BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences

Master Program of Community Psychology

Research title:

A geo-narrative approach to understanding identity construction in multiple spaces: the case of adolescent students attending the Jerusalem American School

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2022

A geo-narrative approach to understanding identity construction in
multiple spaces: the case of adolescent students attending the Jerusalem
American School

توظيف المنهج الجغرافي السردي في فهم تشكلات الهوية في الفضاءات المتعددة: الطلبة المراهقين
في مدرسة القدس الأمريكية كحالة دراسية

رانية ريناوي

تاريخ النقاش: ٤ـ٧ـ٢٠٢٣

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Acknowledgments

Throughout the writing of my thesis, I have received a great deal of support and assistance. I would like to thank my supervisor, Sama Dawani for her unconditional support through all the stages of my research. Your insightful feedback and instructions had an important role in accomplishing and bringing my work to higher level.

I would like to thank The Jerusalem American School for facilitating the implementation of my research at school, including the administration, teachers, the participants' parents. Special thanks to the students who took the time to participate and cooperate in my study. Without you, this work would not be achieved…

At last, I would like to give special thanks to my husband Ihab and my family as a whole for their continuous support and understanding when undertaking my research and writing my project.

Abstract

This research sheds light on the way adolescent students with and without learning difficulties experience different spaces in their lives, and the way they construct and co-construct their identities within multiple spaces. The research was held at the Jerusalem American School in East Jerusalem. Participants were students in the 10th grade, between the ages of 15 and 16. Six students participated in this study (two girls and four boys), some of them were identified with learning difficulties and some were not. Two groups of three students were performed. Group sessions and individual interviews were carried out with both groups. The research follows a socio-cultural perspective for it understands a person's identity to develop through their participation in various socio-cultural contexts. It also follows a "geo-narrative" approach; which is a geographical spatial approach to narratives and to identity with the aim to explore participants experiences and identities through multiple spaces. Data analysis for this study was conducted using structural narrative analysis (the approach of James Gee) and using thematic analysis. The findings showed that participants' experiences and identities were constructed within different spaces, such as their school, home, and at least one another space/a third space. Through these spaces, participants performed their selves differently depending on the space and people there. In the school context, they expressed their need for emotional and academic support through their relationships with teachers. Participants also expressed their need for freedom at school and home. School was an important space for all participants, but for different reasons. For participants with learning difficulties, school was an academic space in the first place for achieving present and future goals, and this was dependent on the quality of relationship with teachers. School for participants without learning difficulties, was considered mostly as a social space, where participants experimented with relationships with friends and peers and where they negotiated their self-image. That does not mean that those participants did not have future or present academic goals, but they were doing well at school therefore, did not need the amount and the types of academic support as their peers with learning difficulties. Their relationships with peers and friends were more important at that time.

The research findings indicate that participants have multiple identities that the teachers only know one dimension of. This study might change any unilateral perception of students, especially students with learning difficulties.

ملخص الدراسة باللغة العربية

يلقي هذا البحث الضوء على الطريقة التي يختبر بها الطلاب المراهقون، بما فيهم من يعانون من صعوبات في التعلم مساحات مختلفة في حياتهم، والطريقة التي يبنون ويشاركون في بناء هوياتهم ضمن مساحات متعددة. تم إجراء البحث في مدرسة القدس الأمريكية في القدس الشرقية. كان المشاركون طلابًا في الصف العاشر، تتراوح أعمارهم بين 15 و16 عامًا. شارك ستة طلاب في هذه الدراسة (فتاتان وأربعة فتيان)، تم تشخيص بعضهم بصعوبات في التعلم والبعض الآخر لم يكن كذلك. تم تشكيل مجموعتين من ثلاثة طلاب. تم إجراء جلسات جماعية ومقابلات فردية مع كلا المجموعتين. يتبع البحث منظورًا اجتماعيًا ثقافيًا لأنه يفهم تطور هوية الشخص من خلال مشاركته في سياقات اجتماعية۔ثقافية مختلفة. كما أنه يتبع نهج "السرد الجغرافي"؛ وهو نهج جغرافي مكاني للروايات والهوية بهدف استكشاف تجارب المشاركين وهوياتهم من خلال مساحات متعددة. تم إجراء تحليل البيانات لهذه الدراسة باستخدام التحليل السردي الهيكلي (نهج جيمس جي) واستخدام تحليل المحتوى. أظهرت النتائج أن تجارب المشاركين وهوياتهم تشكّلت في مساحات مختلفة، مثل المدرسة، والمنزل، ومساحة أخرى على الأقل / مساحة ثالثة. من خلال هذه المساحات، قام المشاركون بأداء ذواتهم بشكل مختلف اعتمادًا على المساحة والأشخاص هناك. في سياق المدرسة، عبروا عن حاجتهم للدعم العاطفي والأكاديمي من خلال علاقاتهم مع المعلمين. كما عبر المشاركون عن حاجتهم إلى الحرية في المدرسة والمنزل. كانت المدرسة مساحة مهمة لجميع المشاركين، ولكن لأسباب مختلفة. بالنسبة للمشاركين الذين يعانون من صعوبات التعلم، كانت المدرسة مساحة أكاديمية في المقام الأول لتحقيق أهداف الحاضر والمستقبل، وقد اعتمد ذلك على نوعية العلاقة مع المعلمين. في الغالب، تم اعتبار المدرسة للمشاركين الذين ليس لديهم صعوبات في التعلم كمساحة اجتماعية، حيث اختبر المشاركون العلاقات مع الأصدقاء والأقران وعبروا عن صورتهم الذاتية. هذا لا يعني أن هؤلاء المشاركين لم يكن لديهم أهداف أكاديمية مستقبلية أو حالية، لكنهم كانوا يؤدون أداءً جيدًا في المدرسة وبالتالي لم يكونوا بحاجة إلى مقدار وأنواع الدعم الأكاديمي مثل أقرانهم اللذين يعانون من صعوبات في التعلم. كانت علاقاتهم مع أقرانهم وأصدقائهم أكثر أهمية في ذلك الوقت. تشير نتائج البحث إلى أن المشاركين لديهم هويات متعددة لا يعرف المعلمون سوى بُعد واحد منها. هذه الدراسة قد تغير أي تصور أحادي الجانب للطلاب وخاصة الطلاب الذين يعانون من صعوبات التعلم.

Chapter One: Introducing the Study

Background of the Study and Research Problem

My work as a social worker for the past six years in a private school in Jerusalem, gave me the opportunity to work with students diagnosed with learning difficulties in all educational stages. I tried to help them in coping with their daily life challenges whether it's educational, social, emotional, or behavioral, to ensure that they form positive life experiences.

Being around adolescent students with or without learning difficulties, enabled me to observe how they interact with their teachers, administration, and other students, and to listen to their stories, especially those related to the challenges they experience in the school context. From those interactions and from my observation, I noticed that many of the challenges students experience are relational; ones that has to do with communicating and relating to teachers. Most of these students reported miscommunication and lack of understanding from their teachers. Students expected me to be the mediator between them and the teachers. This tells something about the quality of interaction and relationships between teachers and adolescent students, specifically students with learning difficulties, at least within my school.

During the orientation days for teachers, which is two weeks before school starts, the school staff are given lectures by a clinical psychologist about ways to understand and help students with learning difficulties and also about ways to identify students who might have learning difficulties. Then, the school provides accommodations to those students based on the recommendations of the psycho-educational report by the clinical psychologist. These accommodations are provided to those students on a daily basis and during tests. For example, students with ADD and ADHD always sit in the front row in class to minimize distractions and to concentrate better in class, also the teacher helps them individually when needed. During tests, teachers read the questions and simplifies them for those students, and they also provide them with extended time.

In spite of the increasing knowledge teachers have about adolescents with learning difficulties, and about ways to help students in class based on the recommendations of clinical psychologists, yet those students are the ones who spend the most time in the detention room at school. In addition, teachers tend to perceive students in the light of their learning difficulty and behavioral problems exclusively. This unilateral perception does not take into consideration students' multiple experiences and identities in other meaningful spaces in their lives. This, stigmatizes them by a fixed identity exclusively related to academic work at school.

This unilateral perception resembles the medical model and how mainstream psychology has been working for many years. When problems and or challenges are seen as residing within the individual then interventions are expected to be at the individual level; people as individuals are held responsible. "[T]he disease is described as a problem for the individual. Society is an audience" (Teague & Robinson, 2019, p.7). Working with students on the individual level, while everything else remains the same, will never be enough. School is a system within systems; the way things are, the way schools and societies are constructed to function in a certain way is the root cause of many challenges and problems faced by individuals and groups. The social model of disability differentiated between 'impairment' and 'disability' and claims that disability is not a product of bodily pathology, but of specific social and economic structures (Shakespeare, 2013). Therefore, we need to reframe problems, to recognize the historical construction of knowledge we take for granted and to reexamine our roles (including our attitudes and positionings) as educators and counselors in relation to our students.

Through an ecological lens, individuals are embedded within and are interacting with multiple social systems. Nelson and Prilleltensky noted that, "mainstream psychology has focused too much on individual psychological processes and neglected the important role those social systems play in human development." (2010, p. 79). Thus, it becomes essential to understand people in context and within contexts, using multiple level of analysis. The ecological principle

enables community psychologists to further understand the qualities of human settings and environments; to identify qualities that oppress people and communities and those that promote personal growth, liberation and wellbeing.

School has been considered an important space and context where students develop, construct and co-construct their identities. Schools are social and emotional environments in which adolescents are exposed to different people (different mind-sets and ways of being and relating), "experience new activities, encounter novel ideas, and engage in social interaction with adults and peers- all with potential contribution to their identity exploration" (Sinai, Kaplan & Flum, 2012, p. 196) and to the dynamic and continuous process of self-construction. The type of people, relationships and activities within a school context frames the experiences "that serve as material for adolescents' identity exploration and formation" (Sinai, Kaplan & Flum, 2012, p. 196). Nevertheless, in addition to school, adolescent students interact with many other different contexts all of which contribute to shaping their identities. It is important to note as well that school itself consists of multiple spaces, which may be experienced differently by different students. These notions can be linked to ecology, a core principle of community psychology.

The school is an important space where adolescent students are exposed to various elements that could intentionally and unintentionally influence their identity development whether positively or negatively. Their relationship with teachers and peers, the curriculum content and process, the school climate and culture, the various extra-curricular activities all play an important role in identity construction and exploration. Through the previous school elements, adolescents can explore and reflect on their selves and their present and past experiences that shaped who they are now and who they want to be in the future. It's a space where adolescents should be allowed to make mistakes, experiment, be critical, and have the freedom of thought and speech.

Driven by the way most of us, teachers, perceive students from a single perspective, and by the dominant narratives that most of us endorse and replicate about student adolescents, and

especially about those with learning difficulties, comes this study. It intends to explore the multiple identity constructions Palestinian adolescent students with and without learning difficulties create within different life spaces and contexts, using narrative research methods for data creation and analysis in addition to thematic analysis and representation.

Research Focus and Significance

Listening to the stories and the daily life experiences of adolescent students with learning difficulties at school, made me realize that they have different experiences in different contexts, and that they experience themselves, their selfhoods, differently in different spaces. This experiential knowledge motivated me to learn more about their experiences and identities in multiple spaces. Sharing the upcoming knowledge with teachers, administrators and parents, may change any unilateral perception they may hold about students, and may challenge the dominant cultural narratives on students with learning difficulties in particular. We believe that when key people in the lives of adolescents, ones whom they are in constant interaction with at multiple levels, become aware of alternative life narratives and thus of identities, they may start relating differently. Only then they can contribute to the construction of positive life experiences and of humanized identities (Freire, 1993).

This study is different on several levels, when compared to other existing empirical studies. Our theoretical and methodological frameworks are interrelated; looking at selfhood as a rhizome inspired the use of narrative inquiry, and more specifically what we call "geo-narratives"; a geographical spatial approach to narratives and to identity. Together with research participants we tried to access the different significant spaces in their lives, each space as one or more entryway to selfhood.

The Main Research Question

This study intends to explore the following question, how do adolescent students with and without learning difficulties experience different spaces in their lives? To be more specific, how do they experience their selves in spaces that they find to be important? And how do they construct and co-construct their personal identities/selfhood within these multiple spaces?

Chapter Two: A Theoretical Framework

Selfhood and Identity

Through a postmodern lens, self and identity can be seen 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, 2007, p. 16). Identity can be considered as part of the evolving self. It refers to the various ways of being in the world and of locating, positioning and re-positioning ourselves in relation to others, events, issues and ideas (Josselson, 2013).

The self through the Dialogical Self Theory (DST), does not only perform as a mini-society, but it is an inseparable part of macro-society. Through this view, the self is not just surrounded by society, which performs as an external element, but functions as a society of minds. At the same time, society as a social structure is not studied in separation of the selves of its individual participants, but rather a society of selves (Hermans, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, changes and development in the self leads to changes and developments in society, and changes in society have results in consequences in the self. This concludes that the self is not a self-contained entity, and society and culture is not abstract and self-less (Hermans, 2012, p. 4).

Selfhood is constantly evolving and changing, it's not static. The formation of the self is in a never-ending dynamic process. It cannot be predicted because of the uncertainty of the possible relational contexts to come. It cannot be developed or spread in a linear way, on the contrary, it will keep on moving back and forth. Anderson discussed the self as a dialogical narrative, and identity as a dialogical narrative identity. There can always be potential selves embedded in our conversations (2007, p. 16). The self does not exist outside of language and discourse, there is no inner core or fixed tangible self (Anderson, 2007, p. 17).

The individual as a person in relationship is dialogical and relationally created. According to this view, individuals are always engaged in conversational becoming, constructing and reconstructing, and shifting identities through continuous interactions with others (Anderson, 2007, p. 160). We are continually forming and performing "I". Hence, we are always as many potential selves and identities as are embedded within and created by our conversations (Anderson, 2007, p. 17). The dialogical self can be seen as dynamic multiplicity of I-positions that is emerging from an intense interconnection with the social environment and is limited to a particular time and space. This embodied 'I' through space and time, is involved in a process of positioning, counter-positioning, and repositioning (Hermans, 2012, p. 8). Therefore, the constructed self or identity is not static, it's contextual and is continually negotiated across time (Anderson, 2007, p.12).

As "individuals", we are persons-in-relationships. The multiple constructed self in narrative does not result in a fragmented self; "the multiplicity of the self does not result in fragmentation, because it is *the same I that is moving back and forth* between several positions" (Anderson, 2007, p. 17) due to the discontinuous and unpredictable changes in time and space. Therefore, it is involved in a process of positioning, repositioning, and counter-positioning. Thus, the self is subjected to a process of decentralization. The decentering movements in the self are reflected by a dynamic multiplicity of I-positions that are evoked by ever- changing situations (Hermans, 2012, p. 9). At the same time, the *I* "appropriates" some of the positions and rejects others, and in this way is involved in a process of organizing positions as parts of a coherent structure. The organizing capacity of the self reflects its tendency to centralize positions as "owned" by one and the same '*I*' (Hermans, 2012, p. 9).

It is through narratives, through the stories that we tell about ourselves and about our world that we construct and re-construct parts of our selfhood and identity. Through the narratives that people tell about themselves, we as researchers can capture and understand parts of evolving

selfhoods. Yet the created stories within the research interaction (the interview for example) do not solely belong to research participants, but are however, a co-construction. Therefore, we as researchers, acknowledge our presence and our subjectivity thus our contribution in shaping the interaction and the created narratives. Consequently, the process of understanding is dialogical and relational; it's a dialogue with the self and others. One can never understand or know other's intention and meaning. Our life experiences and our identities and our understanding of them are created in dialogue with ourselves and with others. We participate in creating what we know about ourselves and others.

Social constructionism and Relational Hermeneutics as postmodern perspectives are concerned with understanding and interpreting meanings of the self (identity) and the other. Social Constructionism places emphasis on the meaning that we associate to the people in our lives, things, events, and to ourselves through our interaction with people, not on the things or the ideas. Therefore, there will be countless possibilities to the meanings created (Anderson, 2007). Relational Hermeneutics also examined the meaning of the self (identity) and other. It focuses on the people as active participants in constructing their worlds. Therefore, this process of understanding the self and others can never be totally achieved because it is influenced by the others' beliefs, linguistics, assumptions, and intentions in which they bring to the social encounter. This process of understanding is dialogical and relational (Anderson, 2007). These postmodern perspectives (Social construction and Relational Hermeneutics) share the same stances. They highlighted that the nature of understanding and the nature of knowledge can be reached through dialogue and are located in history, tradition, and culture (Anderson, 2007). Within these perspectives, we can understand that the group dialogue in this study, contributed in participants' understandings of their selfhoods and identities, and influenced the construction and re-construction of their selfhoods and identities. The co-construction of new knowledge within these dialogues helped in giving meaning to their selves and others. Participants could share their experiences, thoughts and feelings and were actively engaged in exploration and knowledge construction. They could see others' perspectives, look at

things differently, reflect on their lives and goals. In addition, it gave them the space to be aware and critical of their relationship with teachers and the schools' dehumanizing and oppressive policies, and to be self-reflexive of their relationships with their peers and friends.

Deleuze and Guattari (1965) used the metaphor of the rhizome to refer to selfhood. When selfhood is seen as a rhizome, which is "a dynamic, open, decentralized network that branches out to all sides unpredictably and horizontally" (Sermijn, Devlieger, & Loots, 2008, p. 637), it emphasizes the notion of many possible selves all of which are true and authentic. The one and only 'truth', or 'reality' does not exist within rhizomatic thinking. There are always many possible truths and realities that can all be viewed as social constructs. Truths and realities are constructed within social historical contexts. The stories people tell about themselves, how they tell them, and their choice of words, do not only inform us about who they are as individuals, but also about their social worlds. Narratives are not pure they carry within them traces of history and of culture (Dawani and Loots, 2021). As a rhizome, selfhood has multiple entryways, each encounter (each research interview) is but one entryway to selfhood. There is no main entryway which leads to selfhood. Selfhood has many possible entryways that leads to a performed self. Therefore, the self is not fixed or authentic that exists independent of the speaking. We give birth to ourselves in our writings and speaking (Sermijn, Devlieger, & Loots, 2008, p. 638). A new construction of the selfhood is born every time we speak about ourselves which depends on the discourse context and the entryway that we take. Which entry is taken, depends on the audience that the participant is talking to (the researcher), the research context (the social and cultural context), the research question, the positions of the researcher and participant (for example, gender, age, ideology), and the gaze of the researcher and participant. The self is experienced and is performed in multiple ways. As emphasized earlier, as researchers we become part of the rhizomatic self and the constructed narrative of the participants (Sermijn, Devlieger, & Loots, 2008). The narrating voice is not singular, but a polyphony of voices. There is no such thing as unity and fixity in the rhizome thinking. Unity can be seen within a certain moment and context where a single story is illuminated,

but at the same time other stories do exist alongside this story that is not highlighted at that time. The narrative self cannot be viewed as a complete organized whole, but as an infinite, never ending narrative constructions about the self. These narratives are not always connected in a logical, linear ways, they can sometimes be connected through infinite possible connections depending on the entryway that is taken during the speaking, while others remain separated. The narrative selfhood can be compared with a dynamic map of narration which is never complete and always changing through a process of co-construction and co-reconstruction. Therefore, we as researcher can explore only temporal regions and paths. As Rana one of the participants in this study emphasized about facing difficulties when she shares private things about herself to others, "it's difficult, still difficult...this is not everything".

Through the dramaturgical framework introduced by Erving Goffman (1956), we can better understand identity. Analyzing how human beings present themselves and their activities to others in the social world, he suggests that the social world is composed of a multitude of different performances by a vast number of actors, in a variety of settings. Goffman called our behaviors "acts" in order to present a certain image of ourselves. This image is called a front which is the part of the individual's performance which functions to define the situation for the audience as described by Goffman (1959). It is maintained by controlling the setting, our appearance, and the manner in which we present ourselves. The setting includes the context or space where the interaction takes place. Therefore, different contexts (spaces) may have different audiences, which requires different performances. Appearance is the characteristics of the performer like age, race, gender, clothes. Manner consists of our attitude towards our setting and performance such our facial expressions and general attitude. In the presence of others, we as individuals are continuously performing ourselves. Through these performances, the individuals give meaning to themselves, to others, and to the situation. We also engage in "impression management" trying to project an idealized image of ourselves through the aforementioned control in order to achieve individual or social goals (Goffman,1959). Goffman's framework (1959) may suggest that our identities are never "authentic"

calling our social behaviors as "acts", however, as Riessman suggested that the self is not an autonomous entity; rather it arises in the process of performance. The individual should be thought of always in relationship to a social whole (Riessman, 2008).

This study looks at the self as a rhizome and therefore it uses the geo-narrative approach as a way to explore participants' selves through the different spaces in their lives. Each space can be considered as one entry or more to their performed selves. Narration is a performance. When participants narrate their stories about themselves in one space within the group sessions, they perform themselves to their audiences whom might be real audience like me or other participants within the group or it might be other adolescents who may share similar experiences in their lives. So, each time participants talk about a space, it will be a different self-performance depending on the space, audience, and entry-way that is taken there. For example, when participants talked about school as a space, their performed self and identity took a particular form and shape. A self that is more concerned with image preservation, compared to a self that is "care-free" and relaxed at home. Also, the present audience influence the dialogue and interaction therefore, self-performance. For example, the first group was able to narrate themselves in a more relaxed way in the presence of their friends, they were able to share intimate experiences when the group settled and became a closed one, when compared to the initial sessions that consisted of many other participants. At other times, participants' narratives were not limited to the spaces they talk about. Consistent with the concept of the rhizome, taking different entryways in the same space can lead to new or different self-performance. Also, the research space, was another dimension or space for self-performance. Different selves were constructed and co-constructed within the dialogue and the interaction within the group.

The Influence of Patriarchy and Heteronormativity on Identity Development

Our social institutions are based and influenced by several structures and systems which shape and limit our self-performances in which it dictates how to be and behave as men and woman

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through these systems. Patriarchy and heteronormativity are examples of these systems which play an important role in shaping and constructing our identities especially through adolescence. Carol Gilligan (2011) discussed the influence of patriarchy in shaping and constructing adolescents' identities through the process of initiation. She argued that when boys and girls are initiated into a patriarchal culture, they are dictated by certain gender roles. Boys are expected to act as "real boys" and girls as "good girls". Therefore, they must dissociate themselves from aspects of themselves that would lead them to appear unmanly or not what a woman should be (Gilligan, 2011). Those who do not act according to their gender roles, are shamed and condemned, shaping and limiting self-performance.

Judith Butler (1990) discussed gender as performance. She argued that gender is something inscribed in daily practices, learned and performed based on cultural norms of femineity and masculinity. This view is similar to the concept of heteronormativity, in which heterosexuality is the normal mode of sexual orientation. It assumes the gender binary and that sexual marital relations are most fitting between people of the opposite sex. Therefore, patriarchy and heteronormativity are social structures which shape and limit our self-performance, thus, our identity construction.

Self and Identity Construction in a Colonial Context

1. The Educational System (positioned around the banking education/Freire) Between the Neo-liberal and Colonial Systems

The neo-liberal and colonial systems are other systems which has a major impact on our social institutions especially our educational system. It is clear that the educational system works to strengthen the neo-liberal system by promoting concepts that support individuality, even the concept of success and the value of student has become dependent on the quantitative physical numerical assessment which has reinforced competition at the individual level. This system deals with students as individuals and not as a group, with collective identity, by presenting educational

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content that is politically empty, neutral and distorted. Thus, students and even teachers perceive themselves as individuals and not as a group with a cause. Banking education creates generations that are not aware of the reality of structural oppression and are ready to adapt and not to transform the existing reality, which has become a natural reality for them. In this system, students are not conscious beings to their existing reality, their mind is empty passive which is open to the deposits of reality from the world. Nor are they conscious to the intentions of the oppressive system which aims to change their conscious, not the situation which oppressed them, because according to Freire (1993), the more the oppressed adapt to the world, the more they can be easily dominated. It is easy for the colonial system to deal with them, as they are individuals with individual goals that do not exceed their possession of certain goods or their appearance in a certain social appearance, or their illusory sense of power and control. This would restrict their self and identity performance in paths that serve and maintain the existence and continuity of those systems.

2. The Jerusalem American School and the Development of a Palestinian Identity

While examining the educational systems, Makkawi (2008) argued that the educational systems just like any other system of values, can be used as a tool to control and instill desirable goals" (Makkawi, 2008). In this school context, one may stop to think about which and whose goals and values are being instilled? Is the educational system concerned about the development of the Palestinian identity, or other implicit goals which aims at de-Palestinize the students? I think, if it was for the Palestinian people, they would expect their educational system to preserve and reinforce Palestinian identity.

It is possible to compare between the invasion and dumping of foreign funding in the region with special projects and agendas which serve these countries in the period after the Oslo Agreement (1993), with the policy of this school and other schools that serve special goals. We can view that the Jerusalem American School adopting neo-liberal thoughts aims to reinforce the idea of

peace and the co-existence ignoring the importance of reinforcing the Palestinian identity among the Palestinian students, taking into consideration that the majority are Palestinian students.

The school curriculum like the peace curriculum that the school emphasize on implementing for all the educational levels, and the activities which reinforce the idea of peaceful conflict resolution not resistance with the aim of liberation, the pictures on the school walls and the school logo on the students' uniform, in addition to the welcoming of students and teachers from different nationalities especially the Israeli, all support and enhance the idea of peace and co-existence between the Palestinians and Israelis. So, the school context, policy, and curriculum aim to enhance the neo-liberal ideas and works to Americanize and de-politicize Palestinian students by manipulating their thoughts and attitudes and promote the American identity, not the Palestinian identity. In addition to the provision of scholarships to study in the United States of America which will contribute to their stabilization there; to live and to work for the lack of work opportunities in Palestine. This, will weaken the national sense and Palestinian belonging and only caring for the individual gains which will influence the Palestinian identity. It also influences how these students perceive themselves in their relationships with the other. The presence of a collective identity is important to the well-being in the colonial Palestinian context, functions as a protective element as it was emphasized by Makkawi in his studies (Makkawi, 2017). Participants may not feel that they fully belong in the school's American system in order to be a part of the American culture, nor the strong conscious belonging to the Palestinian identity.

Being licensed from the Israeli, American, and Palestinian Ministry of Education, promoting and adopting the neo-liberal ideas, these systems serve western and local agendas. The Ministry of Education approves of the school curriculum because it is emptied from concepts and ideas which re-enforce the Palestinian identity. As stated by Abu Awad's (2013) writings about the neo-liberal and education, that the educational system do not differ from the other mentioned systems (citation). So, the Palestinian authority, the educational system, and the Palestinian educational

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institutions aims at promoting the neo-liberal policies which serves the interests of certain people in the Palestinian authority which is subjected to the conditions of the international financial institutions, the countries supporting them, and the colonial domination.

The Concept of Learning Difficulties

The DSM-5 (2013) defines learning difficulties as a type of neurodevelopment disorder that impedes the ability to learn or use specific academic skills (e.g., reading, writing, or arithmetic), which are the foundation for other academic learning. It can also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, memory, time planning, abstract reasoning, long or short-term memory, attention and ability to focus. It is important to realize that learning disabilities can affect an individual's life beyond academics and can impact relationships with family, friends and in the workplace.

Having a learning difficulty does not make someone less intelligent, it just means they learn in a different way that can render traditional classroom activities problematic. That is why people with learning difficulties often require specific strategy training and customized lessons in order to overcome challenges and make progress in an academic environment. A child with a learning difficulty may need or require strategy instruction and learning/class accommodations such as additional time to complete assignments and tests, someone to read the test questions for him, material delivered in special fonts, or using the computer to take notes…etc.

The most common types of learning difficulties are: dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. Dyspraxia is a motor-skills difficulty that can affect a learner's ability to write by hand and may impact on planning skills. Also, a learning difficulty and motor-skills difficulties can co-present. For example, dyslexia and dyspraxia, or ADD/ADHD and dyspraxia can occur together.

Learning Difficulty vs. Learning Disability

Even if these two terms may have similar meanings, but they certainly have insinuations for how the individual with learning difficulty views himself. The term disability does not just imply that a student is less able than his/her peers, but it can also indicate that he/she is in a permanent state of disadvantage which might cause him/her to lose agency. People with learning difficulties are not disabled, but they just learn differently than others. They may face added challenges in a typical classroom environment, but they can overcome those difficulties by providing learning accommodations as mentioned earlier. Viewing people with learning difficulties as people with abilities, focuses the attention on the environment not the person. Therefore, the work should be on changing the classroom environment not the students as suggested by the social model that I'm going to discuss shortly.

Approaches to Disability: The Social Model vs. The Medical Model

Over the last thirty-eight years, people with disabilities and their allies tried to challenge the historical oppression and exclusion that many people with disabilities experience (Shakespeare, 2013) medicalized and individualistic aspect of disability, disability movements focused on social oppression, cultural discourse, and environmental barriers as a challenge to the later approaches. Many countries all over the world tried to explain disability in social terms. In Britain, the social model of disability has provided the structural analysis of disabled people's social exclusion (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 214). The social model of disability came to light from the political and intellectual arguments of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). This organization was responsible for the development of the British disability movement and of disability studies in Britain. Their latest redefinition of disability is: "the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 215).

Through the social model, impairment and disability have distinctive meanings. While impairement is viewed as individual and private, disability is viewed as structural and public. There are some key differences between the definition of disability through the social model and the medical model of disability. While the former defines disability as a social creation—a relationship between people with impairment and a disabling society—the latter defines disability in terms of individual deficit.

The medical model brings down the problem of disabled people to issues of medical prevention, cure or rehabilitation, whereas the social model thinking endorses barrier removal, anti-dis crimination legislation, independent living and other responses to social oppression. Also, the social model views disabled people as oppressed group and the non-disabled people and organizations as the contributors to that oppression. Therefore, the way to solve the disability problem is by mandating civil rights legislation and barrier removal of the disabled people. This study acknowledges the conditions, structures and contexts that shapes selfhood and identity. It is essential to highlight and to make visible those hidden structures that enable and disable certain ways of being. It is worthwhile looking into how structures (such as patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism and coloniality) shape the challenges and difficulties individuals and groups experience in their daily lives. Therefore, we made sure not to frame participants with learning difficulties within the medical model. I did not ask them about their learning difficulties, this issue was not initiated by me as the researcher, participants were approached as a whole, without pointing out to an intersection that they might not view as part of them. This study dealt mainly with the context, the obstructive context, which is consistent with the social model of disability. The issue of learning difficulty was not central in the group sessions and individual interviews if the participant did not mention it him/herself. The concept of learning difficulties was in the background, participants had the choice to mention it if it is of importance to him, or if it was part of how participants perceive and define themselves. The study focuses on the context and spaces that participants are part of their individual characteristics, in addition to the structures that these spaces are embedded within.

Values and Principles of Community Psychology in Relation to the Current Study

Prilleltensky and colleagues (2001) presented us with six values and principles that should guide our work in community psychology: prevention and promotion, ecology community, power, inclusion, commitment and depowerment. These values and principles are interrelated and can contribute to the well-being of people through different ecological levels: individual level, relational level, and collective level.

In this section, I will shed light on how the research process and findings can create a new understanding that will promote the well-being of students. This can be achieved by following the principle of prevention and promotion which is one of the important principles which reflect the value of health and well-being. On the relational level, positive relationship between teachers and students, especially students with learning difficulties may be developed in order for them to feel supported emotionally and academically and construct a positive identity.

As a community psychologist, adopting an ecological lens, and working through the value of holism, I tried to perceive participants as a whole; their abilities and deficits, and their relationships with others through different contexts. In addition to making visible the influence of colonial and capitalist structures on shaping lives and selves. Perceiving and reframing participants' difficulties from a relational level, not just the individual level, will help students view their selves through their strengths and abilities not their difficulties or deficits will help them internalize and perform other positive identities within the school and other contexts. On the collective level, we need to take into consideration power relations and how they create hierarchies that can be oppressive. The educational system, is a system that functions within a larger system of power, it works for that system. It is clear that this system fosters neoliberalism through promoting the concepts of individualism, even the concept of success and the value of the student is restricted by the materialistic, quantitative, and digital evaluation which promotes competition on the individual level. This system deals with students as individuals not as group, with a collective identity, by

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introducing educational content which is unpolitical, neutral, and deformed. By this, students and teachers perceive themselves as individuals not as people with a collective cause/issue.

The banking system works to create unaware generations about the reality of the structural oppression that can adapt to the existing reality which has become a natural reality. Therefore, it is easy for the colonial system to deal with them as individuals with personal goals that do not exceed the possession of a specific commodity or appearing in a social image, or of being under the illusion of having power. This will limit self and identity performance in ways which sustain and serve the existence and preservation of these systems. Commitment, depowerment and power are other principles which guided my work with research participants. These principles call for working in partnership with disadvantaged people, share the power and knowledge with them, and even called for an empowerment approach in which community psychologists work to promote their self-determination and control over their lives. Community psychology shares the thoughts of liberation education in which people (students) are conscious and cognitive beings, not transferals of information, therefore dialogical relations must exist. Students have creative powers and can transform their world not adapt to it. In order to share power, teachers have to reduce the power of oppression for the cause of liberation.

My relationship with participants especially through the research space, was mindful of hierarchal relationship, and it was more egalitarian. The flexible and participatory research philosophy which guided my study, allowed for a dialogical space to be created with dialogical relationships with participants, which produced relational knowing knowledge, not observer-independent knowledge (Anderson, 2007). Thus, the power was shared in the group and my role during the group meetings became less central as participants were inquiring, commenting, advising each other, and directing the dialogue.

As a community psychologist who do not believe in the "expert" approach of traditional applied psychology, I consider that my research was participatory. I applied individual and group

interviews to create new knowledge, which is considered to be participatory knowledge with participants, not about them. The use of a geo-narrative approach through mapping the spaces, was open enough for participants to choose what is important for them, and what they wanted to talked about and not talk about. This has provided them with a sense of authority over what to share and over the shaping of the research process. The group setting, being with others in the research space, provided participants with power as a group, to negotiate choices and come to decisions together.

Being self-critical and reflexive about my research; acknowledging my subjectivity, I intend to share the interpretations of the research findings with these participants and the school administration to try and change the unilateral perception that doesn't take into consideration students' multiple experiences and identities in other spaces in their lives.

Psychological sense of community and inclusion are other principles that guide our work in community psychology. Sense of community flows from the value of caring, compassion, and support. It is when a person feels that he belongs to a place or to a group of people. The principle of inclusion flows from the value of respect for diversity. Research participants especially students with learning difficulties, did not feel that they belong to or included in their school as they did not feel care or support from their teachers. On the contrary, they mostly shared negative feelings through their relationships with teachers as we can note further on. Also, since The Jerusalem American School considers itself as an inclusive institution and welcomes students from diverse nationalities and abilities, one would expect that inclusion would be implemented on a practical level. As an insider, I could observe that inclusion is found in policy, but not in practice as I noticed that Korean students did not feel that they were included among Palestinian students as they spent most of their break time with each other. Therefore, it is important that inclusion should be employed for all students as a practice, not just as a policy at school.

Literature Review

This literature review consists of two categories of studies. The first one made use of a meta-analysis study (Verhoeven, Poorthuis & Volman, 2018) in addition to other research articles that addressed identity development of adolescents without learning difficulties within the school context. The articles differ in the use of their research methods. Few of them employed a quantitative research method, a mixed-methods design, and the most employed a qualitative research method.

Studies in this category are classified into three groups: First, studies that provide insight about how schools, teachers, and peers may unintentionally (often negatively) impact adolescents' identity development through teaching strategies, teacher expectations, and peer norms. Second, studies on how schools and teachers can intentionally support adolescents' identity development through explorative learning experiences. The third group provide insights into the preconditions that intentionally fosters identity development such as supportive classroom climate. Together, the existing studies suggest that schools and teachers are often unaware of the many different ways in which they may significantly impact adolescents' identity development. The second category of studies addresses identity development and experiences of adolescents with learning difficulties within the school context. These articles employed qualitative research methods.

Studies which Addressed the School's Role in Adolescents' Identity Development

Different theoretical perspectives on identity development were adopted through the first category of studies. Some of which adopted a sociocultural perspective and a psychosocial perspective, while others adopted a social psychological perspective and sociological perspectives. From a socio-cultural perspective, a person's identity can be developed through the person's participation in various socio-cultural contexts, such as home, school, and work. The main focus of the psychosocial perspective is on the internal, psychological processes of a person's identity

development. From a social psychological perspective, a person's identity is constructed by a social and a personal part. The sociological perspective is interested with adolescents' group membership, its evaluation, and the extent to which adolescents identify with these groups.

The Unintentional Role of Schools and Teachers on Adolescent Identity Development

Studies in the first category addresses the role of teaching strategies that may unintentionally impact students' identity development. Studies which used a sociocultural perspective on identity development discussed how the teaching strategies used in the classroom give opportunities to engage in the classroom and with the subject studied, and how some teaching strategies facilitate the emergence of certain identities. Horn (2008) compared teaching strategies in mathematics classes in two different high schools. In the first school, students worked individually on cumulative set of mathematical problems, while students and teachers in the other school, worked collaboratively through group activities that supported different abilities. At the first school, the teaching strategy unintentionally made students think that math is a hard subject which negatively affected their self-views. The reason for that is that students had to remember all the past material that got advanced at some point where students reached to the point that they can't learn anymore. Whereas the other school stressed that everyone is able to improve their abilities in math as students with different abilities worked collaboratively. In addition, other studies focused on how teaching strategies shaped adolescents' self-understandings as capable students in the classroom context and on adolescents' envisioned future in a particular domain (Anderson 2007; Calabrese Barton et al. 2013; Cobb et al. 2009; Cone et al. 2014; Hamilton 2002; Lambert 2015). On the other hand, other studies focused on how some teaching strategies negatively influence students' self-understandings when engaged in a particular subject as visual art (Charland, 2010). Participants in this study were aware of those teaching strategies that hinder their learning and of teacher practices that disable the development of positive identities. In particular multi-sensory teaching was mentioned, it influenced the self-understandings of some of the participants in this study and helped recognize

their learning style which facilitated their engagement in the lessons, strengthened their learning ability, and helped to understand the lessons well.

Other studies demonstrated that teachers may have permanent expectations of adolescents which influence negatively or positively the construction of certain identities (Berg 2010; Rubin 2007; Vetter 2010; Wortham 2006) in her research on a foster child that he was constantly approached by his teachers based on others' perspectives and previous experiences with him as a difficult student. Consequently, his teachers failed to observe the student's improved behavior. The teacher' fixed views and expectations of this adolescent, limited the range of available identity positions and negatively influenced his self-view. Also, the previous studies showed that fixed teachers' expectation sometimes benefit and sometimes harm adolescents' engagement in school practices. Studies with a sociocultural perspective on identity development, suggested that adolescents' self-understandings are informed by their perception of their teachers' expectations, whether the perceived teacher expectations represent truth, imagined or both (Edwards-Groves and Murray 2008). Another group of studies addressed the role of teachers' implicit expectations which may play in adolescents' identity development (Bartlett, 2007; Fields and Enyedy, 2013; Heyd-Metzuyanim, 2013). For example, the study by Heyd-Metzuyanim (2013) showed how the implicit and unintentional low expectations of her students' mathematical abilities, influenced the student's self-perception of being a mathematics student later. Thus, her mathematics identity was influenced by the communicated teacher expectations and the student's self-perception. Another study which adopted a sociological perspective discussed the influence of teachers' negative and implicit expectations of some social groups that teachers form on the students' feelings of self-worth (Bottrell, 2007). Two other studies (Seaton 2007: Smith 2008) examined whether adolescents do or do not identify with the expectation that teachers explicitly state. It showed that even if teachers' expectations make fixed identities available for adolescents, they may or may not approve of. In Smith (2008) study, some students accepted their identity position as that honor students are expected to work hard, others rejected. This concludes that teacher's expectations have to be

desirable and meaningful from students' view in order to become part of their identities. Other studies addressed teachers' certain expectations of adolescents that have different ethnic background (Aschbacher et al. 2010; Bartlett 2007; Edwards-Groves and Murray 2008; Johnson et al. 2011; Wortham 2006) different academic abilities (Landers 2013; Jethwani 2015), and / or gender (Jethwani 2015; Johnson et al. 2011). These studies showed that certain group of students may be subjected to inequalities through teachers' expectations across different groups of students. This, will introduce different opportunities which may promote or restrict their identity development. Participants in this study, especially the ones with learning difficulties discussed similar issues as they felt that they were being treated unfairly and unequally by some teachers at school by providing unequal opportunities for students in relation to academic opportunities, being treated unequally through their interactions, and through the application of unfair and inappropriate punitive measures. This may limit the construction of different identities whether in the school context or other contexts and spaces. This study is also compatible with the former studies in which sometimes participants' self-views fluctuate between the internalization or the rejection of negative self-views depending on the kind of relationship with teachers. Participants oppressive and dehumanizing relationships with teachers that was showed through their need for respect, sometimes negatively and implicitly influenced their self-views, but positive relationships with others, had an affective role in empowering and challenging negative self-views and contributed in the construction of positive identities, in which is considered as resistance of the status quo and the unilateral narratives.

Two studies with a psychosocial perspective on identity development, focused on teachers' roles on adolescent's identity development (Harrel-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Akinribola, 2018). Harrel-Levy & Kerpelman (2010) addressed the role of teachers as co-constructors of adolescent's identities when using a transformative pedagogical approach that involves fostering collaborative learning and empowering students to think creatively and critically. It also emphasizes the role of daily interactions on adolescents' identity development through the transformative pedagogical

approach. In studying teachers' conceptions of their roles on adolescents' identity formation when interacting with adolescence in the classroom context, Akinribola's study (2018) found through teachers' narratives that all of them played an agentic role in the identity development of their adolescent students. However, some of the teachers' conceptions of their role doesn't go beyond subject matter and the curriculum. Others, thought of their roles as identity agents which is expressed intentionally; through their subject matters and daily interactions with students. They elucidate that giving adolescents the opportunity to make independent academic choices is beneficial for their identity development. Although participants experienced dehumanizing and oppressive relationships with teachers at school, they had the opportunity to experience academic and emotional support with others. Through these relationships participants were treated as human beings, beyond the academics, they cared for their success, and provided with positive feedback. These kinds of relationships played an important role in the co-construction and development of positive identities.

Another group of studies which adopted a sociocultural perspective addressed the role peer norms may unintentionally play in adolescents' identity development (Fields and Enyedy 2013; Ideland and Malmberg 2012; Volman and Ten Dam 2007). In their study of a programing class in a middle school, Fields and Enyedy (2013), found out that even though the teacher gave one of the students the space to construct a certain identity, his peers denied this identity position since the students' classmates had a negative experience through a previous relationship with him. Consequently, it was hard for this student to validate the identity position that was offered by his teacher that he tried to pursue. Other studies (Hall 2010; Hall et al. 2010; Johnson et al. 2011; Vetter et al. 2011; Wilmot 2014) focused on how peers can influence the identification of certain identity positions by stigmatizing them. So, when adolescents identify themselves with identity positions that are stigmatized by their peers, they may hide it to protect their reputation. In his study, Hall (2010) found that when teachers offered their students different levels of reader identity positions, this negatively influenced the engagement of students with reading difficulties in the

classroom so as to cover their reading difficulties. This indicates that their classmates' norm does not support having students with such difficulty in class which might hinder the development of a good reader's identity. Conversely to the former studies, participants' relationships with their peers and friends were very important to most if not all the participants in this study. It was their daily motivation for going to school, including participants with learning difficulties as they narrated about the importance of being with friends to survive school and for their well-being, although, their main focus was on their relationships with teachers in the school context. Other times, their relationships with friends limited participants with a fixed identity when they had to hide their emotions and thoughts, perform and keep a certain and acceptable image in order to stay in the relationship. This is in line with the former studies in which participants cover their learning difficulties in order to fit in their classroom norm which does not support students with learning difficulties. The Jerusalem American School, does not celebrate learning difficulties. On the contrary, students with learning difficulties are being stigmatized as the school system separates them from other students based on their academic abilities; putting them in a different class than their other classmates. Students with learning difficulties were being blamed for their difficulties keeping the system and the environment "innocent": as in not responsible for, and is not part of, not contributing to those difficulties. Even though the school tries to help students with their learning by providing them with learning accommodations, this is not enough, the school should adapt its environment (classrooms) to accommodate all students' needs with various learning styles not just students with learning difficulties for example providing flexible and varied teaching methods in various subjects. In addition to how students with learning difficulties are addressed by their teachers; in a way that reflects disrespect. This is based on how students in this study perceived and expressed their relationship to some teachers. The school as a system excludes students with learning difficulties from taking part of certain activities, as will be discussed later on.

The Intentional Role of Schools and Teachings on Adolescent Identity Development

Most of the studies in this section focused on learning experiences that allow adolescents to be introduced to learning contents, learning activities, and identity positions they were not aware of. Most of these studies were conducted in after-school clubs, extracurricular classes at school, or at summer camps. All of these studies (Brickhouse, 2001; Squire, 2006; Stokes and Wyn, 2007; Barrett and Baker 2012; Bruin and Ohna 2013; Carlone et al. 2015; Johnson et al. 2011; Jones and Deutsch 2013; Stapleton 2015; Van Sluys 2010) demonstrated that providing adolescents with such experiences may induce them to adopt new interests, to associate with undiscovered talents, and to try out new identity positions. For example, Stapleton (2015), adopting a sociocultural perspective, examined the effect of the learning experiences in a summer program on adolescents' self-understandings. Students were taken to a site that was deeply affected by climate change, where they were introduced to people and sites which later stimulated them to become more engaged with environmental issues. Also, it introduced adolescents to new topic that fascinated them, and provided them with insights into how they could confront environmental issues themselves.

Another group of studies addressed the role of a supportive classroom climate in promoting the development of adolescents' identities (Cummins et al. 2015; Flum and Kaplan 2006; Hamman and Hendricks 2005; Buxton 2005; Fields and Enyedy 2013; Hazari et al. 2015; Kendrick et al. 2013; Lam and Tam 2011; Olitsky 2007; Tan and Calabrese Barton 2007; Van Ryzin 2014). They argued that it's important to make adolescents feel respected and appreciated to affirm a supportive classroom climate. Some of these articles (Flum and Kaplan 2006; Hamman and Hendricks 2005; Hazari et al. 2015; Olitsky 2007; Tan and Calabrese Barton 2007; Harrell-Levy and Kerpelman 2010; Archer et al. 2009; Carlone et al. 2015) focused on the significance of making adolescence feel secure enough to make mistakes. Therefore, a supportive classroom climate will contribute in adolescents' feelings of confidence in trying out new roles and in reflecting on their own feelings and thoughts. It can also contribute in discovering who they are and what they want to be (Erikson,

1968; Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1993; Sinai et al. 2012). Other studies pointed out ways to promote a supportive classroom environment such as teacher's compliments and warm teacher-student relationships which make students feel recognized and valued (Hamman and Hendricks 2005; Lam and Tam 2011; Robb et al. 2007; Rudd 2012). Also, approaching students with a flexible and an open mind (less judgmental) will contribute in exploring other identities (Rudd 2012). In most of their relationships with teacher, participants of this study asked for emotional support as they did not feel they were cared for, respected, or valued. They were not feeling recognized by teachers in the classroom environment. On the contrary, participants experienced humiliating, oppressive and dehumanizing relationships with teachers. Teachers who disrespected them and their mental abilities. This may have affected their well-being according to the recognition theory and exploring other identities at school. Rarely, participants were given positive feedback from teachers which had a positive influence on their feelings and behavior in the classroom. Also, some studies focused on the role of mutual recognition among peers as an important feature of a supportive classroom climate (Fields and Enyedy 2013, Cummins et al. 2015, Harrell-Levy and Kerpelman 2010), and how it could be stimulated by engaging adolescents in learning activities that invite mutual encouragement (Carlone et al. 2015; Tan and Barton 2008) or by making adolescents aware of what they have in common (Hardee and Reyelt 2009; Jones and Deutsch 2013; Parker 2014; Tan and Calabrese Barton 2007).

Other studies focused on the school context to provide schools and teachers with insights into how adolescents' identity development can be supported (Verhoeven, Poorthuis & Volman, 2019; Akinribola, 2018). It suggested that explorative learning experiences must be meaningful and situated in a supportive classroom climate in order to foster identity exploration and development. Also, other studies addressed the role of meaningful learning experiences in supporting the development of adolescents' identities (Higgins, 2015; Thompson, 2014; Skerrett, 2012). They suggest that learning experiences can be considered as meaningful when there is a space for adolescents' own knowledge and experiences in class and when they can associate what they learn

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at school to their daily lives. Also, when adolescents can identify with the material content (Higgins, 2015). This can be achieved when students are provided with a space not only to voice their learning interests, but to be partners in selecting and preparing the lessons or when teachers take this those interests into consideration (Thompson, 2014, Skerrett, 2012).

Another group of studies showed that the school context has a direct and indirect effect on adolescents identity development in relation to their peer relationships and the school's environment. Studies revealed that a good relationship with peers is positively related to positive identity development (Ragelienė, 2016) a stronger school identity (Willems and Bosma, 2006, p. 109), and a lower tendency to experience negative feelings such as loneliness. As we can view later on through the participants' narratives, being at school with peers have decreased Sameer's (one of the participants) feelings of loneliness, especially the loneliness he experiences at home. The research space created through this study added up another space for Sameer, a group that met several times during the school year, a space where he and others were heard, and where his knowledge and observations about others, self and the world were taken seriously and sometimes validated.

Studies which Addressed the School's Role in the Development of Adolescents with Learning Difficulties

Literature addressing identity development in adolescents with learning difficulties is limited. Maxey & Beckert (2017) noted that the existing literature focused only on the development of sexual identity and social identity related to the observations of these adolescents of their peers and siblings (Maxey & Beckert, 2017). Other studies focused on identity development and experiences of adolescents with learning difficulties within the school context. One study examined the way in which adolescents with learning difficulties describe their understanding of learning disabilities and the meaning and relevance of this label to the way they experience and describe who they are (Muskat, 2009). This study differentiates between the term identity and self as it considers

identity as the part of the self that is attainable within a particular context. It underlined the importance of working with students to understand their learning difficulties, know and celebrate their strengths and be aware of their rights as students with learning difficulties. Also, challenging the stigma related to learning disabilities and to increase public awareness of people with learning difficulties.

Another study, addressed the lived experiences of adolescents with learning difficulties (LD) in regards to peer support, self-advocacy, and self-acceptance of LD (Rosetti & Henderson, 2013). The study highlighted the importance of self-advocacy and peer support to the success of adolescents with learning difficulties. Adolescents, acknowledged the importance of their connection and relatedness with peers with learning difficulties which helped them have better experiences in school and feeling more supported where they began to see personal growth in their lives. It also underlined the importance of the school's experiences, the role of the family, and the adolescents' understanding of their learning difficulties in forming a positive internalized identity in relation to those difficulties.

A study explored how school experiences played a positive role in shaping the identity of adolescents attending a special needs school (Jacobs & Collair, 2017). Adolescents shared positive relationships with their teachers and peers where they felt care and a sense of belonging to the school. This, might lead to an internalized positive sense of self. On the other hand, the school did not provide students with support or guidance in relation to future job-related skills which negatively influenced their thinking about future careers which is significant for identity formation. Another study focused on how adolescents with learning disability conceptualize disability identity, and the elements that may influenced the development of this identity. Their disabilities varied from Autism, physical disabilities, ADHD, and learning disabilities. It concluded that the prominence of disability identity often varied depending on the environment. Also, adolescents relationships with peers with or without learning disability played an important role in the development of disability identity (Forber-Pratt, Minotti, Burdick, Kate Brown & Hanebutt, 2021).

In studying the experiences and aspirations of young people living with Developmental Coordination Disorder, Lingam et al. (2011) suggested that identity formation is influenced by how these adolescents perceived their disability and their experiences at school in relation to their peers and teachers. It also noted that being part of a social network positively influenced their sense of belonging especially one that valued differences and similarities (Lingam et al., 2011). In this study, participants with learning difficulties were aware of their learning needs, but they did not perceive those difficulties as an individual issue, nor as a part of their identity. Conversely, they advocated for their needs and the needs of others as a collective issue, in a collective voice. On the other hand, those participants experienced oppressive and dehumanizing relationships with their teachers which influenced their feelings of belonging and recognition through these relationships. These students lack the emotional support that they seek through these relationships. They needed caring and respectful relationships in addition to their academical needs. Unfortunately, in this school, recognition is found in policy, but not in practice. Thus, there is a need for more emphasis on the quality of relationships throughout education policy and practice, including structures and systems to support students' well-being and their identity development. Students were asking for a caring culture at school.

Most studies, if not all, focused on identity development of adolescents with learning difficulties and without learning difficulties through school as a space and the various elements of schools. My study is different as it looks and examines identity across spaces. Nevertheless, it shares with these studies (Holland et al. 1998; Holland and Lave 2001; Wenger 1998) the adoption of a sociocultural perspective which understands the development of a person's identity through participation in various sociocultural contexts, such as home, school, and other spaces. This perspective is related to the principle of ecology which views individuals as embedded within and interacting with multiple social systems. Through the principle of ecology and the application of the geo-narrative approach, different identities can be constructed through different contexts in addition to the school context.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This study follows a narrative approach to explore ways in which adolescent students with and without learning difficulties experience different spaces in their lives, and ways in which they construct and co-construct their identities within these multiple spaces. It is through narratives, through the stories that we tell about ourselves and about our world that we construct and re-construct parts of our selfhood and identity. Through the narratives that participants tell about themselves, we as researchers can capture and understand parts of evolving selfhood. Yet the created stories within the research interaction (the interview for example) do not solely belong to research participants, but are however, a co-construction. Narrative research is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through "collaboration between researchers and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). We as researchers, acknowledge our presence and our subjectivity thus our contribution in shaping the interaction and the created narratives. Through narratives we can also understand the complex and multilayered of some aspects of human experience.

Looking at selfhood as a rhizome and the use of the geo-narrative approach, allows for multiple selves to be constructed and co-constructed in different spaces. Every time participants think about themselves in a particular space, they provide a new entryway to their selves, therefore new meanings, insights and constructions. These co-constructed stories about the different spaces might have infinite connections to each other through the speaking, depending on the entryway that is taken in that space and time. Other stories might be unlinked depending on the context of the interview or conversation (the responses of the researcher for example) and the different space that is talked about. One can never have a view of the complete map of participants' selfhood, since the narrations people tell about themselves are never complete as they are in an ongoing process of co-

construction and co- reconstruction. "We can only explore several temporal regions and paths knowing that we are taking part in the exploration' (Sermijn, Devlieger & Loots, 2008, p. 644). This refers to cartography which is one feature of the rhizomatic self.

The Jerusalem American School (JAS) / Beit Hanina, East Jerusalem

This section is an attempt to introduce the school context where the study took place. At the beginning I illustrate how the school presents itself to the public through their website, followed by some critical reflections, and later on I reflect on my experience as a counselor and as a mother of two boys attending the same school.

School Context and Policy

The Jerusalem American School is located in Jerusalem under the Israeli authority. Nevertheless, this aspect was not reflected in how it represents itself as a school and the influence of this issue on the students' identity development. This school with its neoliberal orientation, seeks to promote the idea of peace and co-existence ignoring the importance of promoting a Palestinian identity among the Palestinian students, taking into consideration that the majority of the students are Palestinians.

School Overview

"The Jerusalem American School is a private, co-educational K3-12 institution offering a college preparatory program for American, Palestinian and Israeli universities. The school, located in Beit Hanina - Jerusalem, was established in 1988 to meet the needs of families seeking a quality education in the English language. The school currently enrolls more than 900 students and employs a faculty and staff of approximately 80 adults" (The Jerusalem American School, No date).

Purpose Statement

"The purpose of The Jerusalem American School is to provide a positive environment where students value character, learn peace, are academically prepared and socially confident to succeed in life. The school is keen to develop and integrate students' intellectual, social, physical and spiritual being so that they can fulfil God's purpose for their lives". "As their role models, leaders, teachers and friends, it is our privilege to participate in their maturing process" (The Jerusalem American School, No date).

Objectives

"The school's academic goal is excellence, as they expect each student to work to the best of his or her ability. Their desire is that each student will take pride in his/her workmanship and to do so with zeal. They hope to instill these attitudes in every student. The school's goal is to develop students' proficiency in the English, Arabic and Hebrew languages in order for them to continue their studies and succeed in the language of their choice. The Jerusalem American School strives to provide a well-balanced curriculum including multiple languages, mathematics, natural science, social studies, art, music, physical education and ethics" (The Jerusalem American School, No date).

School Curriculum and Programs

"The Jerusalem American School offers an excellent academic program to its high school students, which includes preparing students for SATI and SATII exams which serve as Tawjihi equivalency. Graduates go on to study at American, Palestinian, Israeli and European universities. Licensed with the Palestinian and American and Israeli Ministries of Education, the Jerusalem School provides an education that helps students gain access to some of the most desired colleges of this region. It is accredited both internationally as well as with the United States National

Accreditation Board. The Jerusalem School's challenging curriculum and global extracurricular opportunities develop strong graduates" (The Jerusalem American School, No date).

Reflections on the School's Mission and Policy

Reflecting on the aforementioned purpose of The Jerusalem American School, we can conclude that the school's main focus is on academic excellence which can be a far-reaching goal for many students at school, especially students with learning difficulties in spite of the learning accommodations. This emphasis may limit students within a specific academic identity excluding the emergence of other identities that students may construct and co-construct throughout the school context.

On another note, the school's purpose does not focus on developing a Palestinian identity. On the contrary, it focuses on coexistence and peace and not on resistance with the goal of liberation, which is shown through its peace curriculum where students learn about local and international peace heroes through middle school, and conflict resolution courses for high school students. For example, the school provides extracurricular activities which include inviting some of the peace heroes to talk about their ways in resolving conflicts peacefully. The focus on peace is also manifested and affirmed through the pictures of peace heroes on the middle school walls, the school's peace logo that is printed on students' uniforms. In addition to the diverse faculty which consists of educators from different nationalities like Americans, Palestinians, and Israelis. The student body is also diverse and consists of Palestinian and Korean students.

We can notice that the school is promoting for peace and normalization between the Palestinian and Israeli societies, through the school's purpose, curriculum, and activities. This, will later produce uninvolved and neutral students with no prominent Palestinian Identity. Peace education denies the reality of colonization and sees Palestinians and Israelis as equals, when in fact and in reality, they are not, it denies the existence of a colonial relation between the colonized and the colonizer. This is a serious problem and it is very confusing and harmful for students' wellbeing

and self-worth. For example, the school focuses on equality and peace education, but in reality, Palestinian students outside the school live another reality (dehumanization and humiliation for example on checkpoints, home demolitions etc.) they may internalize a negative identity, they may become ashamed of their origins, of their cause…they may try to dissociate from being Palestinian and from our culture, heritage and language. Without a strong collective Palestinian identity, they may suffer individually/psychologically whenever confronted with the brutality of the colonizer. A strong collective Palestinian identity provides young people with psychological protection (Makkawi, 2017).

The Lived Experience of a Counselor

I have been a counselor at The Jerusalem American School since 2013. Based on my job description, I worked with students in all educational stages, from kindergarten till high school, especially students with learning difficulties in middle and high school levels. Through my role at school, I also collaborated with parents and the educational staff (principal & teachers) to help students cope with their daily life challenges whether it's educational, social, emotional, and behavioral. This will ensure that they form positive life experiences.

My work with students at school especially at the high school level, enabled me to observe and interact with students in order to help them create positive experiences there. The majority of them were facing relational problems with their teachers, which affected many aspects in their school life. Listening to students' stories about the difficulties they face with teachers was an important part of my role as a counselor, something they lack in their relationship with some of their teachers. Here, I found myself being the mediator between teachers and students in order to resolve their problems. I was moved by many of the stories that I have heard across the years, and at times felt anger, especially towards incidents that reflect a strong power relation between students and teachers. From there, I dedicated my work to support students and help them advocate for themselves through their relationship with teachers. At the same time, I worked with teachers by

giving them tools to better interact and understand students whether on the academic or the emotional level. Through classroom observations, I was able to notice and to relate to students' problems with their teachers. Students were frequently punished, to me it was obvious that they were misunderstood by teachers.

The school in its written statement claims to focus on developing students holistically through integrating intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. However, in reality, their main focus is on academic development and peace building, ignoring students' need for a positive relationship with teachers, which is the foundation for fulfilling other needs and for achieving other goals. The need for support whether it is emotional or academic and a need for respect and understanding are crucial.

My Experience as a Mother

My experience as a mother of two boys who attended this same school is somehow different. Both of my sons have attended the school from kindergarten. At the time when I started the research, Waleed was at the university and Ameer was in 7th grade. Their school years went smooth in my perspective, they rarely complained about their relationships with teachers, they were curious about learning new information through their lessons especially in science, they enjoyed working and helping their classmates in understanding the lesson when they needed it, they were social at school and had many friends, and they enjoyed doing extra curriculum activities such as playing sports. Two reasons might have affected this experience. One, is that my children are high achievers, they went through all the school stages smoothly with few academic or behavioral issues. They were aware of the school rules, and of the academic and behavioral expectations and tried to always follow through, which brings us to the second reason, which is my work as a counselor at school. Working at school might have affected the way they behaved knowing my expectations of them as their mother, and also it might have affected the way teachers relate to them in many ways. So, whenever there's an issue concerning my children, teachers used to refer to me to solve it, or

they would address them directly about the issue and advise them because they care about them and because they know me as a person and as their colleague. At other times, my presence at school was used negatively, as a pressure tool, when teachers tried to adjust their behaviors.

After becoming familiar with Freire's notions of liberation pedagogy, I am now aware that my sons were good ambassadors of banking education, they never even questioned the system. They were the well-mannered children that every teacher dream of. In other words, my sons accepted and respected the school rules and followed them and this is probably why they never got into trouble with the system. This system transformed them into followers, not critical thinkers. Teachers considered them as passive entities, as receivers who must fit into the school system.

Research Participants

The selection of participants in qualitative research is purposeful rather than random, which will help the researcher understand the issue being studied (Creswell, 2008). This type of sampling requires a careful consideration of the purpose of the study and then to identify participants within the parameters of what is being studied (Silverman, 2005). The sampling criteria implies that the case to be studied would be a homogeneous group. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) describe it as a group where the members have something in common; like gender, age, social class, education level, particular life experiences or a combination of the above. The aim of selecting a homogeneous group is to gain an in-depth understanding of the particular group's experiences or thoughts regarding a certain issue. However, we acknowledge that although the research participants share many things in common, yet they are diverse in many other aspects.

Participants were invited to participate in this study according to a certain criterion, which requires an enrolment in the 10th grade at The Jerusalem American School. These students were boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 16, some of which are identified with learning difficulty and some are not. Erikson emphasized this stage in life, as the period in the human development

cycle during which the individual starts to question and to develop a sense of personal identity and avoid the danger of "role diffusion" and "identity confusion" (Erikson, 1950, p. 51).

The study included the narratives and experiences of six participant students (two females and four males) three of which were identified as having some sort of a learning difficulty and the others did not have any learning difficulty. My knowledge about these participants was created through different ways/means, not to mention the individual and group interviews where knowledge was co-constructed about their lives and experiences through different spaces in their lives. Some of them, I worked with individually on social issues, others, my work was in collaboration with their guardians in relation to behavioral issues at a young age, and with the rest, my work was restricted to academic issues at an older age.

Introducing Research Participants

Sameer

Sameer is a tall young man with blue eyes and light hair color. He was 15 years old at the beginning of the study attending 10th grade. He was enrolled at The Jerusalem American School since he was 5 years old. He is the second child in a family consisting of four members. His parents passed away since almost 5 years with a couple of months difference in time between them due to sickness. So, he lives with his grandmother in Beit-Hanina /Jerusalem. His brother doesn't live with them, he comes to visit once a week, leading to a weak brotherhood bond according to Sameer. Sameer is polite, calm, friendly, and supportive as it was illustrated during the group sessions. He has a positive self-image which is showed as he presented himself as a handsome young man. He is not very social at school as he spent his time with few friends during the break time. Also, he is not very social anywhere else which is illustrated through his drawings of just two spaces. This might contribute to his feelings of loneliness and sadness which is showed through his narratives. Therefore, Sameer likes to go to school more than staying at home, as he said: "I'd rather be in

school because it's like I'm breathing…I see things outside…I'm doing things". His parent's death at a young age, made him more aware and understanding of other people's circumstances. So, at school, he has a different perspective, a positive one, more than other students about teachers-student relationships. He understands both perspectives. Also, his perspective of social situations is different than his classmates, he thinks more logically than emotionally compared to other students.

Adam

Adam was 15 years old at the beginning of the study. He was in 10th grade. He enrolled at Jerusalem American school when he was 5 years old. He is the oldest one in a family of five members. He lives in Jerusalem with his mother, younger sister and brother. His father works overseas and has high expectations of him in relation to pursue higher education. As you meet Adam for the first time, you cannot fail to notice that he is a charismatic, very tall young man with blue eyes, blond hair, and a smile on his face. As you get to know him, you'll find out that he is smart, funny, friendly and very popular at his school. In addition, he is very compassionate and caring through his relationships with his friends and peers. He likes to please the close people around him in every space, especially his parents, grandmother, and his friends. Adam described himself as a happy positive person and that he likes to see everyone happy at school. He also likes to motivate and support his close friends as it was shown during the group interview.

Rana

Rana was 15 years old at the beginning of the study. She was in 10th grade. She attended The Rosary Sisters School before enrolling at The Jerusalem American School in 8th grade. She's the eldest in a family consisting of four members. Her parents were divorced four years ago. She lives with her mother and sister in Jerusalem, in a house that belongs to the father's family. Rana and her sister visit their father on the weekends. Her father re-married and has a son from this marriage. Rana has a good relationship with her mother and have many things in common. She

understands her and compliments her more than her dad whom she doesn't get along with as much. Rana is a small sized young woman with black hair and brown eyes. She is very active and outgoing and gets nervous easily. She is very ambitious and have future academic goals. Thus, she studies hard in order to achieve good grades that qualify her to attend a university in Turkey. Therefore, she learns the Turkish language in an institution. I got to know Rana a year after she was transferred from the Rosary Sisters School to The Jerusalem American School due to relational difficulties with her girl peers. Back then, she attributed those difficulties to negative experiences in her relationships at The Rosary School which contributed to trust issues with her girl peers. Accordingly, she didn't have many girl friends at her current school. Rana described herself as a moody person depending on the people around her. So, sometimes she likes to make people laugh and influence them to be better people. Other times, she likes to be alone when she feels stressed.

Reem

Reem is an average sized young woman with beautiful long black hair and black eyes. She was 16 years old at the beginning of the study. She was in 10th grade. She lives in Jerusalem with her parents and twin siblings. Reem is the oldest in a family of 5 members. Therefore, her mother gave her the responsibility of taking care of her two siblings. When she was 14 years old, she was diagnosed with ADD, and was on Ritalin which was prescribed by a neurologist. She attended The Rosary Sisters School before enrolling at The Jerusalem American School in 8th grade. There, she faced academic difficulties which negatively influenced her achievement. During that time, she felt fearful and stressed most of the time, as the school stressed on high academic achievement. She described her experience there as horrifying: "school was like a horror movie". Reem described herself as quiet, friendly, well organized, and obedient. She has a close relationship with her mother whom she understands her more than her father. She also has a good relationship with her grandmother who lives in the same building. When she feels bored, she goes up to her grandmother's apartment and spend some time with her. She has a good relationship with teachers

at school. They helped and cooperated well with her, providing her with learning accommodations in class especially as she was a new student at school. Through the group and individual interviews, I had the chance to learn more about Reem through various aspects in her life. I learned that Reem is a survivor. Even though she faced several academic challenges at school, she never gave up. On the contrary, she found a way through every challenge.

Mustafa

Mustafa was 15 years old at the beginning of the study. He was in 10th grade. He was enrolled at The Jerusalem American School in K5 at the age of five. He lives in Jerusalem with his parents and 3 siblings (girls). He is the youngest in his family which consists of 6 members. From my observations and teachers' relationships with Mustafa at school, I can describe him as a well-mannered, respectful, neat, and social young man. When he was 8 years old, he was diagnosed with ADD and speech difficulties. The difficulties in attention and concentration, in addition to the problem in the working memory, made it difficult for him to memorize materials. Therefore, the school provided him with learning accommodations in class like reading the instructions and simplifying them, and to sit in the front rows in class. During tests, he was also provided with extended time and reading the questions. Mustafa is a very ambitious student. In spite of his learning difficulties, he was looking forward to attend university and be an architect.

Rami

Rami was 15 years old at the beginning of the study. He was in 10th grade. He attended The Jerusalem American School in K5 at the age of five. He lives in Jerusalem with his mother, grandmother and two siblings (a boy and a girl). He's the eldest in his family which consists of 5 members. His father works overseas and he visits his family every six weeks and stays for almost two weeks. His parents, especially his mother is very supportive of him and his siblings. They always push him to do his best in everything, especially academically. Rami describes himself as a

very helpful boy; he helps his mother at home with the house work and with her own project in Al Oja area near Jericho. He is also a caring brother. He advises his siblings and supports them. Through my role at school, I got to learn more about Rami through various aspects: academically, socially...etc. Rami is a friendly and well-mannered boy. He always worked very hard at school in order to reach his full potentials and get good grades in order to attend a university to study international law. He participated in youth organizations that his mother encouraged him to join in order to develop his personality in various aspects especially socially. Rami is organized, he prepares a study schedule to avoid getting stressed out and do well at school. He was diagnosed with ADD during his childhood. He suffered from difficulties in attention and concentration. Therefore, he needed time to understand the learning material at school and needs more time to study at home. The school provided him with learning accommodations such as extended time because of his learning difficulties when he was at a younger age, but stopped when he reached high school.

Process and Procedures

After obtaining the principal's consent to implement my research at school, I introduced my research to the two sections of 10th grade during a literature lesson with the collaboration of the English teacher. I introduced the general aim of the research which is to explore ways in which adolescent students experience different spaces in their lives. I explained about the tools, procedures, place and time of the sessions. It was clear for the students that their participation would be anonymous to protect their privacy. Voluntary participation was requested accordingly, and the participants signed a consent form.

My role as a social worker in this school facilitated the introduction of my research to 10th grade students and their consent in participating in the research. I helped some of these students in coping with their daily life challenges especially in the school context, in addition to teaching them

life skills course two years earlier. I tried to differentiate my role as a social worker and as a researcher in the school context, stating that my work will be with them not about them.

Data Creation

Two groups of three students were formed, the goal of which was to explore the multiple identity constructions adolescent students with or without learning difficulties create within different life spaces and contexts. One may say that a group that is consisted of three participants is not considered a group in the real sense because two of them might become friends or they can interact and connect more with each other leaving the third participant behind or out. This has happened in the "group" to a certain extent. It was not planned for the group to be restricted to three participants. In the beginning of the group formation, the number of participants was relatively big, approximately 12 students, then it started to decrease through the second session to reach up to 6 participants because of the unsuitability of the recess time to do research activities in the school context. In the following sessions that I invited the same students to attend to, just three participants could attend due to personal reasons.

During that time and according to the flexible co-constructive research philosophy that inspired my study, many changes and transformations has happened in my research journey that was adapted to the participants' circumstances. Several decisions were taken together with participants, before going forward, I used to discuss choices and preferences with them. We decided together and I respected their preferences. For example, after the number of the first group decreased, they decided to stay together as a closed group, as they felt comfortable with each other and mutual trust was built. Even the second group, it was not planned to be exclusive for students with learning difficulties, I did not intend to separate between students with learning difficulties and without difficulties. Students chose themselves in relation to their feelings of comfort in their relationship with the other, especially when their narrativesstarted taking personal paths, as they started to share personal issues about their selves and contexts. Therefore, I respected their wish and

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this is how the final groups were formed. At the beginning, the first group started with twelve, then six students continued in the following three sessions, then the other two sessions were carried out with three students. In addition to an individual session. In total, six sessions were carried out with the first group.

The first three sessions were carried out once a week for 45 minutes during the student's break time at the school's library. These initial sessions were considered to be the launching of the research. The other two sessions were also carried out once a week for about two hours outside the school context. The individual session was also carried out at school. Two sessions were carried out with the second group in the school context. The first group session lasted for about two hours. The second, was individual sessions for each participant which lasted for about 45 minutes.

Challenges

Implementing the sessions often presented challenges. Some of the participants wanted to make use of their break time to study for their tests, others forgot about the meetings, and another challenge was the duration of the meetings. The student's break time was an hour where they had to buy their lunch and to gather in the library which took time from the session time, which left us with 30- 45 minutes for implementing the session. To ensure all students' participation, I sent them e-mails the day before the meeting as a reminder. Despite the e-mails, some of the students forgot about the sessions where I had to approach them during the break. Recognizing students' need to rest and respecting their break time, I decided to organize the sessions outside the school setting.

Data Generation Tools

Creswell (2008) highlighted four different forms of qualitative data including observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. Data for this study was created through group dialogues/interviews and individual interviews, through unstructured and open-ended questions that intended to explore the experiences of students in different spaces in their lives. Interviews in

qualitative inquiry create a conversation that invites the telling of narrative accounts (i.e., stories) that will inform the research question. It also aims at obtaining contextualized accounts of participants' experiences, rather than information (Josselson, 2013). Qualitative interview is the art of hearing, which the researcher finds descriptive in understanding the value of giving voice to the research participants and their experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). In addition to creating narratives and creating selves through narratives, dialogues in a research setting can create opportunities for conscientization. When research is participatory and process-oriented it can engender positive experiences for participants.

Through a geo- narrative approach, participants were asked to talk about the most important and significant spaces in their lives and the times they visit these places. They had to make a geographical mapping of those places taking into account the way they look, the people there, things that are happening, and things that participants do there. They were also asked to describe themselves at each space, describe how others describe them at these different spaces, the typical stories people tell about them, and their feelings in each space.

Mapping

Mapping was used in the study to explore the students' experiences in different spaces in their lives through the use of the geo-narrative approach. "It is a participatory visual method in research interviews to stimulate a response" (Reavey & Prosser, 2012). The use of drawings to study issues of identity with children and adolescents, is a well-established participatory visual methodology in the social sciences (De Lange, Mitchell, & Stuart, 2007), in addition to the use of drawings in psychology. Drawings have long been used by psychologists to measure cognitive development (Goodenough, 1926) and as a projective technique (with adults as well as with children) to explore conscious and unconscious issues and experiences. Through drawings parts of the self-and/or levels of development will be visible; it reflects memories, thoughts, and feelings of participants. In this study mapping and drawing were not meant to convey a whole idea, or to be

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analyzed by the researcher, they are visual aids just to facilitate and encourage dialogue and interaction within the group, or during an interview (Dawani & Loots, 2015).

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Description of the Sessions

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Group One: (Adam/Sameer/Rana)

Session # 1

The first session was attended by six participants and it aimed at introducing the research project to the participants, where I elaborated more about the purpose of my research, and the process. In addition to establishing an agreement concerning the important issues that facilitates the interaction in the group like cooperation, listening to each other, respecting others' thoughts and feelings. The participants consented about recording the sessions, after clarifying its purpose and who will listen to them, and the use of pseudonyms to protect their identities. Two activities were carried out during this session: the first was about mutual things between participants to enhance team building within the group, and to emphasize the importance of listening skills. The second activity was related to the self and identity in different contexts as a launch to the research process and to the main issue to be explored. This activity included students' feelings, hobbies, favorite people and things, at the school context, home and other contexts in their lives.
(For further information, you can check out the appendix)

Session # 2

This session aimed at introducing and implementing the geo-narrative approach. Through geo-narratives, participants were asked to talk about the most important and significant spaces in their lives and the times they visit these spaces. They had to make a geographical mapping of those spaces, taking into account the way each space look, the people there, things that are happening, and the things that participants do there. They were also asked to describe themselves at each space, how others describe them at these different spaces, the typical stories people tell about them, and

their feelings in each. Students were provided with A3-sized papers and a pencil to draw and map those spaces. Then, they were given the time to think about those spaces. Some of them were hesitant about what to draw, how to draw, they were questioning whether to think of a place that they're comfortable in or important to them. Others had no confidence about their talent for drawing. So, I reassured them that the focus is not on how well they draw, but the drawing is just a mean to facilitate the dialogue when sharing their experiences, and a way to encourage them to think about the details they would like to include, and not on the quality of drawing. Therefore, they were introduced to the drawing as a research methodology in order to help them initiate their narratives. The participants spent this session working on the geographical map. Not all of the participants finished working on their maps, so they had the chance to take them home to continue working on them and return them next session.

Session # 3

Through this session, just two participants (Adam and Rana) could share their stories with the group, due to the lack of time. They both mapped home as the most important space in their lives, then school and another space. The participants were very excited to start sharing their drawings with others and requested to extend the session for a longer time. They also were interested in seeing and looking at what others have created, and were eager to listen to the narratives of one another. While participants were narrating, other participants stepped in, and started asking questions to the one narrating. The group therefore, offered a space for participants to inquire, to elaborate and to dialogue.

Sessions Outside School

Session # 4

This group session was carried out with the parents' signed consent, outside the school context, (Sabreen Association for Artistic Development/ Jerusalem) where there were no distractions that disrupt the course of the group. Previous group sessions were held in the school library and were restricted and limited by students' break time which made it stressful for them and for me. Session four was dedicated for students to relax and enjoy their time in an unstructured way. Also, my role as a social worker at school, required attending to several duties which made the implementation of the sessions stressful.

All participants were invited to attend this group session, but only Adam, Sameer and Rana could attend due to personal reasons. The session lasted for about two hours. All three participants had their maps with them, which they prepared during the last session. The aim of this meeting was to talk about the maps, to generate stories and narratives related to the spaces each chose to identify. Interestingly all participants mapped three important spaces; home, school, and another space (e.g., club, gym etc.). One participant drew only two spaces, which were the only ones that he had in his life at the time. For Sameer, those group sessions (initiated by my research) were the only space that he can socialize in and have fun with his friends. The group was supportive, participants were sensitive to each other's feelings when sharing private things about their family for instance. As a researcher I was the one who initiated the dialogue, but my role during those two hours became less central, and students took the lead and started questioning, commenting and directing the dialogue. During the session, participants shared deeply personal life aspects, and when they realized that towards the end, they asked that they continue as a 'closed' group. This was followed by another session, only Adam and Rana attended. During this session, we zoomed in into participants' experiences (from last session), elaborating more about their identities and selves within their chosen spaces. I noticed how participants were choosing their words when relating to one another,

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careful not to judge or to hurt. In general, I believe that the group provided research participants with a space to be at, to explore their selves and others and to construct their selfhood.

Individual Interviews

I carried out an individual interview with Sameer who could not attend the last group session. It took place in my office at school. It lasted for 45 minutes. During this interview Sameer focused on the two important spaces in his life right now, and compared himself in the present to himself in the past, and the choices he made. I noticed positive changes in his attitude towards learning, school, and future interests when compared to the previous sessions. The different tools used in this study facilitated the generation and the construction of narratives. Therefore, the data was not there, was not collected, but was made and created in interaction.

Group (2)
(Reem/Mustafa/Rami)
Inside the School

Session # 1

This group was created by participants themselves, they chose each other, based on feeling comfortable with one another, knowing that the research space entails sharing personal information. This group session was held at the beginning of the summer holiday in the school context with parents' signed consent. It lasted for about two hours. All the participants came to the sessions with their maps that they have prepared at home. The aim of this meeting was to talk about the maps, to generate stories and narratives related to the spaces that they mapped. Some of the participants drew two spaces, others drew three spaces. Mustafa drew his home, the gym that he used to go to, and temporary spaces such as restaurants, beaches…etc. Reem drew her home, her grandma's, and the sport club. Rami drew his two houses, the one in Jerusalem and the other in Al-Oja. All participants

in this group didn't draw the school on their maps for they didn't consider it as an important space in their lives. They only talked about it when I initiated the dialogue by inquiring about the school's role in their daily lives. I learned that school as a space became important and relevant to them because it provides them with opportunities to build relationships and friendships. As Rami stated: "I don't dream about school…there's nothing to remember about it…school is important just because I get to see my friends...without friends the school would be boring...what makes it beautiful is my friends, we have fun together...there's no taste to school, having friends at school...they motivate you...even though there are lessons, but when I get up in the morning, I want to see my friends". He further explained: "school has positive and negative sides, but the negative is more than the positive". Also, Mustafa feels the same way about the school being important just because of his friends. As he said: "school is important just because of my friends". He then talked about it being important to his future and education when I asked him if it's important to him. He added: "I don't like to go to school, I like to go there because of my friends and I have to go, I don't like it, but I have to". Mustafa is saying that the system is important for his success. Therefore, if he does not comply with the system, he can't succeed in life. Reem also likes to go to school because of her friends as she said: "The most important thing at school are my friends... we have a lot of fun... and the most annoying thing is homework because it stresses us out". The group was very supportive to each other. They were interested in listening and questioning about each other's' mutual experiences which they experienced at school and at their homes.

Individual Interviews

I carried out individual interviews with all these participants because they couldn't agree on a suitable time to meet again. Each individual interview lasted for almost an hour. The aim of the individual interviews was to zoom in and elaborate about the participants' experiences and identities through the spaces that they talked about during the group dialogue.

Research Ethics

Ethics in Relation to Research Paradigms

Research in community psychology is guided by certain paradigms and philosophical assumptions. Lincoln and Cuba (2000) and Blake Poland (2001) as mentioned in (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005) presented us with three different paradigms in relation to their ontology, epistemology, ideology, and methodology: Post-Positivist, Constructivist, and Critical paradigm. These paradigms differ in their view on the nature of reality. For example, the post-positivist paradigm asserts that there is a single external reality which is driven by universal laws and that can be described, explained, predicted and controlled. The researcher and the research object (the participants and topic of study) are independent. The researcher and the external reality are separate from each other. In order to understand reality, research must be objective and value free, in pursuit of the truth of reality. Values of the researcher and of the participants are not part of the research process. However, the researcher can play the role of advocate and activist using the research to promote social change. Research methodology here is primarily quantitative while qualitative methods are used to a lesser extent. On the other hand, the core assumption of the social constructivist paradigm is that there is no single, external reality, but rather mental constructions of reality that are based on people's experiences in context. Therefore, there is no "real" or "true" reality. The researcher and the research participants are interdependent with the goal of understanding and interpreting the multiple realities of the participants. Since research is value-laden, the researcher and research participants bring their values into the research process. Methodology through this paradigm is primarily qualitative and uses different methods such as interviews and observations, discourse analysis, narratives and case studies. Quantitative methods are used to a lesser extent.

The Critical paradigm to community research assumes that there is an external reality that is created by institutional and social structures that have been historically shaped by social, political,

cultural, economic, ethnoracial and gender factors. The researcher works in solidarity with oppressed groups and strives to amplify their voices through the process of dialogue and consciousness-raising. Values are shared between the researcher and research participants, and they should guide the research process toward social change. Researchers must be aware of their values and social position. Community research is primarily participatory and action oriented in nature, but both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in research.

My research in this light can be considered to fall within the social constructivism paradigm and to a lesser extent within the critical paradigm, thus is based on my views (basic assumptions) about reality as a community psychologist and based on the values, personal and social ethics that guides community psychology research including the research methodology, process, procedures, and data generating tools. Applying a geo-narrative approach allowed me to unterstand participants' experiences within different spaces in their lives. The use of the interviews and mapping as a data generating tool, allowed for multiple selves to be constructed and co-constructed with the research participants.

While launching and introducing the study to potential participants, personal ethics were taken into consideration, such as protecting their privacy through using pseudonym names, and parents signed consent for the interviews held outside and inside the school for the second group, and verbal consent for the recording of the individual and group interviews. In addition to the confirmation of voluntary participation in the research and the right to withdraw at any time. The researcher and research participants' values and social ethics were also a part of the research process which required for the researcher to be aware and self-reflexive of her values during the research process. Thus, in order to do so, and since community psychology don't believe in the "expert" approach, but in the active participation in the creation of knowledge, choice, and self-determination of the participants, I explained that my role will be as a researcher working in collaboration with them, not as a social worker at school. I tried approaching participants with fresh eyes, not as an insider and definitely not as an expert in order to explore and to learn together. The

geo-narrative approach through multiple sessions provided participants with time to think and to process ideas, which is not possible through a single interview. Participants were treated and seen as knowers, their knowledge and input were valued and have often led the research process. The research process evolved and matured while being in the field and while interacting with participants (it was not pre-determined) and decisions were made in partnership.

The purpose of my research is to extend participants' voices through dialogue in the hope to change or adjust the school policy and practice in relation to some issues or needs. Since research in community psychology is value-laden, I tried to attend to ethical issues and the synergy of values through my work with the participants, in order to promote the individual, relational and collective well-being and liberation of the participants. The research process had a positive influence on the lives of participants. For some, it provided a space to be at, to explore their selves and others, and to construct their selfhood. For others, it provided a space to reflect on their lives, influencing their attitudes towards learning, school, and future interests. The group dialogue created the space for participants to share their experiences with each other and to co-construct new knowledge and gain insight about how their identity have changed due to these past experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using structural narrative analysis and thematic/content analysis for the data generated by the first and second group of participants.

Narrative Analysis

Structural narrative analysis is suitable for interpreting interview narratives. It gives voice to participants, preserves the sequence of their thoughts and provides context for interpretation which might not be included otherwise. In structural narrative analysis, there's a focus not only on the "told" but also on the "telling" (Riessman, 2008, p.77). It is concerned not only with the content and

with the narrator's experience, but with the structure of the narrative; how a narrative was told. Structural narrative analysis focus on the form and language used to achieve the narrator's aims. There are two approaches to work with interview narratives. These approaches are appropriate for asking how an account is put together, made whole, coherent, and understandable out of parts in our personal stories. The first approach is that of William Labov- which is useful to work with traditional stories- those that have story elements related to time, space, characters, and action. However, the narratives I worked with were more in line with a post-modern narrative, therefore, the approach of James Gee was used.

1. **Attention to Units of Discourse: The Approach of James Gee**

"Some research participants develop extremely lengthy stories in interviews, which does not meet Labov's definition of a "story". There are shifts in time with aside, flash forwards, and flashbacks, and it can build meanings through complex forms of telling. Gee's method is useful for analyzing extended narratives of experience. The interpretation of meaning here begins with close examination of how a narrative is spoken in units that we all use in planning speech, such as idea units, lines and stanzas, strophes, and parts. A stanza, is a series of lines that have a parallel structure and sound as if they go together; they tend to be said at the same rate and with little hesitation between the lines. Gee argues that stanzas are a universal unit in planning speech just like in poetry. Typically, each stanza in a narrative is four lines long, but it can vary. It is about a single topic with a character, action, or other features of the narrative- a vignette" (Riessman, 2008, p.93). Gee's method requires attention to the audio recording to see how a sequence of utterances is actually said. While listening it is also important to listen for the pitch (intonation). Pitch signals the focus of a sentence, the information that the speaker wants the hearer to take as new. It offers cues as to what is important in a long stream of speech. It guides decisions about line breaks. Pauses and non-lexical expressions help in determining stanza breaks. Connectives like "and" and "so" set off stanzas. Then, the resulting transcript is tightly organized. Then titles are given to the stanzas. Gee's

approach of structural analysis accomplishes data reduction to lengthy narratives (Riessman, 2008, p.94-95).

Thematic Analysis

The second part of the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. It is important to be attentive to the produced data and based on it decide on a suitable way to analysis. My aim was to produce narrative accounts using a geo-narrative approach; however, people are different and settings are different. The first group of participants responded and interacted very well with the method, therefore data in the narrative form (long uninterrupted speech) was produced hence narrative analysis was possible. Participants in group two were different, maybe the created space was different all together (this will be discussed further on in the following section). No matter what the reasons were, the type of data produced with group two was a bit different, it was similar to data produced through a regular interview, with many interruptions from my account and shorter narratives from participants. Participants were answering questions and not much leading the conversation or dialogue. This required the use of thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data. It organizes and describes data in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is not attached to any pre-existing theoretical framework; therefore, it can be used within different theoretical frameworks. Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which describes experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which studies the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences are the effect of a range discourses operating within society. It also can be a "contextualist" method, which is in between essentialism and constructions, which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experiences and the ways the social context influence those meanings, while keeping focus on the material and the limits of "reality". Thus, thematic analysis can be a method that reflects and analyze "reality".

The Process of Data Analysis

Transcription, Organization and Analysis of Data from Group One

Transcription is the first step into data analysis. How the audio data is transcribed (transformed into text) influences and informs the analysis therefore the interpretation. Transcription reflects the theory the researcher holds about the 'self'. If the researcher assumes that the self is co-constructed through dialogue with others (the autobiographical self, created through interaction) then the transcription includes the narratives of the participant and that of the researcher. If one assumes that the self is independent of social interaction, a preexisting self, then the transcription will prioritize the narrator's speech (Riessman, 1993, 2008).

The group session dialogue was first transcribed verbatim (rough transcription where every word was transcribed into text) through listening to the recording, at this moment attention was given to the content, to what was said. One week after completing the rough transcriptions, I listened another time to the recording in order to re-transcribe the whole text where I included hesitations, laughing, silences, pauses, pitch falls/rises, and other spoken features by the participants, this was a more careful listening. Then, I listened another time to give a number to each line that is said by participants by paying attention to the pauses, silences, pitch falls/rises in the participants' narratives. Then, the numbered lines were sorted into a hierarchical structure: speech units. Speech units were grouped into lines about one central idea. These lines formed stanzas; which are a group of lines about a single topic which make up the story as a 'whole' (Riessman, 2008, p. 93). Then, I gave titles to each stanza which were taken from the exact words of the participants, and this is to be as close as possible to their choice of words. I read all the re-transcriptions looking for things that were not said, silent, or were not clear which may be useful to explore during later sessions. So, I decided to set another group session with the participants to review the re-transcriptions. This session was like a zoom in into the participants' experiences where they proceeded sharing their stories and elaborating more about their identities within these

spaces. Participants' feedback was that it was strange to read their exact spoken words presented on paper and in a conversational format. The second session was transcribed, and analyzed using the same approach of James Gee. James Gee's approach to narrative analysis was mainly used here, since it is better suited for the kind of narratives participants of this study produced. Their narratives did not meet Labov's definition of the traditional "story", and where more in line with the postmodern story that has no clear beginning, middle and end, conversely, there were shifts back and forth in time (Riessman, 2008, p.93).

Organizing the Narratives

Narratives of each participant were combined separately, and reorganized based on the different spaces he/she has identified. Then I started looking at moments within each space that the participant used to make sense of himself/herself in a particular space. Typically, it was my decision to define the beginning and the end of each relevant narrative. Each narrative was given a title and then analyzed using Gee's approach.

The geo-narrative approach and the mapping of the important spaces for each participant facilitated the identification of a beginning and an end of relevant narratives. However, at times participants' narrations were not organized around and limited to the spaces they talked about. For example, one participant talked about his experiences in the school context, where no mention was made to relationships with teachers. However, those experiences were highlighted in another space (school in Turkey) where he made comparisons between his school there and his current school. Here, we can note the significance of the group interaction which can open up doors for different narratives and selves. This is consistent with the postmodern view of identity as dialogical where there can always be potential selves and identities through continuous interaction with others. Also, it is consistent with the concept of the rhizome, where participants' identities were constructed by taking different entryways in the same space (school). After relevant narratives were identified and analyzed for each participant, I then looked horizontally across the identified narratives of all

participants to look for patterns. Similar narratives (ones that talk about a particular issue) were grouped together to represent a theme. Themes and sub-themes were created.

Data Analysis Process for Group Two

Phase one: Familiarization with the Data

I started the process by repeated reading of all the interviews data, and reading in an active way to search for meanings, patterns and so on, in order to be more familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. Then, I started taking notes and marking ideas for coding. I transcribed the data into written form, which is an excellent way to start familiarizing myself with it according to Riessman (1993). The process of transcription allowed me to develop more understanding of the data which gives information to the early stages of analysis.

Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

This phase inquires the production of initial codes from the data. I started working systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item and identify interesting aspects in them that may form the basis of repeated themes.

I started the coding manually by using highlighters to indicate potential themes. I made sure to code all the data extracts, then I combined them together within each code. Also, I made sure to code for many potential themes in case I found them interesting later on and or relevant to the research question.

Phase Three: Searching for Themes

I started classifying the different codes into potential themes, and combining all the relevant coded data within the identified theme. To analyze the codes while considering how different codes may combine to form a comprehensive theme, I used visual representations to sort the themes. I wrote the name of each code on a separate piece of paper and then I organized them into theme-

piles. Then, I started thinking about the relationship between code themes and between different levels of themes (e.g., main themes and sub-themes). At the end of this phase, I had a collection of candidate themes and sub-themes and all the extracts of data that have been coded in relation to them.

Phase Four: Reviewing the Themes

This phase involved refinement and reviewing the themes at the level of the coded data extracts and in relation to the entire data set. This phase was concluded by generating a thematic map of the data.

Phase Five: Defining and Naming the Themes

This phase involved further defining and refining of the themes. This means, pointing out to the "essence" of what each theme is about, including the overall themes and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures; the overall story the analysis tells in relation to the research question. Also, I identified whether a theme contains any sub-themes. At the end of this phase, I was able to generate clear definitions and names for each them.

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Results & Discussion

This chapter presents the major themes and sub-themes that emerged through narrative and thematic analysis of both groups of participants.

Major theme (1): Self-performance

1. The image of perfection

2. The more 'authentic' self

Major theme (2): The need for a supportive relationship

1. Academically

2. Emotionally

    a. The need for a caring relationship

    b. The need to be treated fairly and equally

    c. The need for respect

Major theme (3): The need for freedom

1. At school

    a.   Strict rules

    b.   Physical environment

    c.   Freedom of voice

2. At home

    a. The need for less protective parents

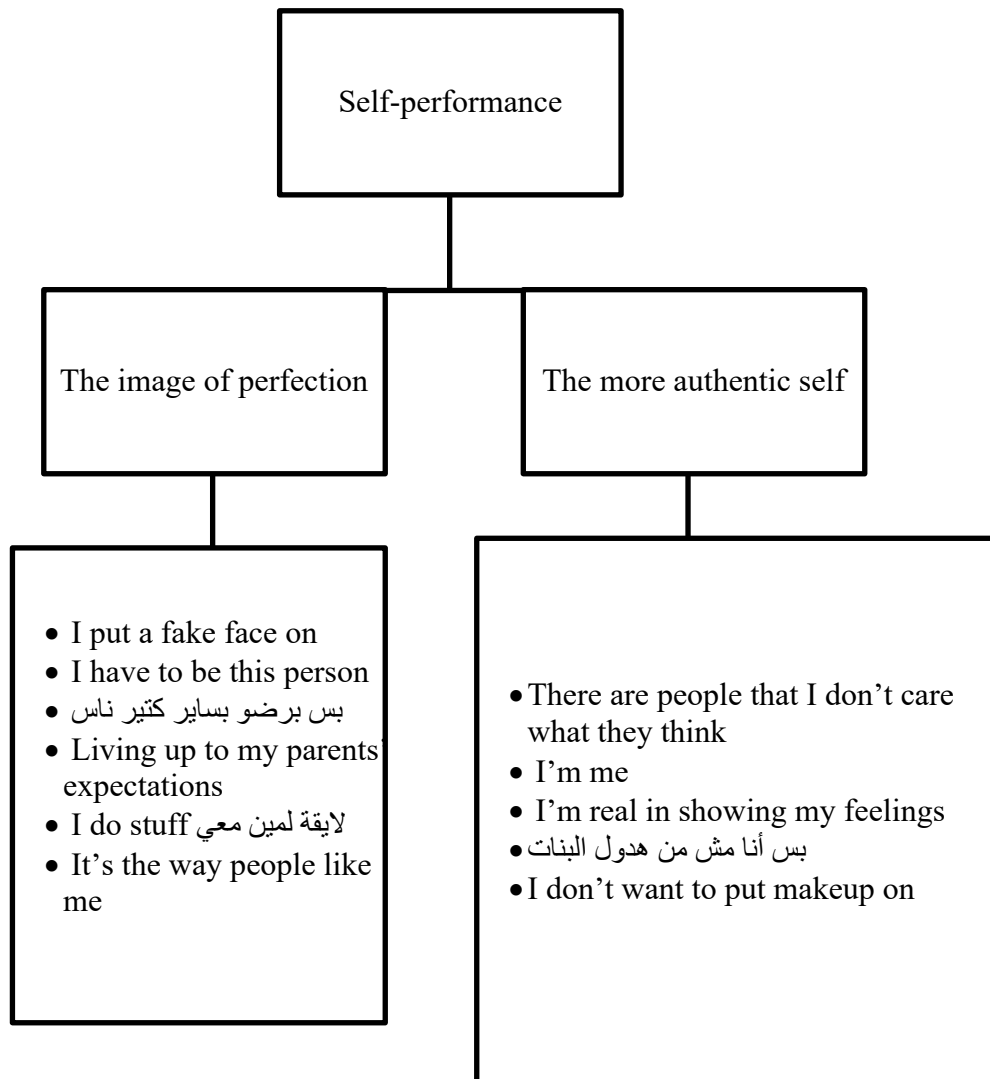   b. The importance of the personal space

Major theme (1): Self performance

Erving Goffman (1959), in his dramaturgical framework, analyzed how human beings present themselves and their activity to others in the social world. He suggested that the social world is composed of a multitude of different performances by a vast number of actors, in a variety of settings. He called our behaviors "acts" in order to present a certain image of ourselves. This image is maintained by controlling the setting, our appearance, and the manner in which we present ourselves. We also engage in "impression management" trying to project an idealized image of ourselves through the aforementioned control in order to achieve individual or social goals (Goffman, 1959). Through this dramaturgical metaphor of selfhood, we can better understand identity. In the presence of others, we as individuals are continuously performing ourselves. Goffman's framework (1959) may suggest that our identities are never" authentic", calling our social behaviors as "acts", but what he suggests is that the self is not an autonomous entity; rather, it arises in the process of performance. The individual should be thought of always in relationship to a social whole (Goffman, 1959). Charles Cooley in the "Looking Glass Self" (1992) as mentioned in Scheff (2018) suggested that who we are is shaped by socialization. Our identity is a product of our context or the space that we are in. Our self-image is shaped by our interactions with others, in which we play an active role in trying to shape how others perceive us.

This theme shows that some of the participant's narratives are pivoted around multiple and different ways they perform themselves through interactions with others in order to present certain images depending on the people and the spaces (contexts) they are in such as their school, home, and public (other spaces). At times, participants' self-performances are influenced by the society's pressures to conform and keep a certain image depending on the spaces and the people there. Participants feel that in order to keep an "image of perfection", they have to engage in impression management or "put a fake face on" as they said, which demands "faking" their feelings, thoughts and behaviors in order to have and keep their relationships with others at school, or to please and

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meet others' expectations, such as their best friends, teachers, and parents. In other spaces and with different people, participants experience their selves in a more comfortable way. They can show their emotions and thoughts, without having to "put a fake face on". They can be and do whatever they feel like to.

Figure # 1: The first level represents the main theme, in the second level comes the sub-themes and the third level represents the narratives each with a title.

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Self-performance   │
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
              ┌────────────────┴────────────────┐
    ┌─────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────┐
    │ The image of        │         │ The more            │
    │ perfection          │         │ authentic self      │
    └──────────┬──────────┘         └──────────┬──────────┘
    ┌──────────┴──────────┐         ┌──────────┴──────────────┐
    │ • I put a fake face │         │ • There are people that │
    │   on                │         │   I don't care what     │
    │ • I have to be this │         │   they think            │
    │   person            │         │ • I'm me                │
    │ • بس برضو بساير      │         │ • I'm real in showing   │
    │   كتير ناس          │         │   my feelings           │
    │ • Living up to my   │         │ • بس أنا مش من هدول      │
    │   parents           │         │   البنات                │
    │   expectations      │         │ • I don't want to put   │
    │ • I do stuff لايقة  │         │   makeup on             │
    │   لمين معي          │         │                         │
    │ • It's the way      │         │                         │
    │   people like me    │         │                         │
    └─────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────────┘
```

1. The Image of Perfection

Narrative # 1: I put a fake face on

Narrative # 1: Adam

Stanza 1

250 School is where

251 I actually act I like everyone

252 I usually do like everyone

253 like it's true I do like everyone

Stanza 2

254 But some people you know I just have to make as if like I don't want enemies

255 so I just make as if I'm cool with you

256 it's not many people it's just like two or three people

257 I usually say I'm nice with you وهيك أشياء

Stanza 3

258 it's not always the case

259 I don't like to have enemies anywhere

260 it's not my thing to have enemies so

261 yeah I try to keep

262 like everyone happy and stuff

Stanza 4

263 بس انه I don't like to put a fake face on

264 بس I kinda have to sometimes

Stanza 5

265 and I don't know in class

266 in class sometimes I have to be this person I have to be that person

267 and in the halls

Stanza 6

268 The people I wanna please a lot

269 like around teachers I'm like angels you know

Stanza 7

270 in public I have to like

271 be you know a good person

272 انه ما نتهبلش في الشارع...هيك أشياء

273 لأنه في شارع قدام بيتي بركض قدام السيارات

274 بس هون انه عادي I don't

Stanza 8

275 when I'm in the street I feel like people looking at me

276 I don't know

277 I don't want to sound cocky

Stanza 9

278 but I know many people

279 and they all live in the same area kinda

280 so I don't want people see me doing this

281 people see me talking to this

282 so whenever I'm in the street I'm like

283 doing stuff that people can't talk about in a bad way

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This narrative conveys Adam's struggle between being his true self and the society's pressures to perform "images of perfection" where for different reasons he has to fake his behaviors and feelings through different spaces and people at school such as the classroom, hallways, and in public. Different spaces have different people (audiences) with different expectations. Therefore, Adam feels that he has to act or perform different images (faces) accordingly in order to be accepted and have relationships, and to meet others' expectations (teachers) at school.

Stanza (1) through (6), shows Adam's struggle with what he knows is happening and between what should be happening. In stanza (1) Adam alternates between speaking his honest voice (what he knows is happening) "I actually act I like everyone", and between speaking through the voice of the culture, "it's true I do like everyone". This strategy of alternation maybe to keep a good public image to his audience whether in this group session or to his friends and to people he knows at school. It seems that a moment of cognitive dissonance may have taken place for a while after vocalizing "I actually act I like everyone", that he tried to solve, to restore balance through changing his internal belief/thought, "it's true I do like everyone". Adam seems to want to convince himself first, to make himself believe that he likes everyone. A moment later, this belief may have sounded a bit irrational to him, this is when he modified it by convincing himself that it is okay to be and to act in such a way, "with some people you know I have to make as if I like". He was addressing and including his audience here, "you know", he wanted to make this knowledge and way of being common and necessary for survival, that it is not only himself acting that way. After which he strengthened his case by rationalizing, "it's not many people, it's two or three people…it's not always the case…". Despite all these attempts to make himself feel good, Adam admitted that "I don't like when I put a fake face on". This shows how mature Adam is, a while ago he was trying to normalize this way of being and later on, he was honest that it is not something he admires. Then comes what seems to be the function of pretending or "putting a fake face on". First comes the "enemies" that Adam do not want to have, then pleasing teachers and keeping up for what it seems like high expectations of him, "I have to be that person…around teachers I'm like angels". Lastly,

comes his public image "in the street", in the neighborhood. He is convinced that "people are looking". It is not only that people are looking but that "I know many people". The absolute function of keeping silent (not saying what you really think and feel), of pretending and of going with the flow according to Gilligan (2011) is to stay connected and to stay in relationship. To be in good terms with everyone with all students at school is a priority and of great importance for Adam to the fact that he repeated this phrase three times in stanzas (2) and (3). So, Adam acts in a "cool" and "nice" way with everyone in order to keep them happy and not have enemies, he also needs to keep a good image of the image Adam wants to preserve is that of the expected and accepted, it is a socially acceptable image, one that guarantees that people will like him and not be "enemies" with him, using his term/word. Being connected to others, being in relationship, being 'friends with' is not an opposite state to having no enemies; having 'no enemies' does not mean being in friendship. The way Adam chose to verbalize this notion maybe explained through the lens of gender, specifically what Carol Gilligan called the "process of initiation" which involves "dissociating" parts of the self from the self. A mechanism that maintains the power of patriarchy through a system of hierarchies, things are ordered and ranked. A good woman is selfless, silent and obedient and a real man is tough, autonomous and rational. Men learn to fear intimacy and women learn to fear separation. Adam did not speak of relationship and of connectedness here, but of having 'no enemies', which seemed to be necessary for his survival. The use of the phrases "I don't know" and "you know", at the beginning of stanzas (5-8-9), marks Adam's struggle in voicing and staying with his true feelings and thoughts, with what he knows from his own experience about human relationships, and with society's pressures to perform and keep a good public image "being that or this person", "be a good person" whom is more accepted by people. Adam knows that he should act as he feels, but through "initiation" he learned not to know. In her research, Gilligan (2011) noticed that the phrase "I don't know" and "you know" is being used in many adolescents' narratives which indicate the culture's voice that became an inner voice that demands dissociation: don't know what you know, ignore the promptings of your body and your emotions. Listen instead to the voices that

tell you what is happening and what you should feel, think, and say (Gilligan, 2011). Seeing himself in the gaze of others, feeling that "people are looking at me", especially that he knows most of them who live in the same area, Adam is so careful not to do anything or to be seen talking to anyone who may disrupt his public image; the image of perfection. At the same time, he does not talk about how he feels or thinks, but behaves in a way that "people can't talk about in a bad way". Adam is so careful to keep his well-constructed image, his good reputation that was created by others. He compared his behaviors in different spaces. In the street in front of his home, for example, where he can be himself, act freely, and "run in front of the cars". Adam gives himself the permission to act this way, "here it's normal I don't", because there's no one around to watch or judge him. We can note that Adam needs to maintain a positive public image to others (audiences) throughout his performances. He engages in a variety of behaviors to manage impressions for others. Besides, he wants to perform a positive image to himself: " I don't want to sound cocky, but I know many people who live in the same area". This is compatible with a number of self-presentation theories that propose that individuals have a need to present a positive image to themselves as well as to others (Baumeister. 1982; Goffman, 1955; Schlenker, 1980).

Narrative # 2: I have to be this person

Narrative # 2: Adam

Stanza 1

402 I have to be this person

403 many times people just draw an image of us

Stanza 2

404 like if we go in another way

405 or if we act in a certain type of way that's not with that image

406 they usually assume that we've changed

407 that we're different people

408 that like something is wrong

409 and I don't like people to think that sometimes

Stanza 3

410 I remember a specific thing

411 it was Thursday yesterday

412 like someone just said something to make me mad

413 and I try not

414 like obviously everyone gets mad

415 but people are not used to seeing me mad

416 so I just tried to control myself to hide the anger

Stanza 4

417 in the geometry class

418 so I hid it

419 yeah, I did shout

420 I know that people are going to be surprised like why did he shout

421 why we're not used to seeing him like this

Stanza 5

425 آه توقعاتهم بس مش ايش همه بسووا

426 يعني مش انه ازا حدا بسوي هيك انا بسوي زيه لأ

427 بس ازا حدا شايفني in a certain image

428 مش راح انه image بخلي هاي ال

429 اعمل حالي تغيرت ولا هيك

Stanza 6

433 بحس انه الناس بتصير تحكي

434 اه تغير في تركيا

435 وأشياء غيرته

436 he's not the person we used to like

Stanza 7

437 genuinely it happened

438 like people came to me

439 and they were like

440 تغيرت ما كنتش عمرك هيك

441 ما كنتش تعصب

442 بس like everyone بعصب

443 بس like everyone gets angry

Stanza 8

444 They just used to see me as a person that doesn't react

445 and doesn't do anything and that's the problem I created for myself

446 I guess

Stanza 9

447 I just wanted people to like

448 think I'm this happy positive person

449 which I am mostly

Stanza 10

450 but, everyone gets angry

451 everyone reacts in a certain way sometimes

Stanza 11	Stanza 13	Stanza 15
455 but I feel like this image that everyone	466 بس انه لأ عادي	475 بعصب بس بحاول انه to contain myself
456 my best friend came up to me the other day and he's like	467 I'm just me	476 مش بروح بضربه ولا بصيح عليه ولا هيك
	468 showing my real emotions	477 انه بمزح معاه بقله ها وبضحك معاه بس
		478 بكون معصب من جوه
Stanza 12	**Stanza 14**	479 They're not used to seeing me mad
457 my best friend came up to me	469 مهتم اه مهتم بعلاقتنا وهيك	480 at least I guess
458 this week the day after my birthday	470 بس انا يعني بعرفش ما شفت مشكلة	
459 the person just waited just to come after my birthday and be like	471 بس بعدين لما قعدت أفكر فيها	
460 انه أنا لاحزت عليك إنك متغير	472 قلت اه maybe شايفينها مشكلة كتير أكبر مما أنا شايفها	
461 وعم بتقعد مع ناس غلط	473 انا يعني بعرفش ما شفت مشكلة	
	474 فلما عصبت عليه وصيحت عليه وهيك زعل	

In this narrative, Adam elaborates on his struggle to fit into an "image of perfection" at school with his classmates and friends. Wanting to include his audiences (friends or other adolescents) with himself and making this issue a collective one, Adam switches between the use of the singular pronoun "I" and the plural pronoun "us", to talk about the society's pressures to keep a certain image that is formed by others "I have to be this person, many times, people just draw an image of us". In stanza (2), using the plural pronoun "we", Adam elaborates that acting (behaving) in a way which is not with the expected image" if we go in another way", people will think that he has changed and that he is not the same person anymore. One may question, 'what does it mean if someone is not the same person anymore? And 'what is the loss?' A more interesting question would be, 'what is the gain?' Adam does not like people to think that he is a different person. His experience in relationships taught him to keep the image that has been created by others in order to be accepted by them and to keep his friendship. In this narrative account voicing the importance and the need for relationship is more direct, when he said in line (469) "مهتم اه مهتم بعلاقتنا وهيك". Adam have had the experience of studying in a school in Turkey for a while, after which he has returned to the Jerusalem American School. It

seems that he has had established an image before leaving to Turkey, "I just wanted people to think I'm this happy positive person" lines (446 & 447) an image of perfection, which certainly had gained him popularity. He is 'clinging to' and wants to preserve that image, changing in the eyes of others has its costs, he is worried that people would say, "he's not the person we used to like" line (436). At times, Adam speaks of people in general "people are going to be surprised" line (420), but the incident he mentioned here has to do with his best friend, he repeated twice, "my best friend came up to me" lines (456 & 458) the incident seemed to be recent and vivid in his mind, "this week right after my birthday" line (460). Adam cares about this relationship. However, he is aware that when others are "used to see me as a person that does not react and does not do anything", that this is a problem "I created for myself" line (444). On the other hand, he has realized that showing his real emotions may cost him to lose friendship, showing real emotions may make people upset in line (474) "فلما عصبت عليه وصيحت عليه وهيك زعل", at the same time he is aware that this is a problem; not reacting, not doing anything, not being moved from inside or more accurately not allowing oneself to show that one is moved and to be what one is feeling is a real problem.

This piece of narrative clearly illustrates the struggle between losing voice and losing relationship. Adam is trying hard, "I just tried to control myself to hide the anger" line (416), "so I hid it" line (418), "I get angry, but I try to contain myself" line (475), and line (477) translated from Arabic as, "I joke with him, tell him 'What?' and then laugh with him, but I am angry from inside". Saying what he wants through a joke maybe a self-protective mechanism on two levels; it is cathartic and most importantly may preserve relationship. Adam is trying to resist the pressure of others, especially his best friend, to fit into this one restricted limited image, "I feel like this image" where he is not allowed to express his real feelings through his relationships, "I'm just me… showing my real emotions".

In this narrative, there is also evidence of trying to normalize the expression of strong emotions, such as anger, "like obviously everyone gets mad" line (414). Another evidence that Adam cares about this relationship can be noticed in lines (471 & 472) translated from Arabic,

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"afterwards when I thought more about it, I said maybe they see it as a more serious problem [meaning the change] than the way I am looking at it". This is evidence that Adam cares, obviously he has given it some thought, he dedicated time to reflect and to think on how others think and see things, being aware at the same time that people see things from different perspectives.

We can also note that Adam used the present tense, "I try not" when referring to his response of trying not to get angry to an event that really made him angry, line (413). He did not use the past tense to speak about a past experience, indicating that he is talking about a pattern, a way of behaving that he likes to be consistent over time and across situations. In stanza 14, speaking from his own experience and perspective, Adam feels that the change in his behavior is not a problem, which he repeats twice to emphasize his own voice against that of others. Showing his true feelings to his friends is something new to them; "they're not used to seeing me mad" line (479) but it might be also a sign of maturity, a change he was until that moment not aware of. Adam speaks of feeling pressed to choose between having a voice and having relationships. He feels that he has to silence himself and not say what he is thinking or feeling in order to be accepted by others and to maintain relationships with them. For him, behaving in a way which is different than his "image of perfection" is something hard to talk about which is shown by Adam ending this stanza with a sigh.

We can understand the system in which Adam's self is constructed. The neo-liberal and economical system that Adam lives in contributes to the construction of his self as a commodity, in a specific image and content in order to please the consumer. This, was unacceptable for Adam, but he found himself obliged to follow this system in order to maintain his relationships with friends. Usually, these structures that we are embedded within remain hidden to most of us, we tend to think that this is how the world is. However, self-promotion and self-presentation are all products of capitalism.

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Narrative # 3: Adam

Stanza 1

810 آه انا وصغير أظني بعرفش

811 if that effects

812 كنت دايما أحكي الصراحة about people

813 like if I see someone looking bad, I'll be

814 like if someone asks me, I'll be like

815 not really

Stanza 2

816 علمني إني آمشي اه اه حلو my older cousin

817 هلا I'm not really like

818 if I actually like something I like ah

819 بس برضو بساير كتير ناس

820 مثلا ازا something I didn't find funny I act like I laughed

821 مرات انه مع طارق

822 هو بعرف صار

823 اه عشان ما يزعل صار يلاحظ

824 وانا دايما كانوا الناس يحاولوا يضحكوني بس ما كنتش أضحك

Stanza 3

825 واحنا قاعدين صار يحاول يضحك

826 قلتلوا بضحكش

827 قلتلو هي هي هي

828 عشان انه دايما صار يعلق لما يحس انه fake laugh

829 حتى لو انه عادي I laugh

830 بقوله هي هي fake laugh صار يقلي ها ها

831 فزهق فقلتلو خلص بطلت اسايرك يعني بدكش أسايرك بلاش

832 وبزعل لما ما أسايره

833 أظن اه it affected me

Stanza 4

834 sometimes when I was young, I made many people sad

835 فقلت مش مستاهلة

836 انه مش مستاهله I learned وهيك

837 don't be honest

838 يعني ستي بتسألني الأكل زاكي بقلها لأ

839 أو بديش آكل أو هيك بس

840 انه خلص تعلمت eat the food لو مش عاجبك

841 آه خلص عادي

842 آه يعني إزا حدا زي ما بتقولي I just have to please

843 عادي بكون

Stanza 5

844 specific people like my dad my mom my parents my teachers

845 like I want to

846 افرجيهم the best version of me

847 حتى لو انه I try to get the best version

848 in other places but mostly with the teachers' parents

849 هيك أشياء people I know that I have to

850 زي ما قلنا

851 تقريبا please

852 yeah, I just put the best version of myself and I act

853 مش act

854 just I mean

855 أكتر اشي أحسن اشي بقدر أعمله بطلع

Stanza 6

864 I please my parents by getting good grades

865 هيك أشياء behaving well at home

866 behaving well in class

867 sometimes good grades

868 knowing the answers هيك أشياء

This is the third narrative where Adam is representing the struggle between staying connected with his self -be honest when relating to others- and between pleasing his best friend and his family including his grandmother.

The 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ stanzas represent what seem to be a developmental change, he compares his 'past' self and way of being and relating with the 'present' self. When he was young, he used to speak his mind and be honest and straightforward with people. When he grew older, his cousin taught him how to get along with people, what we call and he called in Arabic المسايرة . Now, if Adam likes something, he would show it and say it and this is mostly safe to express, but at the same time, he tries to please people a lot "بس برضو بساير كتير ناس" line (818) this is in times of disagreement and or being critical. This was more difficult to display specifically with people that he cares about and cares about having a relationship with. Adam gives an example of how he sometimes relates to people. When he did not find something funny, he fakes his laugh when being with his best friend. Even if his friend was able to differentiate the fake laugh, Adam laughed with him in order not to make him upset. In stanza 3, Adam elaborates about a conversation he had with his friend Zein when he tried to make him laugh. At the beginning, Zein's unacceptance of the fake laugh made Adam not to go along with him. On the contrary, he shared his honest opinion about his friend not being funny, but then he faked his laugh because he knows that even if Zein was aware and could differentiate a fake laugh, he still be upset if Adam did not laugh. Being both aware of faking a laugh and the fact that they can discuss this issue openly is a sign of maturation. However, in practice Zein preferred a fake laugh than no laugh at all! Adam explains more in stanza (4) about how he became the person he is right now, especially concerning his relationships with his family and best friends. By observing the relational world around him through growing up, he noticed that sometimes saying the truth makes people sad. This has taught him that it's not worth it انه مش مستاهله line (835) to upset people around him. So, he decided "don't be honest" (line 836). Carol Gilligan (2011) as mentioned talked about adolescence as a developmental stage where boys and girls are being prepared to enter adulthood as "real boys" and "good girls". They learn how to

be men and women. She calls this process "initiation". Adolescents learn how to talk about things and what is the right way to speak and to be. Living in a patriarchal culture, which divides reason from emotion, mind from body, self from relationships, adolescents will feel pressed not to express their honest opinion, to dissociate themselves from aspects of themselves in order to be 'a man' or one of the boys; to have friendships. Patriarchy creates splits in the psyche. Comparing the change in himself now and before, he gives an example about how he relates to others around him, like his grandmother. So, when his grandmother used to ask him if he liked the food, he would say his honest opinion that he does not like it or he does not want to eat etc. Now, he learned to eat the food even if he does not like it and not to say his honest opinion. Adam ends the 4th stanza and continues to talk in the following one about his feelings or the urge to please specific people around him such as his parents, and teachers, as he comments "I just have to please", "specific people" lines (841 & 843). Adam wants to be seen as "normal". Pleasing people for Adam becomes normal, " هيك بكون عادي" line (842), which he repeats two times for emphasis. Conforming with his parents and his teachers' pressures to be a good boy and a good student, which is the desirable...Adam wants to show them "the best version of me" in stanza 5. He also wants to "get the best version in other places", but he cares more about pleasing specific people as his parents and teachers "I put the best version of myself". At first, Adam used the word "act" to express his desire of showing or being in his best behavior, then he immediately flipped the word "act" line (851), "not act, just I mean" lines (852-854) into " أحسن إشي بقدر أعمله بطلع " refusing to call his good behavior an act, because he does not want to see it as acting but as a way of being in the social world. So, in class, he pleases his teachers by behaving well, and at home, he pleases his parents by behaving well and getting good grades at school. One must also take into consideration the context of the family within the larger culture; how the 'self' is viewed and maintained across cultures. The Palestinian culture can be seen as more of a collectivist one. The self in collectivist cultures is not seen as independent and autonomous, but as part of a larger social network including family and friends. One's thoughts, feelings and behaviors are influenced by the social group and this is considered to be the norm.

Keeping group harmony is important which may mean that people are willing to sacrifice particular wants in favor of the group. Elders and older people are highly respected in our society and younger people are expected to respect, listen and value the advice of older people.

Narrative # 4: living up to my parents' expectations

Narrative # 4: Adam	
Stanza 1	**Stanza 3**
539 I usually get more stressed مع اهلي	548 it's just stresses me out
540 because they talk about	549 بقول بلا المرة الجاي بزبط وهيك اشياء
541الأشياء اللي لازم أدرسها أشياء زي هيك عادي أي أهل	550 لما تيجي المرة الجاي بقول I don't want to let my parents down وهيك
	551عادي زي أي انسان بحس
Stanza 2	**Stanza 4**
543 ابوي هديك اليوم بألوا جبت علامة كتير	558 the way my father sees stuff because he employs people at his work
منيحة بال PSAT	559 ايش سووا بحياتهم CV يعني بشوف ال
544فقلي بتعرف يابا بتقدر تزبط أكثر	560 and he knows how stuff like that works
545 منيحة العلامة أول مرة بعمل	561فبقولي بكون مقدم ٢٠ واحد بنأوروا أحسن واحد
546 SAT ومش راح أصلا يمكن أسوي	562 فأنت بدك تكون هادا الأحسن واحد
547بصير هيك يأولي أشياء	563 he sees it like that

In this narrative Adam expressed the feeling of being pressured to live up to his parents' expectations. He feels stressed when he is with his parents because they talk about school and what he has to study as shown in stanza (1). In stanzas (2 & 3), Adam talks about his father pushing him to be better; to get a better grade at the SAT exam (the high school exam) which makes him feel stressed by wanting to please his parents and not let them down. He concludes this stanza (3) by normalizing his need to please his parents "عادي زي أي انسان بحس". Stanza (4), Adam is aware of how his father sees life and career, and he is also aware of why his father sees things in that way. He

knows that his father is in a powerful position, he is the one who hires people, therefore Adam trusts his perspective. Adam's father is in a position of power in a capitalist world, "he knows how stuff like that works" (line 560), and he is pushing his son and directing him in order to succeed in such a system. Capitalism requires people to compete as individuals in order to have more, one's self-worth is associated with what you have. Adam represented here his father's words, " انت بدك تكون هادا الأحسن واحد" line (562).

Narrative # 5: I just do stuff… لايقة لمين قاعد معي

Narrative # 5: Adam	
Stanza 1 122 Honestly, I was like that but then I realised that 123 you can't be like that like nowadays people just 124 want you in that version of you so if you're like 125وهيك أشياء if you act with them in a certain way 126 they're not gonna enjoy being with you	**Stanza 3** 370 I don' t care 371 if someone doesn't like me whatever 372 like I don't care
Stanza 2 127مش هيك مش أغير بحالي 128 I just do stuff لائقة لمين قاعد معي 129 مش أغير حالي 130 مش لهاي الدرجة 131 I don't really like to change myself for others	**Stanza 4** 373 I won't do like they do just to be liked by them 375 آه بالزبط 376 Yeah, I don't act like anyone **Stanza 5** 379 I do get carried away and do what certain people do 380 but mostly I try not to 381 but it obviously happens sometimes 383 When there's a lot of people like talking about the same thing 384 I try like to read about it a little bit 385 because I want to be with them 386 but I don't act like I like it

This narrative is part of a dialogue between Adam and Rana when they were talking about honesty in relationships. In this narrative, Adam shifts from a first to a second person voice, "I was like that…I realized that…you can't be like…people just want you…" lines (122-124). Adam is stating what he has realized and how he decided to be "that version" of himself that people like and "enjoy". He is addressing Rana the one he was in conversation with during the group session. Adam is talking from a place of experience. He was clear that being in a certain image is necessary for relationship, or else "they're not gonna enjoy being with you" line (126). When honesty threatens his being in relationship with others, he decides to silence his true feelings and thoughts and to show an image that guarantees staying connected. Adam is aware of the performativity of selfhood, "not that I change myself, but I do stuff that is appropriate to whom is with me" lines (127-128). He knows what he is doing, he knows what to say and how to act depending on the person that he is with without changing himself for others, " مش أغير بحالي" which he repeated 3 times for emphasis in stanza (2). At the same time, Adam speaks here about the division that he is feeling between staying with his honest self and with the image that others (society) want him to be. In reference to Niobe Ways' study of boys' friendship and the crisis of connection in her book " Deep secrets", repeating the words "I don't care" twice in stanza 3, shows Adam's hidden desire to have friends (Way, 2011) as mentioned in (Gilligan, 2011). Way explains that adolescent boys use the words "I don't care" very often when their relational desires become deep secrets. In her book, she reveals the intense intimacy among teenage boys especially during early and middle adolescence. Boys not only share their deepest secrets and feelings with their closest male friends, they claim that without them they would go "wacko". Others speak of sadness, loneliness, and depression. Yet, as boys become men, they become distrustful, lose these friendships, and feel isolated and alone (Way, 2011) as mentioned in (Gilligan, 2011, p.169). Stanza (4 & 5) also shows Adam's struggle between being himself, not doing as others, which he repeats twice for emphasis in stanza (4), and between being "carried away and doing what certain people do", when he "wants to be with them", as he says. Even if he "tries not to" behave as the others, but it happens sometimes, at the same time, he

tries to show that he does not like to act as others, "I don't act like I like it" line (386). We can note that the words "tries not to" is repeated many times in his narratives illustrating the struggle between staying with himself and being in relationship with others.

Narrative # 6: it's the way that people like me

Narrative # 6: Sameer

Stanza 1

667 Yeah sometimes

668 like if I'm not feeling well

669 if you're like if anything happen

670 if I act happy, I'm gonna be happy

671 fake it till you make it

Stanza 2

677 because like

678 I feel like when you're not happy

679 like you're pushing people away from you

680 like when I'm not happy I push people away

681 so I try not to do that

Stanza 3

684 not how they see me but like

686 how they act around me

687 because you know

688 if like if you go tell somebody

689 like you're feeling very bad

690 they're gonna act weird around you

691 I don't want people to do that

Stanza 4

692 Unhappy

693 If I'm alone

694 like if people are not talking to me

695 I'm like

696 I don't like this I don't like that

Stanza 5

697 My friends

698 they describe me as a crazy person

699 yeah, I act stupid

700 yeah, they may call me stupid

701 because I act stupid like say stupid things

702 I do stupid things

703 like I introduce somebody like this is my boo

Stanza 6

704 I feel it is that it's the way that people like me

705 if I don't do that

706 it's boring

707 so it's not like that I don't want to …

708 it's fun

This narrative conveys Sameer's struggle in the relational world at school in expressing his true feelings of sadness and his need for acceptance by friends at school. The end of the four stanzas below marks this struggle: "fake it till you make it", "I try not to do that", and "I don't want people to do that".

Through stanzas 1 & 2, Sameer switches from a first- person to a second- person voice in trying to stay with his thoughts and feelings in deciding whether to show his real feelings of sadness or to fake those feelings in order to have and keep his relationships. Sameer speaks of acting "happy", of trying to be happy even if sometimes he does not "feel well" which seems not easy for him, he is struggling with it," if I act happy, I'm gonna be happy", fake it till you make it" lines (670-671), believing that with time happiness maybe internalized from something that was fake and external to something that is real and internal. Here, we can notice the kind of language he used in expressing his feelings. Sameer did not use the word "sad", instead, he used the words "not happy" which shows how society hinder the expression of sad feelings, specifically for males. He feels that if he shows that he is not happy, he pushes people away from him, so he "tries not to do that". In stanza (3), Sameer is trying to emphasize the importance of the kind of relationship people have with him, what is important to him at the end is how people act around him (when he is in a certain state) and not how they perceive him, "not how they see me but how they act around me" lines (684-686), this will be explained further on. Sadness is present in Sameer's life and so does loneliness "if I am alone, if people do not talk to me, I don't like this, I don't like that" lines (693-696), as he experienced it very well after losing his parents. It is an essential and important part in his life, yet he cannot express it freely. Or he cannot tolerate the consequences when he does, "if you're feeling very bad, they're gonna act weird around you" lines (689-690). By the word "weird", Sameer might mean that he doesn't want his friends to treat him differently than others, out of pity because of his domestic situation (his parent's death), therefore avoiding subjects related to parents in general. Also, he might be afraid that his friends do not want or do not know how to deal with someone who is sad sometimes or "not happy" as he said in line (678). According to Gilligan

(2011) in her book "Joining the resistance", adolescents living in a patriarchal culture, feel pressed to dissociate themselves from parts of themselves in order to become a man or to be one of the boys, or to be one of the girls or be a good woman. They must dissociate themselves from their humanity (Gilligan, 2011, p. 172). Thus, expressing one's feelings in this culture is not accepted for men, it's considered a feminine ethic not a masculine ethic. It's seen as a sign of weakness. Men should not express their true feelings to others, they must suppress them, they must act like "real men". Connecting his feelings of happiness to being in a close relationship with others in stanza (4), shows the importance of having a best friend that he can talk to in order not to feel alone at school. We can note that relationships are very important to Sameer in view in the light of his domestic situation. His parents', death when he was young and living with his old grandmother explains the need for relationships especially with people his own age. In stanzas (5 & 6) he speaks about how his friends describe him as being "crazy" because he acts in a "stupid" way and does stupid things as he mentioned in order to be accepted by others "I feel it is the way that people like me". So, for Sameer to be accepted by his group of friends, he had to behave in a "crazy stupid" way, to be funny and fun to hang with, in order to conform to their group norms. Studies showed that peers may strongly determine preference in the way of dressing, speaking, using illicit substance, sexual behaviors, adopting and accepting violence, adopting criminal and anti-social behaviors and in many other areas of the adolescent's life, (Padilla, Walker & Bean, 2009). There's a part of Sameer wants to please others and be in the image of the happy person, the one pleasant to be around even if he acts in a way that contradicts how he feels inside. At the same time, part of him wants to work for his own sake, he really wants to be happy when he says "it's not like that I don't want to, it's fun", (the way he acts with his friends), even though he not only risks losing his voice and eventually not to know his own feelings and thoughts, but he also risks not knowing what is an "act" and what is "genuine" to him during this process. Just like Adam, in trying to keep his relationships, Sameer pushes his feelings underground. He is not to speak, he loses his voice and eventually not to know his feelings and thoughts (Gilligan, 2011). Just as Neeti the girl in "Meeting

at the Cross Road" where she takes her feelings out of relationships and faces difficulty in voicing anything but her nice and kind self she shows to the world (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Sameer is moving out from his relationship with himself and into relationship with an image of himself that other people respond to and seem to value, one that he himself has come to see as more enjoyable "it's not that I don't want to...it's fun". With these words, Sameer ends this narrative by choosing to move to the underground. He no longer struggles with the gap between what he feels and what he says. Now, he is a reflection for what others want him to feel and think.

2. The More Authentic Self

This is the second sub-theme of the main theme of self-performance. In some spaces and with different people, participants experienced their selves in a more comfortable way. They expressed their ability to express their emotions and speak their thoughts, without having to "put a fake face on".

Narrative # 7: There are people that I don't care what they think

Narrative # 7: Sameer

Stanza 1

127 Like a lot of times I'm feeling anxious

128 Not calm not calm at all

129 like I'm not comfortable

130 If I don't know what to say

131 I'm like oh no

132 What to say that's my main problem really

133 Like what do I say

134 If I'm talking to anyone

135 like the conversation just goes downhill

136 Like nothing is happening

137 Oh crap what now

Stanza 2

140 it's weird…

141 like my friend Hussam

142 even if we don't talk

143 I'm still like not feeling anything like it's normal

144 like I still talk all the time when I'm with him

145 but with the others I'm like

146 like 5 seconds go by without saying anything

147 like oh no like things are going wrong

Stanza 3

148 I'm more comfortable around him (his friend)

149 like even if I do something awkward

150 I'm not shy around him

151 it's like I don't know

Stanza 4

152 he is judgmental but I like that

153 I don't really care it's funny

154 Like I know that he doesn't mean to insult me and he doesn't care really

155 it's funny

156 you looked like this

157 you sound like this

158 it's funny

Stanza 5

159 I mean….there are people that I don't care what they think

160 like I don't know Wael always hangs out with these 8th and 9th graders

161 and I'm like who are you

162 I don't care

While talking about his feelings at school, Sameer is presenting to us three kinds of scenarios in his relationships with his friends and peers. In the first one, he is presenting to us a relationship with moments of silence in a conversation where he feels anxious and uncomfortable when talking to his peers, where "If I don't know what to say" line (130), "like the conversation just goes still...it goes downhill" line (135), "like nothing is happening" line (136). These moments of silence are stressful to Sameer, it implies that something is wrong "like 5 seconds go by without saying anything line (146), like oh no like things are going wrong" line (147). Feeling uncomfortable and stressed in conversations, Sameer becomes occupied in thinking what to say next "like what do I say" line (133), which is very stressful and makes such conversations less enjoyable. This kind of stress is common in our relational lives, the stress related to silence in conversations. The common perception that 'silence' is an indicator of 'something wrong'. New researchers and therapists can be intimidated when moments of 'silence' occur during a therapy session or an interview, partly it has to do with 'impression management' and the 'expert position'. People expect that therapists are researchers as experts therefore should always be ready and have something to say. In new relationships when people try to impress others, 'silence' may also be intimidating.

Conversely, Sameer is presenting to us a more authentic relationship, one that is more comfortable and even comforting. In this relationship, he does not have to pretend or to try hard, moments of silence are a natural part of his relationship. He can present parts of himself that he does not feel comfortable presenting to others. Authenticity for Sameer is when "not feeling anything like its normal" line (143) if he does not talk to his friend and if there are moments of silence when being together. At the same time, he can talk about his feelings and about anything he wants. Sameer explains that he feels more comfortable around his friend even when he does something awkward as he says in line (149), he's "not shy around him", line (150). Then, he interrupts himself by saying "I don't know", line (151), maybe wondering about the cause of the uneasy feelings and behaviors when relating to his other friends at school. Sameer does not care if

this specific friend is judgmental; he finds him funny, because he knows that he does not mean to insult him. There seems to be a kind of openness between them, what Sameer called 'judgmental' may indicate being 'honest' and 'genuine', which led to feeling and being comfortable in and around this relationship. On the other hand, Sameer is presenting to us another kind of relationship. This relationship shows another side of him that is very accepting to others "I'm like... who are you", "I don't care" in lines (161 & 162). In this narrative, he introduced Wael who hangs out with younger kids (8th and 9th graders), which seems to be not a preferable thing to do at school, yet Sameer does not judge.

Narrative # 8: I'm me

Narrative # 8: Adam

Stanza 1

165 home I feel like

166 I can do whatever I want

167 I can be whoever I want

Stanza 2

168 There's where my true personality comes out

169 I'm me

170 but at home

171 I just feel like

172 yeah

Stanza 3

173 Hmm I don't know

174 I'm just a person

175 Like at home

176 I don't have to do anything

177 I don't really think about it

178 I don't really think who I am

179 I just think that

180 يعني …I'm me

181 it's just like that personality

Stanza 4

182 انه I'm usually like that in

most of these places

183 but sometimes I have to do this

Stanza 5

186 exactly

187 انه بس No, I do

188 being me just pleases them

189 humble

Stanza 6

190 like I just live my life you know

191 as I want to

192 I'm lucky that my parents are like that

91

The content in the above narrative is clear and simple. The structure of this piece of narrative how it was composed and said tells a lot about it.

This narrative flows like a poem:

Like at home

I don't have to do anything

I don't really think about it

I don't really think who I am

I just think that

I'm me

The structure is important- just reading the lines gives a sense of liberation, of freedom, of breaking free. The narrative came after several other narratives that were heavy- that illustrated the struggle in the social world- and the need to maintain a certain image. At home, and in this particular narrative, all the "rules" of the social world fall apart. This narrative is easy on the ears.

Narrative # 9: I'm real in showing my feelings

Narrative # 9: Rana

Stanza 1

114 I'm real in showing my feeling

115 yeah, I'm real

116 Like if I actually don't like anyone, I'll go tell her that I don't like her

117 My action and words will say it

Stanza 2

118 how I feel about them   بس أنا بتصرف مع الكل

119 بحسب If I like someone

120 I would tell them

121 I say I actually like being around with you

Stanza 3

122 but if I hate someone

123 I would tell them that I don't like you

124 because I want them to get away from me basically

Stanza 4

125 I would tell them that

126 مع انه في كتير ناس مثلا

127 I tell them that I don't like them

128 برضو كمان

129 they still come back

130 بعرفش ليش

131 honest انا

132 I don't like telling someone I like you

133 بعدين ورا ضهره

134 I hate that person

Stanza 5

it's full of drama 135 هلا عشان المدرسة

136 I don't like to go in

137 أدخل بهيك أشياء

Stanza 6

138 I learned from my mistakes

139 I learned from my mistakes like from the past years couple of years

drama is not gonna get me anywhere 140 فهمت انه

Stanza 7

141 and also, it's gonna

142 get me into a lot of problems

143 فقلت انساني

Stanza 8

Drama 144 انه في كتير بنات بالمدرسة...

145 and I hate that stuff

146 مثلا وحدة بتيجي بتحكيلي عن وحده من ورا ضهرها

147 مثلا بتحكي تنين صاحبوا كل المدرسة بتعرف بعد دقيقتين gossip بصير في

148 a part of it I don't like

93

Through this narrative, Rana wanted to make sure that her audiences; this group participants or maybe other people, know how 'real' and honest she is in expressing her feelings towards others at school, as she repeated the words "I'm real" twice in lines (114-115) for emphasis. Rana wanted to show us that no matter how she feels inside; if she likes someone or hates them, she directly expresses her honest opinion to them, as she said: "my actions and words will say it" line (117). Rana does not only express the way she feels about others, but she also behaves according to her feelings towards them. She wanted her audience to know that she is determined and outspoken through her relationships through repeating the phrase "I'll go tell her/them" in lines (116-120-123-125). The way Rana relates to others, indicates a pattern in her relational world of school," but I always behave with all the people according to how I feel about them" translated from Arabic line (118), Rana is aware of her 'self', of who she is inside; her thoughts, emotions, and desires. She does not want to be in fake or unauthentic relationships. She does not like to tell someone that she likes them and then says that she hates them behind their back which she calls "drama" line (135). Speaking from her own experiences, from her past mistakes in relationships as she said in stanza (6), Rana learned that "drama is not gonna get me anywhere" line (140), but it's going to "get me into a lot of problems" line (142). A couple of years ago, Rana attended the "Rosary Sisters' School" before attending this school. It seems that she experienced some problems in her past relationships with girls, "I'll go tell her that I don't like her", using the female pronoun "her". Those experiences as she calls them" drama", seems to have influenced her future goals, as she said in lines (140-142), which is the reason that she decided to distance herself from these kinds of relationships in stanza (7). Elaborating about the word "drama" at school, in stanza (8): Rana associated 'drama' with how some girls at school align themselves with others who talk badly behind each other's back, which is something that she doesn't conform with, on the contrary, she disapproves of these actions and she's critical of those girls " انه في كتير بنات بالمدرسة دراما" line (144). She gives another example for this word, it's when two people are in a relationship and the whole school knows about it after two minutes. Rana refers to "drama" as gossip which is something that

she does not like to be a part of. Rana's past experiences at her previous school, obviously affected the way she thinks and behaves through her relationships at school and made her the person she is right now. We can note that Rana feels and speaks strongly about "authenticity" in relationships. She speaks about being honest in her relationships with others at school. The voice of 'experience' and 'change' speaks about her power to speak what she thinks and to express how she feels about herself and others. Authenticity is not only well manifested in distancing herself from fake unauthentic relationships at school, as she refers to them as "drama", but also, in criticizing other girls who align themselves with those who talk behind people's back.

This narrative was constructed through the group dialogue (that consisted of Rana, Adam and Sameer). Adam was the most out spoken as illustrated in the first narratives presented before. In several occasions Adam was telling about how he learned to "put a fake face on" and how it served his self-image and relationships. In response to that, comes Rana's narrative of authenticity.

Narrative #10: بس أنا مش من هدول البنـات

Narrative # 10: Rana	
Stanza 1	**Stanza 3**
906 آه مثلا بسمعش عنهم من حدا	1168 بس أنا بتفرأش علي إزا
907 from my own experience	1169 تبعتي من مرة بتفرقش علي ال reputation يعني ال
908 أنا إزا بسمع عن حدا	1170 ليش لأنه إزا إزا الشخص بدو يحكي معي وبدو يتعرف علي أنا، مش يسمع من حدا
909 بروح بحكي مع الشخص بسأله	1171 و ليش تروح تسمع من الاشاعات وتبطل تحكي معي عشان سمعت هيك حكي عني
910 بحبش اسمه من الاشاعات	1172 يعني تعال اعرفني أنا
911 وأصدقهم وأصير أعمل اشي	1173 لو يحكوا عني ايش ما يحكوا بفرأش
Stanza 2	**Stanza 4**
912 بالزبط ما عشان هيك أحسن من	1174 في بنات بس أنا مش من هدول البنات
913 my own experience	1175 أنا يحكوا عني بتفرقش
914 than from other people's talk	1176 أنا عارفة مين أنا والي بيجي أهلا وسهلا
915 هو هيك آه بس	

Speaking from past experiences in relationships, Rana continues to elaborate about the way she relates to others at school through this narrative. Being a determined honest person who distances herself from "drama" and unauthentic relationships, Rana trusts the knowledge that comes from her own experiences. She allows her experiential relational knowledge to inform her relationship decisions. She relates to others according to her own experience with them and not from rumors about them in stanzas (1-2). She doesn't allow rumors to affect her judgment and the way she relates to others, line (910). She prefers to confront that person openly, line (909). It seems that, at her previous school, bad rumors have affected her reputation there and resulted in being alienated from other girls. Now, as Rana became older in age and more mature, she became a strong woman who "doesn't care about her reputation" lines (1169-1173). The new school context may have provided her with a space to "be". She is outspoken, speaks what she thinks and expresses how she feels inside. Rana tells what she knows about herself and others through lived experiences. In stanza (3), she emphasized the way she wants others to relate to her. She expects them to "get to know her as a person", which is very important to her as emphasized in lines (1170- 1172) and to relate to her in a mutual way as she explained in stanza (1). Distancing herself from other girls, "I'm not like those girls" line (1174), indicates that Rana knows her self; what she is and what she is not, what she prefers and what she does not approve of. Rana is aware and knows well how girls should be and should behave. She knows that girls should be quiet and should silence themselves "their voices and true opinion" in order to keep relationships and save their reputation. Despite of this knowledge, she still choses to speak up.

Narrative #11: I don't want to put makeup on

Narrative # 11: Rana	
Stanza 1	**Stanza 3**
442 بنعقد الأشياء أكتر	459 for me there's not
443 Girls really care when they don't have make up on	460 yeah exactly
444 or when they do have make up on	461 Girls do
445 هلا عني يحكوا راح ايش يفكروا بصيروا	462 there's this thing is that girls most girls
446 like that that's one of the things I know that girls do	463 go about at school is
447 they feel really anxious	464 dress as if you're going to see your
448 I'm telling you guys advice	worst enemy and your best crush
449 تفهموا عشان	466 I know it
	467لازم تلبس اشي كتير حلو عشان
Stanza 2	468 or to show someone that you really like
451 مثلا احنا why we think a lot about stuff	
452 because we just	**Stanza 4**
453 انه بتحكي one of the main things why	479 Sometimes I go by it
454 because probably there's a guy they're	480 بس مرات بكون لا
455 thinking about that's one of the things	481 I don't want to put makeup on
456 a girl best friend she wants to	
457 احنا ولا most of the time we don't care	
458 but there's someone like someone	

In this narrative, Rana speaks about how important for girls to keep a "good public image" at school, to the extent that "they feel really anxious" line (448), "if they don't put makeup on", line (443), or when "they do have makeup on" line (444). In this narrative Rana is emphasizing how girls should look like.

In the 1st stanza, Rana uses the plural pronoun 'they' to distance herself from other girls, maybe to show that she is different from them, that she does not care about her "public image" as she said in stanza (4). Then, in the 2nd stanza, she shifts to the use of the plural pronoun 'we', as a

way of including herself with girls her age and joining them in voicing the way they think about things, especially when they want to impress or perform a certain image to others (girls or guys). Rana, explains that this is the only situation that girls care about keeping a "good image" as she said:" but most of the time we don't care" line (457). Rana's feelings are the result of the patriarchal culture that we live in which shapes and limits girls thoughts about how they should behave and think in their community in order to be accepted by others. Rana is trying to resist all the systems that we live in which are trying to dictate who she is, who she should be, and how she should behave as a female. Rana is trying to resist the heteronormative and patriarchal systems. She is trying to perform gender differently, an alternative way of being a woman. She is trying to be the woman that she wants to be. Rana is creating different and diverse performances to how she can be as a woman. In the 3rd stanza, she returns to exclude herself from other girls when she talked about not having a boy to impress like other girls, "for me there's not", which seems to be an uncomfortable subject to talk about as she ended the sentence with a sigh. In the 4th stanza, she returns to speak in the "I' pronoun to express how she thinks and behaves which is different than other girls at her school. Rana's narrative shows a "healthy resistance", a struggle against losing her voice and her sense of self. Through some moments, we can note that she sometimes joins other girls her age, voicing their thoughts and needs about different issues in life such as the need to perform a certain image to impress others at school (boys /girls). In other moments, we can note that Rana is not just aware of her 'self', but she's also honest and outspoken. She speaks what she thinks and expresses how she feels in her relational world at school. Rana does not care about fitting into a certain image, the image dictated by others, how girls should be and expected to be.

Contrary to the conclusions of (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), boys are like girls in this current study, they speak about struggling with a relational impasse: if they speak their honest feelings and thoughts in their relationships, if they bring themselves fully into relationships, they risk losing their relationships because no one will want to be with them, yet if they do not speak their honest voice,

if they take themselves out of relationship for the sake of relationships, they lose relationships that are genuine.

Adam and Sameer took similar pathways of growth into this relational impasse. In some spaces and with some people, they are moving out from their relationship with themselves and into a relationship with an image of themselves that is more accepted by others (friends). They learned to fake their feelings and behaviors and not to speak what they truly know and feel in order to have and keep their relationships at school. Conversely to Sameer, Adam is aware of the performativity of selfhood, even if he feels pressured to cover over his feelings and to go underground. Still in touch with his true feelings, Adam knows what he is doing. He knows what to say and how to act depending on the context (space) and the person that he is with. At school, including the spaces within, such as the classroom and hallways, Adam tries to keep a "good image", a "happy positive image", so as not to have enemies and to please his teachers. Furthermore, he tries to keep the same good image in public by behaving in an accepted way and being with good people. In other spaces like his home and break time, we can hear the doubling of Adam's voice as he still struggles in his relationships while he speaks about those spaces. At some moments, he speaks about his home as the place where his true personality comes out, the place where he can be and do whatever he wants, but in other moments, he speaks about the pressure of pleasing his parents, not letting them down, he speaks about being a "perfect boy". The break time is also a space with some contradictions between the way Adam feels, thinks and behaves. Even if he speaks of being himself "not putting a fake face on", because he's with his friends, with the people that he really likes, he also speaks of faking his feelings in order not to make his friend upset. His desire to say what he feels, conflicts with his desire to keep relationships and not to hurt anyone. Sameer, on the other hand, no longer struggles with the gap between what he feels and what he says. Now, he is a reflection for what others want him to feel and think. He not only risks losing his voice and eventually not to know his own feelings and thoughts, but he also risks not knowing what is an 'act' and what is 'really him' during this process. Sameer moves to a psychological

uunderground. Moving out from his relationship with himself and into a relationship with an image of himself that other people respond to and seem to value, becomes normal for Sameer. The separation of the self from relationships; not being true in his relationships, becomes internalized into the psyche. These splits have become mistaken for development, or seen as part of nature not a part of the culture. They are considered as a developmental milestone towards maturity as they appear in the theories of psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology (Gilligan, 2011). Conversely, Rana took a different pathway of growth into this relational impasse. She is aware of her true self, about her thoughts and feelings and is not afraid to express them. She learned to be honest from her own experience in relationships. Authenticity in relationships is very important to Rana in which she distances herself from fake unauthentic relationships. In all her narratives, Rana presents a girl who's outspoken and which is shown in all her narratives except for one moment, where she speaks about unauthentic relationships in her life. Her father's home where her stepmother and stepbrother live, is the only space where she does not feel comfortable in. She speaks of having to 'act' in a certain way, بعرفش كيف to act, to "put a fake face on" when relating to her stepmother.
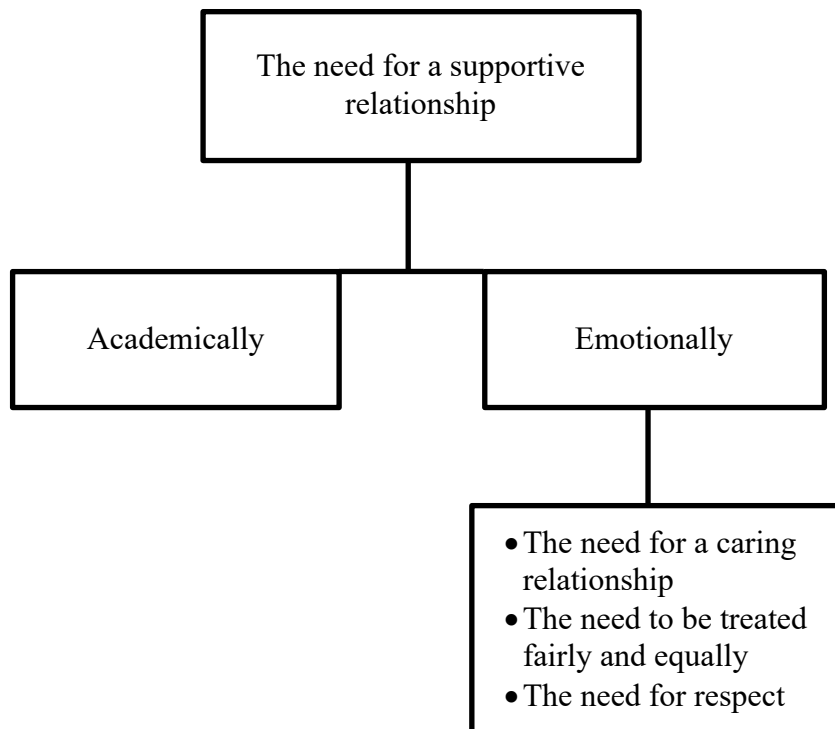
These results were totally unexpected, knowing that we cannot generalize these findings to all adolescent boys and girls living in the Palestinian context. I wonder will this still be the case in the coming years for Rana, Adam and Sameer. Will Rana for instance still be that determined and subversive of dominant and gendered ways of being? or will she eventually surrender and submit? It seems to me that Rana at this point has nothing to lose, with a new school context that she is using to construct a self that she wants. She showed that she is now at least in total control.

Major Theme (2):

The Need for a Supportive Relationship Between Students and Teachers

The teacher-student relationship is the most important relationship in the school context because it impacts students' sense of belonging, behavioral, social, psychological, and academic development and therefore affecting their identities. Some studies discussed the relation between emotional and behavioral development of students (Skinner & Belmont, 1993, Wang & Degol 2015), while other studies examined the relation between emotional and educational development of students. According to Yamashiro, it is by recognizing the inseparable link between the emotional development and the academic development of students that teachers can make a considerable academic impact (Yamashiro, 2004). Similarly, other studies addressed teaching as an emotional practice, where teachers view students as emotional and social beings as well as intellectual ones (Hargreaves, 1998). Through this study, the emotional bonds and understandings between teachers and students shaped everything they did including how they taught, how they planned, and the structures in which they preferred to teach. Teachers acknowledged that building emotional understanding with students in relationships is essential to successful academic learning. Consequently, positive teacher- student relationships are linked to higher standardized test scores (Esposito 1999; Hoy and Hannum 1997), GPA (Wang and Holcombe 2010) and students' motivation to learn (Patrick et al. 2007; Ryan and Patrick 2001), while less teacher respect for students is associated with school dropout (Worrell and Hale 2001). Other studies emphasized that when teachers express care toward students, behave sensitively, communicate respect and interest, and remain warm and engaged, this will improve individual relationships, students' sense of school belonging, cooperation among students, and motivates students to learn. In addition, it will prevent and diffuses disturbing behaviors, and it will affect the broader climate and reduces classroom conflicts (Uslu &, Gisir, 2017). Through this theme, participants talked about experiencing positive and negative relationships with their teachers mainly in the classroom. They stressed on the need for academic and emotional support.

Figure # 2: The first level represents the main theme, in the second level comes the sub-themes and on the third level the specific narratives are represented through their titles.

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              ┌─────────────────────────┐
              │  The need for a supportive │
              │      relationship          │
              └───────────┬─────────────┘
                          │
          ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
    ┌──────────────┐              ┌──────────────┐
    │ Academically │              │  Emotionally │
    └──────────────┘              └──────┬───────┘
                                         │
                          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                          │ • The need for a caring        │
                          │   relationship                 │
                          │ • The need to be treated       │
                          │   fairly and equally           │
                          │ • The need for respect         │
                          └──────────────────────────────┘
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1. **The Need for Academic Support**

Through this sub-theme, some participants talked about the school's care for their learning needs by providing learning support (learning accommodations), applying multi-sensory teaching and learning in class. On the other hand, those students talked about the school's negligence to provide them with their learning needs such as learning accommodations, preparations for the exams, especially the SAT exam, varied and flexible teaching methods in various subjects, modified assessment methods, and instability in teachers through the academic year.

In talking about the benefits that he has attained from his school and the support they provided especially when he was at a younger age in comparison with other schools he might have attended, Rami said: "the school benefited me...if I went to another school, they would have neglected me...yeah accommodations and these things...I mean help...the extra time...they don't

give at other schools". For Reem, caring for her learning needs is when teachers helped her in class simply by answering her questions when she raised her hand, as she added: "they know that if I want to ask a question for example, I raise my hand they come to answer me...they didn't leave me …. I mean they helped me". Teachers also provided her with extra lessons as a preparation for her enrolment at school. Reem said: "they know that I'm new to this school...I mean they didn't leave me alone … and they saw my tests for sure...and the teachers I knew Miss R and Miss V ...I mean these two teachers are the only ones that I only knew because I used to take lessons with them before entering the school". As previously stated, we cannot separate the emotional aspect from the academic one through the teacher/student relationship. Through their words, we can hear that those participants didn't just talk about the importance of the provision of their learning needs, but they also talked about the importance of a caring relationship through this process. For participants in this study, learning support was very important that it influenced the kind of relationship they had with teachers, students still remember their relationship with former teachers, the ones who provided the needed support. Being a "good teacher" for those participants is by genuinely caring about their learning by teaching them ways to help them study, as Reem stated: "Miss N. is a very good teacher, جد يا الله بتجنن بتجنن" ...she was the most teacher that we used to like...the kindest one...she used to help us a lot in a way that she helped us not just to succeed but in a way that she makes us feel that you have to study... in this way...I mean she taught us how to study... that's how I help you". Collaborating with students, finding easier ways to help them do their work was also important for Mustafa as he stated: "remember the outline that she did with us...it was the most wonderful thing". Moreover, for Mustafa, being in a good relationship with teachers who uses multi-sensory teaching while giving the lessons, made the biology subject and teacher his favorite and ideal class. This class caters for his need for multi- sensory learning, as he said:" I like the biology class, but it's a little bit difficult ...but it's nice...it's dissection and stuff...but it's hard...but if they send you to the laboratory, it'll be nice...one-time we did dissection to an eye I think and we took out its parts...you can see things and understand things ...it's a nice experience...we used a

blade and we cut a brain and an eye... you can see it in front of you...you can flip it and see it, open it and see what's inside and touch it". Applying multi-sensory teaching in class helped Mustafa recognize his learning style which is a combination of kinesthetics; learning by movement and touching objects, and visual learning; which is obtaining information through visual means. This also, strengthen his learning ability and helped him to understand the lessons well. As a result, Mustafa was asking for multi-sensory learning not just in Biology class, but also in Chemistry and other subjects when applicable, in order to have similar successful experiences, as he said: "I wish that all the biology classes will be in the laboratory...the subjects that we can work on by hand like chemistry also". Mustafa also talked about his need for "visual learning style" in the History lessons. He wanted to see the things that he learns about in reality so as to see things "in real life" as he talked about history lesson "it's nice to go to Egypt and see things, everything is beautiful when you see things in real life not just in books, imagine going to a place and see artifacts and so on...or to go scuba diving and find something old sometimes people find old things". For Mustafa, engaging more senses makes learning more enjoyable and increases his motivation for learning, especially during the laboratory lesson in biology. So, even if it was a difficult class as he said: "Biology class is hard, but when we go to the laboratory, it'll be a nice experience...it's fun...we don't have to remain seated in class all the time", he still described it as his ideal class. Additionally, for Reem and Rami, the multi-sensory teaching and the caring relationship that they shared with the Arabic teacher makes him their ideal teacher. As Reem commented: "the way he teaches makes us understand the material... he simplifies the material". "Mr. F. is a very good teacher ...he makes us understand the material well", Rami added.

A caring relationship as explained by Reem is when teachers are being helpful and understanding to students' learning needs, as she added: "Mr. F. helps all the students in Arabic... he knows that they're weak, so he makes things easier for us... he also reduces the amount of homework a lot... Mr. F. understands us the most". By using the term "weak" in the previous quote, Reem was referring to the educational level in Arabic of all the students in her class and at her

school as well. This term is used by teachers and students at school to describe students who are at a lower level compared with their grade level and when compared with other schools. We can note here that Reem always includes herself with all the students when talking about her experiences with teachers, except when she talked about students being "weak" in Arabic class where she used the pronoun "they" to exclude herself from other students. This might mean that Reem does not view herself as a student with learning difficulties. Then, she returned to the use of the "we" pronoun to include herself with the students which might indicate that deep down in herself she knows that she needs the help as much as other students. According to these participants, the ideal teacher is not just when a teacher applies pedagogy that support students' educational level, but also when he makes them feel known and cared for in their relationship through personal interest in and knowledge about their lives. When teachers know the young people, they work with, they're more likely to focus on students' growth and possibilities.

On the other hand, participants talked about the school's negligence to provide students with their learning needs such as learning accommodations, preparations for the exams especially the SAT exam, varied and flexible teaching methods in various subjects, modified assessment methods and instability in teachers throughout the academic year.

In spite of being satisfied with the school's provision of learning accommodations when he was at a younger age, Rami is now speaking with disappointment and anger about the administration's negligence of learning accommodations such as the 'extra time' during exams, as is showed in his words and tone of voice: "the school neglects the students and the SAT exam...if the school considers itself a unique American School which is certified from the administration... where is the help and accommodations to the SAT?... this is a wrong thing in the school... last time my mom came to school asking the principal about the way they want to help for the SAT exam...she replied that they provided 12 years of school...and that your son doesn't need extra time!". In addition, Rami was also frustrated by the school's negligence in preparing the students for the SAT exam as he was pointing out to the negative aspects of the school: "the school doesn't

help in preparing for the Sat exam "برمونا زي الكلاب يلا روحوا". Like last year I didn't want to do the SAT ...they gave it to us before a week and I didn't study anything for it...I didn't have the time...I didn't know how to study...and it was the first time that I do the exam...they should have provided us with a guide...they should have done something...they just do whatever they want...and we just pay the price. ونحنا بناكل هوا. In spite of being aware of his learning difficulties and his need for learning accommodations during exams (extra time), Rami doesn't view his learning difficulty as an individual issue or as a part of his identity. This was showed through the switch between the use of the singular pronoun "I" and the plural pronoun "we", when he talked about his ability to do exams without receiving any accommodations (extra time): "eh... I can finish the exam...sometimes I take...it depends on the length of the exam if it's short or long or difficult, even if the whole class takes extra time, we will finish it". Rami wanted to make this issue a collective one, to show that many students also need extra time or some help during the exams. Mustafa was aware of his learning difficulties, especially in retaining information and his need for extra time whether in preparing for an exam or during the exam. He was also aware of his need for variations in exam questions, which made certain assessment methods challenging for him such as the pop quizzes for the lack of time and the lack of variation in test questions. Therefore, Mustafa addressed his worries and the challenges he faced with this kind of assessment method (quizzes): "the pop quiz .... you won't be...you might forget a difficult name...then not know...and he'll give you short time...and finally you'll take a zero...and your grades will go down...so if one studies the material from before it would be better...he would revise in class the day after". As such, being aware of his learning needs, Mustafa was asking for the inclusion of variations in exam questions, such as multiple-choice questions, which helps him with his difficulties in retaining information. He added: "and the exams would include multiple- choice questions.... this wasn't multiple-choice...it's easier to be multiple-choice because the hard words will be in front of you". At the same time, Mustafa didn't view his learning difficulties as an individual issue. This is showed through speaking in the "you" pronoun, where he might be addressing others (peers, friends) who might share the same learning

difficulty, "for sure you're going to forget the material...everyone will forget", then he tried to normalize the aspect of forgetting.

Students feel that the school administration doesn't care about the quality of their learning when they change teachers throughout the same year. Changing teachers without proper planning, might be confusing and concerning for students, especially students with learning difficulties. Participants' concern came from teachers who use "unsuitable" teaching methods, and when new teachers start teaching without communicating with former ones and without learning about their students. Mustafa here affirmed the consequences of frequent teacher shifts: "they don't care about us...every two months, they change teachers...this is not good because this teacher doesn't know what the other have taught us...at first, she teaches well then, she leaves school and comes another teacher that doesn't know how to teach".

The wish of having "one good teacher" reflects Mustafa's current negative relationship with some teachers at school. It also tells us something about how much he is aware of the influence of "good" and less qualified teachers on his current learning, raising some future concerns and worries about his success at the university. Therefore, Mustafa wishes that at the university, there will be more stability in "good" teachers in order to make things easier and have positive experiences there, as he said: "I wish that at the university, good teachers will keep on teaching me through the four years...I want to make everything easier for me at the university because it's the most important thing, I'll try to make everything easier because it's very difficult...I want to make everything easier that the good teachers make things easier for me...studying will be difficult but good teachers make it a bit easier... unlike bad teachers who pressure you more than the good teachers". We can note that through the previous quotes, Mustafa repeated the phrase "make things easier" many times and linked it with "good teachers". From Mustafa's point of view, good teachers are more compassionate about students that they understand their learning and their emotional needs. Also, we can view that despite Mustafa's learning difficulty which makes studying more challenging for him, he is motivated to pursue higher education. He has a goal in life, he knows what he wants to

do. When Mustafa was trying to visualize what university will be like, which is proximate, he was also visualizing the difficulties that he might face there, of course based on the experiences he was having at school. Thinking about studying at the university in the light of his school experiences made him feel anxious.

Building a relationship with teachers is very important to students' emotional, academic, and social development. For students with learning difficulties, building a relationship with teachers is a little bit challenging. It is about letting yourself as student known for the teacher. Students with learning difficulties has a lot of work to do in order to build a relationship, because they have to make themselves known. We are here, we have learning difficulties, and we need more support. With every new teacher they will have to start over, they have to advocate themselves every time.

Other participants talked about traditional teachers using traditional teaching methods without an intention to change. As Rami said: "Mr. B. is like the old people who doesn't accept new things or methods in teaching...he gets upset...he doesn't want to change anything... he wants to stay the same...one time I did an equation in a way and another time I did it in another way like the book...he told me I'm right the book is wrong". This can be thought of as one of the practices of oppression while applying the banking education. In this approach, teachers are the only ones who obtain the knowledge and the students are considered as ignorant subjects, as containers that are filled by teachers. Therefore, the students lack creativity, transformation, and knowledge through this system (Freire, 1993). Participants are demanding to be considered co-constructors of knowledge with their teachers through dialogue, not as containers to be filled with teachers' narratives.

The oppressive and dehumanizing relationship between students and teachers goes beyond the school context. It reflects the multiple and interrelated oppressive systems that we live in. This educational system with its neo-liberal orientation, promote individualism and focuses on peace and co-existence through its curriculum which promote the American identity not the Palestinian

identity. This neo-liberal system which is manifested in the educational systems impose on us how to be and how to construct ourselves and identities and our priorities in life and the meaning and concept of success which influences our self and identity performance. These ways of being, these performances definitely serve colonialism.

2. The Need for Emotional Support

Through this theme, participants talked about their need for care, equal and fair treatment, and respect through their relationships with teachers.

a. The Need for a Caring Relationship

Through this sub-theme, all participants used plural pronouns such as "we" and "us", to share their feelings of being cared for by teachers. They talked about teachers treating them as human beings, cared for their success at school, providing them with positive feedback, and having positive human qualities such as being kindhearted and fun. This positive communication between teachers and students contributed to feelings of comfort while relating to them, as Rami stated: "sometimes he [teacher] is lenient with us...he sometimes allows us to keep our phones... but not all the time...overall we're comfortable in his class". On the other hand, participants experienced miscommunication and misunderstanding with teachers which left them feeling uncared for, and for their emotional needs as learners.

Through their relationships with teachers at school, participants experienced positive and caring relationship with some teachers. As Rami commented about his favorite teacher: "his personality...how he treats us...how he shares things with us about school and we also share with him... we like to talk to him more than any other teacher." Participants felt that they're being treated as human beings, that teachers have genuine interest in their lives and challenges, not just seeing them as students that they only have to teach the material. As Rami commented: "he talks with us about things that's not related to studying or school... about other things... when we finish class, we

talk to each other... we sometimes talk about school...sometimes tell stories that happened outside and about the scout group that he's a part of... sometimes we talk about religious issues...Mr. F. advises us on how to communicate with other teachers". According to Preble & Gordon (2011), when students and teachers relate to each other as regular people with interests and personalities that go beyond just the academics, they have more positive relations and work more effectively together. A caring relationship meant to some participants when teachers show interest and care for their success at school. As Mustafa expresses how the biology teacher wants all the students to do well at school as he said: "Mr. M. sometimes helps us... he tells us we'll see your grade in the finals ...if you don't do well, he'll omit the quiz grade...because it's the only one that we don't do good at". Sharing his personal experience with this teacher, Mustafa spoke about a moment when he gave him positive feedback on his behavior which contributed to a sustainable change in his good behavior. As he added: "I'm always good with him in class...so I saved these 10 points then when I told him to add it to my final grade, he told me you earned it...he gave me a compliment...that day I felt happy how the teacher told me that I've earned it...and I stayed good all year long". Accordingly, we can notice that teacher's compliments and personal teacher-student relationships has an effect on students' behavioral and emotional engagement in the classroom (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), which results in students being more engaged and behaving appropriately (Skinner & Belmont, 1993) and a decrease in behavioral problems for adolescents (Wang & Degol, 2015). This positive relationship makes students feel recognized and valued which may also contribute to a supportive classroom environment (Verhoeven, Poorthuis & Volman, 2018). This shows that students are more likely to respect and conform to the classroom rules when teachers and students value and support one another and have a warm and caring relationship (Wang & Degol, 2015). Therefore, we can note that the teacher's positive feedback which might be intentional or unintentional had a positive impact not just on Mustafa's behavior in class, but also it can have a positive impact in shaping and constructing his identity. Positive feedback can validate strengths

and challenge adolescents' negative self-views. Alternately, negative feedback can invalidate strengths and reinforce negative self- views.

Teaching is not just a cognitive practice, it's also an emotional one (Hargreaves, 1998). As an emotional practice, teaching affects not just teachers' own feelings and actions, it also affects the feelings and actions of others who are in relationship with them. In his description of his ideal teacher, Mustafa commented on the importance of possessing positive human qualities as being "kind hearted", "fun", "forgiving", "patient", because it influences their interactions with him and other students. As he says: "Mrs. F. is kindhearted...yeah, we always make deals with her...not just me the whole class...we agree on staying silent for a week in order to change our participation grade and make it a 10 instead of zero...we waited for a week and she changed it". Having fun in class is also important for Mustafa as he gives an example: "once a girl in class had a Rubik's cube...he [teacher] gave her one minute to solve it so that the whole class will take extra 10 points...so she solved it in less than a minute and everybody took extra 10 points...can you see how fun he is". We can notice here that participants mentioned 'grades' and 'points', gaining and losing points. When assessment and evaluation is only linked to a number, it becomes hard for students to see their success in any other way. This is a structural problem in the educational system, it becomes dangerous when teachers use their power and the power of grades to discipline or to 'control' students. It reflects the legacy of the behavioral school of psychology. As the school system focuses on grades, it ignores students' need for learning and having fun while learning. As Mustafa said: "Mrs. K. is not fun...she doesn't laugh with us or allow us to make jokes in class". According to Robert Fried (1995), as mentioned in (Hargreaves, 1998), good teachers are emotional and passionate beings who connect with their students. Their classroom relationships are characterized with interest, enthusiasm, inquiry, excitement, discovery, risk-taking and fun (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835).

On the other hand, participants spoke about the school system with its policies and structures as oppressive and dehumanizing, reflecting what Freire called the 'banking education' (Freire, 1993). Through this system, vertical patterns of student-teacher relationship structures exist. This indicates the absence of egalitarian relationships not just between teachers and students, but between all the parts that are involved in the learning process (teachers, students, administrators, parents, curriculum designers, policy makers). Through this kind of relationships, there's no space for dialogue. Dialogue cannot occur between people who deny others the right to speak or when one person deposits ideas on others. To transform and humanize the world, there should be reflection and actionbetween the dialoguers. Dialoguers must engage in critical thinking in order to transform reality seeking the continuing humanization of men not the adjustment to reality. Dialogue is an act of creation, it cannot be between people who dominate others, for its purpose is the liberation of human kind. As an act of creation and reflection, dialogue can not exist without love, it is the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. In this study, participants were asking for a caring and loving relationships with their teachers. Relationships that go beyond the academics, to treat them as human beings and have a genuine interest in their lives and challenges and care for their success at school. As an emotional practice, teachers should love and care for their students in order to commit to their learning through dialogue. With oppressive relationships, it is impossible for teachers to love and care for their students. Without love, teachers and students cannot enter into dialogue. Dialogue cannot exist without humility. Teachers cannot be in dialogue with students while projecting ignorance on them, perceiving themselves as the owners of knowledge and students as containers that are filled by them. How can teachers and students be in dialogue with each other when teachers perceive themselves as being right all the time while students being wrong? How can teachers be in dialogue with students while they use traditional teaching methods without the intention to change failing to perceive their own ignorance? Through this situation, teachers and students can not be partners nor have collaborative relationships in the process of teaching and learning. Faith is another important requirement for dialogue. Without faith in

students' abilities, especially students with learning needs and their power to create an re-create, students cannot be fully human. On the contrary, participants will internalize negative self-views about who they are and what are they capable of. Students will lack creativity, transformation, and knowledge through this oppressive and dehumanizing system (Freire, 1993). With these foundations; love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes horizontal relationships and creates mutual trust between the dialoguers. For without them, there would not be trust in these relationships. Trust cannot be built when there is discrepancy between one's words and actions. It cannot be built with the discrepancy between the school policy and practice, when it fails to support students' learning and emotional needs. Without dialogue, there is no communication which without it there cannot be true education.

The student-teacher relationships are characterized by inequality in power. Students are being oppressed as teachers use their participation grades to control and modify their behaviors. When applied in this limited way, behaviorism as an approach becomes dehumanizing. Mustafa commented: "the teacher doesn't allow us to talk without taking points off our participation grade". Therefore, talking in class is not allowed without facing consequences. Students are only expected to listen but not to talk. Teachers are the only ones who could talk in class. They are the ones who have the power, whereas students feel that they are being under control and are being treated as inferiors by the teachers that have more power. Mustafa continued: "the teacher wants to be the boss of the class and for us to be under her control so as students say that she's strict and strong...she overloads us with homework and deduct points from the participation grade". While pointing out to his map, Sameer spoke from a distant or neutral point of view, about students' feelings of being in an oppressive relationship with teachers, as he said: "at school I know it looks stupid but it's like...this is Mr. F. ... 'break detention' and I'm like on the floor…so we're like worshipping…you have to worship them like they're the kings of the castle... like 'break detention' ... ok". Elaborating on the power relationships, he added: "but in school it's like if you let the student to be right you've lost your power… if you lose power, they can do whatever they

want…you have to stay in power to like… like Mr. J., he let us do whatever we want… he loses control over the class… but Mrs. K. still has control over the class". Sameer is aware of power dynamics. Rana and Adam in the 1ˢᵗ group shared the same opinion as Sameer about the negative relationship students share with teachers, as they said: "many teachers have control over the class but they don't have to be like her…she is [teacher] too much exactly… she [teacher] is over doing it". Participants thought of better ways to control the class, that are more positive. One can question here how does losing control of the class looks like? What does it mean when the class is under control? Teachers and students may have similar perceptions and expectations that a 'quiet' class is one that is under control.

Instead, applying liberation education at school breaks the vertical characteristics of banking education. Teachers are both students and teachers, they learn while they teach, and students are students and teachers, that teach while they learn. To use Freire's words: "the teacher is no longer the one who teaches, but the one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. The teacher and students are jointly responsible for their learning in a process that they will grow in it together. In this process there is no space for authority" (Freire, 1993, p.80). The teacher should employ his/her authority to encourage students' participation, criticism and thinking not to impose ideas upon them, in order to make them autonomous learners and to realize their humanity. When teachers consider students as conscious and cognitive beings and when they reduce their oppressive power in class through dialogue with students, there will be no authority, the teacher and student teach each other through the process. Students will be co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher which will be their cause of liberation.

Participants experienced not just negative and uncaring relationships with teachers, but they also shared stories of misunderstanding (misconception) and instability in their relationship with some of them. Talking in the "we" pronoun, Mustafa wanted to show how sometimes teachers misunderstand them and how miscommunication leads to anger and negative relationship: "there are many misunderstandings happening between teachers and students...maybe you're sitting near a

group of people who are talking and she sees you moving your lips and maybe you talked a little bit...she'll give you a zero but not them", "sometimes you want to ask her about other things than grades...I mean you want to ask her about the field trip sometimes...one time we wanted to ask her about something then she put us a zero because "we're disrupting the class". These misunderstandings between teachers and students make them feel unknown, uncared for and for their emotional needs, which might interfere with the teachers' ability to help their students to learn. According to Noddings (1992), teachers who know and care for their students are more able to respond differentially to individual needs. They are able to interpret their emotions, thoughts and desires (Hargreaves, 1998). Other participants like Rana, talked about teachers' misunderstanding of her personality. She elaborated that some teachers, don't know her as a person with multiple capabilities, she described herself as a person who can manage in class and can be multitasking. As she stated: "I am a person who can multitask, even though, I am not paying attention to teachers in class, but I multitask, I can listen to what they were talking about.

Through the following narrative, Adam as well, talked about teachers not knowing their personality which resulted in miscommunication and feeling unrecognized by teachers. This is shown when Adam was comparing the kind of relationship he shared with his teachers at his current school and the one in Turkey.

Narrative # 12: "They don't know anything about us"

Narrative # 12 : Adam

Stanza 1

1084 I feel that school in Turkey is not like here

1085 you just go to school talk to your friends

1086 teachers shout at you and then you go home

1087 We do learn but

Stanza 2

1088 In this school, it's just there's a lot of consequences for learning

1089 schools shouldn't be like that

1090 there' a lot of consequences that come with learning

1091 like if you're genuinely want to learn

1092 I feel that there' a lot of consequences that come with learning

1093 just being in school

Stanza 3

1095 Ya we do learn

1096 but at the same time

1097 you get screamed at by people who don't really know your personality

1098 people that I mean teachers just see you for 45 minutes a day

1099 They assume that you're this person

1100 so it's just yeah, it's not a fun place

Stanza 4

1101 there, school is like

1102 like every teacher used to sit with you and talk to you ask you about how are you feeling

1103 the principal knows every single person

1104 you feel that he really knows me like my mother at home

Stanza 5

1105 even though, they are an international school, international kids from all over the world

1106 but, the principal knows their abilities, their background, their ethnicity

1107 when he talks to my mom on the phone

1108 you feel that he really knows me like my mother knows me at home

Stanza 6

1109 in our school, they don't know anything about us

1110 last time, my mom called the school

1111 and she was like: "Adam is not at school"

1112 or: "I want to bring Adam"

1113 oh...Adam is not at school?

Through this narrative, Adam started sharing his personal experiences at school by comparing this school with the one that he had attended in Turkey a year ago. He used the singular pronoun "you" to address others (peers, friends), or me the one who is engaged in the conversation, to show the mutual experiences that students face at school, where they go to school just to be

screamed at by teachers, be with their friends, and then go home. Through stanzas (1-3), the word "consequences", was repeated three times, lines (1088-1090 & 1092) and the word "scream on" two times lines (1086 & 1097) to emphasize and criticize the association between being at school to learn, and going through bad experiences (consequences) there. It seems like Adam wants us to know that students can't go to school without facing negative consequences which are manifested in being screamed at, line (1086). What Adam is asking through his relationship with teachers, is to put an effort and work with students in order to get to know them personally, not just academically. Having a good relationship with teachers will positively influence their daily communications at school. Through this kind of relationship, teachers will find better ways to relate to students than screaming at them "you get screamed on by people who don't really know your personality". He then evaluated this experience as "it's not a fun place". In stanzas (4 & 5) Adam continues to compare between the two schools by describing the kind of relationship he had with teachers and principals in both. He described the close and caring relationship with his teachers and his feelings of uniqueness in class. The close relationship with his principal was very important to Adam "the principal knows every single person…their abilities their background their ethnicity". The genuine relationship with the principal was emphasized by stressing on the word "جد" (really) when talking about the principal's understanding of his personality. Adam saw that in Turkey the principal made an effort to get to know him, and with time he knew him as his mother did, as he stated: "when he talks to my mother on the phone, I feel like he really knows me as my mother knows me at home" translated from Arabic. This reflects the opposite kind of relationship with teachers in his current school in stanza (6), where there's a lack of communication and familiarity between them. The desire of a close and caring relationship was also emphasized here by repeating the verb "know" three times in stanza (5), to show Adam's desire for this kind of relationship. Sameer, on the other hand, and as a good observer started describing what he witnessed. He tried through the following narrative to narrate the relational dynamics between students and teachers.

Narrative #13: "They don't look through our perspective...They kinda bring out the worst in people"

Narrative # 13: Sameer

Stanza 1

768 but I feel like our teachers

769 like in general

770 they don't look through our perspective

771 like what I saw before

Stanza 2

772 like in class

773 like today and yesterday

774 say like Mrs. Samia she was like

775 people were talking and she was yelling at them

776 and some of them weren't even talking

Stanza 3

778 so, the people got annoyed

779 like Rami I saw him

780 he wasn't talking

781 and when she told him stop talking

Stanza 4

782 he got offended

783 he was like ok I'm gonna talk now I don't care

784 if I'm gonna not talk and still get in trouble

785 why bother

786 like I saw that I was like

787 that's not good

788 people are described as bad people

Stanza 5

790 Not me no

791 like but I see it happening

792 but people even described as like

793 like bad people

794 like people who misbehave in school

Stanza 6

795 like they get misunderstood

796 and then they like I don't want to be understood then

797 they just act like that

Stanza 7

799 I think more logically than like that

800 I think more logically than emotionally

801 Like if they think

802 oh nobody

803 they don't understand me

804 this is gonna make me in trouble anyway

Stanza 8

805 I think more logically like

806 she just misunderstood me for talking that's it

807 but they get emotional and start yelling

808 like that's the difference

Stanza 9	Stanza 10
809 but you can't blame them for that	814 like with their friends they're chill
810 but you can't blame the teacher for	815 they don't act like that
811 like school in general	816 like in class when that happens
812 they kinda bring out the worst in people	817 they act the way they do
813 those kind of people	

In the first stanza, Sameer was talking in the plural pronoun "our", in order to join his classmates in describing the kind of relationship that teachers share with their students. He tried to illustrate two words that are separate; the world of adults (teachers) and the world of adolescents (students) as he said:" they don' t look through our perspective", line (770). Conversely, through this relationship, students' behaviors were mis-interpreted by teachers which resulted in yelling at them for something that they did not do, in line (775). These incidents, resulted in students being angry, "like the people got annoyed" in line (778). Using the word "people" indicates collectivity.

As Sameer explained, this miscommunication influenced students' behaviors and feelings towards teachers in class to the point that they don't care if they follow the class rules. "I'm gonna talk now... I don't care", line (783), "if I'm gonna not talk and still get in trouble why bother", lines (784-785). From afar, Sameer was evaluating his classmates' relationships with teachers as a negative one. There were no clear and understanding communication between them. "Like I saw that, I was like, that's not good", lines (786-787). In stanza (5), we can notice that Sameer was distancing himself from his classmates. He rejects being put in the same category as his classmates. This was clear when I asked about if he shared the same experiences as his classmates. Here, the pitch of his voice became high the first time he said "no", distancing himself from others. The second time he said "no", the tone of his voice went lower which felt like a disappointment. Then, he proceeded his narrative by talking about the image that was constructed by teachers about students as they described them as 'bad people' line (793). This fixed image had influenced students' behaviors in class to the point that they started behaving according to it, "they just act like

that ", line (797). In stanza (7), Sameer evaluated his classmates' reactions to situations in class as emotional unlike himself," I think more logically than emotionally", line (800). He tends to describe himself as more logical in reacting to those situations, as he stated: "she just misunderstood me for talking that's it", line (806), which leads to better consequences than being emotional and then yelling. Analyzing those situations, Sameer does not blame the students nor the teachers for these negative behaviors, he blames the school's environment, maybe the classroom context, where students are being stigmatized with a negative image in the absence of a clear and understanding communication between teachers and students. Then, in stanza (10), he continues his evaluation by stating that in another space at school as the recess, students act differently, they act relaxed "chill" with their friends than in class with teachers.

b. The Need to Be Treated Fairly and Equally

Participants talked about being treated unfairly by some teachers at school whether by providing unequal opportunities for students in relation to academic opportunities, being treated unequally through their interactions, and through the application of unfair and inappropriate punitive measures.

Rami expressed his feelings of being treated unfairly while talking about the negative side of school, which led to mistrustful relationship with the school administration. Rami talked about systemic inequalities such as providing unequal academic opportunities to students. He said: "Last time the school took a couple of my classmates on a trip to another school...then I asked the principal about them going and not us...why didn't you take us? ...why you always choose the same people? She tells us that they registered before...actually we didn't know...there was no registration....it was a lie...how did they chose? We didn't know anything about that".

Discrimination is the word Rami used to describe the (Academy Program)[1]; that is a part of the educational system at school that he refuses to be enrolled in for the following reasons, "the academy program is like discrimination upon your grades...they are separating the smart from the rest...this is a wrong thing...you'll have to see your friends in the upper level". My role as the school social worker made me aware that Rami was speaking from personal experience when he was in 7th grade, where he was separated from other students and friends and used to be in a class with students who have learning difficulties and behavioral problems. This experience has affected him negatively till this day. Nevertheless, he chose to speak using the pronoun "one" to separate himself from this issue: "it's separating people upon their abilities...that's the thing I hate...if one is not doing well at school, but is good at something else, they'll put him in another class in a different environment that's not suitable for him". Rami is speaking about the importance of perceiving each student as a whole, not just through academic performance. As Rich and Schachter (2012) confirmed in (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020), that "teacher's caring and a school program that cultivates the whole student rather than just academic learning are the most important school features for the development of adolescents' identity and self-concept, which in turn can promote positive development and positive future behaviors and choices (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020). Rami added that the school should view students as people with various abilities and not to classify them or put them into certain categories, as he stated: "they separate you from the normal...there's no such thing as normal, everyone is different in their own way...then they put the others in another class and they tell them that they're academy (advanced class)...these are the smart ones the good ones...you're not smart...that is wrong". This will negatively affect student's feelings and self-view, as he said: "one will be upset, he'll think that he's not good مش شاطر...that's why I don 't like it...I don't like to be in that category". Rami thinks that the school's policy should be about merging

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[1] The academy program is an advanced program that starts from 10th –12th grade. Through this program, students take advanced materials (classes) in Math and English, compared by the regular classes. Students must have an average of 95 and above in Math in order to be accepted in this program, in addition to have a good behavioral record.

students together not separating them by categories, "the school, especially in the 10th -11th-12th grade, it shouldn't be like this, all the students should be together...in the university it's ok... there are advanced classes...but here we are all the same, they shouldn't let the others think like this...they should cancel the academy".

The issue of teachers using negative classroom management by implementing unfair and inappropriate punitive measures is a collective one at school. Mustafa uses the "we" pronoun to voice others' feelings of being treated unfairly in class as teachers misuse participation grade as a punishment for misbehavior in order to control students' behaviors in class. As he explained, "the teacher thinks that the participation grade is when we talk in class, they deduct points of our participation grade when we talk in class...they have a wrong understanding of the participation grade...participation is if we participate not if we talk in class...I mean they got it wrong". The first group participants also talked about the importance of fair treatment, "like Ms. D. is the perfect like mixture… she's strict but like… she understands us…yes, she might joke at us…but she's not…we know that she's being…she's doing what she has to do … she would have a rough day a rough class before us……but she's never unfair". We can note that the need to have a fair relationship with teachers was very important to participants, as they said: "في حدا مثلا" what do they do... once you say one word one word… zero participation …Ms. F. is cool… but I don't like how she punishes the whole class…I'm gonna get you a very hard test that you're going to cry your eyes out… Surprise pop quiz… only 3 people are talking هلا بتحكوا عشان". On the other hand, participants are conscious and aware about the reality that they're living in the classroom. They are aware of these unfair punitive measures (grading system) that is being abused by teachers to control their behaviors, they see it as very provocative and only increase their anger. This may cause students to consciously rebel against the teachers, seeking liberation from this oppressive reality (Freire, 1993). Students wanted to ignore the classroom rules; as not talking in class and staying seated all the time. As Mustafa commented: "and sometimes they say that they're going to give us zero...this makes us feel angry that we want to talk more in class...we want to get up from our chair to talk to the teacher".

Through the following quote, Reem was not just asking to be treated fairly and equally compared to other students in class, but she's also asking for mutual respect in her relationship with teachers. She views teachers' unfair and unequal interaction with students as a way of being used or taken advantage of. As she explains: "Mr. B. humiliates us when we do something wrong, but if other girls do the same thing, he doesn't say anything to her because she treats him in a mean way, because we're good with him, he took advantage of that situation." Elaborating on the meaning of the sentence (the teacher takes advantage of the situation) Reem added: "I mean, he took advantage because we're good with him, we don't dare to be rude with him... this thing affects us because they don't treat us the same way we treat them". By using the word "us", Reem is including herself with the "good girls" who obey their teachers. Reem is speaking of teachers who take advantage of submissive students. The "other girls"; girls who behave in a mean and rude way with teachers are being treated with more 'respect'.

c. The Need for Respect

As it was mentioned earlier, participants were also asking for mutual respect in their relationships with teachers. Through this sub-theme, participants spoke about experiencing feelings of disrespect and even humiliation through their communication with some of the teachers. Some of them talked about teachers disrespecting their mental abilities. Others talked about teachers who yell and embarrass them in class.

Through several moments, whether during the group meeting or the individual interview, Rami expressed his deep feelings of anger and hatred towards his math teacher in relation to the disrespectful and humiliating way he communicates with him. The first moment was during the group interview when Mustafa (a participant in the same group) was talking about his hopes to have a good teacher at the university, where Rami stepped into the dialogue to share those negative feelings: "I hate Mr. B., I ask him a simple question that I forgot...he made fun of me ...he humiliated me in front of the whole class...he told me: "what's two plus two 4...you get it". We can

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note that Rami's negative emotions were so deep towards his teacher to the fact that he retold the later incident in another moment during the individual interview. Rami talked about feeling emotionally hurt and humiliated that he described feeling like trash as he said, "one time the teacher humiliated me in front of the class, he told me: "what two plus two 4....you get it... " زبلني مرتين قدام الصف ". Rami summarized their relationship as "disgusting" through this quote: " استاز سامي مقرفلي عيشتي ومقرفله عيشته". These negative feelings of anger, hatred, humiliation, hurt, and disrespect

between teachers and students affect their feelings of being recognized at school and therefore affect their emotional well-being. Also, these negative feelings affect students' behaviors in class. Students expect respect to be exercised mutually in their relationship with teachers, and when they feel that it's not mutual, their behaviors in class will be negatively affected intentionally. As Rami puts it: "That's what he told me then, what can I tell him, if that's the way he treats me then I'll treat him the same way...so last time, I got up to talk to my friend...he told my classmate 'sit sit...it looks like you're slow in understanding' then he told me 'it seems that he's like you, he has a problem in understanding', then I turned around to him and told him 'Mr. If I have a problem in understanding, how did I answer your question'". We can note that Rami's self-view were not aligned with how his teacher perceived him or with the teacher's implicit expectations. They're not part of his identity. Rami views himself as a person with good mental abilities who is capable of understanding and answering the teacher's questions. This is in line with studies suggesting that teachers' expectations make available fixed identity positions that adolescents may or may not endorse (Verhoeven, Poorthuis, & Volman, 2019). So, in order to become part of their identities, they have to be desirable and meaningful from students' perspectives (Verhoeven, Poorthuis, & Volman, 2019). On the other hand, the math teacher's negative feedback implicitly affects Rami's self-view. We can note that he doesn't view himself as a smart student. This is shown through comparing himself with smart students in class who have good relationship with the teacher as he said, "G. is on the same line with the teacher, he makes the class be quiet, he jokes with the teacher, these things make the teacher likes him... Mr. B. likes the smart (good) students". This negative relationship where

teachers are abusive, humiliating and judgmental in relating to students also affect students'
academic behaviors in class. Students won't seek help or ask questions to understand the material.
As Rami commented, "when I don't understand some material, I ask the other class to help me or
sometimes I refer to the book to understand the material". We can note that the math teacher
implicitly has low expectations of Rami's academic abilities which caused inequalities through their
daily interactions compared to other students. Rami explains with anger and frustration about how
the teacher ignores him when he needs help to understand the material, "I ask him a simple question
that I don't understand, he says, 'I want quality questions...this is easy' and I tell him, 'Mister, I
don't understand...he says: "move on" ...if I don't understand the simple question, how can I
understand the difficult one". This is consistent with ethnographic studies that suggest that
inequalities may occur in teacher's expectations across different groups of students that are
distinguished by perceived academic abilities (Verhoeven, Poorthuis, & Volman, 2019).

The school as a system supports student categorization, 'putting students in particular boxes';
perceiving them through a specific one-dimensional lens. Unfortunately, this influences how
teachers perceive students and thus their relationship with them, which can contribute to the
development of negative identities. Students with learning difficulties can come to perceive
themselves as inferior when compared with other students. With time, students will internalize the
negative images and teachers' misperceptions about who they are and what they are capable of. This
can be shown through Rami's awareness of these inequalities as he comments about the students
who have good relationship with the teacher, "all the intelligent students...they know how to talk to
the teachers...makes jokes with him...keeps the class quiet...then Mr. B. helps them". Reem also
shared a personal experience where she felt disrespected by some teachers at school. She explained
that even though she related to them in a respectful way in contrast to other mean girls at school,
they still were relating to her disrespectfully as she said, "frankly, that's their problem...for example
there are many mean girls but I'm very good with them(teachers) so they take advantage of this
thing... for example with Miss K. I always behave in a good way in her class...but because I once
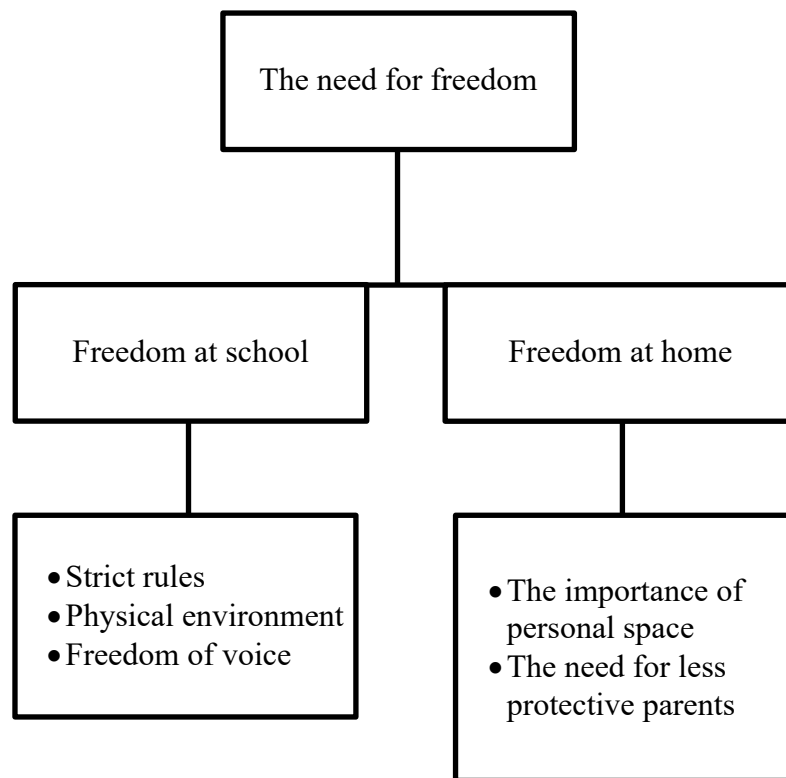
laughed, she told me: "what is happening Reem...what is this laugh... and I don't know what... just because I'm always good, now you want to scream at me just because I said this small sentence". In the fore-mentioned quote where Reem was speaking about being treated fairly and equally by teachers, we can view that Reem was also demanding mutual respect in her relations with teachers at school. Talking in the "we" pronoun in order to join her voice with other girls, Reem shared embarrassing moments while relating to one teacher, as she said: "With Mr. M., for example, if we do something wrong, he must embarrass us...but he doesn't say anything with other girls...the girl did something wrong and he didn't say anything to her...why? Because she treats him in a mean way...but because we're good with him, he takes advantage of this situation...because we're good with him...we don't dare treat him in a rude way". Also, Mustafa shared Reem's view concerning teachers' lack of respect through communicating with students. As he says: "teachers will step on you if you are too good with them", "يعني بدعسوا عليكي ازا بتكوني كتير منيحة"

We can note that when participants were addressing their need for emotional support, through providing them with a caring relationship and a respective one, they were expressing their need for recognition through their relationships with teachers at school. The recognition theory was used to understand the impact of the student/teacher relationship on the students' well-being (Thomas, Graham, Powell, Fitzgerald, 2016). Through this theory, they linked feelings of being cared for, respected, and valued to the students' feeling of recognition. We can also pinpoint that through the above sub-themes (need for care, need for respect), that recognition is found in policy, but not in practice. Therefore, there is a need for more emphasis on the quality of relationships throughout education policy and practice, including structures and systems to support students' well-being. Therefore, participants' feelings of being recognized at school will affect their identity development.

The home-room system at school is an example of the discrepancy between the school policy and practice. According to the school policy, the system of home-room is applied through all

grades at school with a difference in application. At the elementary level, one teacher is responsible not only for teaching almost all the subjects, except for the Arabic and Hebrew languages, but also for caring for all the students' needs at school. This is the way it is applied till recently. Over the years, the application of this system at the middle and high school levels has been changed. The home-room class used to be a space where students from various grades meet for a specific time so as to get to know each other. The home-room teacher didn't teach those students, but they can talk to her/him about various issues and difficulties they experience at school. Later on, at the time of the study, the application of this system has been changed through the middle and high school levels. Every subject is taught by a different teacher and the home-room teacher teaches her students one subject, and her/his role is to care for all students' needs. This system should reflect a culture of care and understanding to students' various needs through students' relationships with the school's staff, most importantly teachers. Unfortunately, as we have noticed through the above themes, students' emotional and academic needs are not met through some of these relationships. Therefore, teachers should be more aware of their role as co-constructors of adolescents' identities through their daily interaction with them. Building a close relationship with students is very important in order to know them better not just academically but also to know them as people with interests, abilities, skills and desires in order to support them academically and emotionally.

Figure # 3: The first level represents the main theme, in the second level comes the sub-themes.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ The need for freedom │
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
              ┌────────────────┴────────────────┐
    ┌─────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────┐
    │ Freedom at school│              │  Freedom at home │
    └────────┬────────┘              └────────┬────────┘
    ┌─────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
    │ • Strict rules  │              │ • The importance of │
    │ • Physical      │              │   personal space    │
    │   environment   │              │ • The need for less │
    │ • Freedom of    │              │   protective parents│
    │   voice         │              │                     │
    └─────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
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Major Theme (3): The Need for Freedom

Through this theme, participants talked about their need for freedom whether at school or at home. Freedom means differently for each participant at various spaces in their lives. It can range from feeling imprisoned by the strict school rules, the physical environment, and their need for freedom of voice, to their need for less protective parents and their need for their personal space at home.

1. The Need for Freedom at School

a. Strict Rules

Participants talked about the lack of freedom at school. They feel imprisoned by the strict rules that they have to obey as Adam stated: "schools shouldn't be like that…it shouldn't be like prison…that's how I feel…like if you genuinely want to learn…. there's a lot of consequence that come with learning…just being in school". Adam's feeling of imprisonment does not only reflect the oppressive and dehumanizing school system which restrict students thoughts and behaviors, but it also reflects the multiple oppressive systems that we live in. Participants wants to feel free, to have control over their lives and self-determination over their present and future lives. Living in a colonial context denies and rob those rights. Students, as it was clear here, were much aware of school as an oppressive system, however, they might not be aware of the Israeli settler colonialism that this particular school is embedded within and serves. Adam talked about the need to have more flexible rules at school to enable them do things such as going home when they feel sick or bored, without having to explain. He gives an example as he compared his current school with the one that he used to attend in Turkey, "there, it's just freedom…that's how you feel…freedom…. when I wanted to go home because I was bored at school or I'm feeling sick tired, I would tell my mom, she just sends an email and the principal calls me that to take a slip to go home, I order a taxi from school then I go home". Adam also talked about not feeling free to ask for help when needed, as calling their parents if they need anything, they do things secretively to escape from consequences. Talking in the "you" pronoun, addressing me directly, he explained, "here, we have to escape from teachers so as to talk to your parents if we need something…there, phones are allowed, not during class, so if we need anything we can tell people". Adam gave another example about the strict school rules comparing his current school to the former one in Turkey: "here, if they saw us sleeping in class or putting our head on the desk, they tell us "wake up" they punish us. If someone doesn't want to read because they are tired or sick, they put zero on participation, but why?". Adam,

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like other participants in the second group also referred to the school's misuse of the participation grade to control students' behaviors." Sameer talked about the school's strict rules and his way of dealing with them in order to avoid negative consequences. As he said, "I feel like with teachers we have to listen to them like no matter what or like we get punished…I don't listen to anybody really even teachers I got to really listen, I just act that I listen…because like I don't want to be punished…I'm sick of all the consequences to everything at school…like if you're late what did I do I was late 2 minutes…so why do you have to do this?"

b. Physical Environment

For other participants, as Mustafa, the feeling of imprisonment is linked to the school's physical environment. While comparing his school with another one that he visited, he described the school building as a prison which has a negative effect on the student's emotional well-being, as he stated, "the school building looks like a prison...when you look outside the classroom you see iron bars which are like the prison…at the other school, when you go out of the classrooms there's a garden…you'll see nature…it helps you change your mood". Therefore, we can view that Mustafa was asking for a natural space, a garden, which contribute in enhancing a better emotional well-being for students.

c. Freedom of Voice

This sub-theme is derived from participants' need to "have a say" or to have the right to voice their opinion about issues that concern them at school. Students wanted to be active participants in decision making.

For some participants and with some teachers, the classroom is the space where they feel that their voices are being heard and accepted. It's the space where they can be active participants with teachers in constructing knowledge, this is in harmony with the values of liberation pedagogy. As Mustafa elaborated through this quote describing the "good teacher" as he said: "he stands with

us, listen and react to the students' needs, and not to do the things he wants and we are like nothing". The words "stands with us" shows participants' need for solidarity from the teachers, to "stand with them (Freire, 1970), and to have more humane relationships in order to transform the situation of the students. Students are asking for humanist educators; to plan the program content horizontally, to be designed according to what students want to know more about. Sadly, yearning to support students in their conquest for liberation, educators are taken by the banking education when planning the educational content. We can ask ourselves here, who are the ones doing all the planning? Usually these are not the teachers who teach. The content is imposed on both students and teachers. To resolve the contradiction between teachers and students, knowledge (content of education) should not be imposed on students, taking their own personal views of reality. To transform reality, humanist educators must work together to liberate and be liberated with the people. This means that both students and teachers need to work together towards their humanization. According to Rami, the Arabic teacher is an example of the "good teacher" that Mustafa aforementioned earlier when he described the "good teacher". He elaborated that in his classroom, students are allowed to voice their opinion and talk about many issues related to their daily lives. As he said, "we like to talk to Mr. F. more than any other teacher...we talk to him and he talks to us when we finish the lesson". Participants are talking about their need for more collaborative relations with teachers. Through these kinds of relations, cooperative learning environment is created where students can construct and reconstruct their identity. Students will have the opportunity to explore "how they think" about issues and about themselves.

On the other hand, the classroom and the school are spaces where participants' voices are suppressed leaving students feeling angry, frustrated, and disrespected. One of the issues that the participants highlighted is the administration's denial of their right to voice their honest opinion about their school, as Adam commented, "last time, some people came to analyze the school and they were asking what do we think about it…so I started to talk about the honest stuff…the things that the school is good…that people don't judge here as much as they do in other schools…it's

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true…during that time the two principals were looking at me then one of them started putting words into my mouth, saying that this school has equality and it's better than any other school…but I didn't mean the things she said…then these people started to ask me about what do I mean about equality…I can't lie to her in front of the principal so I didn't say anything". Through the use of the singular pronoun "I" and the plural pronoun "we", Rami spoke about a personal and a collective experience which is similar to Adam's, as he pointed out about the school's inhibiting their freedom of voice, as he stated: "what can I do, I don't say anything...if we say something, they tell us not to talk بسكتونا...sometimes they take our opinion and sometimes they don't". Mustafa also shared the same negative feelings towards teachers inhibiting his freedom of voice by using negative classroom management method that's based on deducting participation grades. These feelings are so strong as he spoke with a high-pitched tone through the group meeting and during the individual interview. Talking in the pronoun "you", as a way of addressing me, Mustafa expressed his right to talk in class without being shouted at and disrespected. As he stated: "if you talk in class, they tell you "don't talk" ...I mean that students should be allowed to talk in class, not to talk a lot or shout and misbehave, I mean just talk to each other...we can't stay silent ...the period is 45 minutes...the school must give students the right to talk in class...the period is very long... they should allow us to talk and to stop talking... like this...they always tell us "stop talking...be silent". When students are asked to keep silent all the time, this is also an act of dehumanization and oppression. Teachers demand respect from students, but at the same time, when teachers tell students "not to talk", they're not exercising the same respect. This kind of relationship when students have no voice, the respect is not mutual. This negative classroom management method (grades) results in misunderstandings between teachers and students which leads to ignoring their need to voice their opinion in class. Participants were asking teachers to be more attentive to these needs in order to have positive relationships. As Mustafa said: "and sometimes they ignore us …I mean when the teacher gives us zero in participation for talking in class, she doesn't listen to why she gave us zero".

2. The Need for Freedom at Home

Through this sub-theme, participants spoke about their need to have less protective parents, to behave more freely at home, and the importance of their personal space.

a. The Need to Have Less Protective Parents

For some participants, being an only girl or an only boy in the family set some limitations to their freedom in relation to certain issues in their lives which are impelled by cultural and social norms. Other participants only wanted to behave freely at home.

Reem started her narrative about her need to be less protected by her parents by this sentence: "our society give boys more freedom than girls". As she was growing up, she could observe the difference in her upbringing compared to that of her brothers. Her brothers as she said have more freedom to go places and do whatever they want compared to her when she was the same age. Growing up in a patriarchal culture, Reem learned that it's essential for girls to have a "good reputation" or as Gilligan puts it to be "good girls", and if they do not, they are shamed and condemned (Gilligan, 2011). As she explained: "because with girls any scratch anything or if someone talks about her as a girl…if her reputation is gone…everything is gone". When she was a young girl, she always fought to have more freedom, as she stated: "when I was young, I didn't understand well…I wanted to do this…go there…etc.". Now, as a young woman, Reem chooses to push her feelings and thoughts to the underground. She is not to speak her true thoughts, she loses her voice and eventually not to know her feelings and thoughts (Gilligan, 2011). She commented: "now I don't say anything…if they don't want me to go, I won't go…it's normal". We can note that there is no resistance in Reem's words, she has internalized and adopted her parents' voice and lens. Just as the other participants from the first group, she only wants to please her parents and to fit into the 'world of perfection" that's predetermined for women, which views women as less aware in what they do and what they know in comparison to men. We can note that Reem not only wanted to please her parents, but she also took on her parents' voice which represents the society's pressures

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to perform a more accepted image, to be the "good girl" as she said: "my father is very afraid about me when it comes to boys' issues because I'm a girl; his only girl, but my brothers are boys, that's enough, they know that they're going to be young boys and they're going to be aware and whatever they do, they know, not like a girl, when I grew up, I understood this thing, I understood that because I'm a girl". On the other hand, Reem could narrate and reflect on her experiences when she was a little girl as she was envisioning herself as a mother raising her girl in the future which influenced the approach she'll use in her upbringing, as she stated: "I will give her a little bit more freedom than I had at a younger age, but at the same time to be well brought up, for example, to allow her to come and go more…eh I don't know what could that mean…I don't know…maybe when she's young, one can put pressure on her so as when she grows up, she'll know, she'll be brought up well… I mean the most important thing is being well brought up…her reputation". The use of the words "I don't know" in the previous quote shows a struggle. A struggle between staying with her true feelings and thoughts, about how she wants to live her life and behave in the way she sees 'right', and between pleasing her parents and succumb to cultural and social norms. Also, Mustafa expressed his need for less protective parents. According to him, being an only boy in the family exert various limitations on the way he wants to live his life. As he stated: "I'm the only boy in the family and they keep me protected, even my grandmother wants me to be healthy and that everything is for me…I mean that I don't smoke and not to do anything bad…not to lift heavy weight at the gym…and they don't want me to take the public transportations because I'm the only boy in the family they take care of me". On the other hand, Mustafa is asking his parents for more freedom; to be more responsible of his own decisions, just like other adolescents his age, as he stated: "there's a lot of people as you know how they tell their parents that they're leaving the house or they don't tell them anything…I mean I don't say not to tell them anything, but just to tell them that they're leaving…I want to be like that…most of the time my father allows me to go places…but I want them to be less protective of me…they are very protective". Mustafa wants his parents to give him the freedom to go out places without being so worried about him, as he added:"

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when I go out my mother always keep on telling me not to take anything from anyone or not to drink…something like that…I always hear that from them…I mean I'm not going to forget that… there's no need to repeat that…my mother told me before". Mustafa understands why his parents are so protective of him and what it means to be the only boy in the family. He knows the value of being a boy in a patriarchal society. At the same time, Mustafa was talking about contradictions in his parents' upbringing where he was wondering about their desire to be strong and act like a man, and at the same time, being so protective of him: "my parents are very afraid about me…how could you be tough if they are very afraid about you because I'm the only boy".

b. The Importance of Personal Space

In general, participants' home for both groups was the most important space among the ones they spoke about for various reasons such as safety, comfort, and being alone.

For Adam, home is the space where he feels comfortable; physically and emotionally, which he referred to as being "alone" and "isolated" in a good way. As he stated: "I drew it the biggest space, because it's home…I go to rest there…I usually turn off all the lights and sit on my phone or something… put music ah…at home I feel relaxed…I feel chill… I feel kind of alone isolated, but it's good sometimes…my home is not that big which I like about it…because it's just a tiny space…it's a good space…so yeah". For Mustafa, feeling safe and comfortable is what make his home the most important space. Feeling safe for him, might mean emotional and physical safety. Maybe, knowing that at the end of the day he has a place to rest and sleep, as he said: "safety is the main reason because where else would you rest and sleep". Also, Reem feels safe and comfortable at her own home, as she commented: "home is safer…I feel comfortable about the way I dress…about my body…I mean outside is more fun but home is more comfortable". Feeling safe for Reem, might mean feeling more comfortable with her body, with the way she looks, the way she dresses. It might also mean not having to be in a certain image that is more accepted by society. As she added:" my house is the most place I can rest it, any mistake I do outside, I feel that I'm not

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clean (metaphorically speaking)". Being raised to think and to act as a "good girl", makes her feel accountable to how she behaves outside her house, being aware of how others view and judge girls/women's behaviors. Reem, also talked about her grandmother's home and her feelings of physical relaxation compared by her home. As she said:" my grandmother's home is much calmer than my home, there I rest more…there are no chores…of course I rest in my home and so on, but for example my brothers sometimes want things…wants to do things…so it's more comfortable at my grandmothers' home". Rana's home where she lives with her mother and sister is the space where she feels more comfortable compared to other spaces, as she added: "I drew the most important to me, the most space where I feel quiet, where I can basically just calm down, the space where I feel the most comfortable in". Feeling comfortable for Rana might mean feeling emotional comfort. Being and behaving as her usual and authentic self, not caring about other people like her step-mom's judgments or views, as the way she feels and behaves at her father's home, as she further explained: "I have to put like a fake face on, and I need to act in a certain way in front of my step-mom...she like to interfere with the way I behave". Home for Sameer is the place he feels relaxed in and has a free choice unlike school. He can be himself and do whatever he wants. His home provides him with a kind of emotional immunity or protection from loneliness. Even though he feels lonely sometimes, but he "likes being alone over being in other spaces". As he explained:" imagine you're sitting in the middle of the room, you have a lot of people and everyone is talking to each other, would you feel lonely if you're not talking? You feel lonelier like that than when you're actually alone...like there's living proof on".

Participants' room took great significance in their lives, as they spend most of their time there, considering it their home. It is like their sanctuary. It provides them with emotional comfort. For example, Sameer talked about his room as the space he feels relaxed in. As he stated:" it's like my home more than any space at home...I sit on the computer, I play or just read... I'm not thinking or feeling anything". For Adam, his room is the space where he feels relaxed and isolated from people around him, as he said: "even my room is very small…I like to sit in the middle surrounded

by four walls sometimes because being with a lot of people can just be overwhelming sometimes…when I come here, I just like to do things… I usually turn off all the lights and sit on my phone or sometimes listen to music… ah home I feel relaxed…I feel chill…I feel kind of alone isolated". Rana also feels the same way about her room being the place she feels comfortable and quiet in, as she stated: "I like to be alone…to stay in my bed on my phone…I watch tv shows on my phone... I send messages on the school's group…I go through memes".

Comparison Between the Two Groups

Both groups shared several similarities and differences in relation to the research context and experiences through the spaces they chose to talk about in their lives. As for the first group participants (Adam, Rana, Sameer), holding the sessions outside the school context in (Sabreen association for Artistic Development), created a calm and relaxing environment for students to share their experiences without any external distractions. This, might have affected the length of narratives. Participants were able to talk extensively about their experiences. They could express easily how they felt and thought about issues related to their lives. This meeting was an exemplar of the expansion of participants' spaces and their conception of their experiences which went beyond the school context they were able to experience and to bring other spaces into attention. This may explain why their performances were not limited by the school context as the second group. Conducting the research sessions in the school context may have influenced participants feelings of being imprisoned, limiting the construction of alternative identities besides of the aspired educational one.

The other group sessions were held at school at the beginning of the summer vacation. There were several distractions during the group interviews, whether by students interrupting each other's dialogue or by external distractions. This, might have produced shorter narratives than the first group. The dialogue took the form of questions and answers without much elaborations on their experiences. One might question the reason for the difference in narrative length between the two

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groups, knowing that interviews were held with both of them through the geo-narrative approach and they were both introduced to the same questions in the same way. Could it be affected by the different contexts where the group interviews were held, or by the distractions during these interviews, or could it be the fact that the second group had learning difficulties?

Another core difference between these groups is in the relational realm. The first one (Adam, Rana, Sameer), focused on their relationships with peers, and on "their image", the way they appear to others at school. The second one, focused on academic and emotional aspects in their relationships with teachers. Adam, Rana and Sameer, struggled with relational crisis with peers and friends. Their struggle was how to stay connected with themselves, with what they know through experience, what they hear and see, and at the same time, to be connected to their friends and to the world of their school. Therefore, some participants faked their feelings and behaviors, not speaking their true feelings in order to fit into a certain image that is more accepted by others (society) to keep their relationships with some friends at school. With others, like their best friends, they didn't have to perform a specific image. They could be themselves without trying to perform a certain image, they can be real in showing their emotions. Those participants didn't experience learning difficulties as the second group participants. They were doing well at school. Even though they talked about negative relationships with teachers, this issue wasn't their main focus or interest at school. Their relationship with other students was far more significant for those participants as it surfaced their narratives.

The other group (Reem, Mustafa, Rami), focused on academic and emotional aspects in their relationships with teachers. Their relationship with them was very important in order to survive and succeed at school. It has a significant impact on the students' learning on a daily basis. This is well illustrated through talking about their positive relationships as teachers showed their interest in the students' lives, cared for their success at school, and received positive feedback. Participants need for academic support was so clear that it surfaced participants' narratives more than any other aspect compared to the second group. The provision of their learning needs such as

the accommodations and varied teaching methods was very important to the participants, yet they didn't meet all their learning needs. This was showed through their narratives of neglecting to provide them with learning accommodations, preparations for the exams especially the SAT exam, varied and flexible teaching methods in various subjects, modified assessment methods and the high turnover in teachers throughout the academic year.

Nevertheless, both groups shared some similarities through their experiences at school. Most participants expressed their need for freedom at school. Some participants compared school to a prison. The rigid school rules and the school's physical environment, such as the school building with its iron bars facing the classrooms, contributed to these feelings of being imprisoned. Participants were asking for more flexible rules which allow them to feel free to do things at school such as "calling a parent when you're sick" without facing negative consequences. They were asking for a natural space, a garden for example "to change their mood". Participants also expressed their need for freedom of voice. Being an active participant and (having a say) about issues which concern them at school. The term "freedom" at home holds similar significances for some participants, and different for others, depending on their home situations. For some participants, it meant their need for less protective parents regardless of their gender. For others, it is their need to behave freely at home without much restrictions. Furthermore, both groups experienced negative relationships with teachers. Participants faced misconceptions, lack of communication and understanding of their personalities, perspectives, and abilities with teachers. This, negatively affected the kind of relationship and interaction with teachers, which also had a negative effect on attending to their emotional needs such as being cared for, and how they behave in the classroom on a daily basis. Participants in both groups were asking for a more positive relationship with teachers. Talking about oppressive and dehumanizing relationships which is outlined by the unfair and inappropriate punitive measures, shouting at them in the classroom, and giving them detentions shows their need for emotional support. Those participants were asking to be treated equally and

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fairly, to be cared for, and to be respected; they were asking for recognition in their relationship with teachers.

The Power of the Group and of the Research Space/Process

Working with adolescent research participants in groups had several advantages. It encouraged participants to come to the sessions, simply because their friends were there. That's why the number of students who joined the first session was relatively large compared by the proceeding sessions. Those spaces with time became supportive environments, where participants shared their experiences, thoughts, and feelings and became actively engaged in the knowledge construction. I think that if the group was composed of more participants for example 8-10 participants, the dialogue may have been more profound and dynamic, which may have branched out to other spaces just like the metaphor of the rhizome when referring to the self. This would enable us to learn more about the influences of these spaces on students' experiences and constructed identities. Nevertheless, participants had the time to inquire, to elaborate, and to advise each other throughout the dialogue. They were very sensitive to each other's feelings and needs when sharing private things about their family for example.

The produced knowledge through dialogue can be considered as participatory knowledge or relational knowing as opposed to objective or observer-independent knowledge (Anderson, 2007). As researchers working with participants in group setting, we are the co-authors of their identities that is constructed narratively. We are not the experts in the participants lives, we participate in the creation of knowledge, thus the power is shared in the group. Therefore, my role during the group meetings became less central as participants started questioning, commenting and directing the dialogue.

I believe that the group provided research participants with a space to be at, to explore their selves and others and to construct their selfhood. It helped them in seeing other perspectives and look at things differently. For others like Sameer, it offered a space to socialize, to have fun with

other adolescents his age. It also provided him with a space to reflect on his life, his present and future goals which had a positive influence on his attitudes towards learning and school.

The following dialogue illustrates how working with participants in a group helped them in seeing other perspectives and look at things differently. This dialogue was during the group interview with the first group participants (Adam, Rana, Sameer). Rana was talking about feeling stressed and uncomfortable in public places and how it was affecting her interactions with others around her. She was giving an example of the way she feels and behaves in public situations. Rana and Sameer were the ones who interacted the most during this conversation.

Through this dialogue, Adam and Sameer talked about sharing mutual experiences at some point in their lives. They talked about being shy in the past in public spaces, how they cared to do things correctly and how they cared about what others thought of them, which affected the way they interacted with others. Those participants learned to overcome this obstacle and moved on in their lives. Adam changed from being a shy person into a person who" learned how to talk", and Sameer learned to" not care to do things correctly". On the other hand, Rana was still facing difficulties and feeling uncomfortable in public spaces. Speaking from personal experiences, Adam and Sameer were trying to be supportive of Rana and help her overcome the stress that she feels when encountering strangers. As we can note, Sameer introduced other perspectives of viewing and thinking about such situations which helped him grow as a person who doesn't care what others think of him. He tried to make Rana aware that people do not care about these encounters. They meet many people during the day which makes these instances insignificant to them, but for Sameer and other adolescents, they "think about things more than others", "for us we're thinking about it the whole time" as Sameer added. He also compared the insignificance of what others might think of him by a person who passes by another person in the street.

This dialogue helped Rana view other perspectives of similar situations her group participants faced in their lives. This, might help her confront future situations with another mind set, another way of viewing things.

- Rana: For example, in public ...you tell me to buy a bottle of water
    - I get way uncomfortable
    - I start thinking how to ask the person for water
    - I'll be like eh
    - That's me
- Adam: I used to be like that a lot
- Rana: Last time I wanted to buy a shirt
    - So, I wanted to ask them then
    - I was like ...ok
    - I wanted to go out ...didn't know what to say
    - then I said thanks and kept on going
- Adam: I was like that I changed
- Rana: I'm like that most of the time
- Adam: I was shy but I learned how to talk
- Sameer: Sometimes you have to not care to do things correctly
    - and I used to be like overly what I'm gonna say
    - now it doesn't matter
    - do they care it's only 5 seconds of their life
    - they're not gonna think about for more than 2 min.
    - who cares
    - We think about things more than others
    - Like say that you're walking outside oh somebody is walking ok
    - and he stop thinking about it

- - - o   for us we're thinking about it the whole time

- Adam: exactly

- Rana: things are more difficult for me

- - - o   if I wanna go buy something

- - - o   I wanna get something

- Sameer: when you see somebody, do you think about them for more than 5 seconds?

- - - o   I mean somebody's walking

- Rana: there are things like that

- Sameer: but you don't think about them

- Rana: that's right

The Importance of Having Multiple Spaces for the Well-being of Adolescents

Having multiple spaces in the lives of adolescents can have positive influences on their well-being and in constructing their identities. Participants in this study talked about having another space in addition to their home and school except for one participant. In some of these spaces, they have their friends whom they have fun with and support in achieving certain goals such as physical goals at the gym or future goals like learning a new language. Others, care for their own well-being by simply having fun at these spaces with friends or family. Also, some participants try to be more social with people.

For example, the gym is the second important space in Adam's life where he goes to after school. It's the space where he feels motivated to go to in order to achieve fitness goals (physical well-being) and to release his anger and stress, as he stated to "zone out". His motivation is derived from being with his best friends where they support and encourage each other, as he said, "because you know me and Rami like to push each other", and without them he doesn't feel motivated to go to the gym and achieve these goals. Here, Adam can be himself and doesn't have to "put a fake face

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on", as he stated: "I feel like at the gym, I don't have to be someone else it's kind of like here" pointing out to his home, because he's with his best friends, he talks and have fun.

For Rana, the Turkish institute is the first space that she started talking about in her geographic map. There, she goes to learn the Turkish language in order to study at a university in Turkey. This shows the importance of achieving her academic goals. In this space, Rana doesn't have to perform another image, but her "true" self. She tells what she really thinks/her opinion about other people like students there, and doesn't care what others think, even if her friends don't agree with her about her attitude. Through interacting with others, she expresses her true thoughts about people, but then regrets it. She knows that she's being "rude", but that's her true self, she's real in expressing her true thoughts and feelings.

Other participants, like Mustafa, cared for his own well-being. He didn't have a fixed space that he goes to in addition to his home and school. He likes to go to the gym to work on his body and be with his friends, as he said. He goes to the sea and to restaurants with his family. He doesn't like to stay home because it's boring for him and he likes meeting people.

For Reem, the sport club is the space where she plays basketball and have fun. She sees herself as the politest girl there. A polite girl according to Reem is "the one who does not get into fights or make problems with other girls". Growing up, seeing things differently, Reem does not care about these things anymore, and does not care what girls think of her. She thinks that they are jealous of her and saw her too arrogant because she is "beautiful". Therefore, she pushed those friends away for they "grew up", and stopped being polite like her. Reem is much different than Rana, it was clear how Reem was still working at maintaining an image of the perfect girl, while Rana was challenging the norms of gender performance.

Bridge Palestine, is one of the spaces that Rami spoke about during the group interviews, but he did not consider it as an important space in his life, as it was not mapped in his drawing, although being a member in this institution had influenced and shaped his identity the most. Bridge Palestine is a three-year capacity building program targeting 400 tenth graders. The project aims to

optimize opportunities for high achieving, innovative and distinguished Palestinian students to enroll in internationally recognized universities. This space provided him with experiences that changed the way he thinks about things, played a role in his personality development and made him more confident and responsible. One might wonder why? Might be that Rami's main focus and interest was on his academic needs that he couldn't view other positive experiences that played an important role in developing his personality and constructed his identity? The particular group context Rami was part of, may have influenced how he thought about the spaces in his life, school with its negative atmosphere to this group, has taken over and shaped the conversation. On a second thought, I could have asked him directly about this particular space and what it meant to him.

Nevertheless, not all participants had a third space in their lives. Some of them had just two: their home and school. For these participants, like Sameer, this research space provided him with a space to be at, socialize and have fun with other adolescents his age. It also provided him with a space to reflect on his life, his present and future goals which had a positive influence on his attitudes towards learning and school.

Concluding Thoughts

This study intended to explore the way adolescent students with and without learning difficulties experience different spaces in their lives, and the way they construct and co-construct their identities within multiple spaces. As a school counselor, my experiential knowledge with students motivated me to learn more about how they experience and perform their selves within different school spaces as well as within other spaces. Usually students, specifically those with learning difficulties, are seen through a unilateral lens; in the light of their learning difficulty and or behavioral problems exclusively. This stigmatizes them and limits them to a fixed identity, in which they may internalize or resist. With other teachers, participants were perceived and related to as human beings, as a whole, not based on their academic achievement, which might have played an important role in students' well-being and in constructing other identities. In other spaces other than

school, participants felt more humane and performed themselves in a more authentic way in comparison with the school context where they feel dehumanized and oppressed.

Freire (1993) discussed the concept of humanization and de-humanization. He explained that de-humanization is to derive people from being human; that of thinking, or reflecting, of feeling, of questioning, and of inquiring, of learning, of creating and transforming, of having a voice. It is to treat people as objects, to impose a certain reality and knowledge that serves the dominant culture that is often oppressive such as the school context which reflects other social systems in our lives (Dawani, 2016, p. 210).

My role as a counselor allowed me to see many other aspects of students, in addition to how most teachers describe them. Besides having a learning difficulty, a student may as well be a creative story teller, a confident basket-ball player, a caring big sister/brother, a person who is aware and conscious about waste and the environment, about discrimination, oppression and the occupation etc. Perceiving this richness and providing spaces and opportunities for multiple self-performances, allows us as teachers and counselors to better relate to each student and be positive contributors in the dynamic process of identity construction.

This study was held at the Jerusalem American School in East Jerusalem. Participants were students in the 10th grade, between the ages of 15 and 16. Six students participated in this study (two girls and four boys), some of them were identified with learning difficulties and some were not. Two groups of three students were formed. The first group started with six students who met for three initial sessions within the school context. The other two sessions were carried out with just three of them outside the school context, and an individual interview was carried out with one of those participants at school. The second group had one group session together, and later on I conducted an individual interview with each participant inside the school context.

In order to explore and understand participants' most important spaces, a geo-narrative approach was used. It included mapping as a visual aid which facilitated the generation of narratives during the group sessions and during the individual dialogue/interviews. This approach to research

also allowed them to construct and co-construct their identities within these multiple spaces, taking into consideration that the research space was another dimension where their identities were performed. Data analysis for this study was conducted using structural narrative analysis (the approach of James Gee) with the first group participants and using thematic/content analysis for the second group. The mapping technique showed that participants' experiences were focused within three important spaces in their lives: home, school, and another space, a third space. Several themes and sub-themes emerged through these multiple spaces. The theme of "self-performance", is an embodiment of Goffman's dramaturgical perspective on the self. Participants discussed how they perform their selves through their interactions with others and with spaces, in order to present certain images depending on the people and the space. The "need for relationship", this second theme was in particular localized within the school context, participants expressed a strong need for academic and emotional support in their relationship with teachers. Through this theme they were aware of being dehumanized and are striving to be humanized and regain their humanity. The "need for freedom" was a third main theme, this theme is interrelated with both the first and the second themes. In a first instance, it may only sound like a typical adolescent request for autonomy. However, it was also linked to "self-performance", a request for spaces with "loose" less judgmental audiences that allow more authentic and relaxed self-performances to be shaped.

Several Notions Can be Concluded Based on the Findings:

- School was an important space for both groups of participants but for different reasons. For participants without learning difficulties, it seems to take its significance because of their relationship with friends, for them school was a social space. School as a space surfaced the narratives of students with learning difficulties more than any other space, reflected through the second main theme "the need for emotional and academic support". Even though, these students mentioned at the beginning that they go to school because of their friends, they did not talk much about their relationships with them. Nevertheless, students with learning difficulties saw their "fate" as dependent, in the hands of their teachers. For these

participants, school, was important for achieving future success and future goals. This may indicate that these participants did not feel a sense of belonging to their school, as their experiences with teachers were mainly negative. This negativity was reflected in academic needs being not met, within disrespectful and dehumanizing relationships. This is in line with research that shows that school belonging is the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school environment, and it is mostly influenced by the teacher-student relationship as (Ibrahim & Zaatari, 2020).

- Participants without learning difficulties also experienced negative relationships with teachers to some extent, but it wasn't their main focus or interest at school, when compared to their interest in image preservation, hence the main theme of "self-performance", a self that is aware and conscious about how it performs itself, in order to stay in relationship.

- The relational realm was the most significant one for participants with and without learning difficulties through the school context. Participants with learning difficulties focused on their relationships with teachers as it was very important to them to survive and succeed at school and later on, in college for instance. Participants without learning difficulties focused on their relationships with peers and friends and their "image", as they were doing well at school and did not need the academic support. In spite of their learning difficulties, participants were motivated to pursue higher education and achieve their goals in life. These participants were fully aware of their academic and emotional needs and the influence of their relationships with teachers on meeting those needs through their daily interactions. They wanted to have a "good teacher" as they said; to have good relationships in order to provide them with academic and emotional support. They sought to have supportive relationships that goes beyond the academics and to relate to them as human beings. They needed teachers who make an effort to know them, their interests, their lives and challenges in order to support them and help them grow academically, emotionally and socially.

- In addition to being aware of their needs, participants with learning difficulties advocated for their needs and the needs of others as a collective issue, in a collective tone. This signifies that those participants did not perceive their learning difficulties as an individual issue nor as part of their identities. In spite of teachers' low expectations and negative perceptions of them and their mental abilities, this did not influence their self-views about who they are or what are they capable of. Although, some of these participants had internalized teachers' low expectations and negative misconceptions, as they perceive themselves as "less" when compared to other students in class. On the other hand, participants experienced positive relationships with teachers which validated strength and challenged their negative self-views, and contributed in constructing and shaping positive identities. This could be seen as an act of resistance.

- Relationship with friends and peers was very important for participants without learning difficulties. It was their main focus and interest then. Thus, they tried to keep an image of perfection through these relationships by sometimes "faking" their feelings and thoughts in order to keep these relationships through various spaces. Participants struggled with relational crisis; how to stay connected with themselves, with what they know through experience, what they hear and see, and at the same time to be connected to their friends at school. Therefore, sometimes participants faked their feelings and behaviors through their interactions with people in order to fit into a certain image, other times, they showed their true feelings and behaviors with others, depending on the space and people there. Even though, participants experienced similar relational crisis at school, they took different pathways of growth. Some of them were aware of the performativity of their selfhood, they knew what to say and how to act depending on the space and people there. Others, became a reflection for what others want him to feel and think, they do not struggle anymore with a relational crisis. Some, were honest in their relationships at school, they were aware of their "true" self, about their feelings and thoughts, and were not afraid to show them (Gilligan,

2011). We can note that their relationships with friends were far more important than their relationships with teachers as they were doing well at school. Even though, they sometimes pointed out to some aspects through their relationships with teachers, such as mutual expectations, but it was not their main focus or interest.

- Most of the participants were aware and critical of how the school system perceived them which influenced the kind of relationships students had with teachers and administration. Students thought that the school system did not care for them or their learning needs when they do not provide them with academic and emotional support. They viewed this system as oppressive and dehumanizing (Freire, 1993) as it categorizes students into boxes, perceiving them through one-dimensional lens, or one fixed image based on their academic work and their behavior in class. This may limit the emergence of other identities within the school context. It also produced misconceptions of them, of who they are and of who they can be and miscommunication, which made them feel unknown and uncared for and for their emotional needs which eventually produced negative relationships.

- Participants were also aware of the power dynamics at school. They felt that through these relationships, there was no space for dialogue, or even equality in power. Students felt that they were being under control and were being treated as inferiors, when teachers used their participation grades to modify and control their behaviors.

- Oppressive and dehumanizing relationships at school were illustrated through participants' need for freedom at school. The word "freedom" meant differently to each participant depending on their needs. For some, it was their need for more flexible rules, for others, a better physical environment. For the most, it was their need to voice their opinion about issues that concerns them and to be active participants in decision making.

- Through participants' narratives about their need for emotional support, we conclude that they needed recognition through their relationships with teachers. They needed caring

relationships and respectful ones. Unfortunately, in this school, recognition is found in policy, but not in practice. Therefore, there is a need for more emphasis on the quality of relationships throughout education policy and practice, including structures and systems to support students' well-being and their identity development, a caring culture.

- Even though the results and conclusions took a relational aspect in which participants focused on their self-performance and their need for relationship and freedom, we can never reduce the importance and influence of capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and coloniality as structures we are imbedded in, systems that play an important role in imposing how to be and how to construct ourselves and identities, thus our performances.

- We can question, why was the street not present in the spaces participants talked about? Why was it absent? The absence of the street reflects, in my opinion, several interacting factors. It reflects students' family backgrounds and priorities, it reflects privilege in a certain sense. Street can be a dangerous place to be. Streets have no boundaries, one could meet anyone and one could learn anything. These families chose an American private school for their children, this may mean that they wanted to protect their children from mixing with the public, the Palestinian public, the resisting public. This kind of school provided their children with "protection", like living in a bubble separate from the harsh "reality", from belonging and from being part of the community. This school system teaches students to be good "citizens", individuals, and take care of their own affairs without thinking about what is happening on the streets. The street is a dangerous place because it teaches other things, it opens the eyes of teenagers to things that are not present at home and school, such as resistance. The colonial system played a role in the disappearance of the street, especially in the Jerusalem context, after Abu khdeir and what happened in Shuafat area, after the uprising in Jerusalem and the resistance of its youth after many years of being silent. These schools are working to tame their students, to keep them away from the truth, from reality, and delude them that they are in a better place, and they will be free and have great

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"successful" futures, but this is only an individual freedom, not a collective one, not the freedom of a community and of a nation.

A Discussion on Ethics in Research

Several ethical issues could be raised here, concerning the research process and interpretations or issues of power imbalance between the researcher and the participants, what Cresswell, (2008, p. 177) called the "backyard" research. As a community psychologist, my work with the participants abided by the values, personal and social ethics of community psychology, including the research methodology, process, procedures, and data generating tools. Therefore, I think that my work at school with the educational staff (teachers and principal), students and parents facilitated the introduction and implementation of my research. Being an insider, working with students individually and in groups for several years, having a trustful relationship facilitated the introduction of the study to students and their consent in participating in the research as they were motivated to be part of it. Also, it helped overcome several challenges related to the place of the group sessions whether outside of school or inside the school. Collaborating and working with participants' parents through my role at school, facilitated the research process by being cooperative that they signed the consent form in order to proceed with the sessions outside the school.

This research had multiple positive impacts on the lives of participants. It provided a space for all participants to be at, share their experiences with each other in order to explore their selves and others. It provided a space to co-construct new knowledge, and gain insight about how their identities were being dynamically shaped due to their social experiences within multiple spaces. For others, it provided a space to reflect on their lives, influencing their attitudes towards learning, school, and future interests.

The geo-narrative approach and the different data generating tools such as the individual and group interviews, mapping and drawing as visual aids, allowed me to better understand participants' experiences within different spaces in their lives and allowed for multiple selves and identities to be

constructed and co-constructed within the research space. Having multiple spaces in the lives of adolescents means having more diverse opportunities for self-performance and supportive relationships, which may play a positive role in their well-being. This means having more opportunities to experience and perform their selves differently in each space, especially their "authentic" selves, thus, constructing more positive identities. Having multiple spaces means having more opportunities to interact with diverse people, to have more supportive relationships and networks; more emotional and social support. Having that kind of support will play a significant role in achieving certain goals.

Reflecting back on the research journey, I can describe it as a messy- non-linear process- a journey that took its shape while attending to the context and interacting with participants. Listening to them and respecting their wishes and preferences, for example in relation to how the groups were formed, was a humanizing practice. It can be seen as a rhizomatic process, within multiple entryways and connections constructed and navigated together with participants.

The research findings highlighted several aspects concerning adolescence's lives. Sharing these results with the educational staff (teachers & administration) at school might change their unilateral perception of students, especially students with learning difficulties. When teachers are more aware of student's positive experiences in other meaningful spaces than school or within multiple spaces at school itself, they will be more understanding of their identities and the experiences that shaped them. They may view them in a different light, not just through the academic one. Also, they will be more aware of their role as co-constructors of adolescent's experiences which shapes their identities which will all influence how they relate to others.

As a community psychologist, adopting an ecological lens, I tried to reframe students' difficulties from an individual level to a relational level, acknowledging the role of multiple people and spaces in constructing and shaping their identities, which will influence adolescents' relationships through these spaces. This, will not only change the perception of teachers and the way they relate to them on a daily basis, but also the students themselves by focusing on their

strengths and abilities instead of their deficits and weaknesses. Then, students will be able to internalize and perform other positive identities within the school. Also, sharing the results with the school's administration and teachers may amplify students' voices. This, might contribute to the modification of the school policies and structure towards participation, fairness and humanization, therefore the wellbeing of all parties.

Thinking about the relationship between identity and wellbeing on the collective level, I have become aware throughout my journey in studying community psychology, of a missing aspect at school. What does it mean for Palestinian students attending an "American" school system in East Jerusalem? This school system works at depoliticizing students; separating them from their land and cause therefore hindering the development of a collective Palestinian identity and of pride of being Palestinian. A sense of alienation may arise; not belonging or totally fitting in the "American" system and culture nor to the Palestinian community. Built on a colonized land and preaching for peace and co-existence, while Palestinian students and their families are constantly living in humiliation and danger, is in itself an act of dehumanization. Denying the reality of the colonial situation contributes to false consciousness and further reinforces a colonial mentality. Palestinian students attending an "American" school system may feel superior to other Palestinian students attending local schools, and may never feel equal to their non-Palestinian peers attending the same school.

Makkawi has pointed out to the role of social identity in coping with war-related traumatic experiences. When individuals are able to interpret and to attribute their exposure to military violence, humiliation and discrimination to their group membership and belonging to the targeted group (the Palestinians in this case) and not as random isolated individuals, "social identity mediates the subjective experience of the traumatizing event and provides information needed for appraisal of the event" (Makkawi, 2017, p. 488). By not reinforcing a collective social identity, we are causing more psychological harm to our students on the individual and collective levels. This

aspect was not explored in the current study, but future studies may look into how such school contexts influence Palestinian students' collective identity.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored adolescent experiences' (with and without learning difficulties) and the construction and co-construction of their identities across different spaces. This study was different compared to the existing literature on student identity, as it examined identity across multiple spaces, not only school, using a geo-narrative approach. I think implementing similar studies in other schools and spaces using the same approach will enable us to examine other influences of these spaces on the students' experiences and the constructed identities. In addition to challenging the unilateral perception (academic realm) of students with or without learning difficulties, but it also can challenge the dominant cultural narratives on students with learning difficulties in particular.

Recommendations for Schools

If school is as dominant in the lives of adolescents, as expressed by participants of this study, it means that school as a system has great responsibilities- it is a major space where adolescents explore and construct their identities in context. Schools need to be emphasized as relational contexts of respect and care, providing students with safe spaces to explore and to be, not in one particular form, but with many infinite possibilities. On the structural levels certain core values, the ones that humanize all stake holders in a school system, need to emphasized in school policies, and most importantly reflected in our practices and relationships to create an inclusive and empowering climate for all. As adults working in schools and on the individual level, we too need to be more reflexive and aware of how our backgrounds, values and identities are shaping/ informing our practice and relationship. As the school system works at depoliticizing students; inhibiting the development of a collective Palestinian identity, extracurricular activities or other

Palestinian organizations of non-formal education can fill the gap created by the school system. So, on the collective level, Palestinian collective identity can be actively rebuilt and sustained (Makkawi, 1999, p. 6).

Limitations of the Study

Did a geo-narrative approach succeed in opening up opportunities for participants to construct and perform multiple different identities? To a certain extent, maybe, but not as hoped for. School was a dominant space for all participants, although initially resisted by students with learning difficulties. An aspired academic identity and a social relational identity were the most important for participants. Both of which are sometimes performed as dictated, thus reproducing dominant social expectations, and at others resisted.

The difference in the number of group and individual sessions between the two groups could be considered as a limitation in this study. But we cannot compare between the first and the second group sessions. These groups were held in different research contexts, with different conditions, and experiences. Holding the group sessions outside the school context created different environments and conditions for multiple identity constructions for the research participant and to share different experiences compared by the second group research context. This shows how the flexible co-constructive research philosophy that inspired my research, allowed for these changes and transformations through the research journey.

Being an insider comes with disadvantages and can be considered as another limitation in this study. Participants know me as their school counselor, and I approached them through the school system. To me before being research participants, they were students. Approached through the school system, these participants saw themselves as students. This dynamic may have amplified "school" as a space and may have limited the possibility to see other spaces, therefore, other performances.

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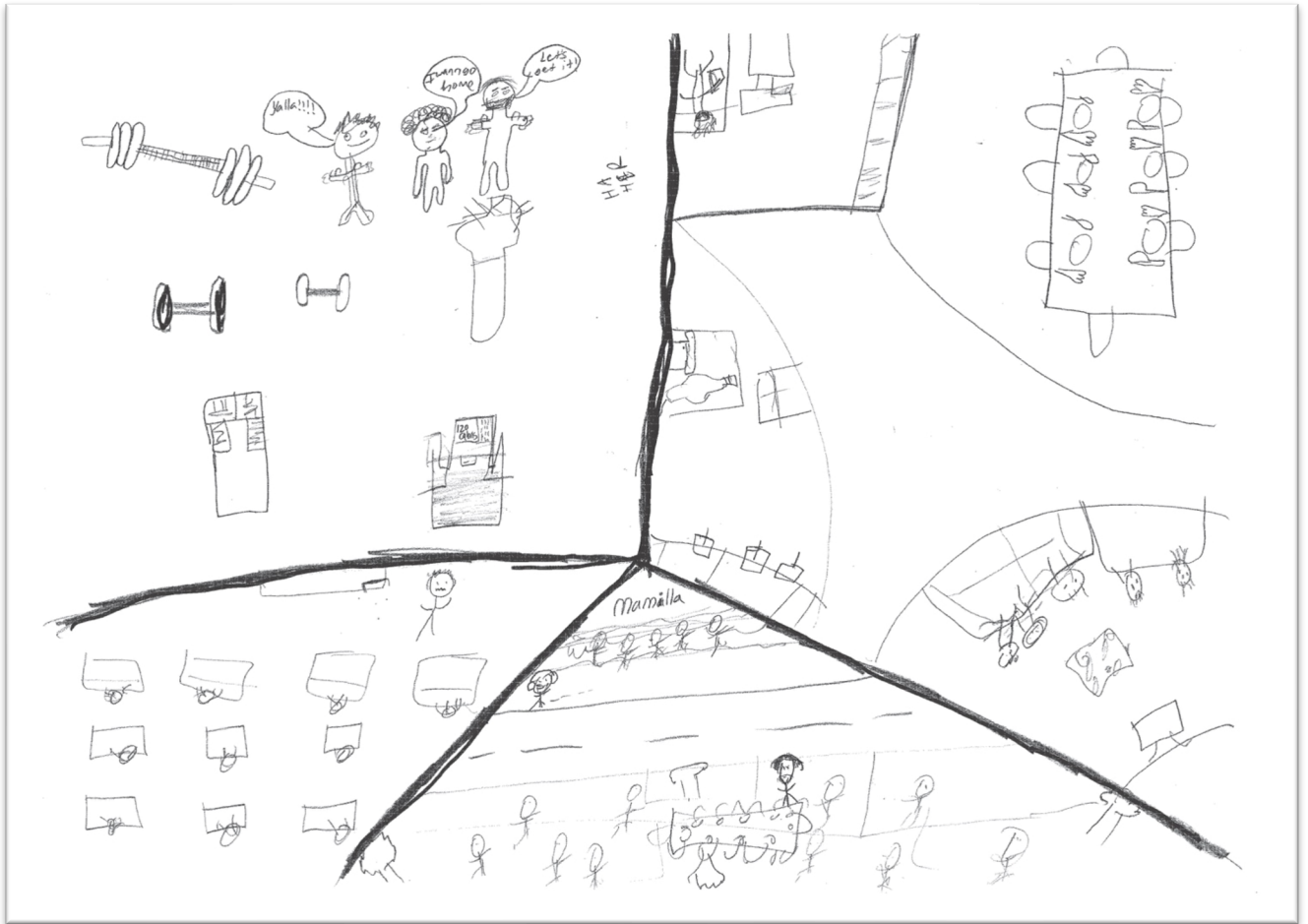
Appendices

Appendix (1)

Participants' drawings
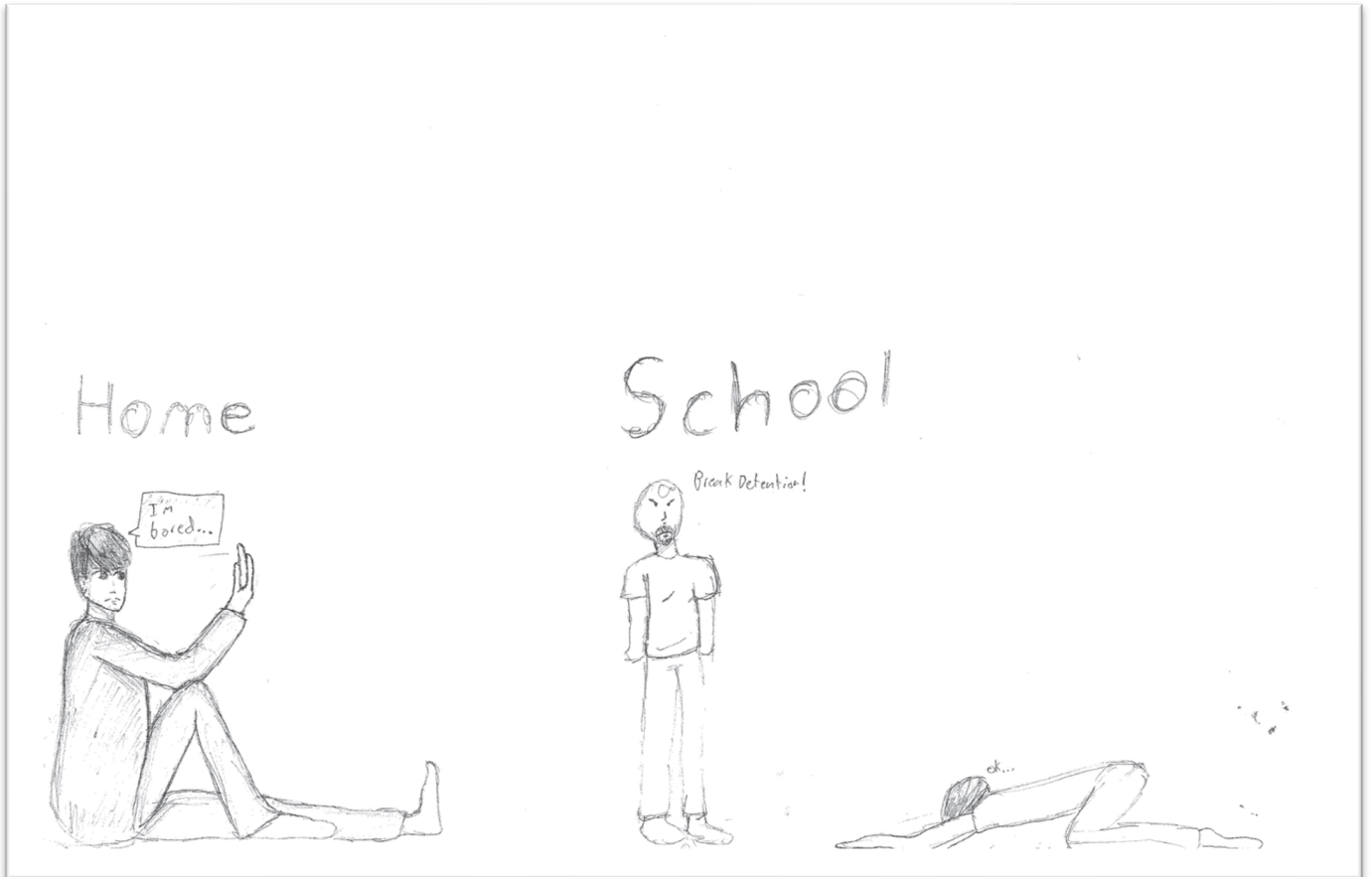
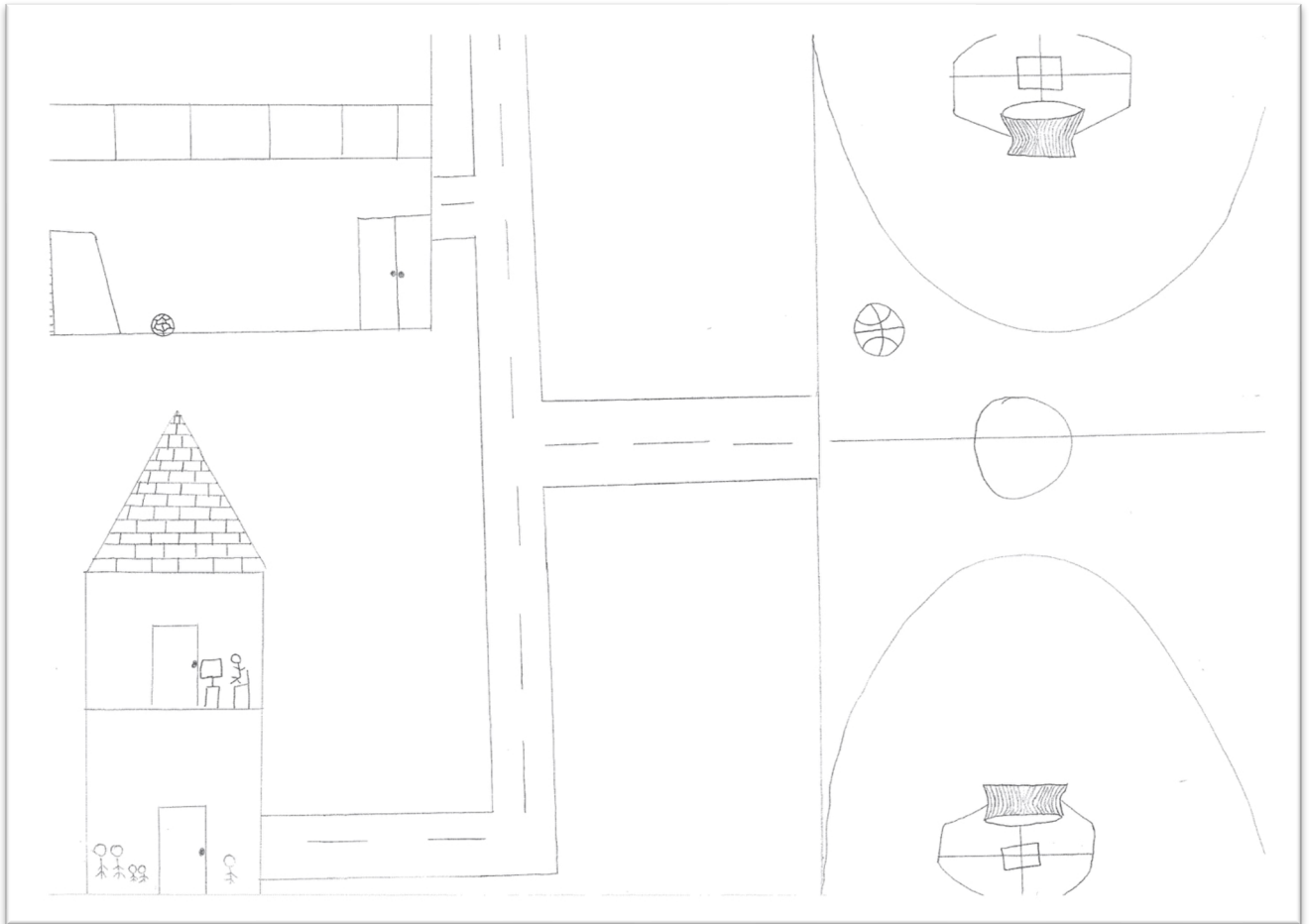Name of participant: Sameer

Name of participant: Adam

Name of participant: Rami

Name of participant: Rana

Name of participant: Reem

Appendix (2)

Self activity

- I like school because _____

- I'm sad in school when _____

- I think a good teacher _____

- My hobbies are _____

- I'm happy in school when_____

- In school, I like to _____

- A good friend is someone who_____

- I hate school when_____

- My favourite person in my family is_____

- My favourite person outside my family is_____

- I love_____

- My favourite possession is _____

- The thing which makes me nervous is _____

- When I'm worried about something I _____

- A person who has been a good friend to me _____

- I get upset when_____

- I'm more happy in _____than _____

Appendix (3)

Letter to parents

Dear parents,
Date: 01/06/19
I'm working on my thesis for my master's degree in Community Psychology which is on the "
Experiences of the 10th grade students at school". I intend to meet with the students at school on
Monday 10/06 to share their experiences at our school. I'm asking your approval in order to achieve
that purpose.
Thank you for your cooperation

Mrs. Rania Rinawi

Social worker