setting aside politics and the political things that divide us, and interacting with the Jewish students. I wanted to mix with them and learn from them in terms of language and many other things. But I really found that they held themselves apart, so our social interaction remained very superficial. This strengthened my feelings of being different and of belonging to a different people. (personal communication, May 2003)

Conclusion

This review of the state-controlled school system for Palestinian Arabs in Israel reveals that many obstacles stand in the path of realizing the ideals expressed by Palestinian educators (e.g., full rights to all levels of state education, the Palestinian right to establish and control their own educational systems and institutions, including knowledge in mainstream schools). The current state-controlled educational systems in Israel continue to delegitimize the identity of the Palestinian Arabs, with a particular emphasis on suppressing its development within the school system. This has been achieved by systematically controlling the curricula in both Jewish and Palestinian schools to exclude the historical narrative of the Palestinians. It has also been accomplished through the hiring of professional staff in Palestinian schools on the basis of security classifications, with the aim of suppressing the individual and national identity development of the students. For the minority of Palestinian students who remain in the school system and pass their matriculation exams, additional, culturally biased criteria present barriers to obtaining higher education. The curricula, learning environment, and overall quality in the state-sponsored Palestinian schools have been designed to marginalize and achieve social and political control of the young generation, with the intention of creating a submissive minority ready to accept a position of inferiority vis-à-vis the Jewish majority and to deny their own national identity while maintaining loyalty to a Jewish state that explicitly excludes them from full and equal membership.

Furthermore, the Palestinian Arab state-sponsored education system in Israel has never been treated as an independent or complete structure; nor is it viewed as forming a legitimate component of the national education system. Indigenous Palestinians do not have autonomous control of their school system and do not hold any of the key decision-making and policy-making positions in the national educational infrastructure, which is reflective of their position in Israeli society in general. Israel, as "the state of the Jewish People," is a constitutionally exclusive state, which is democratic as far as the Jewish population is concerned. It offers many, although not equal, democratic advantages to its Palestinian Arab citizens, who are effectively excluded from the state's identity, superstructure, and power centers (Rouhana, 1998). This situation leaves the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel in a psychological, political, and social limbo, which was very effectively described by Said Zidani (1997):

> I am an average [Palestinian] Arab Israeli citizen existing in a gray area between being a citizen and a temple slave. I am a half citizen in the state of Israel; from my point of view the state is half mine, and half democratic. The gates of the state and society are half-open to me, and the ear is half listening to what I have to suggest or to say. I have no other state, and the state I have is only half mine. I am still a present-absentee, half-separated and half integrated in various life spheres of the state and the society. Despite my participation in elections I am not a legitimate partner in important decisions which affect me, nor am I a partner in deciding on the standards and norms in the various spheres of public life. (p. 63)

The solution to the dilemma of identity formation for Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel lies beyond the education system itself. So long as the entire Israeli national ethos and state apparatus continue to exclude the Palestinian Arab minority from equal membership and full legitimacy as citizens, the educational system will just as surely continue to deny and suppress the individual and national identity development of Palestinian Arab youth. The state educational system has been essential in creating and maintaining the cultural, social, and economic marginalization of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel, thus, no reform effort will be successful without making radical changes in the educational system. The Orientalist bent of not only the curriculum but also the system's overall aims of marginalization and control must be uprooted and replaced with aims, goals, and curriculum that would intentionally *de*-marginalize and recognize the history, culture, and identity of the Palestinian minority within Israeli society. However, as long as the marginalization, subordination, and suppression of collective identity development among the Palestinian minority in Israeli society is neither questioned nor challenged, the state-controlled education system will continue to serve as a tool for maintaining these conditions.

Notes

1. In 1950 the Israeli government classified internal Palestinian refugees who had temporarily left or been displaced from their property, but were still present in Israel as "present-absentees" and the state then confiscated their properties (Lustick, 1980).

2. In the 2002-2003 academic year, only 30.95% of Arab high school students passed the matriculation exams, compared to 46.8% in the Jewish schools (Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004; Swirski & Etkin, 2004).

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