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Influenced by social identity theory, psychologists have focused primarily on the role of shared identity in leading people to engage in collective action. In this study, we are concerned with the factors that lead individuals who do not share a collective identity to act in solidarity with an outgroup. We explored this question by looking at the narratives and motives that brought non-Palestinian university students to participate in collective action for Palestine. In-depth interviews with campus activists and a yearlong observation of campus debates over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggested a number of motives for solidarity activism. First, activists drew parallels between their in-group collective narrative and the collective narrative of the Palestinians. Second, an intersectional narrative of identity increased activist self-efficacy by highlighting the ways that activists were both marginalized and privileged. Third, activists explained their affinity to these narratives as rooted in personal experiences with marginalization and discrimination. A final motive arose through the practice of coalition building that further empowered students of different minority groups. Findings from this study contribute to an understanding of the current surge in Palestinian solidarity activism on college campuses in the United States.

Keywords: activism, collective action, intersectionality, campus-politics, Palestine

College campuses in the United States serve as incubators for social movements. Many of the successful social movements of the last century, including the antiwar movement, the feminist movement, and most recently, the anti-apartheid movement, have gained momentum through campus activism (Nettikkara, 2015; Wrigley-Field, 2014; Zhou & Green, 2015). In recent years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a source of growing debate on college campuses. Some of the campus debates have been triggered by activist-scholars and lecturers who discuss Palestine in their courses (Lloyd, 2014; Mullen, 2015), educational events drawing connections between different social justice issues and Palestinian dispossession (Abdulhadi et al., 2012), and campus protests by Palestinian solidarity organizations (Erakat, 2012; Tapper, 2011). An especially controversial tactic that has promoted debate about Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza has been the introduction of divestment bills that have called on the university to divest funds from companies that supply products used to sustain the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (Barghouti, 2006; Hallward & Shaver, 2012).

Divestment bills are commonly proposed by Students for Justice in Palestine (sjpalestine.com), also referred to as SJP, a student advocacy organization common among many United States college campuses (Yazbak-Abu Ahmad, Dessel, Mishkin, Ali, & Omar, 2015). The divestment bills have called on universities to withhold investing university endowments in companies engaged in business with the Israeli military (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009). Increasingly, student unions at universities and colleges (e.g., Stanford, Oberlin, Princeton, the University of California campuses, Hampshire College, and Northwestern University) have passed divestment bills which call on the uni-

versity regents to divest from companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Lockheed Martin, General Electric, and Caterpillar ("Introducing the BDS Movement," n.d.). Much of the success of these bills has been associated with support from non-Palestinian activists working to pass divestment bills on college campuses (Abunimah, 2015; Medina & Lewin, 2015).

In this study, we are interested in exploring the processes that lead individuals to participate in collective action on behalf of the Palestinians. We ask: What are the narratives that motivate non-Palestinian youth to act in solidarity with Palestine? What are the life experiences that are associated with identifying with a specific narrative? What are the contextual factors in the university setting that promote activism in solidarity with Palestinians' struggle for self-determination? We answer these questions using a qualitative methodology that aims for a phenomenological, in-depth understanding of ongoing political processes on university campuses.

Our investigation contributes to the social psychological theorization of collective action. Primarily, social psychological research on collective action has focused on the manner in which social identities (e.g., woman) has become politicized through a political identity (e.g., feminist; Kelly, 2015; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). However, through studying non-Palestinian activists' support for Palestinians, we may examine the politicization of activists who do not share a basic social identity with Palestinians. In this research, we go beyond a shared identity to locate the narratives and motives that bring college activists to support Palestinian rights. Moreover, while many social psychology studies look at the fundamental motives that explain collective action across space and time, in this study we are interested in providing a rich qualitative description of the making of activists within the university setting. We seek to explore how this setting shapes emerging adults' political identities in formative and enduring ways.

Finally, we believe this investigation has important practical implications. Often, non-Palestinian activists are accused of being motivated by latent anti-Semitism that leads them to "attack Israel" and ignore the human rights abuses in other countries (Bard, 2015; Miller, 2015). By giving a qualitative, phenomenolog-

ical, and in-depth account of why students with no direct ties to Palestine come to politically organize on behalf of Palestinians, we hope to promote an understanding between those debating Israel and Palestine on university campuses in the United States.

Conceptual Tools

Social Identity and Narrative

The primary condition for motivating individuals toward activism, according to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), is a sense that they are part of the same social group (Brown, 2000). Identification with the group leads individuals to imagine themselves as sharing similar values and holding comparable goals to others with that same group identity. Van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2008) refined this social identity approach, showing that the politicization of group identity plays an important mediating role between identification with a group and collective action. Social identities become shared and politicized by identifying with a group narrative that frames the collective as enmeshed in a political struggle (Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). For instance, a study of the conversations between Jewish and Palestinian adolescents during a 2-week "dialogue program" suggested that the adolescents saw each other through the prism of a political narrative (Ben Hagai, Hammack, Pilecki, & Aresta, 2013). In this study, Palestinian adolescents framed their identity based on a narrative in which they were indigenous to the land, but were constantly dispossessed and made to suffer. Identification with a political narrative that sees the collective as dispossessed may also play a role in leading individuals to join in collective action on behalf of an outgroup.

Intersectional Analysis

An intersectional feminist analysis avoids politicization of identity based upon a singular identity axis such as Palestinian, woman, or gay, and instead asks activists to account for multiple systems of oppression (Curtin, Stewart, & Cole, 2015; Williams & Wittig, 1997). Intersectional discourse has its roots in Black feminist thought (e.g., Combahee River Collec-

tive) as well as the work of critical legal theorists (e.g., Crenshaw, 1991; Ferguson, 2012). Crenshaw (1991) explains her goal of a new theory of feminism in first using an intersectional metaphor:

> My objective there was to illustrate that many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately. (p. 1244)

Intersectional discourse rejects a single axis analysis of oppression that focuses only on race or gender, and calls on us to account for the consequences of individuals' positionality within multiple intersecting social categories.

Activists who use an intersectional lens to make sense of oppression do not focus on one form of oppression, but look at what Collins (2000) calls the "matrix of domination." An examination of the matrix of domination accounts for social stratification and marginalization that affects people situated across many social positions. An analysis of the matrix of domination lends itself to coalition building among people who are part of different social categories (Cohen, 1997; Cole, 2008). Moreover, activism influenced by an intersectional lens acknowledges that individuals have privileges, as well as experiences of injustices, depending on the context and situation (Croteau, Talbot, Lance, & Evans, 2002). Overall, an intersectional narrative highlights the ways in which collective actors are marginalized, as well as the ways in which collective actors hold some privilege because of the intersectional components of their social identity (Curtin, Kende, & Kende, 2016). Moreover, it highlights the ways people across many social categories can face multiple social obstacles (e.g., racism, sexism, and homophobia), serving as a matrix of domination (Cole, 2008).

An intersectional narrative that sees the protagonist as both marginalized and privileged, and an analysis of the obstacles facing the self in terms of a matrix of domination, may result in both a sense of self-efficacy and a sense of relative deprivation (Ben Hagai & Crosby, 2016). A sense of efficacy (that the self, or one's group, has the power to change its circumstances), as well as a sense of collective relative deprivation (that one's group is deprived compared with other groups), have been found to play an important role in motivating activism (Duncan, 2012). When a sense of deprivation is also matched with a sense of collective group efficacy, individuals are more likely to act in solidarity with each other to change the social structure (Case, 2012; Dessel, Ali, & Mishkin, 2014).

Psychological Predictors for Identification With a Collectivizing Narrative

College is a moment in which individuals explore their racial or ethnic identity, as well as their political values (Arnett, 2006). During this time, emerging adults may come to understand their personal identity as part of a larger class, race, and/or ethnic collective identity (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008). At times, the internalization of a minority racial identity becomes associated with a recognition of similar oppression experienced by other minority groups (Cross, 1991). Identification with a collective narrative of struggle may be associated with individual experiences of marginalization and discrimination throughout one's life (Vollhardt, 2015). Among individuals who are part of a privileged social group, a sense of empathy, openness to experience, and a heightened sense of their own privilege, may play an important role in disposing them toward acknowledging social inequalities and injustices (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013; McAdams et al., 2008; Stewart, Latu, Branscombe, Phillips, & Denney, 2012; Thomas & Mc-Garty, 2012). Finally, attending classes that address social privilege and structural oppression has been associated with an increased support for social justice initiatives and collective action among participants (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Swank & Fahs, 2011).

The Current Study

In this study, we ask why non-Palestinian college students join solidarity actions that are sympathetic to the Palestinian plight. Our investigation focuses on the relationship between narratives, life experiences, and contextual factors that lead individuals to come to advocate for Palestinian rights. In line with a case study methodology, we conducted in-depth inter-

views, participant observation, and an analysis of public video footage of campus events at one United States public university. We restricted our study to non-Palestinian activists engaged in activism in solidarity with Palestine on one college campus college campus in California. We did not include instances of pro-Palestinian advocacy by Palestinian-identified individuals or instances of activism that were not related specifically to Palestine (e.g., antiprison or indigenous rights) in this analysis. We also excluded activism in solidarity with Palestine that occurred outside of the campus community.

Method

Participants

The unit of analysis for this study was a group of students who led solidarity activism for Palestine, and who themselves did not identify as Palestinian. We used purposeful sampling, inviting participation from activists who took a leading role in pro-Palestinian advocacy and who did not identify as Palestinian. Nine university undergradate and graduate students who took a leading role in pro-Palestinian advocacy on a college campus participated in an in-depth interview for this research. All students attended the same university, which is a mid-sized (20,000 undergraduates and graduates) public university in California, United States. Participant ages ranged from 19–32 (demographic information is displayed in Table 1).

Procedure

Following a pilot study the previous year, the first two authors began collecting data for this study. The data collection period lasted approximately the academic year. At the beginning of the school year, the researchers introduced themselves to the organizers and students at meetings and events where advocacy in solidarity with Palestine was discussed. Researchers explained to participants that the goal of the research was to "identify ways of promoting inclusive and constructive conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on campus." We specified that we hoped that by talking to activists, we could voice the motives that led them to advocate for Palestinian rights. Given that advocates for Palestine are often accused of being active due to anti-Semitic feelings, many activists were keen to explain their motives.

To interview leading solidarity activists, we used purposeful and snowball sampling. We defined a leading role to be an official position in a student group organization (e.g., vice president of the African American Student Association) or as having an active role organizing campus events or actions in support of Palestine. Activists who took a leading role in meetings and actions (based on our observation) were invited to participate in this study. Students were invited to participate in this study through a personal, face-to-face invitation from one of the researchers. Some participants were

Table 1
Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Student organizations	Ethnicity/race	Self-identified socioeconomic class	Class level
Dafna	Woman	SJP	Jewish-Israeli (Mizrachi)	Middle class	Graduate student
Jon	Male	SJP	White	Middle class	Graduate student
Lydia	Woman	SJP and Coalition for Public Education	White-Jewish (Ashkenazi)	Middle class	Undergraduate
Antonio	Man	MEChA	Mexican-American	Working class	Undergraduate
Lola	Woman	MEChA	Mexican-American	Working class-poverty level	Undergraduate
Lana	Woman	SJP and Black Student Association	Ethiopian-American	Middle class	Undergraduate
Mofeda	Woman	SJP	Syrian	Upper middle class	Undergraduate
Banzir	Woman	Afghan Student Union	Afghan-American	Working class	Undergraduate
Sam	Gender queer	SJP	White-American	Upper middle class	Graduate

Note. SJP = Student for Justice in Palestine; MEChA = Movimiento Estudiantil ChicanX de Aztlán.

contacted via email as part of a snowball recruitment strategy if another participant recommended that they be interviewed because of their leadership role in Palestine solidarity on campus.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was in line with case study methodology—relying on several data sources (Yin, 1994). Three main sources of information were used to analyze the study questions: in-depth interviews, participant observations, and field notes from campus events. We also examined open access video footage available online from the student union meeting debating the divestment bill. Our analysis focused on the student leaders engaged in activism in solidarity with Palestine, using observations of campus events and the boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) debate to contextualize the interview data.

In-depth interviews. Students who were identified as leaders in pro-Palestinian activism on campus (organizing events as part of SJP, or working in solidarity with SJP organizations) were invited for an in-depth interview as part of this study. All interviews were conducted in a room in the psychology department by either the first or second author.

Participants were asked similar questions in each interview and were encouraged to elaborate on their answers based on their unique life stories. In conducting the interviews, we were guided by Josselson's (2013) procedures for semistructured interviewing. All interviews included questions such as, "When did you first become interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?", "Why did you become involved in advocacy related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?", and "Did you have any positive experiences discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on campus?" Interviews lasted between 40 min to 2 hr. All interviews were taped. Tapes from the interviews were transcribed verbatim (with the exception that participants' real names were excluded).

Participant observation. In addition to the in-depth interviews, we conducted a yearlong participant observation of campus events, classes, and organizational meetings by student groups who worked in solidarity with Palestine. Researchers attended and took notes at organizational meetings of the campus SJP and the

Group Movimiento Estudiantil ChicanX de Aztlán (MEChA), as well as campus-wide educational events about the Palestinian occupation, campus protests for Palestinian rights, and a divestment debate held on campus. In our field notes of the meetings and events we attended, we focused on describing the setting, activists, and content of discussions. Our focus was guided by our research question, which led us to focus on the ways in which participants presented and explained their solidarity with Palestine within the settings of meetings and campus. Our field notes followed strategies proposed by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). Field notes based on observation and informal conversations were shared among the researchers. We used our notes to make sense of the narratives and examples used by participants in their interviews.

Video footage. We also studied video footage of the divestment debate in addition to field observations. This footage was made public on a university student union website. In this 3-hr-long video, students gave testimonies as to why they supported or rejected the divestment bill calling on the university to divest funds from companies that supplied products to the Israeli military for the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The second author analyzed footage from the divestment debate and used it to compare themes emerging from the in-depth interviews. Because triangulation of the data suggested similar explanations for support for Palestinian activism, we determined that we had reached data saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data Analysis

Development of codes and categories. Some studies following the case study method rely on theoretical propositions to inform the gathering and analysis of collected data (Yin, 1994); the analysis we pursue in this study is more exploratory. We chose to conduct an explorative and inductive analysis of the data because of the scarce amount of research on Palestinian solidarity activism in the United States.

Our analysis borrowed theoretical tools and analysis strategies from the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). To induce emerging categories, we followed several strategies. First, we conducted a line by line analysis of the inter-

view transcripts. This reading was accompanied by open and in vivo coding that sustained the participant's expressed meaning within the codes. Through comparison of coding from different interviews and memo writing, we were able to construct more abstract themes. Axial coding allowed us to make connections between the categories (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). The coding process was conducted independently by the two first authors. We discussed these emerging categories in relationship to observational field notes in semiweekly lab meetings. Toward the end of the coding process, as categories emerged from the data, we began exploring the relationship between the emerging categories and theoretical concepts from social identity theory, narrative psychology, intersectional feminist theory, and studies of student activism.

Researchers' positionality.   The first two authors of this study conducted the interviews, engaged in participant observation, and analyzed the narrative themes. The third author assisted in conceptualizing the study, helped to ensure methodological and analytic rigor, and contributed to writing and editing the final report. She did not conduct interviews or engage in participant observation. At the time of the research, the first author was an Asian American undergraduate student, the second author was a Jewish Israeli graduate student, and the third author was a European American professor. The researchers who conducted the observations and interviews came to the study having different assumptions about the activists engaged in solidarity with Palestine. The Asian American researcher tended to frame Palestine advocacy as grounded in a logic of antiracist activism. The Jewish Israeli researcher assumed that Palestine activism was motivated by liberal logic supporting equality and human rights. As we spoke to the participants, our understanding of the sources of their activism shifted and became focused on intersectionality and a shared collective narrative across differences.

The identities of the first and second authors intersected with some of the campus activists we talked to. One of us was a person of color, both of us identified as feminists, and we both saw ourselves in solidarity with activism to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. At the time of this study, both researchers were also students at the university where the study was conducted. The Asian American undergraduate researcher was friends with some of the activists that were invited to participate in this study.

In several ways, our identities diverged from the activists we studied. Neither of us were active in Palestine solidarity activism on campus, nor had we experienced consistent marginalization because of our racial/ethnic identity. When we had traveled to Israel, we experienced the privilege of an Israeli or American passport. Moreover, this research was sponsored by the university's psychology department—we were empowered by our position as university researchers in a way that activists critiquing the university's position were not.

Trustworthiness.   We used several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of our findings (Merriam, 2002). These strategies included triangulation, peer review/examination, identification of researcher position and reflexivity, maximum variation, and seeking saturation. First, we triangulated the data by relying on several sources of information: in-depth interviews, participant observations, and a study of video footage. In addition, we met as a research team on a semiweekly basis to discuss and study the transcripts and observational data. The research team included psychology faculty, a graduate student, and undergraduate researchers who had different views and political positions on Palestine (e.g., some were Jewish, some were Arab, and some had no direct relationship to the conflict). Discussions among the diverse set of researchers illuminated our different assumptions and allowed us to acknowledge the implications of these assumptions on how we interpreted the data. Another strategy that we used to increase trustworthiness was to seek interviews with individuals with extensive variability in terms of their identity. We interviewed participants who had close ties to the Middle East (they identified as Israelis or Syrians), as well as those with no direct investment in the conflict (e.g., Mexican Americans). Finally, we sought to offer a comprehensive description of the narratives, events, and campus environment. We do not claim that findings from this study can be generalized to other contexts, but rather that readers may apply this particular analytical proposition to understand similar solidarity social movements on college campuses. It is at the

readers' discretion to consider the applicability of the theoretical postulations to other contexts.

Findings

Reoccurring themes in explaining motives that led non-Palestinian students to act in solidarity with the Palestinians included: (a) an articulation of one's own group narrative as parallel to the Palestinians' dominant narrative, (b) adopting intersectional narratives in academic classes, (c) an affinity with narratives of dispossession rooted in personal experiences with marginalization, and (d) a sense of empowerment that emerged from unity between students across social groups.

Identification With the Palestinian Narrative

Arab and Muslim activists. The Arab and Muslim students we talked to informally, as well as the two formally interviewed Muslim and Arab student leaders, framed their collective narrative to parallel the narrative of the Palestinians. Some of the Arab and Muslim youth who came from countries with recent wars (e.g., Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan) tended to be versed in historical and political events and tensions that had caused strife in their nation of origin. Being well-versed in, and thoughtful about, their own collective historical narrative led them to recognize parallels between their group's history and that of the Palestinians. For instance, Banzir, an organizer in the student Afghan association, explained:

> I guess it's a Middle Eastern thing where you're born with politics and you grow up hearing it, you know, you're around it constantly so you kind of have [to] know your history. The history of Israel and Palestine is very relevant to us, especially because of the fact that, not similar I guess to our situation in Afghanistan but pretty close.

An additional way in which some Arab and Muslim students recognized their collective narrative as similar to that of the Palestinians was in what they explained to be a Western indifference to Arab and Muslim suffering. For example, Mofeda, a Syrian student and a leader in SJP explained:

> There's this revolution that's happening in Syria, and no one is really supporting the revolution. And our president [Bashar al-Assad] is getting away with geno-

cide, and the world is being quiet. They're speaking up—in a minimum way. And basically, people are dying. And it makes me really angry. And I can relate to the Palestinian conflict because I feel like this has been going on [for them] for years and it amazes and shocks me how the world is unaware of the whole thing.

Mofeda saw the injustices between Syria's current civil war as parallel to the Palestinian history of dispossession. In both the Palestinian and the Syrian narratives, injustices brought forth by Western forces and Arab dictators (supported by the West) are met with Euro American apathy. Western indifference to Arab and Muslim death was a common frame that connected some Arab and Muslim students from different nation states (e.g., Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan) to the plight of Palestinians.

African and Latino students. The American rite of passage of going to college, in which emerging adults leave their homes and move to college campuses, lead many young adults to seek campus organizations and groups that celebrate their cultural identity. Identity groups (groups based on a shared identity), such as the Black Student Alliance or the Movimiento Estudiantil ChicanX de Aztlán (MEChA), celebrate a common heritage and culture, and discuss political issues common to the group. Within these groups, conversations focus on a historical understanding of the group's collective trauma and current marginalization (Azmitia et al., 2008).

Like some of the Muslim and Arab students we spoke to, students involved in student groups such MEChA or the Black Student Alliance tended to think of their collective story in parallel with that of the Palestinians as well. For instance, Lola (a leader in MEChA) explained:

> What the conflict comes down to in my mind is colonialism, imperialism, this idea that you can come into somebody's land and take it because of [the] self-determined idea that you have ownership over it somehow. So that's something that's obviously part of my background as someone of Mexican ancestry. And also just that there's like parallels between them currently, the way that like a lot of the forces that are behind this [the occupation of Palestine] are the same people that are behind violence elsewhere.

In the above statement, Lola invokes the reoccurring category of narrative expansion, in which both the Palestinian and Mexican dispossession are framed as a consequence of colonialism and imperialism.

The ties and parallels between different groups' struggles are further formed through activist strategies of coalition building. According to Antonio, another leader in MEChA, these conversations occur on a local level and national level:

> We started having conversations with Students for Justice in Palestine on a national level and having talks about how the intersectionality of our struggles correlate with each other in some instances when talking about occupation and when talking about borders, and that resonated with me a lot. And so when we started having conversations further it was something that, although different, it was kind of the same as the struggle of an immigrant from Mexico.

In activist conferences and events, conversations about occupation and borders highlight Chicanos' and Palestinians' similar positionality (as indigent occupied populations) and the obstacles (occupation and colonialism) that are facing these groups. The shared struggles and obstacles influencing both groups, such as dislocation from lands, physical boundaries preventing movement, and the impacts of colonialism associated with awareness of the parallel collective narrative of the Chicanos and Palestinians. Moreover, based on our observations and informal conversations, the Palestinian plight was often depicted as an archetype of the plight of indigenous communities, and as such, created unity between groups concerned with indigenous people's rights and Palestinian solidarity organizations.

Intersectional Narratives

The connections activists made between their own collective narratives and those of the Palestinians were often made in university courses on race and ethnic studies, feminism, or critical political and economic theory. Such classes contributed to the politicization of youth identity as they highlight the historical mechanisms that created current global inequalities. In these classes, professors encouraged students to theorize and make connections between different forms of oppression (i.e., the matrix of domination). Through these discussions of how systems of power influenced individuals, students came to see their own identity as part of a larger politicized collective.

Analyzing the matrix of domination. Gender studies, and decolonial and postcolonial theories taught in feminist and ethnic studies classes, inspired many of the activists, such as Lana, Antonio, Lydia, Jon, and Sam, to become interested in activism on behalf of the Palestinians. In these classes, students engaged in an analysis of the matrix of domination and its relationship to global inequalities. For instance, in a feminist studies class influenced by decolonial and postcolonial theories, Lana, the daughter of African refugees, became exposed to the ways in which Western regimes oppressed minorities and indigenous populations while glorifying their tolerance of sexual minorities (pink washing) or selected minority groups (brown washing). She describes this process:

> Lana: I took a feminist studies class and I just fell in love with it . . . [the professor] brought up Israel at one point and was relating it to the curriculum and how we were being critical of like white supremacist regimes, and not only America, but Europe. And she drew a parallel between that and Israel. . . . And how Israel is oppressing all these minorities and queers. And also pink washing, a kind of diverting method, to take away attention from what's happening to Palestinians and people of color, and present themselves as this Liberal, accepting environment.
>
> Interviewer: Why did you fall in love with gender/feminist studies?
>
> Lana: I guess I fell in love with feminist studies because it felt so true to me. It spoke to me, it felt real to me. Because, they say the feminist slogan, "the personal is political." They like to base it on the lived experiences of people of color. And I realized I had lived and experienced all of the things that feminist studies are talking about.

Lana experienced an awakening of her black feminist identity as she heard and read about similar experiences to her own in feminist texts. Understanding her experiences, not as a woman, but as a member of a collective led her to major in gender studies and become an activist. Lana's deep engagement and enthusiasm for making linkages between different forms of oppression brought her to research how the Israeli government advertises the country's thriving gay culture and inclusiveness toward gay Jews to mask its oppression of the Palestinians and African refugees. Leaders of SJP asked Lana to present her research during Palestinian Awareness Week, and after that, she "just stuck with them" and became a leader in organizing for Palestine.

Like Lana, many activists we spoke to explained that their motivation to join solidarity activism with Palestine arose from or was strengthened by the feminist, queer theory, crit-

ical theory or ethnic study classes that they enrolled in. As college students learned of the ways in which interlocking forms of oppression are used to oppress women and minority groups they came to recognize Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as an important exemplar of the matrix of domination.

Intersections of privilege and oppression. In addition to analysis of the matrix of domination, many of the students in their in-depth interviews (Antonio, Lana, Sam, Lydia, Lola) highlighted the importance of intersectional theories where they not only highlighted the matrix of domination, but also their own privilege. A recognition of one's own privilege led many of the youth we interviewed to become committed to working for Palestinian liberation. Intersectional theories that highlight aspects of identities in which one is privileged, as well as those in which one is less so, led activists like Lydia to become more open to listening to the narrative of the other.

> My privilege affects my behavior but also, my non-privilege. I do not have male privilege and that's why I do a lot of feminist activism, but I feel so grateful that I'm aware of other types of privilege so . . . I'm not going to argue against someone telling me their experiences of oppression, the way that other people do. And that's why maybe when I was in the West Bank [in Palestine] and hanging out with the Palestinians I felt, this is great. I do not feel just because you're talking about the state of Israel and [I am] Jewish, I do not want to be defensive. When I'm with people of color who are like bitching about White people I'm not gonna be like this knee-jerk reflex [of defensiveness] because of my own experiences of men doing that all the time to me when I'm trying to talk to them and tell them about my experiences.

Lydia's understanding of the privileges afforded by her white, Jewish, middle-class identity, as well as the ways in which she is less privileged as a woman in relation to men, led her to be less defensive and more empathetic to experiences that were in contradiction to her own. Understanding the ways in which she is marginalized as well as the ways in which she is privileged had also motivated her toward activism that addressed multiple injustices.

> A big part of the reason how I got to this stage of Palestine solidarity was actually through exploring feminism more. So, like being truly intersectional in feminism I realized I was being a massive hypocrite by fighting for oppression in some places and not in others. And that was like the moment I thought ok, I'm being a hypocrite and Zionism just doesn't work with

feminism now, because I need to be intersectional and fighting oppression everywhere.

Lydia's (as well as other activists') increased understanding of intersectional feminism became associated with an increased commitment to fight injustices across different locations (i.e., "fighting oppression everywhere"). When a commitment to intersectional analysis increased, Jewish activists like Lydia came to reconsider Zionism as another form of oppression that dispossessed Palestinians from their land.

Personal Life History of Marginalization and Identification With the Narrative of the Other

When we asked activists (informally and in their in-depth interviews) why they were attracted to narratives (postcolonial, intersectional) that created connections between the plights of different populations, a reoccurring theme was the recollection of early experiences with personal marginalization or discrimination. A clear example of this category is found in Antonio's interviews. Antonio explained his critical stance toward a liberal rhetoric of identities as rooted in the threat of his parent's deportation.

> Interviewer: What's the impetus to be so annoyed with those Liberals, is it only just cognitive or intellectual?
>
> Antonio: I think it comes from having both of my parents deported when I was 13. And that itself was very interesting to me because it's, how can we address this situation where we have lawyers trying to help a family out but the lawyers mess up, or they're like, "we're charging you a lot of money, but we're helping you out." And from there I think it's like, trust. Like I really developed how to be like, I cannot trust you until I say I trust you because of that. Because I felt my parents were being like, milked for their money, and not really being helped. Once I started understanding politics, um in high school, like it's interesting to me how the rhetoric of having a Latino Republican means that all Latinos should be Republican. Or it's interesting to me how being a Democrat itself is super Liberal. Oh, so you're progressive, therefore you're a Democrat, there's never anything else, but this Democratic Party. And I feel like I started thinking that it became too rigid to identify with that. And I do not know, I never liked being told that like, you're this, I always tried to like, stay away from that because it doesn't give me my own agency. . . .

Antonio links the threat of the state deporting his parents and unhelpful intervention of lawyers as a leading motivator for his mistrust of authority

and hegemonic discourses of identity (such as categorizing individuals as legal and illegal). His experience of marginalization led him to be critical of traditional epistemology and liberal politics.

For the white, middle-class activists interviewed (Jon, Sam, Lydia), early experiences of being outsiders and perceptions of being different from an early age were associated with their interest in critical theories. For instance, Jon, a graduate student and a leader in SJP, became interested in the occupation of Palestine as part of his broader interest in Marxist theory. In his interview, he suggested that his attraction to critical theories of capitalism was rooted in awareness of social inequalities and being different from a young age. "I have always been an outsider in a lot of social situations. So it made more sense for my life experience and the things that I had observed about the world . . . " Sam explained his interest in critical theories as rooted in early experiences of feeling like an outcast in the church community his parents frequented.

> I didn't identify as Christian since I was like 11 or 12, but I was terrified to tell my parents because they were so like. You know like my parents weren't just like we go to church, it was like my parents went to church on Sundays, they were involved in like deacon kind of stuff, elder kind of stuff. . . . I was terrified because I was questioning the existence of God because I was depressed and miserable because I felt like a social outcast . . .

Sam as well as others invoked memories of times in their lives in an early age in which they questioned their parents' values and social norms. This questioning of people in power such as one's parents or priests or teachers was associated with a sense of alienation. A self-understanding as different and as being outsiders, and awareness of power inequalities from an early age disposed White, middle-class activists we spoke to toward an interest in critical theories. The study of critical theories such as Marxist theories, postcolonial theories, and queer theory further facilitated their alliance with Palestinian advocacy organizations.

Empowerment Through Solidarity

An additional motive that appears to explain non-Palestinian activist support for Palestinian rights was the joy and empowerment in mutual public recognition and acknowledgment of the different struggles activists faced across many cultural backgrounds. This additional motive for activism emerged in our juxtaposing of the inter-

views and our participant observation in the divestment debate.

The student body on the campus we studied discussed the divestment bill in a crowded room until 3:00 a.m. For over two hours, students provided public testimonies in support or opposition of the bill. As speakers approached the microphone to argue for their position, they introduced themselves by name, then often by their school major and affiliated organization. The number of speakers in support of the bill doubled the number of those who spoke in opposition to the bill. Moreover, many of those who spoke in support of the bill introduced themselves as Jewish, Muslim, Arab, Chicano, and African American. All those who gave testimonials opposing the bill that night appeared to be White (it is important to note that not all of them may have identified as White).

The main argument made by those against the bill was that the bill was only symbolic since the regents did not intend to divest from Israel. They argued that although the bill was symbolic, it would make the campus climate more critical of Israel and less safe for Jewish students who saw Israel as an important part of their identity. Some Jewish-Israeli students opposed the bill because it positioned Israel as the villain and Palestinians as the victims. This simplification, they argued, did not comprehensively explain the complicated conflict between Israel and Palestine. Finally, several Jewish students argued that the separation barrier was important since it protected Israel from terrorists who target Jewish civilians in Israel.

Following the long hours of these testimonials, the student union representatives discussed the bill before voting on it. One of the first to speak was Antonio, representing MEChA. Antonio addressed the comments made by the Jewish students about the alleged security that the barrier fence provided Jewish Israelis from terrorism, as well as Jewish students' fear of not feeling comfortable on campus if the bill passes. Ending his address rhetorically, Antonio exclaimed, "I am sorry you feel uncomfortable, I have felt uncomfortable since the day I was born." After these words, the room broke into claps and cheers.

The affirmation and pleasure that students of color and white students experienced in forming alliances together served as an additional motivation for activism. Lola described the joy in

solidarity through a description of how activists came together following the passing of the bill:

> In Chicano culture there's this idea of this unity clap, which is a clap where people kind of simultaneously clap together in a heartbeat rhythm. It was originally brought up by the Mexican farm workers during the farm workers movement as well as the Filipino ones who, because they didn't share a language, instead at the end of the day would show their solidarity by combining their claps into that heartbeat. So after divestment passed we ended up, not just MEChA, but a lot of the audience members, people from the Students for Justice in Palestine, and other people who were there [in support], we all got in a circle and we did that unity clap together, symbolizing that we do come from different communities, we come from different struggles really, but we all came together under that same goal.

Actualizing intersectional activism through coming together across differences had an empowering and gratifying effect on activists who advocated for the divestment bill.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore the narratives and motives that were associated with non-Palestinian college activism in solidarity with Palestine. We explored the interaction between group narratives, personal experiences, and activist practices. Previous research using the social identity approach tends to view social activism to be rooted in a shared group identity (Brown, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). More recent research on collective action suggests that when individuals saw their social identity as based in politicized discourse that highlights unjust treatment to their group, they were more likely to participate in collective action (Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Our study's findings expand on this theorization by suggesting that some college activists joined Palestinian solidarity actions when they came to see their groups' collective narrative in similar terms to those of another social group. When some Arab, Muslim, and Latino students we interviewed saw their collective history and present reality as parallel to the Palestinians, they were more likely to join Palestinian solidarity organizations. Conceptualizing this finding from a social identity lens suggests that a deep structure based on common themes of indignity and dispossession due to colonial power served as a superordinate narrative that functioned like a superordinate identity

(e.g., Vollhardt, 2013). Shared themes of indignity and dispossession in the narratives of members of diverse social groups (e.g., Chicanos, Syrians, Afghans) united members of these groups into collective action.

College Classes and Intersectional Analysis

In addition to a shared group narrative, our findings further highlight the powerful role that intersectional narratives and analysis have in motivating individuals toward activism on behalf of a marginalized other (Cole, 2008). Non-Palestinian activists in solidarity with Palestine often told a story in which an intersectional analysis informed by gender and feminist studies classes motivated their action on behalf of Palestine. Intersectional analysis promoted action on behalf of the Palestinians in two ways. First, the focus on the matrix of domination was associated with an understanding of the marginalization of one's collective as part of a systematic process in oppressing women, people of color, and sexual and gender minorities (Collins, 2000). Political intersectional analysis that is also associated with liberation politics and queer politics highlighted the ways in which systems of oppression were interlinked (Cohen, 1997; Puar, 2007; Schulman, 2012). As students were trained in their classes to observe systems of oppressions, they were able to recognize how their struggles as African American students, queer students, or working class students were associated with the oppression of marginalized minorities.

In addition, an intersectional analysis among more privileged individuals not only highlighted the ways in which activists were deprived, but also the ways in which they were powerful (Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2017). Understanding both their marginalization as well as their privilege empowered students to attempt to change the system, and in some instances, related to a sense of efficacy as an important motivator for social activism (Case, 2012; Curtin et al., 2016; Thomas & McGarty, 2012). Finally, an important sustaining factor for students' activism was the pleasure of acting in solidarity with one another. The debate over the divestment bill provided a forum in which students' stories were heard and celebrated. The empowerment of intersectional solidarity that included forming alliances across differences

gave momentum to the camaraderie between activists.

Sense of Collective Efficacy Motivated Collective Action

Narratives of indignity and dispossession and an intersectional analysis interacted with the developmental processes common among college students. During college, many students come to explore aspects of their social identities, especially ethnic, sexual, and political identities (Arnett, 2006). Some students who are members of minority groups come to immerse themselves in a study of their history and collective trauma (Azmitia et al., 2008; Duncan, 2010). According to Cross's (1991) nigrescence theory, members of minority groups who encounter personal instances of discrimination and marginalization are more likely to immerse themselves in a study of their collective history and trauma. Internalization of one's own collective history of marginalization may lead youth to also recognize oppression experienced by others. Following Vollhardt (2013), we also find that the experience of othering can be associated with an inclusive sense of victimhood that recognizes how others have been marginalized as well.

Implications

We did not find support for the notion that pro-Palestinian advocacy in support for the BDS movement is based on latent anti-Semitism (Bard, 2015; Miller, 2015). Although anti-Semitism is potentially a motive for critiques of Israel, we did not see evidence of it among the activists that we observed and interviewed. Instead, we found that support for the divestment bill was often based on a narrative of a shared struggle between minority students and the Palestinians. Moreover, students engaged in learning feminist and postcolonial theories followed those theories in engaging in an analysis of the matrix of domination (colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy), which led them to associate the Palestinian struggle with that of other exploited indigenous populations. University administrators and teachers who set out to promote social justice activism among youth should consider pro-Palestinian student activism as an actualization of these goals. Nevertheless, given the important role that college campuses play in introducing American youth

to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is important to also provide a platform to legitimize other voices that oppose divestment bills as part of campus conversations. Ignoring or delegitimizing voices opposing BDS may lead to a monolithic view that frames the conflict in terms of good versus evil associated with dehumanization of the outgroup.

Future Research

This is a qualitative study that offers an in-depth description to the motives of students engaged in solidarity activism on a college campus as they arise through processes in the campus community. Our findings raise further questions regarding current activism around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For instance, more in-depth investigation is needed to understand why some Arab and Muslim students come to join the Palestinian cause while others choose to spend their time in other forms of activism (e.g., anti-Islamophobia activism). Our research focused on coalition building involving students on the left of the political map; it is also important to examine motives of coalition building in support of the Israeli right, specifically coalition building among right-wing Zionist organizations and evangelical Christian groups. Moreover, our findings afford certain propositions for future research with larger and random samples. Studies examining motives for activism across different political struggles should test whether one's collective group narrative is parallel to that of another group, and whether it predisposes those individuals toward collective action on behalf of that other group. Second, our findings propose that an intersectional analysis, because of its focus on oppression and privilege, is associated with a disposition toward collective action. Experimental research can test causal connections between intersectional analysis, an increase in self-efficacy, and a propensity toward solidarity activism.

Conclusion

While much of psychological theorization on collective action highlights the importance of shared identity and group goals, this study shows how processes of meaning, where members of groups come to share similar narratives (e.g., we are all fighting imperialism and our dispossession), contribute to the creation of solidarity above and beyond a singular similar

demographic category. As such, this study contributes to the current understanding of the microprocesses of coalition building which forge shared political identities between young activists working in solidarity with Palestine. By situating our investigation in the setting of an ongoing political struggle on a college campus, we illuminate how young adults' exploration of their identity in an academic environment fosters identity politicization and leads to coalition building among members of marginalized groups.

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