

HABASHI, JANETTE ELAIS GEORGE, Ph.D., December, 2004

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF PALESTINIAN CHILDREN: CHILDREN AS
GEOPOLITICAL AGENTS (348 pp.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation: Dennis Hart
Linda Rogers

This research looked at Palestinian children's political socialization in the absence of a coherent state doctrine as well as how children in the West Bank generated national identity and made sense of historical memory. The study theorized the concept of geopolitical agency for the Palestinian children and its relation to formal and informal agencies in the process of political socialization.

The research provided empirical data that will help articulate the impact children have as geopolitical agents in the West Bank. The research was unique in its notion: it avoided the academically inherent problem, which views children in war zones from one narrative, that of being traumatized. The Western theories regarding child rearing are in the fashion of integrated rational discourse; however, they fail to account for the fragmented reality of any given child's development especially for children in a war zone. Therefore, the research was based on an interdisciplinary framework, which approached the phenomenon from perspectives of educational psychology, early childhood, and political science in order to provide some answers to a complicated discourse. The

multidisciplinary structure enhanced the understanding of the lack of theories that reflect on children's paradoxical reality. In addition, it theorized the political socialization of Palestinian children in its realistic paradoxical and fragmented form to which this approach should not be imaginary with little realistic substance of children in a war zone. The study looked at Palestinian children as geopolitical agents who reflected the complexity and challenges of adults and professionals. Moreover, the study was based on triangulation that combined quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach was essential because of the lack of research in this area and also to provide a better insight into Palestinian children's lives.

The findings of the quantitative and qualitative data highlighted several issues. First, the significant role the informal agencies such as the family narratives, street politics, and the current situation played in making children authors and partners apart from keepers of historical memory. Second, the study presented the paradox of formal agencies especially the school systems. The school systems experienced historical constraints against teaching the Palestinian legacy. However, the teachers crossed borders between the informal and formal agencies. Third, there are no gender-distinguished roles between female and male concerning political knowledge or resistance. However, the findings revealed that there was a space that females could take over, specifically, in what is expected to be a male role in resistance. Fourth, the locations such as cities, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank were an element in the intensity of informal agencies. Fifth, the political parties did not play significant formulators in children's political knowledge.