

Third-Generation Voices: Memory and Identity in the Palestinian Diaspora

Submitted by Kristine Sheets, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Palestine Studies, July 2023

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of the Palestinian Diaspora and the unprecedented increase in the number of global Palestinian communities since 1948 has transformed the collective identities of its members. This research explores the richly complex worlds of an extraordinary generation of Palestinian young adults, whose families migrated to different corners of the Palestinian diaspora since their departure from their homes in or around 1948. The Palestinian Diaspora today consists of diverse groups whose ongoing cultures, politics, and identities tied to inherited memories of exile and collective trauma in the wake of the settler-colonialism, the memories of which shape their cultural interactions in everyday contexts. By utilizing the in-depth oral narratives of diasporic Palestinians, this research explores how inherited memory is preserved, mediated, and called upon as the individual searches for an 'authentic self' during their formative years. I analyze the making of a new, multinational Palestinian identity that characterizes its youngest generation of young adults, and how they create a spectrum of Palestinian identities that help them carve out places of their own in a changing, twenty-first-century global community. This thesis reveals that region, race, gender, and belonging shape how young Palestinians remember their familial and collective histories, as well how they act upon such memories as they construct what it means to be Palestinian.

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INTRODUCTION

16 October 2020. It was on this day that I found myself engaged in a Zoom conversation with Jafar, beginning what would become the initial instalment of our two-part interview series. I often used this medium, borne out necessity to circumvent the lockdowns taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic, which proved itself an effective platform for interviews. It allowed my counterparts to convene with me from the comfort of their own homes, a setting that seemed to foster a heightened ease in delving into the intricacies of sensitive subjects. Jafar, too, embraced this dynamic, offering me glimpses into his own memories – those experienced first-hand and those he inherited – his selfhood, and his perspective as a young Palestinian.

One poignant recollection serves as the marker to our exchange. It was the story of his grandmother, a tale of survival etched into his memory. In the days before the al-Nakba of 1948, she lived in Jaffa, Palestine. Working in a children’s hospital, she witnessed, on one afternoon, an episode of destruction wrought by Israeli air raids. “They basically demolished the building while she was inside of it,” he told me, “That day, maybe one hundred-fifty children died. She stayed under the rubble for maybe a couple hours until they found her.”¹ When sharing this vulnerable moment with me, Jafar did not hold back tears:

When she was getting rescued, this is the way my mom told it to me, she was saying her full name, and shouting it. I guess she was saying, ‘I’m ***** and I’m here.’ I’m guessing she was hearing that people were getting closer.

I don’t know. Something about it makes me sad. It gives me the feeling that she announced her name, which gives the idea that she’s not just another casualty of some sort. That it’s personal.²

In retelling his grandmother’s story, Jafar recounted receiving this tale during his early adulthood from his mother, who, at the age of fifty-five, had only recently learned it from her own mother. “She told me that my grandmother never told the story to anyone,” he shared, “until later, a bit before she passed away.”³ Such dynamics of communication sometimes manifest in the lives of those who have

¹ Jafar, Interview Number Thirteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

² Ibid. Names omitted to protect the identity of those mentioned.

³ Ibid.

survived historical traumas. Once guarded recollections, held secret throughout adulthood, abruptly emerge later in life, transforming witnesses into a wellspring of detail. These instances can come as a shock to the descendants of survivors, as demonstrated by Jafar and his mother, and mirror other individuals I came across throughout this research. Jafar, like his mother, belongs to a *postmemory generation*, comprised of those who descend of victim survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders who witnessed massive traumatic events. Such generations forge an intimate bond with the survivor generation's recollections of the past, assimilating these inherited memories as integral components of their personal and collective identities.⁴ Consequently, they employ these narratives as tools to fashion meaning within their own lives, thereby shaping their interpretations and attitudes towards history.⁵

In Jafar's reflection, we discern an intriguing examination of the narrative, situating the public trauma of al-Nakba within the intimate confines of his family history. Thus, his statement, "It's personal." By recounting this story, he directs our attention to the dehumanizing dimensions of warfare, seeking to restore his grandmother's viewpoint and agency amidst the debris of the hospital in Jaffa. Curious about the connection between this story and his understanding of his identity as a Palestinian, I probed him further. "It's all the same in the end," he claimed candidly, "She left, never spoke about it again, spoke about it before she died. That's the same for all Palestinians."⁶ I often heard this statement again and again throughout my research. *That's the same for all Palestinians*. Admittedly, such a statement may appear an essentialist approach towards identity, memory, and history. Yet, it resonates profoundly, offering insight into how the descendants of al-Nakba survivors grapple with their ancestral legacies in the context of exile.

While reflecting upon his grandmother's encounters, Jafar intertwines her personal account with his perception of a wider, deeply ingrained collective memory within the Palestinian community. As evidenced by the subsequent interviews, Jafar

⁴ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁵ Craig Larkin, "Locating a Postmemory Generation," in *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past* (Routledge, 2012), 10–34.

⁶ Jafar, Interview Number Thirteen.

constructs an understanding of the archetypal Palestinian experience, one characterized by historical trauma, the shattering violence of 1948, and the subsequent dispersal throughout the diaspora. Through his identification as Palestinian, he acknowledges the affinity he harbors for the narrative of Palestinian exile. "I've always had that connection with Palestinians," he confided, thus reinforcing the significance of this narrative in his own life. For Jafar, al-Nakba stands as an indelible and defining feature of his grandmother's Palestinian identity.⁷ Driven by his own familial ties to Palestine through his grandmother, he feels compelled to establish a personal connection to this narrative. However, in fashioning this narrative as the epitome of the Palestinian experience, he inadvertently overlooks the multitude of other factors that constitute his grandmother's life, both preceding and following the traumatic event. This contemplation led me to wonder how this particular detail came to be the decisive factor in defining one's Palestinian identity.

It is not uncommon for members of social groups to select collectively experienced historical events, especially those that elicit highly emotional responses, as markers of their identities. Often, these social representations serve as vessels of collective memory, allowing past experiences to shape perceptions of the present.⁸ Such dynamics are particularly evident in cases of *postmemory*, where the descendants of survivors inherit the trauma witnessed by preceding generations.⁹ Interestingly, Jafar's narrative, through its very existence, serves as a counter to the framework imposed by past frameworks for understanding trauma. Much of the literature on trauma analyses historical trauma as a closed-casket phenomenon, constructing a binary relationship with the past that sees these events as 'out of time,' otherized from the normal, daily experience. This tendency becomes

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Brady Wagoner, "Collective Remembering as Process of Social Representation," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Representations*, ed. Gordon Sammut et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁹ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

especially apparent in contexts beyond Europe, where postcolonial realities persistently grapple with the ongoing traumas of past and present occupation.¹⁰

Jafar's interview, conducted within the between 2020 and 2022 amidst the third-generation diasporic Palestinians, offers an apt framework for delving into intergenerational memory and the web of familial storytelling surrounding generational conceptions of Palestinian identity and history. Through his narrative, Jafar sheds light on one of the many nuanced experiences of Palestinian youth as they form new identities and encounters within the diaspora, all the while grappling with the dynamics of remembering and forgetting their familial legacies. Within each narrative, we witness the imperative to commemorate and learn from past sufferings, juxtaposed with an anxiety of failing to locate an authentic sense of self and agency amid a narrative so profoundly traumatic that its psychological repercussions reverberate across successive generations.

As touched upon earlier, I draw much of my inspiration from Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory. In many cases, the routine experience of those who belong to a postmemory generation is to be subjected to the unconscious echoes of a parental (or, in this case, grandparental) unconscious marked by trauma. These individuals grapple with elusive "memories" shared with them by preceding generations, entailing both unconscious emotions and sensations of a past that does not belong to them.¹¹ Eva Hoffman aptly employs this term to underscore the inherently retrospective nature of such a generational viewpoint, emphasizing the disparity between their perceptions of the traumatic occurrence and those who bore direct witness. What they remember is not the event per se, but rather the feeling or sensation of its knowledge.¹² Nevertheless, the prefix "post" in postmemory does not imply an end to the event's tribulations, but rather its enduring aftermath.

¹⁰ Nora Parr, "No More 'Eloquent Silence': Narratives of Occupation, Civil War, and Intifada Write Everyday Violence and Challenge Trauma Theory," *Middle East - Topics & Arguments* 11 (November 13, 2018): 58–68, <https://doi.org/10.17192/meta.2018.11.7792>.

¹¹ Stephen Frosh, *Those Who Come After: Postmemory, Acknowledgement and Forgiveness (Studies in the Psychosocial)* (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019).

¹² Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: A Meditation on the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (London: Vintage, 2005).

This certainly seems to be the case for third-generation, diasporic Palestinians, whose grandparents fled Palestine during or around the beginning of al-Nakba in 1948, and who spent their entire lives in the diaspora, sometimes never setting foot in Palestine. This generation, while growing up surrounded by narratives of loss and exile, live with such distance from the events that occurred in Palestine, and sometimes those who witnessed them, that their relationship with either become more steeped in imagination than in grounded experience. Their connection to the past is thus not only contextualized by recall, but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation, a process coined by Robert Jay Lifton as “formulation.”¹³ Coupled with this concept is the understanding that, to grow up with such an overwhelming legacy is to risk having one’s own identity superseded by it.¹⁴

It is important to note here that not all narratives found within this work encapsulate memories of overwhelming trauma. Of course, to claim that Palestinian collective memory was not marked by al-Nakba would be erroneous. We can certainly see, in some shape or form, how its legacy finds its way into the everyday experiences of those who came after. As members of the survivor’s family, they share this legacy, and thus also a curiosity and urge to know about the past. However, and as many participants urge, they also wish to move away from over-identifying with their family’s suffering, opting instead to reconstruct imaginings of the past and the meanings derived from them. In consequence, instead of analyzing Palestinian memorial transmission solely through the lens of trauma, I instead regard it as one of many forms through which memory travels. This perspective expands the lens through which we can explore mnemonic exchange between family members and invites further exploration into the both the polarities and nuances of emotion and experience in the field of memory studies.

In contemplating the concept of “postmemory,” we find ourselves faced with the question: What precisely do we signify by the term “memory”? The crux of this discourse appears to lie not solely in the memory itself, but rather in the ways memory manifest. These manifestations arise from the memories of previous

¹³ Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

generations, perhaps even stretching back so far in lineage that no direct contact exists between these individuals and those to whom the narrative alludes. In many accounts that follow, the act of "remembering" assumes the form of nothing more than a story, a recipe, or a recurring motif, encountered in one's upbringing and transmitted not through direct recollection, but rather through imaginative construction. It is this inventive quality that I seek to explore – the manner in which intergenerational Palestinian memory is formed, reformed, and applied within ever-shifting social milieus and personal encounters across the diaspora.

In doing so, questions arise concerning the boundaries of memory, its influence on the formation of identity, the awakening of historical consciousness, and the dynamics of social engagement. How do Palestinian youth assimilate and reconfigure intergenerational memory into their own daily lives? To what extent is the exchange of inherited memories and identities molded by the intersections of space and time, politics and gender, economics and social class? Lastly, does Palestinian postmemory present a hindrance to those individuals who aspire to discover a sense of agency within a narrative of inherited trauma?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The chapters in this thesis closely analyze various agents, conduits, and landscapes of Palestinian memory, as well as the acts of transfer they facilitate. They highlight the interactions between the artist and the audience, teller and listener, of the subject and documentarian, and of the creator and the consumer, which are all inflected by generation, gender, race, nation, and class. In this collection, these interactions are often located within familial contexts, between those interviewed and their parents or grandparents. The settings I explore occur in the everyday, comprised by actions, objects, and settings that are feasible and readily available to Palestinians in the diaspora. They can be practised despite severance from the resources that originate in Palestine, making them ad-hoc, and inevitably default processes that reproduce memories and cultures that, otherwise, are risk of being forgotten.

In Chapter one, the I analyze the elaborate and silent storytelling in Palestinian families as recounted by the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors. The narratives

vary in their level of elaborateness and silences, influenced by the circumstances that shaped the storytellers and the interviewees' perceptions of them. The relationships between parents/grandparents and children are crucial in shaping the interviewees' identities and sense of belonging. Autobiographical narratives are exchanged between generations, fostering a connection and influencing the interviewees' understanding of themselves and their purpose. Even more so, this research addresses the gap in literature on intergenerational storytelling by exploring how offspring hear ancestral narratives and use them to make connections with their parents.

I also examine familial silences and their psychological effects on the self-perception and well-being of the survivors' descendants. Some details of family history are selectively recalled or omitted, either to protect the family image or due to an inability to communicate emotional pain. The research emphasizes the importance of an intersectional approach, considering various factors such as gender, economic class, language, and culture, in understanding how individuals share autobiographical memories with their descendants. It explores how economic class influences the memories shared and the themes derived by the audience. Regardless of the legacy left by previous generations, the narratives have a lasting impact on the descendants who receive them.

Chapter two delves into the concepts of resistance and sumud, the latter which emerged in the Palestinian community following the al-Nakba in 1948, as a response to the challenges posed by occupation and exile. Existing scholarly works have predominately examined the development of sumud among the survivors of al-Nakba and their children, but our exploration extends to the skepticism expressed by the grandchildren of these survivors towards previous, more politically-driven manifestations of sumud. Instead, these individuals emphasize the assertion of their identities through personal interpretations of resistance. They adopt alternative approaches and perspectives that align with their immediate needs in the diaspora.

Their methods of resistance, which “echoes” the psychology of sumud, appears to be inherited from preceding generations, but is expressed in distinctive ways,

prioritizing the preservation of memory and seeking acceptance in security in the diaspora, rather than pursuing a physical return to Palestine. Their focus shifts towards personal experiences and everyday acts of resistance, which embody their hybridized identities. This nuanced manifestation of sumud, interwoven with the concept of postmemory, provides a framework for comprehending the ongoing struggles for self-autonomy and underscores the significance of indigenous forms of resistance and resilience that are contextualized by the diasporic experience.

Chapter three engages with the multifaceted nature of Palestinian tatreez, with a particular focus on its archival and mnemonic value. By exploring the act of embroidering itself, as well as the embroidered objects, I illuminate the role they play as sites of memory, capturing and preserving the lived experiences of their creators. Within the diaspora, embroidery practices are shaped by intricate social and emotional contexts, which reflect the evolving identities of those who practice the craft. Drawing inspiration from Derrida's notion of archiving, the embroidered objects are understood as repositories of memory, offering tangible documentation of the lives lived by their makers.

To exemplify this phenomenon, Wafa Ghnaim's written work, *Tatreez & Tea*, provides concrete illustrations of how tatreez serves as a medium for safeguarding thoughts and memories, as evinced by the symbolic designs that harken back to the historical deployment of embroidery as a language by Palestinian women. Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the progressive transformations occurring within Palestinian embroidery practices in the diaspora, as artists such as Ghnaim and Jordan Nasser forge new avenues for capturing the experiences of post-Nakba generations and embracing fluid conceptions of gender and gender roles. Consequently, this chapter calls for a comprehensive reconceptualization of Palestinian tatreez, underscoring its significance as a means of documentation and as a conduit for the younger diasporic generations to forge meaningful connections with their heritage and engender fresh narratives.

Chapter four delves into the multifaceted nature of memory within cooking and eating contexts. Through food-related practices individuals showcase their knowledge and connection to their traditional culture, fostering a sense of

connection to family and identity in unfamiliar settings. The act of cooking and sharing recipes becomes central to the formation of Palestinian identity in the diaspora, with sensory experiences evoking memories of the past and storytelling in the kitchen adding further meaning to dishes. Diasporic cuisine finds its foundation in easily accessible and uncomplicated dishes, serving as a means for Palestinians to identify themselves and maintain cultural continuity outside Palestine. The significance of communal meals lies in their role as a bridge between the past and present, offering solace in the face of displacement. Memories associated with food intertwine personal and familial narratives with cultural and social identities, preserving and celebrating Palestinian cultural traditions and memory in the diaspora. By sharing these experiences, diasporic Palestinians sustain a connection with their past, homeland, and present-day communities, using food as a means of coping with the lived experiences and inherited memories of forced relocation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Memory and Identity

What events we remember on collective level, and how we remember them, and how they contribute to our identities, is subject to the influence of others. At the core of this research lies the understanding that our identities are fundamentally shaped as narratives we actively construct and share with others. These narratives, woven intricately, are composed of diverse strands of memories residing in the depths of our subconscious, awaiting their emergence into conscious thought. Such a line of thought correlates with Hall's theoretical framework of "identification as discourse," which regards identity construction as a process of "becoming," not one that is already in "being," and is done so across varied intersections.¹⁵ This realization has given birth to an entire world of scholarly inquiry, blossoming particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The disciplines that address questions of memory and identity are highly varied, with a range of theoretical underpinnings and methodologies that sometimes

¹⁵ Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and P. du Gay (Sage, 1996).

compliment, and other times conflict, with one another. “Indeed, ‘memory studies’ is an umbrella term hovering up a diverse set of disciplinary vantage points, methodological approaches, and theoretical perspectives on how we collectively and corporately remember and commemorate the past.”¹⁶ Therefore, it is necessary that we clarify a system of thought that best compliments the data explored, pulling from a wide range of approaches towards memory. It seems that the sociological standpoint, with its sensitivity to the social aspects of memory, sets itself apart from other disciplines.¹⁷ Despite the varied approaches discussed, three underlying themes remain central to addressing each environment in which memory plays a central role: identity, change, and persistence. As I found throughout my analysis, these themes permeated each interview. This, it seems, is not uncommon, and has been a longstanding point of attention in memory studies in general.¹⁸

These tensions underscore feelings of belonging and non-belonging, which have been rendered problematic by the social changes of, in the Palesitnian context, cases of migration. What this means, basically, is that the way people talk about themselves and their identities is subject to constant fluctation, being constructed and reconstructed as people create discourse between themselves and others. Of course, the idea that identity and memory are both socially constructed is not original, neither is the construction of either as a process. The significance of this theoretical framework is that it sheds further light on the relationship between the personal and the collective. However, it must be disclaimed that this is not a discussion of “identity politics,” but rather a matter of belonging to a social group aside from the nation, namely, the intimate space of the family.

Because memory is so expansive, we need to settle on how it will be used and analyzed within the contexts of this research. However, choosing a singular term is not entirely useful, as it does not explore the unique and often interconnected

¹⁶ Brian Conway, “New Directions in the Sociology of Collective Memory and Commemoration,” *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 7 (July 2, 2010): 443, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00300.x>.

¹⁷ Conway, “New Directions in the Sociology of Collective Memory and Commemoration.”

¹⁸ Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 105, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105>.

nuances that govern the nature of memory. For that reason, I pull my theory from a variety of perspectives within the field of memory research. The embodied vs. semantic, oral vs. documented, traumatic vs. hopeful, inherited vs. lived – all these perspectives are explored in relation to the contexts of identity, belonging, and agency.

I will first create an understanding of how an individual situates their identities through the connection of memories. I then introduce the question of how one may “inherit” memories from others, raising a philosophical inquiry that gauges to which extent our identities are truly our own, and which parts of us are a product of social influence. Building from this statement, I then outline the various methods in which memory is understood socially, outlining the theories on collective memory and their influence on the social psychology of a group. These, I argue, occur across various contexts, including, but not limited to: varied emotional and embodied experiences; rituals that occur in the everyday; and between intersecting identities, such as gender, class, and generation.

Framing Memory, Narrative and Identity

The mere recollection of events alone does not suffice for the construction of one’s identity. In reality, memories are nothing more than disparate experiences scattered across different moments in time, necessitating contextualization by an observing entity. To derive meaning from one’s experiences, as argued in the scholarship outlined below, they must first perceive memories as progressing in a linear fashion, enabling curators to establish causal connections. In this way, stories serve as a primary means through which we comprehend our pasts. Our understanding of history, both individual and collective, stems from an accumulation of narratives acquired over time, each contributing additional contexts to the way we understand the past.

Graci and Fivush’s research support this notion, asserting that “expressing past events linguistically, notably within a narrative framework, may be both an indicator

and a facilitator for organizing and understanding events and ourselves.”¹⁹ The meanings derived from past experiences not only help us project future directions but also imbue our life trajectories with a narrative-like quality, as if our stories are still unfolding. This process, termed as *emplotment* by Brooks, conveys a sense of contingency, where previous events, condensed into plot structures, influence present circumstances.²⁰ The chronological sequencing of memories, accompanied by emotional attachments and learned behaviours, shapes our identities. Individuals adopt the narratives they construct, positioning themselves as characters within those narratives. The contexts that shape the plot also shape the characters themselves. Life’s twists and turns acquire meaning, transforming random temporal moments into personalized and meaningful experiences, infused with the rememberer’s own sentiment.

This process is inherent to human cognition, so much that Graci and Fivush observed that deriving meaning through life narration may serve as “both an indicator and a facilitator of psychological health.”²¹ It renders life events, including the future, more understandable, analyzable, and predictable, thereby alleviating anxiety associated with the unknown.²² These memories help individuals shape their self-understanding, guide decision-making and behavior, and connect with others.²³

Our identities are constructed through a selective process, during which we prioritize certain aspects of ourselves over others and use them to shape our personal narratives. Experiences are assimilated, accommodated, indexed,

¹⁹ Matthew E. Graci and Robyn Fivush, “Narrative Meaning Making, Attachment, and Psychological Growth and Stress,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 34, no. 4 (April 22, 2016): 489, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407516644066>.

²⁰ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intervention in Narrative* (Knopf, 2012), 2.

²¹ Matthew E. Graci and Robyn Fivush, “Narrative, Meaning Making, Attachment, and Psychological Growth and Stress,” 487.

²² Andrei Novac, Robert G. Bota, and Barton Blinder, “Identity Narrative Density: Preliminary Findings from Scoring Emotional Valence of Autobiographical Events,” *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* 81, no. 4 (December 2017): 2, https://doi.org/10.1521/bumc_2017_81_05.

²³ See Dan P. McAdams and Jennifer L. Pals, “A New Big Five: Fundamental Principles for an Integrative Science of Personality,” *American Psychologist* 61, no. 3 (2006): 206, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.61.3.204>; and Kate C. McLean, Monisha Pasupathi, and Jennifer L. Pals, “Selves Creating Stories Creating Selves: A Process Model of Self-Development,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 11, no. 3 (August 2007): 262–78, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868307301034>.

negotiated. Some are repressed; others are allowed. Certain experiences hold central positions in this construction, while others are deemed coincidental. Consider Jafar, whose story I shared in the introduction. His most vivid and emotionally charged memory, inherited from his grandmother, revolves around her survival of a bombing during the encroachment of Zionist forces upon her village. Jafar claims that her narrative aligns with the broader Palestinian narrative, one of powerlessness and overlooked humanity, asserting that his grandmother was more than just a statistic.

However, in depicting his grandmother and the plight of Palestinians in general, Jafar overlooks the nuanced variations in experiences that differentiate individual Palestinians from a collective representation of Palestinian identity, despite the indelible shaping influence of al-Nakba. At times, it seems challenging to reconcile both understandings, as if experiences that do not align with the expected narrative are deemed irrelevant to one's ultimate identification. By narrowing the parameters of self-identification, despite the existence of diverse experiences, and therefore of diverse memories, individuals engage in an ongoing process of perpetual meaning construction and reconstruction, where the defining elements of the self are constantly under scrutiny. In some cases, certain aspects of one's life and behaviors are omitted, such as memories that do not conform to the traumatic themes of al-Nakba.

To navigate such tensions, individuals undergo a process of selective remembering and forgetting. This process constructs a narrative with resolution, meaning, and purpose, presenting a closed case with a lesson learned. Thus, reading the narrative from start to finish allows interpreters to attribute any anomalies in the narrative to mere coincidence.²⁴ Within these contextual frameworks, individuals attain a sense of autonomy over seemingly happenstance events.²⁵ In fact, some argue that this process of selective remembrance and forgetting serves a purposes of continuity – not necessarily the continuity of specific memories, but rather that of meaning and narrative structure. Paul

²⁴ This perspective comes with its own set of issues, as will be described later on in this section.

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago, Ill. ; London: University Of Chicago Press, 1984).

Ricœur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*²⁶ explores how the fleeting past can be revisited in the present through memory, how our understanding of the past is influenced by our present recollection of it, and how forgetting is necessary for remembering.

Memory and Collective Identity

The self is not created in isolation; rather, it is socially constructed. To comprehend oneself, it is imperative to grasp the contextual backdrop within which one exists.²⁷ Humans are exposed to diverse social, political, and economic environments, prompting them to embrace multifaceted identities that are mutually constructed, negotiated, and affirmed. Without ongoing engagement with external stimuli, such as the communities in which individuals reside, a cohesive self-understanding over time becomes unattainable. These identities often intersect and either compete with or bolster one another. Kenneth Gergen, in his book, *The Concept of the Self*, posits that the self comprises a composite of various identities, some more salient in our consciousness while others remain discreet.²⁸ These identities are shaped through interactions and relationships with others, particularly within contexts where a sense of belonging is fostered, such as friendships, family ties, work roles, and shared racial, ethnic, national, or origin-based affiliations.

Past investigations on memory analyze it not as a matter of the subjective mind and its inherent properties, but rather as how minds work together in society, and how their cognition is structured by social arrangements. While discussions on social memory date back to Durkheim,²⁹ it was French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who introduced the term *collective memory*, a mutual understanding of a community's history that its constituents produce and agree upon socially.³⁰ Halbwachs delves into the intricate relationship between memory and various

²⁶ Paul Ricœur, Kathleen Blamey, and David Pellauer, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

²⁷ N. Hopkins and S. Reicher, "The Construction of Social Categories and Process of Social Change: Arguing about National Identities," in *Changing European Identities - Social Psychological Analysis of Social Change*, ed. G. M. Breakwell and E. Lyons (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinman, 1996).

²⁸ Kenneth J Gergen, *The Concept of Self* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

²⁹ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995). In this book, he identified religious rituals as mnemonic practices and a way for social actors to connect with one another.

³⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992).

social constructs, including identity, language, time, and space. Time is conceived as dates that commemorate momentous events, which can be invoked through rituals and imbue groups with meaningful traditions.³¹ Spaces possess mnemonic potency as the sites where individuals reside and encounter significant experiences, which are emotional resonant and etched into memory.³²

According to Halbwachs, individuals cannot recollect coherently or consistently outside of collective contexts. We can see that in his following statement: “There is no point in seeking where... [memories] are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled by me externally and the groups of which I am part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them...”³³ Gadamer echoes, stating “it is time to rescue the phenomenon of memory from being regarded as a psychological faculty and to see it as an essential element of the finite historical being of man.”³⁴ Therefore, they argue that memory is not confined to an individual’s mind but rather reconstructed external with the aid of social groups. This perspective diverges from individual psychological theories, such as Freud’s by emphasizing the socially mediated formation and activation of memory within specific social milieus.³⁵ While individuals can actively engage in remembering, it is always within the framework of prevailing circumstances, norms, and social conditioning.

Collective memory is a dynamic and fluid process influenced by social and political contexts, specific localities, and the actors involved in its construction.³⁶ The domain of memory-related inquiries has, for this reason, expanded to encompass

³¹ Jorge Mendoza García, “Exordio a La Memoria Colectiva Y El Olvido Social,” *Athenea Digital. Revista de Pensamiento E Investigación Social* 1, no. 8 (November 1, 2005): 1, <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenead/v1n8.217>.

³² Isabel Piper, María José Reyes, and Roberto Fernández, “Women and Public Space: A Psychosocial Analysis of the Monument ‘Women in Memory,’” *Feminism & Psychology* 22, no. 2 (December 5, 2011): 249–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353511415966>.

³³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38.

³⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960; repr., London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

³⁵ Patrick H. Hutton, “Sigmund Freud and Maurice Halbwachs: The Problem of Memory in Historical Psychology,” *The History Teacher* 27, no. 2 (February 1994): 145, <https://doi.org/10.2307/494716>.

³⁶ Adriana E. Espinoza, Isabel Piper, and Roberto A. Fernández, “The Study of Memory Sites through a Dialogical Accompaniment Interactive Group Method: A Research Note,” *Qualitative Research* 14, no. 6 (April 17, 2013): 712–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113483301>.

these various intersections and memory-related topics, including memory work,³⁷ memory entrepreneurship,³⁸ memory projects,³⁹ autobiographical memory,⁴⁰ historical memory,⁴¹ prosthetic memory,⁴² postmemory,⁴³ recovered memory,⁴⁴ and more. These subfields can be broadly classified into three categories: those centered on the agency of remembering individuals, those that concentrate on the social contexts in which memory is produced and recalled, and those that explore the diverse forms that memory assumes.⁴⁵ Overall, though, research on memory can agree on one observation: the act of recalling and narrating history is imbued with subjective elements.⁴⁶

Because collective memory is a complex social phenomenon, it reflects the collective imagination and ownership of the people involved. Rather than presenting an objective history, it involves people's attitudes towards the past, their emotions, and the significance they attach to their narratives. It is a process of selecting and preserving what social groups consider important, which also involves choosing what may be forgotten.⁴⁷ This raises challenging questions about what should be remembered, why, and who has the authority to narrate the past. These questions often fuel discussions on identity politics, and their answers are not easily found. Furthermore, collective memory encompasses how a society remembers the past, applies that memory to the present, and uses it to envision a

³⁷ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

³⁸ Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies."

³⁹ Frederick Corney, "Rethinking a Great Event: The October Revolution as Memory Project," in *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, ed. Jeffery Olick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 17–42.

⁴⁰ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁴¹ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

⁴² Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

⁴³ Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103–28, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>.

⁴⁴ Marita Sturken, "The Remembering of Forgetting: Recovered Memory and the Question of Experience," *Social Text*, 57 (1998): 103, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466883>.

⁴⁵ Brian Conway, "New Directions in the Sociology of Collective Memory and Commemoration."

⁴⁶ Gary Fine, *Difficult Reputations: Collective Memories of the Evil, Inept, and Controversial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ Barry Schwartz, "Collective Forgetting and the Symbolic Power of Oneness: The Strange Apotheosis of Rosa Parks," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (June 2009): 123–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019027250907200204>; Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscape: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1997).

future.⁴⁸ It enables individuals to connect with a collective narrative, shaping their spatiotemporal position within a particular group.

Each community possess a unique history, and collective memories serve to demonstrate continuity and distinctiveness, especially when faced with threats to identity.⁴⁹ Communities are, according to Bellah et al., “constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a ‘community of memory,’ one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative.”⁵⁰ Like individuals, social groups construct their understanding of the past, present, and future, influencing their cultural identity. Cultural memory, defined as shared remembrances of past events, is preserved through acts of commemoration and cultural production. This concretizes group identity and facilitates identification among members.⁵¹ The fluid relationship between individuals’ schemas and experiences shapes the formation of collective memories, leading to transformative effects of recollections.⁵²

Collective remembrance, in turn, shapes social identities. As Bellah et al. have astutely observed, communities possess a historical fabric, rendering them “communities of memory” wherein the past remains unforgotten. To preserve this link to the past, communities engage in the ceaseless retelling of stories and their constitutive narratives.⁵³ Through shared memories, people establish a foundation for mutual identification and a sense of belonging. This process occurs naturally, driven by the “fundamental human motivation” to feel accepted and connected to others.⁵⁴ Constructed narratives within a collective guide individuals in their

⁴⁸ J. David Lewis and Andrew J. Weigert, “The Structures and Meanings of Social Time,” *Social Forces* 60, no. 2 (December 1981): 435, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2578444>.

⁴⁹ E. L. Lyons, “Coping with Social Change: Process of Social Memory in the Reconstruction of Identities,” in *Changing European Identities: Social Psychological Analyses of Social Change*, ed. G. M. Breakwell and E. Lyons (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1996), 31–39.

⁵⁰ Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008).

⁵¹ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65, no. 65 (1995): 130, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

⁵² Linda Steiner and Barbie Zelizer, “Competing Memories,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 2 (June 1995): 213–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039509366932>.

⁵³ Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 153.

⁵⁴ Roy F. Baumeister and Mark R. Leary, “The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation.,” *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): 497, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.

behavior and interactions, both within and outside the group. Membership in a community necessitates situating oneself in relation to its past, either by embracing or rejecting it.⁵⁵

Moreover, personal identity interweaves intricately within this complex social tapestry. Scholars such as Halbwachs illuminate the pivotal role played by family and socialization in the construction of personal narratives.⁵⁶ Zerubavel underscores the notion that our most intimate memories are not exclusively ours, as we assimilate events from our respective groups and communities that predate our individual involvement, incorporating them into our personal past. This shared narrative, often referred to as “sociobiographical memory,” engenders and emotional connection to the events that transpired within our groups prior to our own participation.⁵⁷

The emergence of interest in social memory coincides with the rise of nationalism in the mid-1980s. Historians were tasked with narrating new accounts of the past, featuring shifting themes and perspectives that fit the budding identity of the nation-state.⁵⁸ Scholars directed their focus towards the dynamics of public remembrance and historitization, which encompass written records, public commemorations, and official sources. These elements are integral to state-driven endeavors aimed at constructing social identities. Moreover, scholars actively engage with counter-memories, narratives that have been marginalized within official historical accounts but are reclaimed through oral sources. This process reveals that “the past and its retrieval in memory hold a curious place in our identities, one that simultaneously stabilizes those identities in continuity and threatens to disrupt them.”⁵⁹ If the past helps us determine who we are, it also provides us with an understanding of our present state.

⁵⁵ E. J. Hobsbawm, “The Social Function of the Past: Some Questions,” *Past & Present* 1, no. 55 (1972): 3–17, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/650220>.

⁵⁶ Halbwachs and Coser, *Collective Memory*.

⁵⁷ Eviatar Zerubavel, “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 3 (September 1996): 283–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02393273>.

⁵⁸ Geneviève Zubrzycki and Anna Woźny, “The Comparative Politics of Collective Memory,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 46, no. 1 (July 30, 2020): 175–94, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054808>.

⁵⁹ Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, *Tense Past* (Routledge, 2016), xvi.

Over the past few decades, there has been a significant growth of public interest in memory, particularly in response to the rise of multiculturalism and the politics surrounding victimization and regret.⁶⁰ Academically, memory studies have gained considerable popularity, establishing itself as a distinct and semiautonomous field of inquiry. Historically, research on collective memory and historiography purported to answer questions of cultural domination and counterhegemonic narrative, linking history, memory, and power in the process of identity construction;⁶¹ to expand knowledge on the connection between memory and commemorative practices, analyzed as mechanisms of political power;⁶² to focusing on the mnemonics of everyday practices and rituals, including how norms, values, and attitudes to culture are reinforced throughout.⁶³

According to Anderson, the constructed past during that era aimed to legitimize and naturalize an outdated construct. Instead of narrating tales of dynastic legacies and royal affairs, the focus shifted towards narratives centered on the nation itself, casting it as the protagonist, and displacing the role of the royal family.⁶⁴ Historians of that time did not perceive themselves as merely transmitters of national heritage but as active “molders of opinion.”⁶⁵ These narratives, influenced by the political objectives of each nation, aimed to forge a new collective memory and foster a freshly conceived national identity.

Hobswan and Ranger argue that state and government agencies deliberately constructed national traditions with fictional links to the past. These fabricated collective narratives, which serve as the foundation of many people’s understanding of history and appear to have originated centuries ago, were

⁶⁰ Michael Kammen and Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, “Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory,” *History and Theory* 34, no. 3 (October 1995): 245–61, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505624>.

⁶¹ Barry Schwartz, “Introduction: The Expanding Past,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 3 (September 1996): 275–82, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02393272>.

⁶² Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press New England, 1993).

⁶³ Diana Crane, *Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994).

⁶⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁶⁵ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007, 1995), 21.

actually invented between 1870 and 1914 by parties who gained from the construction of national identities.⁶⁶ These narratives were designed to instill loyalty to emerging national governments and its elites during a period of political and social upheaval. Cressy, in his examination of English collective memory in the 17th century, observed that “The calendar became an important instrument for declaring and disseminating a distinctively Protestant national culture...binding the nation to the ruling dynasty and securing it through an inspiring providential interpretation of English history.”⁶⁷ Calendars played a vital role in establishing the temporal framework for social groups, influencing their perception of the past through enabling and constraining processes.⁶⁸ They marked the end of old eras and regimes⁶⁹ while heralding the construction of new beginnings.⁷⁰

Emotional Memories

Part of the analysis of memory entails acknowledging its emotional impact. The field of memory studies has been captivated by the transmission of traumatic memories and their influence on the construction of identity. Particularly, the concept of *postmemory* refers to the relationship that the descendants of survivors of mass atrocities have with the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of preceding generations.⁷¹ Marianne Hirsch developed this term to describe “the experience of those, who, like me, have grown up dominated by a narrative that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the powerful stories of the previous generation, shaped by monumental traumatic events that resist understanding and integration.”⁷²

⁶⁶ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁶⁷ David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), xi.

⁶⁸ Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*.

⁶⁹ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).; Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the 19th Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁷⁰ John R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁷¹ Marianne Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 5–37.

⁷² *Ibid*, 12.

While initially confined to those who are descendants of Holocaust survivors, the concept of postmemory has since expanded to include offspring whose parents have experienced any form of collective trauma. This generation acts as the guardians of this form of memory, possessing a familial sense of “ownership and protectiveness.”⁷³ I argue that this definition can be expanded to include survivors' grandchildren too. The grandchildren of survivors, as seen in the chapters that follow, also inherit the traumatic memories of the generations that precede them, even if in ways that differ from those who are the direct offspring of survivors. For these individuals, the pain of their ancestors is certainly felt. By recognizing and exploring this generation's experiences, we can see the prolonged effect of trauma on a social group, and gauge exactly to what extent these experiences remain within the psychology of a family.

Hirsch asserts that media produced by this group is influenced by a desire to represent the long-term effects of living close to the pain and melancholy witnessed by those who have endured these traumas.⁷⁴ However, the presence of postmemory does not automatically imply trauma in the descendants of survivors; rather, these are distinct occurrences contingent upon various intersecting contexts. Regardless of these contexts, postmemory is unquestionably a deeply personal experience. At the same time, there is a cognitive and emotional distance from the event itself. Postmemory is a memory once removed, as the memories truly belong to the parents and grandparents, rather than the offspring themselves.

As demonstrated through the examination of postmemory, there exists a close relationship between the topics that capture the attention of memory studies and the social atrocities that have occurred in the twentieth century. While significant work has been conducted in memory studies regarding the practice of remembrance in everyday contexts, the field has undoubtedly gravitated towards trauma, violence, and other collective legacies of the like. This has led to a well-established paradigm employed to unravel trauma and its various manifestations. However, this focus dominates memory studies and our general approach to

⁷³ Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” 104.

⁷⁴ Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

memory.⁷⁵ As noted by Katriel and Reading, this results in a habitual gaze on trauma, violence, and victimhood in the exploration of collective memory.⁷⁶

There are indications that scholarship is beginning to move beyond the trauma paradigm as the central focus of research. For instance, recent studies have emerged that delve into the perspectives of perpetrators⁷⁷ and "implicated subjects."⁷⁸ While these endeavors certainly broadens that traditional focus, which centered on the victims and their memories, they still frame memory in relation to violence. However, this research calls for a critical engagement with the centralization of trauma in memory. Due to its fixation on the traumatic, memory studies has become entangled in perpetuating the prevailing notion in public debates that violence is the primary concern of collective memory, and grievance is the central notion of identity.⁷⁹ This neglects alternative forms of memory, awareness, and emotion, and risks overlooking even the rarest forms of transmitting positive memories.

Consequently, this research argues for the necessity of expanding the focus of memory research beyond trauma and developing analytical tools to capture the transmission of a broader spectrum of emotional memories and the commitment to specific values. It directs attention to identifying instances in which the transmission of positivity is evident, encompassing attachments to objects of value and the ideals of a good life. This is what Mary Ahmed identifies as "objects of happiness,"⁸⁰ and Bruno Latour coins "matters of concern."⁸¹ These memories, along with the processes through which they are transmitted, may be just as

⁷⁵ Ann Rigney, "Remembering Hope: Transnational Activism beyond the Traumatic," *Memory Studies* 11, no. 3 (July 2018): 368–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018771869>.

⁷⁶ T. Katriel and A. Reading, eds., *Cultural Memories of Nonviolent Struggles: Powerful Times* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁷⁷ Susanne C. Knittel et al., "Editors' Introduction," *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 1, no. 1 (December 11, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.21039/jpr.v1i1.51>.

⁷⁸ M. Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory and the Implicated Subject: On Sebald and Kentrige.," in *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, ed. L. Plate and A. Smelik (New York: Routledge, 2013), 35–58.

⁷⁹ Diane L Wolf, "Postmemories of Joy? Children of Holocaust Survivors and Alternative Family Memories," *Memory Studies* 12, no. 1 (February 2019): 74–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018811990>.

⁸⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham And London: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁸¹ Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (January 2004): 225–48, <https://doi.org/10.1086/421123>.

ineffable at the traumatic events widely discussed in memory studies. Anne Rigney has recently contributed to this effort by analyzing memories associated with hope and activism.⁸² Diane Wolf, following a similar line of inquiry, examines how memories of laughter, joy, and love intertwine with Holocaust postmemory.⁸³

This signifies an evolving shift in memory studies to incorporate positive memories and their transmission processes. However, there is still room for development in this area. As such, this research aims to focus on what Wolf describes as “postmemories of positivities.”⁸⁴ Emphasizing this topic does not imply imposing a rose-colored lens to concoct images of a happy and idyllic family. Rather, it examines families in which the traumatic histories of al-Nakba survivor grandparents and refugee parents usually coexist with affirming memories of joy, hope, pride, and resilience. These memories of positivities do not negate the traumatic memories present within each family; instead, in many cases, they hold equal and significant impact.

Memory, Ritual, and the Everyday

Pierre Nora argues that these contemporary attempts to preserve history, classify as *lieux de memoire*. There are *lieux de memoire*, symbolic sites of memory, in the absence of *milieux de memoire*, spaces that elicit active memory recall. He identifies the ironies of historical documentation elicited by the memory boom of the 1990s: the more we document, the more we forget, because we no longer feel the urge to remember. Following Halwachs,⁸⁵ he argues that memory is both collective and individual, plural and specific.

Because the way we remember the past has changed, he argues, the way we construct our collective selves has changed as well. He argues that historicization of the past results in a cognitive distance from it. *Lieux de memoire* emerges when the emotional connection to the past no longer appears relevant, “the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical

⁸² Rigney, “Remembering Hope.”

⁸³ Wolf, “Postmemories of Joy?”

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Halwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it.”⁸⁶ It suggests that, in the process of commemoration, those who practice tradition and ritual lose much of their connection to the purpose of such a ritual, which is symbolic for the lost connection to particular moments in time when they were much more meaningful. This poses problematic, though, as it suggests a certain rigidity to ritual, and characterizes commemoration as disconnected.

In order to appreciate the acts outlined in the chapters that follow as sites of mnemonic transference, we must understand the nature of ritual. I argue that ritual is a key site where storytelling, food, embroidery, and even resistance come together with memory and identity, but that this should not distract from the importance of everyday contexts. I aim to move away from conceiving ritual solely for the symbolic and isolating the everyday to the practical. In many cases, ritual and everyday memory and practices mutually reinforce one another, particularly in the context of one of the key concepts with which I will examine each mnemonic setting: that of identity and belonging, i.e., the idea that third-generation diasporic Palestinians *build identities and form understandings of belonging in the present through the rituals of everyday action, which are informed by the memories and knowledge they inherit socially.*

Additionally, much attention has been paid to the content of memories – *what* has and *should* be passed down through time? Somewhat less attention has been paid to the form in which memories manifest and continue, and how these forms are shaped by culture and society.⁸⁷ This is why Connerton’s *How Societies Remember* sits at the bedrock of these types of analyses – his work focuses attention on questions of *how*, transcending simply asking *what*. His notion of an “act of transfer”⁸⁸ describes acts in the now that individuals and collectives use as a foundation for identity by reciting a shared past based on shared norms,

⁸⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les lieux de memoire,” *Representations*, 26 (1989): 7-24, 12

⁸⁷ Ann Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler, “Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in ‘New Order’ Java,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 1 (April 2000): 4–48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500002589>.

⁸⁸ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 39.

conventions, and practices.⁸⁹ These acts of transfer include “incorporating memory,” which are ritualistic ceremonies that hold a mnemonic potential that rest upon creating sensory and emotional experiences that crystalize memory in the body. Connerton’s approach to ritual regards it as a relatively inflexible system of select gestures that must be repeated with precision, like a formula or recipe. This means that rituals change gradually, preserving much of their past forms:

To kneel in subordination is not to state subordination, nor is it just to communicate a message of submission. To kneel in subordination is to display it through the visible, present substance of one’s body... Such performative doings are particularly effective, because unequivocal and materially substantial, ways of ‘saying’; and the elementariness of the repertoire from which such ‘sayings’ are drawn makes possible at once their performative power and their effectiveness as mnemonic systems.⁹⁰

Recent anthropological work on ritual we certainly contest such a gesture, examining instead the improvisational and historical element of ritual.⁹¹ At the same time, others agree that ritualistic performances possess a certain cultural staying power.⁹² Some have also recently questioned the definition of ritual, and how to conceptualize it in the contexts of the everyday,⁹³ not satisfied with the assertion that ritual, in its essence, is “loud” and “announcing,” as others have found in the past.⁹⁴ Instead, they regard it as more intimate and meaningful, part of each person’s canon.⁹⁵ This definition of ritual preserves its meaningfulness without necessitating its boldness.

⁸⁹ We can see recent discussions on this process through the lens of social representations theory, for example, Brady Wagoner, “Collective Remembering as a Process of Social Representation,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Representations*, ed. Gordon Sammut et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 143–62.

⁹⁰ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 59.

⁹¹ Hallam and Ingold, *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* (Routledge, 2021); Karen Barber, “Improvisation and the Art of Making Things Stick,” in *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, ed. Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold (Routledge, 2007), 35–52, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003135531>.

⁹² See, for example, Olivier Morin, *How Traditions Live and Die* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Maurice Bloch, *Ritual, History and Power* (Routledge, 2020).

⁹³ Qiao Wu, “The Structure of Ritual and the Epistemological Approach to Ritual Study,” *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 5, no. 1 (August 23, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-018-0081-x>.

⁹⁴ David Parkin, “Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division,” in *Understanding Ritual*, ed. Daniel de Coppet (London: Routledge, 1992), 11–25.

⁹⁵ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

This is especially true in the contexts of memory, as Cole once noted, studies remain silent on the experiential aspects of social memory in everyday contexts.⁹⁶ Anthropological studies of everyday processes, such as food consumption, for example, have long synthesized these dynamics, highlighting the functions and meanings of meals that transcend the everyday.⁹⁷ Meaningful practices of daily provisioning extend to the extraordinary contexts of celebration and commemoration. The mundane and the extraordinary are interconnected: mutually engrossed in systems of meaning, symbols of one another.⁹⁸

One of the most common places where memory, identity, and the everyday intersect is within the home. Notions of home are prominent in diasporic research, since it is a place embedded with social and emotive relationships and meanings.⁹⁹ It is within one's home that they create an understanding of security, familiarity, and comfort; this form of belonging underscores the emotional attachment tied to feeling at "home."¹⁰⁰ Kondo defines "home" as a place, whether psychological or physical, where the person feels no need to explain themselves to outsiders.¹⁰¹ Ignatieff explains it as an environment where one feels completely unthreatened.¹⁰²

Therefore, the memories and practices exchanged in the home have the potential to become associated positively for those involved, increasing the likelihood for the individual to return to the practice and/or associate the memories discussed with the practice. Additionally, this analytical scope complements the contexts in which postmemory occurs, which concerns itself with the intimate realm of the family.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Jennifer Cole, "The Work of Memory in Madagascar," *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 4 (1998): 610–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/645857>.

⁹⁷ David Evan Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006).

⁹⁸ Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," in *Myth, Symbol, and Culture* (New York: Norton, 1971), 61–82.

⁹⁹ Vijay Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* (University of Toronto Press, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442673878>.

¹⁰⁰ Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (July 2006): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331>.

¹⁰¹ Dorinne Kondo, "The Narrative Production of 'Home,' Community, and Political Identity in Asian American Theatre," in *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*, ed. Samdar Lavie and Ted Swedenberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 97–117.

¹⁰² Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁰³ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016).

This connects another component of this research: the framing of historical rupture as an ongoing psychological experience that melds into the fold of a group identity as it persists throughout time. This idea challenges conventional approaches of trauma theory, which views trauma and the everyday with a problematic level of binarism.¹⁰⁴ We can see this in the theories outlined on memory and identity in this chapter – that narrative moves in a linear fashion, creating a sense of distance from the present and past. This has limited use for analyzing the fluid and ongoing nature of memory and inherited trauma within the family. The range of current possibilities for analyzing historical trauma, as outlined previously, presumes that the experience of rupture is exceptional – as constructed against an understanding of an everyday normalcy that exists outside of violence.

This understanding is developed and narrated through a linear plot structure centered around a desire to find resolution to rupture and conflict.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the everyday is ordinary and trauma is extraordinary. There is a presumption that occurs, that trauma is a rupture that defies linear trajectory.¹⁰⁶ Because it is an emotionally provocative exemption to the norm, it is separate from the mundanity of the everyday.¹⁰⁷ The persistence of trauma in the everyday, therefore, is regarded more so as a disruption to the everyday, where flashbacks interfere with a sense of normalcy.¹⁰⁸ This is what justifies silences in trauma and memory; how can one put to words something that is so separate from the normalcy with which we are so familiar?¹⁰⁹

However, as these chapters highlight, trauma is not a one-off event. How people in this research grapple with and narrate their familial trauma is much different from a

¹⁰⁴ Nora Parr, “No More ‘Eloquent Silence’: Narratives of Occupation, Civil War, and Intifada Write Everyday Violence and Challenge Trauma Theory,” *Middle East - Topics & Arguments* 11 (November 13, 2018): 58–68, <https://doi.org/10.17192/meta.2018.11.7792>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Dalia Said Mostafa, “Literary Representations of Trauma, Memory, and Identity in the Novels of Elias Khoury and Rabī Jābir,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 40, no. 2 (2009): 208–36, <https://doi.org/10.1163/008523709x12470367870065>.

¹⁰⁷ Lindsay Stonebridge, “Theories of Trauma,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*, ed. Marina MacKay (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁸ Mostafa, “Literary Representations.”

¹⁰⁹ David Patterson, *The Shriek of Silence: A Phenomenology of the Holocaust Novel* (University Press of Kentucky, 2021).

generic plot structure with the beginning, middle, and an end, with no immediate resolution in sight. Their narrations are constantly being constructed and reconstructed as they apply them to firsthand experiences in their own lives, which equally shape and inform the way they recollect such memories. The events are not as silent as some research may elude; in fact, they motivate many of the perspectives, beliefs, and actions of those interviewed, making them a pervasive aspect of the everyday. Thus, focusing on informal meaningful practices in the home will serve this research well. This theme is apparent in the four main aspects in which I will examine memory and identity in this thesis, first in storytelling, second in preparing and eating meals, third in creating embroidered art, and fourth in the everyday “echoes” of sumud.

An Intersectional Approach to Memory

The interactions outlined above are the product of an intricate interplay between the past and present, the one and the many, the intimate and public, the everyday and the commemorative, remembering and forgetting, conscious and subconscious, and trauma and nostalgia. It is a study of cultural memory, a dynamic repository of the fragmented personal and collective experiences, shaped by the mediums through which its knowledge is represented. Memory, in this sense, is shared through performance, communicated by actors, and received by interpreters. Thus, the method of transference is contingent on the contexts in which the memory is transferred.

It must be stated that the goal of this research is not to make claims on history and memory, but rather to analyze the acts of transfer that occur within families, which in turn make those involved agents of memory. How is it then aside from these processes that younger generations access the knowledge and wisdom of those who came before them? The history known by these individuals is not one witnessed first-hand, but rather received through processes of inheritance. Therefore, it is imperative that we study not only what has happened, but how that knowledge is passed. In each case outlined, I pay close attention to both the storyteller and the audience as they participate in acts of telling and listening,

performing and watching. In doing so, I also acknowledge the unavailability of the original memory and the fractured and malleable quality of reconstruction, for how we perceive the past is a product of the present.

This approach does not advocate for precise, factual remembering, which would not be possible in the human mind. Instead, it focuses on how well recollection enables individuals to function in the world and the degree of agreement reached by others regarding those recollections. From this standpoint, the role of memory is not to accurately depict the past as it truly occurred, but rather to enable the past to have a presence in the present in a way that fulfills the free functions identified by Bluck et al. These functions include guiding current and future thinking behavior, ensuring the maintenance of a sense of identity over time, and facilitating the formation, preservation, and nurturing of social connections.¹¹⁰ With this in mind, this research examines the constructions of memory as they are influenced by the various intersectionalities that influence the people who remember. The ones identified throughout these chapters are as follows: generation, gender, and economic class.

Generational

A generation can be defined as a group of people belonging to a particular time period, often associated with a specific event or events.¹¹¹ When outlining generational memory, Corning and Schuman introduced their *critical years hypothesis*, which suggests that individuals are most influenced by national and global events they experience during late childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, leading to lasting memories of the past.¹¹² Generations consist of birth cohorts, which are individuals born within a specific range of years or during a particular year. By subtracting their birth year from the year of the event, we can determine their age at the time of the event. These shared generational experiences intertwine with personal convictions, attitudes, and historical

Susan Bluck et al., "A TALE of Three Functions: The Self-Reported Uses of Autobiographical Memory," *Social Cognition* 23, no. 1 (February 2005): 91–117, <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.23.1.91.59198>.

¹¹¹ Amy Corning and Howard Schuman, *Generations and Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

narratives, situated at the junction of subjective and collective experiences.¹¹³ Even so, in timespans marked by continuity, where novelty is rare and change occurs slowly, distinct generational markers may not appear. There must be a substantial and perhaps disruptive moment for a birth cohort to emerge, fostering a collective consciousness among those born within a particular time span.¹¹⁴

In the same line of thought, Mannheim contends that generations do not emerge organically, but are instead molded by “the historical dimension of the social process.”¹¹⁵ His theories position generational members within a specific historical context, shaping their perceptions, conceptualizations, and modes of engagement with one another. Interpretations of sociobiographical memory varies on generational levels, a concept that has become a central object of study when analyzing the intersection between individual and collective identities.¹¹⁶

Mannheim’s scholarship underscores how pivotal social and political events come to define generations through shared experiences during their formative years.¹¹⁷ Schuman and Scott’s research expanded upon Mannheim’s theories by asking members of different age groups to rate various moments in history by importance. “Striking” differences in responses confirmed that generational differences in memory are strong, as well as that late adolescence and early adulthood is the primary period for “generational imprinting in the sense of political memories,” to which all subsequent memories refer back.¹¹⁸ Shils goes as far to say that new generations juxtapose their own identities against those of previous generations, thereby bearing an equally different relationship to the past.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ James Edward Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁴ Norman B. Ryder, “The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change,” *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 6 (December 1965): 844, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2090964>.

¹¹⁵ Karl Mannheim, “The Sociological Problem of Generations,” 1952, https://1989after1989.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/01_The_Sociological_Problem.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 105–40, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105>.

¹¹⁷ Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations.”

¹¹⁸ Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, “Generations and Collective Memories,” *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 3 (June 1989): 359, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095611>.

¹¹⁹ Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Lastly, with each new birth cohort that continually emerges within societies, there arises a “fresh contact” with the cultural traditions and accumulated collective memories of the past.¹²⁰ This engenders reinterpretations of historical events, the accommodation of new experiences, and consequently, the cultivation of novel cultural paradigms. Mannheim found that experiences were stratified between generations, in that younger and older cohorts, while experiencing the same event, will interpret it differently. The subjective emotional and psychological impact of each event, Mannheim argues, is determined by the extent to which the experience is superimposed upon other memories.¹²¹

Economic Class

Economic class exerts a substantial influence on an individual’s sense of self and molds their lived experiences. Numerous studies have probed the multifaceted ways in which economic class permeates various dimensions of identity, encompassing self-perception, social bonds, cultural values, and prospects for mobility. Of particular interest is the examination of the psychological ramifications of economic class on self-identity. Studies have revealed the challenges confronted by individuals from lower economic classes in cultivating positive self-worth and self-esteem due to socioeconomic disadvantages and the societal stigmatization they encounter.¹²² Conversely, those from higher economic classes may undergo a sense of entitlement and privilege, shaping their self-perception and interactions with others.¹²³

Moreover, economic class intersects with other facets of identity, such as race, gender, and ethnicity, engendering intricate dynamics and sculpting individuals’ experiences. Intersectionality theory posits that economic class intermingles with other social identities, culminating in distinctive encounters and obstacles for

¹²⁰ Howard Schuman and Amy D. Corning, “Collective Knowledge of Public Events: The Soviet Era from the Great Purge to Glasnost,” *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 4 (January 2000): 917, <https://doi.org/10.1086/210396>.

¹²¹ Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations.”

¹²² Antony S. R. Manstead, “The Psychology of Social Class: How Socioeconomic Status Impacts Thought, Feelings, and Behaviour,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 57, no. 2 (February 28, 2018): 267–91, <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12251>.

¹²³ Paul K. Piff, “Wealth and the Inflated Self,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (August 20, 2013): 34–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213501699>.

individuals.¹²⁴ Lastly, the impact of economic class on identity transcends the individual and extends to encompass communities at large. Economic disparities engender divisions and stratification, exerting influence over collective identities and societal frameworks.¹²⁵

Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality exert significant influence on the construction of individual identities. These socially constructed concepts deeply impact individuals' self-perceptions and how they are perceived by others. The societal norms, expectations, and stereotypes surrounding gender and sexuality shape the development and expression of personal identities. Scholarly investigations reveal that gender identity, which encompasses an individual's sense of being male, female, or another gender, emerges through a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors.¹²⁶ Individuals whose gender identity does not align with societal expectations based on their assigned sex may experience gender dysphoria, significantly impacting their self-perception and overall well-being.¹²⁷ Sexuality, on the other hand, encompasses an individual's sexual orientation, attractions, and behaviors. It encompasses a diverse spectrum of identities, including but not limited to heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and asexual orientations. Importantly, sexual orientation is an inherent facet of an individual's identity, one that is not a matter of choice or influenced by environmental factors.¹²⁸ Research emphasizes that acknowledging and accepting

¹²⁴ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Chicago Unbound, 1989,

http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8?utm_source=chicagounbound.uchicago.edu%2Fuclf%2Fvol1989%2Fiss1%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

¹²⁵ Richard G Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

¹²⁶ American Psychological Association, "Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People," *American Psychologist* 70, no. 9 (2015): 832–64, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906>.

¹²⁷ E. Coleman et al., "Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8," *International Journal of Transgender Health* 23, no. sup1 (August 19, 2022): S1–259, <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2100644>.

¹²⁸ American Psychological Association, "Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People," *American Psychologist* 70, no. 9 (2015): 832–64, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906>.

one's sexual orientation is pivotal in fostering a positive and authentic sense of self.¹²⁹

The effects of gender and sexuality on identity are multifaceted and intersect with other social categories, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and age. Approaching identity through these forms of intersectionality allows us to understand how individuals' experiences and identities are shaped by the interconnections of multiple social contours.¹³⁰ For instance, the lived experiences of a transgender person of Palestinian descent will most certainly diverge from those of a white cisgender individual, due to the intermingling of gender, race, and other factors.

THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA: HISTORY, MEMORY, IDENTITY

A History of Palestinian Expulsion

The exploration of the political and historical roots of the Palestinian diaspora is a well-documented topic in literature. The narrative begins with the forced displacement of approximately 750,000-800,000 Palestinians, representing 80% of the total Palestinian population.¹³¹ This mass uprooting unfolded from regions of former Palestine either designated to Israel in the 1947 United Nations partition plan or seized by Israel during the subsequent war against Arab armies. Despite ongoing disputes about the circumstances surrounding this exodus, commonly referred to as al-Nakba (the catastrophe), it has become an indelible part of Palestinian collective memory, characterized by unexpected events, violence, atrocities, and the imposition of forced exile.

Numerous massacres occurred in the years 1947 and 1948, leading to the flight or expulsion of many Arabs. The 1948 war resulted in the depopulation of approximately 530 villages, most of which were subsequently destroyed or taken over by Zionist immigrants.¹³² Walid Khalidi's book, *All That Remains: The*

¹²⁹ Lisa M. Diamond, *Sexual Fluidity : Understanding Women's Love and Desire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹³⁰ Crewnshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex."

¹³¹ Dina Matar, "News, Memory and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain" (Doctoral Thesis, 2005), <https://etheses.lse.ac.uk/1820/1/U199401.pdf>.

¹³² Ghaleb Natour, "The Nakba—Flight and Expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948," in *Catastrophes*, ed. Andreas Hoppe (Springer, Cham, 2016).

Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948, catalogues the destroyed villages, providing details such as location, population, land ownership, and other pertinent information.¹³³ Many of these villages were replaced by Jewish settlements with new names, sometimes resembling the original Arabic names. The significant displacement of half of Palestine's existing villages and the expulsion or flight of about three-quarters of the population during this period are central issues in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The refugee question's origin is a key aspect of al-Nakba, highlighting that it is not merely a historical event confined to 1948; its repercussions persist in the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in camps and in exile. The aftermath of the tumultuous events of 1947-48 has left an enduring impact on Palestinian collective consciousness. This period, marked by a palpable sense of betrayal and helplessness, continues to resonate emotionally for Palestinians, transcending generational changes. The narratives from this period in history have evolved into deeply ingrained personal and shared experiences, creating a significant cultural and historical reference point for Palestinians worldwide.

However, the history of Palestinian migration predates al-Nakba, with politically motivated flights occurring even before 1948. Notably, the Great Revolt of 1936-9 witnessed a surge in migration, driven by opposition to the emerging Jewish institutions in Palestine. Going back further, in the late 18th century, small-scale migration began, involving mainly Christian families from Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Ramallah, and Jerusalem. These early migrations were primarily motivated by socio-economic factors and considerations of personal interests and family well-being.¹³⁴ These families moved to various Latin American countries, such as Brazil and Chile, where they flourished financially and socially.

The post-Nakba migration patterns were influenced by a complex interplay of factors. The absence of a robust Palestinian/Arab leadership, coupled with various geopolitical dynamics, resulted in the dispersal of Palestinians across oil-exporting states, Europe, and the Americas over successive generations. Forced migration

¹³³ Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

¹³⁴ Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

did not cease with al-Nakba, either; subsequent events, such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (*al-Naksa*) and the ongoing Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, further shaped the patterns of displacement.¹³⁵ Forced expulsions and voluntary migration, influenced by various regional events, have left an indelible mark on the demographics of the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, obtaining precise figures remains a challenge due to the lack of recent official censuses.¹³⁶

The Palestinian Refugees: Internally Displaced Persons and the Middle Eastern Diaspora

The Occupied Territories / Israel

The individuals who, due to the circumstances in 1948, were compelled to leave their homes were divided fairly evenly among the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and neighboring countries (Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria). The Six-Day war of 1967 resulted in a second displacement for many refugees, as Israel occupied not only the Golan Heights and Sinai but also the remaining areas of historic Palestine. Presently, millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants reside within neighboring countries. The Palestinian refugees from 1947-1949 and those who became displaced in 1967 are not the sole groups of refugees; there are also the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, defined by Israel as lacking valid stay permissions, preventing them from returning home. The final group consists of internally displaced Palestinians within Israel, inhabitants of destroyed villages who relocated to neighboring villages within the state.

Around 160,000 native inhabitants remained within Israel. Those who assumed leadership roles within the fragmented and traumatized community in Israel operated under the belief that they were in a democracy rather than an ethnocracy. Their strategic choice was to work within the system the Israel political leadership established in 1949. Thus, the initial land primary struggle of Palestinian citizens in Israel focused not on the pillaging and loss of their land, as well as their overall

¹³⁵ Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

¹³⁶ Matar, "News, Memory and Identity."

dispossession, but on the matter of citizenship.¹³⁷ This struggle persists until today, rooted in the underlying motivations of Zionism: a desire for a secure haven for Jews and the ambition to establish Judaism as a national movement. The territorial realization of these motivations in Palestine led to a colonialist project marked by the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948.¹³⁸

Israel's creation resulted in a state that, despite its founders intending to build a liberal democracy, evolved into a hybrid of settler colonialism and a secret-service regime. This regime controlled all aspects of Palestinian's lives in Israel. As Israel's border's cut through or separated Palestinian villages, Palestinians became designated as "Israeli Arabs" or "minorities."¹³⁹ Despite attempts over time to fortify the democratic aspect of the Israeli state, recent trends demonstrate its departure from democratic principles and towards increased oppression towards Palestinian minorities.¹⁴⁰

In his book, *The Forgotten Palestinians*, Ilan Pappé explores the lived experiences of Palestinians in a state weary of navigating between democratic pretenses and discriminatory practices, progressively shedding the illusion of democracy. In consequence, the Palestinians who remain in Israel and the Occupied Territories face various forms of discrimination, ranging from social discrimination in job and housing searches to institutional discrimination in resource distribution, and even legal discrimination. Amongst other restrictions, the right to protest and organize is not a given for Palestinians in Israel. Such discriminatory shifts are attributed to factors such as political leadership mediocrity, legislative measures, and the influence of the military and secret service.

Palestinians in Kuwait

The pre-1948 family, neighborhood, and village relationships among Palestinians played a crucial role in shaping post-1948 Palestinian society in diaspora. In response to statelessness, they developed a "politics of survival," a general

¹³⁷ Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (Yale University Press, 2011).

¹³⁸ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oneworld Publications, 2007).

¹³⁹ Natour, "The Nakba."

¹⁴⁰ Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine* (Stanford University Press, 2012).

process of adaptation that extends beyond their residency in Kuwait.¹⁴¹ Palestinian intelligentsia, including former bureaucrats, teachers, and professionals, migrated to Kuwait to seek opportunities during the 1950s and 60s oil boom. Following this, a second wave comprised peasants, or *falaheen*, many lacking skills beyond agriculture, who gathered in camps in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan before undertaking perilous journeys to Kuwait.¹⁴² The migration for survival not only widened familial networks but also became ingrained in the communal existence of Palestinians, familiarizing them with dispersion.

The family unit assumed a critical role in Palestinian diasporic social fabric, evolving beyond a mere agency for individual survival into a force that protected and engaged with Palestinian culture and society while in exile. Death rituals, mourning periods, and funeral attendance became significant expressions of solidarity within the family. Visiting among relatives emerged as a frequent practice, serving as the cement and building block of the broader family network.¹⁴³ Housing was often secured through familial connections, resulting in clusters of family members within neighborhoods. The economic and social hardships experienced at certain points led to families living closer together. Conversely, improvements in lifestyle, salary, or work location encouraged families to opt for different locations.

The involvement of the family extended to various aspects of private enterprise, with almost every form of Palestinian private enterprise incorporating familial connections. Family funds, often subsidized by male family members, played a crucial role in facilitating higher education, especially as opportunities tightened. The family, with the reinforcement of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)-funded schools, also undertook the responsibility of educating collective history in the absence of national representation.¹⁴⁴ The emphasis on the connection

¹⁴¹ Shafeeq Ghabra, "Palestinians in Kuwait: The Family and the Politics of Survival," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 2 (January 1988): 62–83, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536864>.

¹⁴² Laurie A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

¹⁴³ Ghabra, "Palestinians in Kuwait."

¹⁴⁴ Tawfic E. Farah, "Political Socialization of Palestinian Children in Kuwait," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 4 (July 1, 1977): 90–102, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2535779>.

between familial roots and the town of origin became a central theme in discussions about the past, serving as a form of modern Palestinian folklore for those uprooted.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 marked a significant upheaval for Palestinians, leading to three distinct faces of emigration. The events that took place after the invasion, including the arrest, torture, and collective punishment of Palestinians, strained relations between Palestinians and Kuwaitis.¹⁴⁵ The expulsion of Palestinians not only permanently damaged the trust between the groups but also impacted Kuwait's economy. Many Palestinians, including professionals and businesspersons, left for Jordan, their departure lamented by some who had lived in Kuwait their entire lives.¹⁴⁶

Palestinians in Jordan

Following the mass exodus of Palestinians to Jordan, it became the only country to grant them citizenship rights, a policy intended to justify the annexation of the West Bank into Jordanian territory. However, the complex demographic changes and the lack of clear statistics regarding the Palestinian population in Jordan led to ongoing debates about their status in the country.¹⁴⁷ The arrival of a sizable Palestinian community who were more advanced in education, healthcare, employment, trade unions, and newspapers, sharply contrasted with the predominantly nomadic, seminomadic, and sedentary Bedouin tribes.¹⁴⁸ As such, Palestinian migration into Jordan also raised concerns of identity and nationalism, bringing to light the artificial nature of Jordan's political framework and the significant influence of tribal affiliations. The 1950 Union Act, extending citizenship to Palestinians while

¹⁴⁵ Ann M. Lesch, "Palestinians in Kuwait," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20, no. 4 (1991): 42–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537434>.

¹⁴⁶ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "AFTER the WAR: Kuwait, Palestinians in Kuwait Face Suspicion and Probable Exile," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/14/world/after-the-war-kuwait-palestinians-in-kuwait-face-suspicion-and-probable-exile.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Nur Köprülü, "The Interplay of Palestinian and Jordanian Identities in Re/Making the State and Nation Formation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," in *State Formation and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Kenneth Christie and Mohammad Masad (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 59–85, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137369604_4.

¹⁴⁸ Maya Rosenfeld, *Confronting the Occupation: Work, Education, and Political Activism of Palestinian Families in a Refugee Camp* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004).

concurrently endorsing the annexation of the West Bank, aimed at fostering a collective Arab identity.¹⁴⁹ However, tensions surfaced as Palestinians aimed to assert their independence. The 1967 loss of the West Bank exacerbated disparities in Jordanian-Palestinian identities, which became further magnified by socioeconomic differences.

Palestinians entered Jordanian society through nuanced process of “controlled Jordanization” or “controlled integration.” This resulted in a bifurcated identity landscape – West Bankers strongly attached themselves to their Palestinian identities while East Bankers aligned themselves as Jordanians. This historical context perpetuates the shaping of perceptions and distinctions between these two communities.¹⁵⁰ On the one hand, as an increasing number of Palestinians from lower economic backgrounds found themselves displaced, their deepening sense of Palestinian identity became fortified. This conviction was further fueled by their aspiration for a tangible return to Palestine, the establishment of a secure homeland, and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. These collective ambitions stemmed from a desire to break free from challenging living conditions, legal discrimination, and the perceived lack of a promising future for subsequent generations.¹⁵¹ Since their initial arrival, these Palestinians have resisted complete assimilation into the societal fabric of Jordan, exhibiting a heightened determination when compared to middle- and upper-class Palestinians. On the other hand, the upper- and middle- classes showed less reluctance in integrating within Jordanian society and established roots there.¹⁵²

Palestinians in Lebanon

Lebanon, formed in 1943, is characterized by political and economic uncertainty despite being classified as an upper-middle-income country. Lebanese society is

¹⁴⁹ Köprülü, “The Interplay of Palestinian and Jordanian Identities in Re/Making the State and Nation Formation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.”

¹⁵⁰ Asher Susser, *Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative* (Brandeis University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv102bfzn>.

¹⁵¹ Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*.

¹⁵² Salim Tamari, “Arzt: Refugees into Citizens: Palestinians and the End of the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 2 (1999), <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/40647>.

highly heterogeneous, with religion playing a crucial role in determining identity, social status, and political power. The situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was particularly difficult. Political and economic factors create a hostile environment, and despite being born in Lebanon for generations, Palestinians have historically been denied basic civil rights. Lebanese labor laws restricted economic activity, and they faced spatial segregation in semi-permanent camps. However, due to the lack of empirical studies on the socio-economic standing of those residing in Lebanon,¹⁵³ it is difficult to determine the exact number of Palestinians affected by this predicament.

Jaber Suleiman identifies six phases of Palestinian presence in Lebanon. The initial phase spanning 1948 to 1958 saw Palestinians seeking refuge in Lebanon, where they were initially welcomed by both the government and general population, perceived as a labor force contributing to the country's economy. The subsequent period from 1958-1969 witnessed a shift as aggressive policies towards Palestinians subjected refugee camps to tight control. This culminated in the Cairo Agreement of 1959 between the PLO and the Lebanese government. The period from 1969 to 1982 saw increased institutional building by Palestinians, but their power diminished after the 1982 invasion. The turbulence that ensued lasted until 1989, encompassing tragedies such as the Sabra and Shatila massacres, the collapse of PLO institutions, and the "war of the camps" in 1985.¹⁵⁴ The years 1989 to 2005 brought forth the Madrid peace conference and the Oslo Accords, commencing official Palestinian-Lebanese dialogue. However, the years after 2005 reflect a new era with greater Lebanese willingness to discuss Palestinian refugees' rights, motivated by broader changes in regional dynamics between 2004 and 2006.

¹⁵³ Marianne El Khoury and Ugo Panizza, "Poverty and Social Mobility in Lebanon: A Few Wild Guesses" (Beirut: American University of Beirut, Department of Economics, 2001), <http://kumlai.free.fr/RESEARCH/THESE/TEXTE/MOBILITY/mobility%20salariale/poverty%20and%20social%20mobility%20in%20lebanon.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ Jaber Suleiman, "Marginalised Community: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Media/57a08c4be5274a31e0001112/JaberEdited.pdf> (Brighton: University of Sussex, Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2006).

According to Sayigh: By 1995, Palestinians in Lebanon faced their own set of challenges, including their marginalized status within the broader refugee issue initiated in Madrid and endorsed by the PLO in during the Oslo Accords. Unlike other refugee Palestinians, those in Lebanon faced heightened uncertainty about their futures. Originating from areas like Galilee and the coastal cities captured by Israel in 1948, these Palestinians have no chance of returning to their places of origin or to areas under Palestinian control.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, the Lebanese government and public opinion developed an oppositional stance to Palestinian settlements. This left settlement into Lebanese society a troublesome topic, eventually contributing to the deterioration of relations between groups as well as affecting the poorest and most vulnerable segment of the Palestinian community.

Identity-wise, Sawsan Abdulrahim refers to them as an “ethnic group” in Lebanon, emphasizing their long-term refugee status and disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances. He argues that the term captures their economic and social realities, likening their situation to disenfranchised racial/ethnic minorities in industrialized countries rather than short-term refugees. The identities of Palestinians in Lebanon, therefore, are shaped by their ethnicities in addition to the shared history of exile and the efforts to maintain a collective memory.¹⁵⁶

The Palestinian Refugees: The United States and United Kingdom

Palestinians in the United States

Palestinian Americans constitute a significant part of the Arab American population, being nearly 0.052 percent of the total United States population, according to the 2022 American Community Survey.¹⁵⁷ However, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Palestinians in the United States, due to the identification of some Arab Americans as simply “Arab,” as well as the potential

¹⁵⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 1 (1995): 37–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538103>.

¹⁵⁶ Sawsan Abdulrahim and Marwan Khawaja, “The Cost of Being Palestinian in Lebanon,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 1 (November 5, 2010): 151–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2011.521363>.

¹⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. “Selected Population Profile in the United States.” *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Selected Population Profiles, Table S0201, 2022*, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2022.S0201?q=palestinian&t=001:511>. Accessed on February 5, 2024.

mixed Jordanian-Palestinian heritage within the claimed Jordanian ancestry. Major Palestinian American communities are found in urban areas and nearby suburbs, particularly in California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Texas.

Demographically, Palestinian Americans fare well compared to the overall US population. They exhibit higher education achievement, with 54.4% holding a bachelor's degree. This education is reflected in higher household incomes, with the median Palestinian American household income surpassing the median American household income in 2022. However, nearly fourteen percent of Palestinian American households fall below the poverty line, exceeding the US average. In terms of family size, Palestinian Americans tend to have larger families than the national average. Over 30.7% speak only English at home, while more than eighty-five percent speak English very well. This demographic profile portrays Palestinian Americans as a highly educated, professionally successful, and well-integrated ethnic group.

Migration from the Arab world to the United States initially involved mostly Palestinians from Lebanon, but small communities existed in the US since the early twentieth century. Post-World War II tensions between Zionists and European Jews in Palestine triggered a significant wave of Palestinian migration. The 1948 al-Nakba and subsequent expulsion of Palestinians led to its diaspora, with individuals migrating to the US in addition to surrounding Arab and European countries. Palestinian migration to the US increased again after 1967 after conflict in Arab countries, resulting in a diverse diaspora with varying legal statuses and historical and political experiences. The Palestinian American community is organized through hometown associates like the American Federation of Ramallah (Palestine) and engages in political advocacy for Palestinian rights and an independent state.¹⁵⁸ Advocacy efforts date back to the early twentieth century and

¹⁵⁸ Carlos E. Cortes, "Palestinian Americans," in *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, edited by Carlos E. Cortes, (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452276274>

continue through various local and national pro-Palestine activist groups, involving not only Palestinians but also Jews, non-Palestinian Muslims, and others.

For Palestinians, assimilating into Western communities proves challenging due to the negative media portrayal of Palestinians. Bennett (2007)¹⁵⁹ underscores the widespread and intense negative image of Arab Americans, particularly Palestinians, exacerbated by the Arab-Israeli conflict. This portrayal often depicts Palestinians as Arab refugees or terrorists. Consequently, many Arab Americans, especially Palestinians, feel vulnerable to insults and slurs, becoming the focus of scrutiny during major events in the Middle East, such as the Gulf War.¹⁶⁰ Despite these challenges, Christison asserts that Palestinians are anything but politically indistinct. While they assimilate into their new society, they tend not to actively engage in the politics of their host countries. They seldom participate in functions, demonstrations, or write letters to congressmen. The majority seek a secure and comfortable life, aiming to live in peace while maintaining a connection to their origins and heritage.¹⁶¹ First-generation Palestinian immigrants in the U.S. quickly adapt to American society, remaining within immigrant communities, and staying highly aware of the politics in their native land.¹⁶² The second generation, born in the U.S., displays an increasing level of political awareness and ethnic pride.

Christison's¹⁶³ extensive research on the Palestinian population in the United States reveals that they face ethnic intolerance and have been victims of terrorist attacks but have never perpetrated such attacks. Palestinians respond with self-control and self-confidence, maintaining a healthy and optimistic attitude despite their hardships. They appreciate what they have, and while encountering obstacles, they address them without fear of losing their rights or violating legal parameters. Ahed,¹⁶⁴ in her ethnographic study on Palestinian-Americans in New

¹⁵⁹ Christine I. Bennett, *Comprehensive Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice*, 6th Edition (USA: Pearson, 2007).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid 183-184.

¹⁶¹ Faida Abu-Ghazaleh, *Ethnic Identity of Palestinian Immigrants to the United States: The Role of Material Cultural Artifacts*, (El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC., 2010).

¹⁶² Christison, "The American experience."

¹⁶³ Ibid

¹⁶⁴ Basima Ahmad Ahmed, "The Palestinian Diaspora: Nationalism and Ethnicity among Palestinians in New York" (Doctoral Thesis, 1995),

York City, emphasizes their consciousness and immense pride in their heritage. Palestinians resist assimilation by preserving their traditions, identity, and connections with their towns and villages of origin. Despite language and religious differences, they establish social and political organizations to counteract assimilation. Ahed's interviewees express that their accomplishments in the U.S. are preparations for their eventual return to Palestine.

Palestinians in Britain

Especially notable in the context of Britain, is the substantial yet inadequately understood population of Palestinians, whose contemporary presence can be traced through Britain's (post)colonial history in the Middle East. In the early twentieth century, the British Mandatory government orchestrated avenues of educational and professional mobility for Palestinians seeking to establish themselves in Britain.¹⁶⁵ Palestinian students earned scholarships to attend British universities, while others found footing in the BBC Arabic service in London. With the end of the Mandate Period in the 1940s, Palestinian civil servants were extended refuge and citizenship in Britain, and those unable to return to Palestine spread roots in the UK through personal and professional connections. The aftermath of the 1967 War thrust many Palestinians in Britain into a limbo, as Israel labelled them "foreign residents," allowing their return only through temporary visitor visas. Subsequently, in the 1970s, Palestinian entrepreneurs and business communities sought sanctuary in Europe, particularly in Britain and the United States, becoming magnets for professionals such as engineers, doctors, and teachers.¹⁶⁶ At the same time, upheavals in the Middle East sparked the migration of increasing numbers of refugees and stateless Palestinians. Consequently, the

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/304203590?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20%20Theses>.

¹⁶⁵ Samir N. Anabtawi, *Palestinian Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza* (London: KPI, 1986); Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800*, vol. New York, New York (Oxford University Press, 2018); Ghada Karmi, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* (London and New York: Verso, 2002); Pamela Ann Smith, *Palestine and the Palestinians 1876-1983* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

¹⁶⁶ Abbas Shibliak, ed., *The Palestinian Diaspora in Europe: Challenges of Dual Identity and Adaptation* (Ramallah: Institute of Jerusalem Studies and Shaml, 2005).

Palestinian community in Britain exhibits diversity across social class, cultural backgrounds, legal statuses, places of origin, and political and religious affiliations.

Scholarly exploration of the Palestinian population in Britain has revolved around the documentation of community organizations and their political and social activities.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the concentration on prominent figures and prevailing political discourses implies a coherent Palestinian “community” in Britain, offering limited insights into the contested nature of these discourses among the broader UK Palestinian population in their daily lives. Previous research has explored the political engagement of a specific group of Palestinians in Britain—students—emphasizing the need to situate such work within financial and cultural lines of mobility, citizenship frameworks, and embodied political practices.¹⁶⁸ However, it overlooks the political practices of Palestinians born or permanently based in Britain. Other inquiries delve specifically into the experiences of British Palestinians, examining the role of media in fostering a sense of belonging. This work centers on communal practices involving the consumption of Arab and English television and radio news, probing into the significance of these practices in shaping diasporic senses of belonging and understanding how narratives of Palestinian identity are both portrayed and understood across diverse socio-economic and migratory backgrounds.¹⁶⁹

Palestinian Identity: The Survivor Generation

In a 2001 article, Palestinian historian Elias Sanbar writes, “The contemporary history of Palestinians turns on a key date: 1948. That year, a country and its people disappeared from both maps and dictionaries.”¹⁷⁰ Like other scholars who

¹⁶⁷ Lina Mahmoud, “British Palestinians: The Transformation of an Exiled Community,” in *The Palestinian Diaspora in Europe: Challenges of Dual Identity and Adaptation*, ed. Abbas Shibliak (Ramallah: Institute of Jerusalem Studies and Shaml, 2005), 98–108.

¹⁶⁸ Joanna Claire Long, “A Particularly Political Diaspora: Palestinian Student Activism in the UK” (Doctoral Thesis, 2011), <https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/662/LONGDaarAI2011.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>.

¹⁶⁹ Dina Matar, *News, Memory, and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain*, PhD Thesis, The London School of Economic and Political Science, 2005; Matar, “Diverse Diasporas, One Meta-Narrative: Palestinians in the UK Talking about 11 September 2001,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, no. 6 (August 2006): 1027–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830600761537>.

¹⁷⁰ Elias Sanbar, “Out of Place, Out of Time,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (June 2001): 87–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/714004568>.

focus on al-Nakba, Sanbar regards Palestinian identity after 1948 as centrally concerned with addressing such losses.¹⁷¹ Narratives of pre-1948 Palestine and al-Nakba are believed to be a crucial site of collective memory, spawning cultural practices that restore individual subjectivity, and preserve a national identity and relations of belonging to a homeland.

Modern Palestinian society, both within the Occupied Territories and its diaspora, has undergone extensive research and analysis, with a voluminous body of literature delving into specific aspects such as refugee situations, Palestine Liberation Organization policies, and the broader scope of Palestinian society and nationalism. The literature on Palestinians is characterized by two contrasting political purposes.¹⁷² On one hand, it depicts a fractured population lacking a “genuine national identity,”¹⁷³ while, on the other hand, it emphasizes Palestinian essentialism, affirming an authentic nation with inherent rights and deep connections to the land.¹⁷⁴ Works by scholars such as Rosemary Sayigh,¹⁷⁵ Kimmerling, Baruch and Migdal,¹⁷⁶ and Helena Lindholm Schulz¹⁷⁷ offer diverse perspectives on the evolution of Palestinian national consciousness and identity. Post the 1993 peace agreement, Palestinian authors like Rashid Khalidi¹⁷⁸ and Yazid Sayigh¹⁷⁹ have further enriched the discourse, exploring the formative years of Palestinian nationalism and the role of armed struggle in nation-building.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ See also Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Incorporated, 1998); Ted Swedenburg, “Popular Memory and the Palestinian National Past,” in *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History*, ed. Jay O’Brien and William Roseberry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023), 152–79; Ahmad H. Sa’di, “Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity,” *Israel Studies* 7, no. 2 (2002): 175–98, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30245590>; Sonia El-Nimr, “Oral History and Palestinian Collective Memory,” *Oral History* 21, no. 1 (1993): 54–61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40179316>.

¹⁷² Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*.

¹⁷³ Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929 (RLE Israel and Palestine)* (Taylor & Francis, 2020).

¹⁷⁴ Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

¹⁷⁵ Sayigh, *The Palestinians*.

¹⁷⁶ Kimmerling et al., *Palestinians*.

¹⁷⁷ Schultz and Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora*.

¹⁷⁸ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.

¹⁷⁹ Yazid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

¹⁸⁰ Sayigh, *The Palestinians*.

Many studies suggest that Palestinian identity emerged partly as a reaction to Zionism, with both forces shaping the existence of Israeli and Palestinian societies and the conflicts between them.¹⁸¹ The interconnectedness of Israeli and Palestinian societies is emphasized, highlighting their inseparable histories.¹⁸² However, conflicting trends exist within analyses of Palestinian nationalism, with some questioning its historical authenticity and others affirming it as an autonomous phenomenon.¹⁸³

Rashid Khalidi, particularly, establishes a connection between the emergence of Palestinian national consciousness in the early 20th century and the role of the Arab press.¹⁸⁴ Influenced by Anderson's theorization,¹⁸⁵ Khalidi argues against the notion that Palestinian identity and nationalism are recent or artificial constructs. He emphasizes the role of newspapers and periodicals in shaping Arab attitudes towards Zionism and building a shared sense of grievance among Palestinians.

Acknowledging the complexity of Palestinian identity, Khalidi notes the intertwining of various foci of identification, including Islamic or Christian, Ottoman or Arab, local or universal, and family or tribal affiliations. The multiplicity of these identities persists, creating a distinctive feature of Palestinian history. Scholars like Bernard Lewis¹⁸⁶ and Muhammad Ayish¹⁸⁷ delve into the broader Arab context, highlighting the intertwining of political identity, loyalty, and worldview within Arab-Islamic cultures, with individualism encompassing both individual and group identification.

The Silencing of the Palestinian Narrative

Scholars have extensively documented the defeat and subsequent resurgence of the Palestinian National Movement, the dispersion of Palestinians, and the disappearance of Palestine as both a political and physical entity. However, the

¹⁸¹ Matar, *The Palestinians in Britain*.

¹⁸² For example, see Yuval Portugali, *Implicate Relations: Society and Space in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993); and Kimmerling and Migdal, *Palestinians*.

¹⁸³ Sayigh, *The Palestinians*.

¹⁸⁴ Khalidi, *Palestinians*.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁸⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 2001).

¹⁸⁷ Muhammad I. Ayish, "Beyond Western-Oriented Communication Theories a Normative Arab-Islamic Perspective," *Javnost - the Public* 10, no. 2 (January 2003): 79–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2003.11008829>.

personal and national traumas and their enduring impact on memory and political consciousness have received relatively little attention, albeit the exceptions outlined in the next section. The Palestinians' political circumstances at the time made it challenging to articulate ongoing trauma, leading to a focus on political and national aspects in their struggle for self-determination.¹⁸⁸

The traumatic experiences of 1948, including the loss of home and homeland, were marginalized in public discourse. Unlike other historically marginalized groups, such as European Jews or African Americans, the Palestinian narrative predominantly emphasized enumerating and documenting Israeli actions rather than articulating the human experience, psychological impact, and social consequences of those actions.¹⁸⁹ This pattern was particularly pronounced among Palestinians in Israel, where the constitutive history of their colonized reality was, until recently, silenced in official discourse.

Families served, and continue to serve, as key transmitters of oral history, recounting the stories of communities and the events of displacement.¹⁹⁰ Internally displaced persons diligently shared their stories, maintaining a connection to their original towns and cities.¹⁹¹ The landscape itself became a powerful context for transmitting these stories, with evacuated and destroyed towns, deserted Arab neighborhoods in mixed cities, and formerly Palestinian cities now inhabited by Jewish settlers serving as silent witnesses to expulsion.¹⁹²

Memories and stories of the 1948 Catastrophe were silenced despite Palestine's significance in the Arab world during the era of pan-Arabism. After its loss, Palestine became a central Arab cause, yet in Israel, a deliberate effort was made

¹⁸⁸ Masalha Nur, "Remembering the Palestinian Nakba: Commemoration, Oral History and Narratives of Memory," *Holy Land Studies* 7, no. 2 (December 2008): 123–56, <https://doi.org/10.3366/E147494750800019X>.

¹⁸⁹ Nadim N. Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, "Memory and the Return of History in a Settler-Colonial Context: The Case of the Palestinians in Israel," *Interventions* 21, no. 4 (January 3, 2019): 527–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801x.2018.1558102>.

¹⁹⁰ Gish Amit, *Ex-Libris: Chronicles of Theft, Preservation, and Appropriating at the Jewish National Library* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2014).

¹⁹¹ Lauren Banko, "Occupational Hazards, Revisited: Palestinian Historiography," *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 3 (2012): 440–52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23256655>.

¹⁹² Yair Bauml, "The Military Rule: The Years That Shaped the Relationship between Israel and Its Palestinian Citizens," in *Ethnic Privileges in the Jewish State: Israel and Its Palestinian Citizens*, ed. Nadim N. Rouhana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 103–63.

to erase Palestine from the consciousness of Palestinian citizens and replace it with a reinvented Zionist vision. Israel's denial of the Nakba and the threat posed by the Palestinian narrative to its self-image were crucial in shaping its foundational narrative.¹⁹³ This denial permeated various aspects of Israeli society, including education, media, and cultural institutions.¹⁹⁴

In the private sphere, Palestinian culture, including poetry, folksongs, literature, and fine arts, flourished and was preserved despite attempts to suppress it in the public domain. Palestinian history and identity found expression in cultural modes outside official spaces, serving as a primary vehicle for conveying their experiences and aspirations.¹⁹⁵

The process of counter-memory, reclaiming the repressed Palestinian history, began to emerge in the public domain in the 1970s, challenging the comprehensive erasure inflicted upon Palestinians in Israel during military rule.¹⁹⁶

The emphasis on national and political dimensions, coupled with the de-emphasis of personal human experiences, consigned the meaning of the Nakba primarily to Palestinian refugees, sidelining the experiences of Palestinians in Israel. The focus on the return of refugees remained central until the early 1970s, shifting later to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁹⁷ However, both paradigms marginalized the historical experiences of Palestinians in Israel until the late 1990s. Israel's persistent refusal to recognize its Palestinian citizens as a national group reflects its commitment to maintaining an exclusively Jewish state, denying the indigenous people's right to their homeland.

Palestinian Memory and Postmemory

¹⁹³ Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2000).

¹⁹⁴ Azmi Bishara, "On the Question of Palestinian Minority in Israel," *Theory and Criticism* 3 (1993): 7–20.

¹⁹⁵ Nadim N. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

¹⁹⁶ Sammy Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997): 198–241, <https://doi.org/10.1353/is.2005.0060>.

¹⁹⁷ Nadim N. Rouhana, "The Palestinian National Project: Towards a Settler Colonial Paradigm," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 97 (2014): 18–36.

Previously, certain academics explored the nuanced connections between memory, identity, and narrative. These central themes emerge in the works of scholars such as Lila Abu-Lughod, Khaldun Bshara, Fatma Kassem, Ihab Saloul, and Hania Nashef.

Abu-Lughod's writings emphasize the constructed nature of Palestinian memory, urging for a critical examination that challenges idealizations and advocates for deconstructing the dominant Israeli historical narrative.¹⁹⁸ Her commentary on archives play a vital role in Palestine studies, presenting them as dynamic and politically charged entities that carry the potential to cultivate nuanced historical understandings.¹⁹⁹

Bshara's research delves into the tangible memories and spatial activities by members of the Palestinian diaspora, conceptualizing the camp as an evocative mnemonic tool. At the same time, he critiques the reduction of Palestine to symbolic representations post-Nakba.²⁰⁰ In other works, he argues that restoration projects within Palestine serve as sites where heritage is valorized and provides pride to craftsmen in their struggle against alienation and exploitation during occupation.²⁰¹

Fatma Kassem's work focuses on gendered memory and narrative histories of urban Palestinian women. With a discerning gaze, Kassem highlights the agency of these women as they confront collective trauma and challenge established theoretical concepts regarding 1948, al-Nakba, and the ongoing occupation and displacement of the Palestinian people.²⁰² Fatma also addresses terminological

¹⁹⁸ Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Introduction: The Claims of Memory," in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa'di (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 12–23.

¹⁹⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod, "Palestine: Doing Things with Archives," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 1 (May 1, 2018): 3–5, <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-4389919>.

²⁰⁰ Khaldun Bshara, *Space and Memory: The Poetics and Politics of Home in the Palestinian Diaspora* (Irvine: University of California, 2012).

²⁰¹ Khaldun Bshara, "Building Crafts in Palestine: From Production to Knowledge Production," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 13, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 77–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496772.2020.1735130>.

²⁰² Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2013).

issues related to the ongoing conflict, emphasizing the precision of language in challenging distorted narratives.

Ihab Saloul's contributions emphasize the significance of oral histories when preserving Palestinian cultural memory, especially concerning al-Nakba. His exploration of postmemory and oral history delves into the ongoing significance of narratives in anchoring Palestinian identity within the cultural memory of catastrophe.²⁰³ Additionally, his discussions on performative narrativity analyze films like "1948," which not only challenge official Zionist history but also foster nuanced understandings of the Palestinian experience.²⁰⁴

Hania Nashef's examination confronts the negation of Palestinian existence through the lens of non-fiction works like those written by Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said. These works serve as a poignant reclamation of a marginalized history, asserting an enduring Palestinian presence and humanity in the face of historical and collective erasure.²⁰⁵ Nashef's discussions on recent documentaries shed light on the resilience of Gazans navigating challenging circumstances, utilizing technology as a means to articulate their narratives and demand recognition as ordinary human beings.²⁰⁶

Collectively, these scholars contribute to a richly textured exploration of memory, identity, and narratives, offering critical insights that challenge dominant perspectives and envisage a more inclusive future for the Palestinian people. They focus on location, class, and gender in their analyses, using these lenses as tools through which we can understand the interplay between power, narrative, and the construction of national, ethnic, and cultural consciousnesses. Additionally, across each author's work, we see the issue of the archive emerge. Where should one go when looking to find Palestinian history? These scholars utilize documentaries,

²⁰³ Ihab Saloul, *Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination* (Springer, 2012).

²⁰⁴ Ihab Saloul, "Performative Narrativity: Palestinian Identity and the Performance of Catastrophe," *Cultural Analysis* 7 (2008): 5–39.

²⁰⁵ Hania A. M. Nashef, "Challenging the Myth of a 'Land without a People': Mahmoud Darwish's Journal of an Ordinary Grief and in the Presence of Absence," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 53, no. 3 (2018): 394–411.

²⁰⁶ Hania A. M. Nashef, "Giving a Face to the Silenced Victims: Recent Documentaries on Gaza," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 39, no. 1 (2020): 120–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2020.1818531>.

films, craftworks, novels, and oral history interviews – all of which deviate from traditional archival practice – to explore narrative and agency in Palestinian attempts to narrate history and preserve cultural identity.

The Palestinian Postmemory Generations

In terms of research, several studies explore how diasporic Palestinians integrate and utilize live and inherited memories in the construction of their identities across generations. Within this group, individuals establish unique relationships with their familial homeland and their Palestinian identities, with each relationship shaped by the specific experiences that unfolded within the framework of space and time. Mason contends that the experiences of diasporic Palestinians are not merely determined by the generation to which they belong in terms of migration, but rather by the number of generations they have experienced in exile.²⁰⁷ These relationships are fluid, giving rise to diverse understandings of home, identity, and belonging.

For example, Palestinians who migrated from Kuwait to Australia identify more strongly with their exilic generation than with their nationality or birthplace. This is attributed to the nature of their exile and the politicized nature of their life in the diaspora.²⁰⁸ At the point that they were in Australia, most first-generation migrants sought to recreate a Palestinian community and establish a sense of belonging within their host country, creating a secure bubble from which they could navigate Australian society while retaining the comfort of their own culture.²⁰⁹

On the contrary, the offspring of migrants, the second-generation immigrants, exhibit a greater sense of assurance regarding their presence in Australia.²¹⁰ They

²⁰⁷ Victoria Mason, "Children of the 'Idea of Palestine': Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, no. 3 (August 2007): 271–85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860701429709>.

²⁰⁸ Mason, 272. This is also found in Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015); Sayigh, *Palestinians*; and Fawaz Turki, "To Be a Palestinian," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3, no. 3 (April 1, 1974): 3–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2535889>.

²⁰⁹ Ghassan Hage, "At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism Ethnic Food and Migrant Home-Building," in *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sydney's West*, ed. Helen Grace (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1997), https://www.academia.edu/12916012/At_Home_in_the_Entrails_of_the_West_Multiculturalism_Ethnic_Food_and_Migrant_Home_Building.

²¹⁰ Mason, 277.

possess a confidence stemming from their active engagement in Australian society during their formative years. As Mason notes, “As a general rule, they feel they have a *right*, no less than any other Australian citizen, to feel part of the country, and to feel their place is secure.”²¹¹ Their identification with being Australian becomes a fundamental aspect of their self-understanding. Simultaneously, they recognize the significance of their relationship with Palestine in shaping their self-identification. To navigate these dual forms of identification, they create what they describe as hybridized identities, integrating elements from both their Australian and Palestinian influences into their sense of self.

A similar pattern emerges amongst Palestinians in Britain. Werbener reveals that individuals within this group exhibit high heterogeneity, and their patterns of mobility and identification must be understood within the context of shifting circumstances and personalities.²¹² They navigate diverse loyalties, ranging from cosmopolitan identities to ethnic or parochial identities. Undoubtedly, additional pressures confront those born in Western countries. Living outside Arab-speaking nations complicates the process of cultural transmission. Rather than experiencing full immersion in Palestinian culture, children born in non-Arab speaking countries encounter their familial culture *en passant*,²¹³ a more subliminal and spontaneous encounter. For many, their relationship with Palestine is partly shaped by observing their parents during their youth. Hence, in the diaspora, family serves as the primary site of cultural transmission and the conduit of Palestinian memory in exile.²¹⁴

Not all second-generation diasporic Palestinians share the same level of comfort and ease regarding their national and cultural backgrounds. Blachnicka-Ciacek’s research reveals that those born in Sweden and Britain exhibit ambivalent relationships with both their birthplace and their familial homeland. Growing up in

²¹¹ Ibid

²¹² Pnina Werbner, “Introduction: The Materiality of Diaspora—between Aesthetic and ‘Real’ Politics,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 5–20, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.2000.0010>.

²¹³ Harald Welzer, *Das Soziale Gedächtnis. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung* (Verlag Hamburger Ed., 2001), 12.

²¹⁴ Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians*; Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).; Lisa Taraki, *Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance and Mobility under Occupation* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

households consumed by Palestinian politics, these individuals witnessed the emotional impact of dispossession on their loved ones. The negative association caused the sense of Palestinian identity among this group to remain dormant for a significant period of their lives. As a result, their connection to their homeland was not subconsciously passed down, but rather a conscious choice.²¹⁵

Across studies, one observation remains evident: second-generation exiles, regardless of their birthplace, demonstrate a diminished connection from Palestinian culture, memory, and identity, and feel the need to establish a deeper understanding of that aspect of themselves. Despite lacking lived memories in Palestine or of expulsion, these experiences, which they inherited from previous generations, remain central to their identities. During their childhood and young adulthood, their connection to Palestine and their Palestinian identity is forged through “acts of memory” that provide mnemonic links to the homeland.²¹⁶ This recognition is underscored by an emotional attachment and strong relationship with their parents, driven by a sense of obligation to compensate for the way of life their parents or grandparents lost due to expulsion.

Trips to Palestine, whether to visit extended family or witness the homes their parents and/or grandparents were forced to leave, serve as a form of “roots tourism” for many individuals.²¹⁷ Frello suggests that this movement between the birth country and the ancestral homeland connects them to a narrative from which they often feel distanced in their everyday lives.²¹⁸ They come across commonplace symbols of Palestinian-ness, such as the geography, holy sites, and agricultural products, such as olives and oranges.²¹⁹ However, during their visits to Palestine, they do not feel a sense of belonging. Instead, they often perceive

²¹⁵ Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, “Palestine as ‘a State of Mind’: Second-Generation Polish and British Palestinians’ Search for Home and Belonging,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 11 (September 2017): 1917, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2017.1369868>.

²¹⁶ Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 12; Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 153.

²¹⁷ Stephanie Anna Loddó, “Palestinian Perceptions of Home and Belonging in Britain: Negotiating between Rootedness and Mobility,” *Identities* 24, no. 3 (March 2016): 275–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289x.2015.1124779>.

²¹⁸ Birgitta Frello, “Towards a Discursive Analytics of Movement: On the Making and Unmaking of Movement as an Object of Knowledge,” *Mobilities* 3, no. 1 (March 2008): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450100701797299>.

²¹⁹ Ted Swedenburg, “The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1990): 18–30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3317957>.

themselves as outsiders due to their lack of Arabic language proficiency, their Western upbringings, and their unfamiliarity with the everyday events in Palestine. They compare themselves to Palestinians living within the borders of Palestine who, as Said notes, are cherished as Palestinians “already there,” their lives marked by living on the edge and enduring the effects of violence, granting them a kind of grace denied to the diaspora.²²⁰

New Directions in Studying Palestinian Memory and Identity

This research explores factors shaping the Palestinian experience, focusing on class, gender, and location. In the past, Palestinian scholars have done a commendable job in identifying how these factors intersect and influence Palestinian life. Building upon their work, this research incorporates testimonies from Palestinians belonging to varied economic classes, religions, genders, and nationalities, with different educational levels and sexual orientations, all unified by their shared identity as third-generation diasporic Palestinians and whose parents survived al-Nakba. Unlike previous analyses limited to the direct offspring of survivors, the second-generation, this study focuses solely the grandchildren of survivors as they are the newest generation to reach adulthood in diaspora.

Expanding on the gendered dynamics of memory and its transmission across generations, this research delves into how gender influences elaborative or silent autobiographical storytelling within families. Moreover, it explores how sexuality and gender identity affects individuals’ relationships with their cultural identity, consequently influencing which Palestinian ideological, political, and social issues are prioritized. In doing so, it allows us to understand the relationships between gender, queerness, and postmemory, a topic that remains unexplored in research on Palestine. Furthermore, this research builds upon existing approaches to memory and archives, particularly regarding how the history of a people is constructed, maintained, and made accessible in the absence of national archives. By investigating informal archival practices within families – such as the preservation of embroidered thobes by Palestinian women, remembering a family

²²⁰ Quote derived from Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 170.

recipe, or speaking with one's elder – it highlights the significance of these practices in preserving familial memories and asserting historical presence. This research also explores the transition from embodied mnemonic practices to written documentation, exemplified by the documentation of food memories in cookbooks and/or the recital of recipes from memory, and its implications for agency in diasporic communities.

Additionally, I continue previous scholars' emphasis on everyday behaviors, their mnemonic power and ability to reinforce identities through repetition of action. However, I expand my analysis beyond the scope of the refugee camp and the MENA region, focusing on how Palestinian cultural and mnemonic practices are reproduced by Western diasporic Palestinians as well as those in the MENA. This multi-locational, comparative analysis allows me to see how everyday practices evolve with respect to location, as each location will surely shape the social, emotional, psychological, and physical needs of the Palestinians who migrate there, thereby shaping their everyday practices as well. Furthermore, while this research agrees that certain Palestinian symbols have been reduced to just that symbols, I argue that daily or consistent engagement in certain activities, such as drinking coffee with one's family, storytelling, or sewing thread to fabric, gives life to certain symbols. These activities, which are highly symbolic for the Palestinians interviewed, are never truly stagnant, but instead fluid and actively present in these individuals' lives. These objects or actions represent *their* Palestine – the culture in which they engage daily, taught to them by their families, and which hold personal meaning.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, I explain how this research took shape, and account for the decision to pursue a generational study to examine the ways in which members of the Palestinian diasporic community make sense of memory and narrative, and what this interaction means for their everyday experiences and social interactions. The bedrock of this empirical work, as discussed in previous chapters, lies within a tradition that focuses upon the relationship between the audience and the medium

of knowledge, which in this case manifest as instances of storytelling, food production and consumption, embroidery, and other actions to which young Palestinians commit themselves daily. While each subsequent chapter embraces some form of memory, the overarching methodological approach adopted throughout this thesis weaves together empirical work and the theoretical underpinnings of memory and identity in everyday contexts.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Beginning with an overview of the evolution and debates when studying collective memory, isolating the approach to that of an intersectional, feminist lens. Subsequently, it delves into the empirical and methodological framework, identifying the criteria that guided my selection of this study group and the rationale behind my methodology. The third part outlines the procedures that entail the collection of data. At the end of this chapter, I pause to reflect upon the analytical methods deployed in interpreting the collected data.

Rationale of the Study

When setting the parameters of this research, and especially upon the realization that I will need to diversify my dataset to complement interviews, I was aware of the potential risk of oversaturating my analysis with various forms of empirical evidence. I also recognize the need to strike a balance to explore the diverse sets of data outlined in the previous section. This required a combination of interview research, textual analysis, and synthesizing the data with existing theories. The initial questions I aimed to investigate – what do young Palestinians remember, how do they acquire these memories, how do they utilize them, and what does it mean for questions of belonging and identity – necessitated a qualitative study based primarily on semi-structured oral history interviews.

In designing my methodology, I carefully considered the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to determine the most suitable one. After thoughtful deliberation, I chose semi-structured oral history interviews as they were best suited for my objective of engaging interviewees as participants and igniting reflexive discourses. I recognize that these questions could be effectively addressed through oral history research, enabling a system of analysis of narrative aspects of identity construction and the role of memories in everyday activities.

In making this choice, I was mindful of the trend in recent scholarship on memory, history, and identity, which favored observational ethnography as the preferred method for studying everyday mnemonic practices.²²¹ However, due to practical constraints, such as the dispersed nature of those Palestinians interviewed (they reside in various countries throughout Europe, North America, and the Middle East), as well as the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting observational ethnography was not feasible. Instead, I sought dialogue methods that could be sustained even in isolation. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction to this thesis, online video-chat meetings, conducted over the platform Zoom, emerged as the preferred method for both interviewees and myself. This platform allowed for extended periods of interaction, facilitating in-depth discussions on sensitive topics that interviewees may not have felt comfortable discussing in a public setting.

It is important to note that the testimonies shared by interviewees were treated with utmost confidentiality. Many interviewees expressed that what they disclosed to me, they could not reveal to another Palestinian due to social pressures and obligations within the Palestinian community. However, the privacy of Zoom conversations, coupled with my American nationality (which helped to foster a sense of distance from the topic on the behalf of interviewees), created an environment where interviewees felt safe to share their thoughts, knowing that their identities, and thoughts, would remain anonymous. The only exception to this procedure is Wafa Ghnaim, whose interview material is connected to her published work – a fact that I explore extensively, and therefore could not separate. It was expressed by the interviewee, in this instance, that I only omit certain details regarding the content of the interview, a request to which I obliged. All the same, it appears that many participants viewed this interview as an opportunity to explore latent emotions that are not as easily expressed elsewhere, fostering an environment of openness and elaboration.

²²¹ See, for example, Craig Larkin's research on Lebanese postwar memory in *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past* (Routledge, 2012).; as well as David Sutton's research of the Greek island of Kalymnos in his book, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006).

The theoretical perspectives adopted in this thesis, particularly the understanding of memory as social constructed through discourse and action, and mnemonic settings as sites of cultural discourse, guided my decision-making process. These perspectives necessitated an integration of people's discourses and self-reflections regarding their mnemonic practices. The combination of theoretical, practical, and research considerations led me to conclude that oral histories and other alternative document analysis, drawing on social-scientific and humanistic inquiry, were the most suitable methods to investigate how young Palestinians make sense of their familial legacies and utilize them in their everyday lives. While the data collection methods draw primarily from empirical procedures in the social sciences, the data analysis methods derive from a broader, humanistic approach.

Research Design

In my research, I directed my attention to a distinct group: the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors, who have spent their lives in the diaspora. Employing a methodology of semi-structured, open-ended, qualitative interviews, I sought to establish a reflexive dynamic between interviewer and interviewee. I conducted twenty-seven interviews, delving into their family histories, the contexts in which they acquired these narratives, their interpretations of the past, and the personal significance attached to these stories. The fieldwork spanned from 2019-2022, conducted on a rolling basis. The low total of interviews is compensated by the extent to which each narrative is explored in-depth during interviews. The duration of each interview averaged between four to six hours – producing an extremely large volume of recorded audio, which I personally transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed.

The research project was designed to grapple with intellectual challenges inherent in the observation of mnemonic exchange, identity discourses, and their mediation. By employing in-depth, qualitative interviews, I endeavored to capture the interplay between the real and imagined lived worlds of subjects and their relation to it – what I mean is that the continuous story related to Palestinian dispossession, the topic of the qualitative interview was and remains pertinent to the lived world of my participants. The questions probed various themes, including the modes of familial

story-sharing, the most relevant methods of mnemonic transference, the significance of intergenerational memories, the personal import of these narratives, and the participants' comprehension of Palestinian history and memory.

The open-ended design of these inquiries allowed for a fluid interview structure, organized around subjects, themes, and chronology, progressing from the general to the specific. Commencing with an exploration of the participants' engagement with different forms of memory, I encouraged them to freely converse about their family histories, recollections, and Palestinian identities. Subsequently, I delved into the motivations underlying their selection of specific topics and narrative plot points, seeking to grasp their personal significances. Moreover, I prompted participants to engage in comparative assessments of the different people and settings from which they derive this information regularly, as well as to consider the role these narratives played in their daily lives.

Furthermore, I encouraged participants to expound upon their interpretations of their family histories in relation to their perceptions of what they sometimes referred to as the more "authentic" Palestinian narrative, which, despite being socially constructed, functions as an archetype against which diasporic Palestinians measure themselves individually. These exchanges entailed inquiries into their processes of identification, notions of authenticity, and discussions surrounding othering, belonging, and exclusion.

By delving into these overarching themes, I gained valuable insights into more specific aspects pertinent to this research, such as how participants perceive and navigate the residual trauma embedded within family narratives and the broader social representations of Palestinian history. Additionally, I explored the impact of consuming these narratives on their experiences within the diaspora and the consequential shaping of their identities. This approach granted participants the agency to express subjectivity, a methodology confirmed by Matar,²²² assuming positions on history and memory, and evoking emotional engagement while also exhibiting reflexivity in their perspectives and understanding.

²²² Dina Matar, "News, Memory and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain" (Doctoral Thesis, 2005), <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/1820/1/U199401.pdf>.

Alternative Archives: Oral Histories, Cookbooks, Embroidery

The choice to embrace oral history interviews as my primary form of data collection is a means to bridge the divide between oral and written modes of memory, challenging the colonialist mentality that devalues non-Western forms of remembrance.²²³ In the context of this research, oral histories offer a vital avenue for capturing the ongoing narrative of Palestinian history and collective experience. The absence of Palestinian formal archives, landmarks undermine the preservation of Palestinian identity culture on a publicly historiographical level. Even smaller forms of inheritance, such as family photos, were mostly lost upon migration, thereby limiting the symbolic representations of both Palestinian and familial histories. To compensate for this, it is necessary that any research faced with this dilemma turn what feminist scholars identify as “alternative archives,”²²⁴ which span beyond the forms of documentation traditionally accepted within historiography. Instead, alternative documents refer to matters of cultural production: the visual images, musical rituals, material culture, popular culture, and oral histories. These invaluable sources document the lived realities of disenfranchised and marginalized populations, whose narratives often evade recognition or are misrepresented within dominant discourses.²²⁵

My research relies on qualitative data obtained through oral history interviews, exploring individuals’ emotional bonds to specific memories and their positioning within personal and familial narratives. Ritchie suggests that oral history interviews manifest as extended and organized expressions of casual storytelling, a university human inclination,²²⁶ which can be used to promote elaborately nuanced answers that best serve the analytical scope of this research. This approach enables participants to unravel the cause-and-effect relationships between events and to reveal the significance they ascribe to these experiences. Moreover, it facilitates an

²²³ Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²²⁴ John D. Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 2.

²²⁵ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44987296>

²²⁶ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 9780199329342

in-depth examination of pivotal memories, encompassing their emotional resonance and resulting learned behaviors.

Interviewing Methods:

To recruit participants, I established contact with various organizations across the United Kingdom and United States that focuses their concerns on Palestinian human rights issues. I also contacted various artists and restaurants through their social media pages, which yielded one or two participants. I found my last round of interviews by emailing individuals who already participated in research on Palestine, and whose names were publicly listed in the publications accessed; the names of the publications I choose to omit to protect participants' identities. Most frequently, I received responses from members of pro-Palestinian organizations situated within universities. Notably, students from London-based universities exhibited the most enthusiasm.

Once in the field, I employed snowballs sampling techniques, leveraging initial contacts to expand the participant pool and include a more extensive and global diaspora population. I asked my initial round of interviewees for the names of friends, colleagues, classmates, or family members, expecting that the contacts drawn from these options to differ from each other and the original contact. Most were, however, more willing to give names of friends and classmates than they were colleagues and family members, so my sample is biased towards the former group than the latter. Since friendship groups tended to share common backgrounds or worldviews, I also limited my contacts to one or two friends per chain stretching from the original contact, thereby avoiding oversaturating the sample. There were points where participants referred me to friends whose narratives they suspected I would find interesting or relevant, or to people who they knew would enjoy, or be good at, discussing themselves and their experiences.

It is noteworthy that participants referred by others tended to be more open during interviews, possibly due to the referrer's belief in their ability to share stories openly. However, participants directly contacted by me, particularly Millennials, sometimes exhibited less openness during interviews. Notably, individuals from

Gen Z were generally more forthcoming with their responses overall, compared to Millennials.

I do not claim that this sample is representative – certainly not of Palestinians living in diaspora, but not necessarily even third generation of al-Nakba survivors. There is a clear concentration of respondents that belong to middle-class families, which will undoubtedly shape how they experience life as refugees. Nevertheless, the nature of snowball sampling introduced a fortunate variety of respondents, resulting in outliers within the predominately middle-class majority.

The Interviews

Interview durations varied from two to six hours and were recorded digitally, via voice recorder or on Zoom. The interviews were structured around open-ended questions, both in terms of unstructured questions and probing responses to unveil implications in broader thoughts. Questions were designed to prompt interviewees to narrate their family history chronologically and position themselves within that timeline. While covering essential questions, I also delved into topics that intrigued interviewees, seeking to uncover how they connected ideas to address different themes. I was interested in a range of ideas, understandings and even inarticulate assumptions people might bring to bear on the question of Palestinian identity. Rather than focusing on what people remembered, I prioritized understanding the context available to them for remembering, and how they utilized these resources.

The varied interview times and the structure of sessions alone may dictate the level of elaborateness shared by interviewees. As can be seen throughout, the interviews were extensive and, at times, rigorous. Some participants had enough stamina to last through a single session. I had noticed that these sessions, while extensive at the beginning, fizzled out by the end due to mental strain and lowered energy levels. For example, topics discussed in hour four may not contain as elaborate responses as those touched in hours one or two. I found that even I grew tired after several hours of question and answer. In these cases, I always offered breaks, but interviewees always declined. Later, I gave interviewees an option to mitigate exhaustion. For some, we split interviews into two time slots, averaging two to three hours per session. This was helpful as it allowed me to listen to the

material from the first session and return to the interviewee with more detail-oriented questions or to seek clarification. It also allowed us to work for longer durations in total, as we had more energy for each session. These sessions probably produced the most detailed responses out of all three interview types discussed. Other times, interviewees simply did not have five or six hours to give, so chose to break their interviews into two one-hour sessions or defaulted to one two-hour session. In these instances, I shortened my questions to focus on a single grandparent and a single parent and kept more closely to the structure of interview questions I originally drafted. If interviewees chose to tangent, I allowed them to do so and probed slightly, then returned to the question set.

The central focus was on examining how culture and trauma influence memory, identity, and experience. Participants were initially asked to share the content of their family narratives, followed by reflections on how this knowledge shaped their beliefs and attitudes towards themselves and the world around them. I began my questions by asking them to introduce themselves and state what they believe it means to 'be Palestinian.' These questions served as starting points, allowing me to explore their character using the themes they suggest. Once we finished probing their initial responses, we returned to the list of questions. The inquiry into familial timelines began with questions about grandparents, given that they were the ones residing in Palestine before 1948. Questions asked concerned asking them to describe their grandparents' personalities; doing so allows me to gauge the nature of the relationship between the interviewee and their family member. Then, I asked for information about each grandparent's life, starting from childhood, which allowed me to understand what was remembered about Palestine during British occupation, but before expulsion. Details concerned any descriptions of the familial home and property, job descriptions of family members, any siblings or friends of significance to that grandparent, and any details regarding the village or city of origin. I tried to get them to imagine as many visual details of the memories as possible, which I feel encouraged the imaginative aspect of recollection, rather than relying solely on semantic facts – for example, describing details of the exterior of their family home in Palestine, even if they never saw it firsthand.

Since the purpose of this study is to also explore postmemory, I shifted my attention to al-Nakba, asking interviewees what their grandparents' experiences might be. I asked for locations before and after expulsion and any feelings felt by the grandparents. After asking about al-Nakba, I asked how the family experienced starting new lives in the diaspora, including how easy it was for them to settle in, what jobs the family members got, did they lose family members along the way. During this time, a few respondents became emotional, so there were times where the interviewee and I paused the conversation and returned to the topic later in the interview, or simply did not return to it at all. In these instances, I always attempted to comfort the individual by thanking them for sharing such vulnerable details with me, gave them time to emote and re-regulate, and asked their permission to continue.

I then transitioned to the next generation in line, or the parents of interviewees. Many of the questions regarding parents mirrored those asked about grandparents, covering aspects like personality traits, relationship dynamics between the parent and child. I also covered their childhoods, touching on topics like schooling and the integration of parents into the society in which the family lived at the time. Given the diverse migration trajectories of Palestinians in the diaspora, I undertook preliminary research into the social, political, and economic contexts of countries welcoming Palestinians throughout history, spanning North America, Europe, and the Middle East. As a result, I tailored my questions in accordance with what I already knew from private research, which allowed me to probe further during interviews. I sought to understand how families socialized in diaspora, formed or joined new communities in host countries, secured employment and/or fed and sheltered their families, and navigated issues related to citizenship. Equally relevant to specific country's histories, I delved into any conflicts tied to the interviewees' birth countries and their Palestinian identity. For instance, those with parents born in Lebanon discussed experiences related to the 1967 War. This made for a complex analysis, as there are varied temporal layers at play when gauging the source of an offspring's postmemory. At the same time, it showcases the analytical challenges of studying a group affected by prolonged conflict and the resulting psychological trauma, which spans over generations.

At the conclusion of each time period, I prompted interviewees to reflect on the stories shared. I inquired about their feelings descending from individuals with such life stories and whether they perceived any similarities with their ancestors. These questions aimed to assess the depth of connection among family members and explore how these connections influenced the individuals' beliefs and self-perception. I also explored with whom they most frequently discussed these matters and the nature of the relationship with that individual. I sought to understand the interviewees' emotions when discussing intergenerational narratives within their families compared to how they felt sharing the same story with me. Also, during interviews, I further investigated the settings where respondents commonly engaged in intergenerational narrative exchange or where mnemonic landscapes allowed them to engage with family memory. Questions focused on how they received these stories, including the storytellers and settings. It became evident early on that cooking, intentional storytelling, and the occasional tateez circle were the most common settings for mnemonic exchange among family members, prompting a refinement of my questions over time to align with these recurring themes.

Finally, and given that this study primarily aims to investigate how memories passed down through generations manifest in an individual's everyday actions and experiences, I inquired about the personal lives of the interviewees. To understand their sense of belonging in their countries of birth, I questioned them about their childhood and present friends, the characteristics of meaningful friendships, and their understanding of belonging. Some interviewees primarily had Arab friends, while others lacked Arab or Palestinian friends. In both cases, I explored whether they engage in discussions about Palestine with their friends or in educational settings, and if so, to what extent they delved into the topic. Furthermore, I explored their outlooks on the future, specifically how they envision their life paths. This covered their openness to marrying and starting families, as well as their willingness to pass down Palestinian culture. Additionally, I asked them what they would say to a young Palestinian in a similar situation to theirs, aiming to understand the guidance they would provide and the insights derived from their personal struggles. To understand their connection with the land of Palestine itself,

I inquired whether they have visited or plan to visit the region. If not, I probed the reasons behind this decision. For those who had visited, I explored their emotions during the visit, the observations made, and their sentiments when comparing themselves to the Palestinians who live there.

As my research progressed, I came to realize that the transmission of memory within the Palestinian extends beyond that of storytelling. Various sites of exchange, such as family kitchens and community *tatreez* circles, facilitate dialogue between storytellers and their audiences. The narratives shared over these activities became a constitutive part of their practice; its practitioners layered the ‘doing’ of the present with their interpretations of the past, using narratives to justify why they practice certain traditions in the present. These mnemonic sites, while substantiated by storytelling, also include other elements of transmission and retention – embodied memory and documentation for example.

To delve further into these concepts, especially when identifying the differences between methods of transmission, I juxtapose oral history transmission with other alternative forms of documentation. In Chapter Two, I analyze Palestinian cookbooks, while Chapter Three explores the significance of *tatreez*, each produced by Palestinians raised within the diaspora. While these methods of analysis and theory are outlined in more detail within each respective chapter, it seems fitting to disclose the analytical questions with which I approach each form of documentation. Firstly, in the realm of food, how does the act of transcribing recipes impact the embodied practices of cooking and the retention of food-related memories? How does this influence the transmission of knowledge surrounding Palestinian cuisine? Such inquiries highlight the intricate histories embedded within cookbooks, encompassing culinary heritage, kinship relations, family memories, and sensory memories.²²⁷ Furthermore, it seeks to unravel the relationship between textual and embodied memory.²²⁸

Cookbooks

²²⁷ Eleonora Sava, “Family Cookbooks – Objects of Family Memory,” *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 7, no. 1 (July 8, 2021): 98–115, <https://doi.org/10.24193/mjcst.2021.11.06>.

²²⁸ For more information regarding this inquiry, look to Carol Hunt

By analyzing Palestinian cookbooks, I examine the function of passing on recipes within a more dynamic perspective of the process of cultural assimilation. Simultaneously, this process serves as a significant location for the transfer of memories and histories, whether in written or experiential form, potentially challenging authoritative sources of knowledge pertaining to the past. The analysis of cookbooks is used specifically as a comparative device to further understand the mnemonic impact traditional knowledge-sharing practices in the kitchen. In doing so, I ask the following questions. How might a departure from social settings that employ traditional, hands-on cooking impact memory and innovation? To what degree have Palestinian families substituted the traditional knowledge transfer with reliance on cookbooks and recipes? Written recipes may lead to a decline in the longstanding innovativeness that came with relying on embodied food memories to recreate recipes; requiring precise reproduction, rather than embracing variation. They resemble what Terdiman describes as “extra-individual mnemonic mechanisms,” which isolate individual pieces of information to the detriment of their connection to any holistic understanding, a trend that has been increasingly ingrained in modern socio-economic practices since the industrial revolution.²²⁹ Warde, in his examination of changes in written recipes over a twenty-five year span, highlights a growing emphasis on precision, measurement, and calculation.²³⁰ Cookery is increasingly portrayed in recipes as a matter of technical rationality, diverging from the practical judgement inherent in “traditional” cooking practices.²³¹ Conversely, written recipes also serve as a gateway to innovation; Goody suggests that they play a role in the evolution of “cuisine.”²³²

To compare the mnemonic transmission in oral knowledge-sharing settings with that in cookbooks, I analyze the cooking processes described in interviews alongside the recipes from Palestinian cookbooks, specifically Joudie Kalla’s *Palestine on a Plate* and Sami Tamimi’s and Tara Wigley’s *Falastin*. I identify

²²⁹ Richard Terdiman, *Past Present: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

²³⁰ Alan Warde, *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture* (London: Sage, 1997).

²³¹ David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2006).

²³² Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

common keywords related to my areas of analysis. The first theme explores how the embodied experience of cooking is addressed or overlooked in both settings, examining directions shared orally or found in cookbooks that active embodied memory, such as chopping, stirring, and shucking. I also assess the specificity of statements, evaluating the ability of respondents or cookbooks to recall or describe ingredients and flavors. Additionally, I look for keywords indicating the emotional connection each author establishes with their recipes, considering how often dishes are created, personal preferences documented, and any emotional anecdotes that accompany the recipe. Since these cookbooks center on Palestinian cuisine, I investigate how they use narrative to link recipes to Palestinian culture, exploring connections through family memories, personal encounters, or private research. If the cookbooks do not contain personal narratives, I explore how the author connects their recipes back to Palestinian dishes. The key here is to see how the author justifies labelling common household ingredients that can be located both in Palestine, the wider Arabic-speaking world, and western countries, as inherently Palestinian. Finally, I search for social memories in the recipes, checking for stories related to family memories of social cooking settings. If the cookbooks contain such stories, I then examine the level of elaborateness in the narratives shared. In doing so, I can gauge the extent to which meals are chosen and documented due to their collective and personal emotional value.

Embroidered Objects

In examining instances where individuals link emotions to objects, or sensory processes to crafting and performance, a recurring theme emerges that involves textiles and embroidered items. While prior analysis explores how textiles act as archives of memory, the act of embroidery itself triggers sensorial memories linked to emotions. The process of embroidery involves a significant exchange of knowledge between the body and the material. According to embodied cognition theory, what we perceive and know is shaped by our sensory experiences. Humans, guided by somatic markers, intuitively shape their actions, drawing on past emotions to learn and predict the outcomes of future scenarios. Negative somatic markers, when juxtaposed with anticipated outcomes, act as warning

signals, bringing potential concerns to attention. Conversely, positive somatic markers, intertwined with future possibilities, serve as beacons of motivation.

The sensorial experiences felt within the embroiderer's body link to the emotions guiding them, dictating the when, how, and why of their craft. Within this framework, it becomes evident that the act of embroidering fosters positive emotional attachments and can serve as a form of personal expression and a means to process personal and familial trauma. This becomes evident in recent research, such as the observations of Garlock and von Kurthy, which detail the transformative impact of embroidery on an individual's daily life. Additionally, studies exploring similar themes but with a regional emphasis in the Middle East, such as Katoshevski and Huss's research on Bedouin embroidery in Israel, further contribute to our understanding. Drawing parallels with the Nora's *les lieux de memoire*, both the embroidered object and the act of embroidering itself emerge as sites where memory and emotion converge. This connection appears in the works of artists like Gruner, who embroider upon their mothers' handkerchiefs, imbuing each object with layers of meaning and mnemonic power. The ritualization of this process becomes a crucial avenue for artists to confront or expose themselves to the emotions elicited during the process of making embroidery, allowing them to delve into a world of affect and connect with familial and collective emotions.

Through this perspective, I examine items adorned with *tatreez*, linking them to the memories and sentiments they embody and advocating for their interpretation as conveyors of postmemory. Initially, I explore the use of embroidery as a form of communication among Palestinian women, drawing insights from the designs and narratives shared by Wafa Ghnaim in her written work *Tatreez and Tea* and the embroidered artwork of Palestinian-American artist Jordan Nassar featured in his online portfolio. By deciphering the symbolism in both artists' embroidery and correlating these symbols with keywords from personal and public interviews, I evaluate their art as a means of communication portraying the artists' personal stories and emotions. Additionally, I employ the patterns from Ghnaim's book for the second part of my analysis, delving into the emotional connections individuals establish with embroidered objects within family collections. Thirdly, I investigate the emotional bonds artists form with their own creations. For those who began

embroidering in their youth, I consider the embodied memories formed during childhood and how these positively nostalgic associations are linked to the artist in the present when they engage in embroidery. Across various artists, I examine how they express the emotions that fueled their art or that they experienced during its creation. As a secondary aspect of the analysis, I concentrate on how the artists' work diverges from conventional notions of the craft by incorporating perspectives or methodologies developed externally and shaped by their postmemory.

Interviewing and Reflexivity

The fieldwork for this research proved to be a multifaceted endeavor, as I soon came to realize, and as has been found by other academics. Viterna's reflections on fieldwork in El Salvador brought to light two pertinent validity discussions during the process of data collection. One such concern involves the propensity of individuals to either forget or lack knowledge about narratives, particularly as time elapses, leading to an increase in cognitive and emotional detachment from the events discussed. Moreover, the emergence of new experiences competes for mental space, further exacerbating the issue.²³³ While gauging these levels of forgetting is a central aim to this research, it also poses as a risk of validity, as respondents may provide inaccurate information based on false recall.

Respondents displayed similar gaps in memory, particularly when queried about their day-to-day experiences within their familial homes during childhood. To address this, I employed textual and alternative document analysis as a complementary approach to the interview data. In instances where textual analysis proved unfeasible, I focused on cross-referencing and corroborating narratives, either among themselves or against available documented evidence derived from secondary sources.²³⁴

²³³ Jocelyn Viterna, "Negotiating the Muddiness of Grassroots Field Research: Managing Identity and Data in Rural El Salvador," in *Women Fielding Danger: Negotiating Ethnographic Identities in Field Research*, ed. Martha K. Huggins and Marie-Louise Glebbeek (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 271–97.

²³⁴ While primary sources, such as letters, newspaper articles, and archives, would be the ideal texts to cross-reference, these texts are either inaccessible, do not exist, or are published in Arabic, a language in which I am not fluent.

Another challenge rose from interviewees' inclination to filter their recollections through the lens and hindsight of present-day social norms and customs, as illuminated by Vroman's study on Belgian convent nuns during the Holocaust. Consequently, they might downplay or accentuate specific elements, themes, and meanings in their stories long after the actual events transpired.²³⁵ Furthermore, the recollections of the respondents can be influenced by audience effects and the narratives relayed to them by others after the original experiences.²³⁶

The interviewing process in this study was further complicated by the respondents' apprehensions concerning the purpose of this research. It was incumbent upon me to make participants feel comfortable by assuring them that no concealed political agenda underpinned my investigation. To foster a comfortable atmosphere, I engaged in casual conversations and addressed questions that arose during interviews, touching upon topics such as my own life, additional findings, or my motivations for research. Although this approach aimed to cultivate open communication, it raises the question of how my responses contextualized each interview.

It feels necessary to comment on the impression I may have made with interviewees, which appears to have led to very candid responses from interviewees. Two or three times at the end of interviews, individuals told me that they feel like they have a better understanding of themselves as people and as Palestinians. This suggests that the conversations we had promoted a great deal of personal reflection and meaning-making, which inevitably shaped the respondents' answers.

As mentioned in the introduction, most interviews were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, during which people from around the world endured lockdown procedures. Fortunately, for this interview, their anchoring to their homes proved beneficial. People had the time to sit with me, and they had the resources to do so,

²³⁵ Suzanne Vroman, *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and Their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²³⁶ William Hirst and Gerald Echterhoff, "Creating Shared Memories in Conversation: Toward a Psychology of Collective Memory," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (March 2008): 183–216, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2008.0061>.

as the work from home lifestyle included Zoom accounts. This allowed me to conduct interviews not only from around the world, but within the privacy of our own homes. I believe that this allowed interviewees to feel very comfortable and secure during interviews, as they could safely share their thoughts and feelings in a familiar space, rather than in an unfamiliar and public environment where they may feel on guard and therefore withholding of personal details that lead them to feel too vulnerable.

Additionally, other individuals would sometimes disclose that what they're sharing is something that they would not discuss with another Palestinian. I believe that, since I, the interviewer, am female, American, of small stature, and of a calmer demeanor, and I have no visible stake or reputation on the topic of Palestine and Israel, interviewees are able to calmly and candidly share highly intimate and personal details of their lives with me. This includes information that they would not regularly feel comfortable sharing with another Palestinian. This phrase was oftentimes accompanied by a saying that did not show as much support for the Palestinian cause as one would like to impress on other Palestinians, who they believe are more invested in the cause than them at times. This suggests that the answers provided to me may not be as actively employed or shared in contexts where other, untrusted Palestinians are involved.

This does, of course, raise the question between what each interviewee might tell me and what they will tell others, meaning a deviation between private and public personas. However, it is this interplay between the *should's* and *should not's* of history, culture, and identity that interests me, as ultimately it is the tension between what one wants and what one believes that should do that motivates action.

Cohort Characteristics

The diverse backgrounds of interviewees posed a significant challenge when tracing each family's historical trajectory and migration patterns across the diaspora. The acquisition of accurate and dependable data concerning the participants proved arduous due to the extensive range of backgrounds spanning multiple countries, regions, and continents. The sheer volume of empirical data

necessitated an intersectional analysis that could, realistically, exceed the parameters of a single thesis. Moreover, limited access to elder family members and local documents impeded further exploration and verification of facts and dates associated with each testimony.

Economic Class

While the sample is overwhelmingly middle class, there is not always a clear-cut signifier for the economic class for each interviewee. In certain cases, families were able to migrate from Palestine while still retaining some or large amounts of wealth. Others did so to a lesser degree, owning a second house or able to find new employment through class-based social connections, making relocation easier than those who may have been forced to leave their possessions and homes behind for life in refugee camps. The consequences of economic class on what is remembered during family storytelling is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Families who moved to surrounding MENA countries: Upper class families lost some wealth, but managed to retain property, finances, job positions, etc. Lower class families lived in refugee camps, some remained in Palestine. Usually in these instances, there is some economic mobility that occurs in the third generation, or the interviewees' generation. Growth is slow, but it still occurs. This is because older generations strongly encourage younger generations to receive university degrees in order to find high-paying or respectable employment, with the latter term contextualized by what the family defines as respectable.

Each of the families who migrated to the United States started from lower economic backgrounds and gradually gained economic mobility in their respective communities, achieved within one or two generations. However, even this process does not always signify the interviewee's financial status. For example, although one interviewee's family amassed wealth during their time in the United States, he lost connection with his family after coming out as transgender. In this case, he also lost funding for university, therefore never completing his qualifications. Families who moved to England started with mixed backgrounds and generally remained in their economic classes as generations passed. This is with the

exception of one family, who began in refugee camps and rose to the middle economic class after decades spent in England.

Education

Three individuals (11%) lack a university degree; however, they were raised in England or the United States, so are familiar with Western educational curriculum and theories. A majority of fifteen individuals (55%) possess bachelor's degrees, while four people (15%) hold master's degrees, and five individuals (19%) have either a PhD or an MD. Notably, 78% of the respondents received their education, secondary or post-secondary, either in the United States or the United Kingdom. Initial observations suggest that class is a primary driving factor that shapes the worldview, given that most individuals all have access to Western educational institutions at a post-secondary level. While this may partly be the case, it becomes evident that university attendance is not exclusively tied to wealth. Many respondents pursue higher education regardless of economic background. Although there is some correlation with family wealth, deviations from this pattern are also observed, as seen in families belonging to lower economic classes collectively saving money for one or two family members to attend university. The prevalence of university degrees may imply a prioritization on education within the Palestinian diaspora rather than being solely indicative of respondents' belonging to higher economic classes.

Rather than being solely class-driven, these responses might be influenced by exposure to Western culture and education in general, especially for those born in or who spent their formative years in the United States and the United Kingdom. The fact that 78% of candidates report having exposure to Western, secondary and/or post-secondary education speaks the degree of influence that these institutions have in shaping diasporic Palestinian worldview. We do see this to some detail in Raghad's testimony, as she often refers to her doctoral research when articulating the spatio-temporal layering experienced when navigating the streets of Jerusalem. However, since this study focuses on knowledge and memory mediated within the family and familial settings, the extent to which knowledge and theory covered in university is limited. This fact does highlight the

need to explore such an area in greater detail, particularly the content of university and secondary curricula and how this may contribute to the interpretation of family memory.

Moreover, some respondents claim familiarity with influential scholars in Palestinian, feminist, and humanitarian topics, of which they feel shape their worldviews. Notably, this exposure occurs irrespective of their level of formal education. For example, consider Sarah, who did not pursue a university education but actively engaged in the feminist society during her time at a British secondary school. She frequently alluded to these experiences during her interview, indicating their impact on shaping her current worldview. Another instance involves Henry, who, despite concentrating on a career in finance, exhibits a comprehensive understanding of Palestinian literature. During his interview, he cited prominent researchers in the field of Palestinian studies, one example including Ilan Pappé, to reinforce the foundations of his arguments. This implies a proclivity to absorb these perspectives and the publications housing them, extending beyond the confines of a university setting. This inclination will be thoroughly examined throughout this thesis.

Religion

This group did not overtly identify as religious. Fifteen individuals (56%) did not mention any type of religious practice, which is demonstrative of the extent to which they prioritize their religiosity when attempting to analyze and understand themselves, especially since they had at least four hours to raise the topic in each interview. Those who did practice some sort of religion inevitably raised their views in conversation. Less than half (44%) of my contacts identified as Muslim. Even then, only seven (26%) interviewees made religious understandings central to the way they discussed their lives. Religiosity was a matter that, while oftentimes paralleling their identities as Palestinians, did not always dictate their actions or identities as Palestinians. Rather, being Muslim contextualized the moral standards to which they upheld themselves as individuals, as is the case with Henry and (Faris).

For others, religion stood as an obstacle to achieving full identity synthesis, such as the cases with Taylor and Habib, both members of the LGBTQ+ community, or with (Sarah), who grappled with the traditional aspects of Islam, which she feels challenges her feminist ideologies and aspirations. In only two instances did interviewees explicitly synonymize religiosity with Palestinian-ness: the case of (Nour), who mourns the perceived loss of communal values during Eid, which she believes Palestinians should continue to uphold in diaspora. The other case did not receive as positive of an association. In fact, the participant's connection was not formed through practicing Islam; rather, Islamic religiosity was downplayed in this family. Instead, the participant encountered anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic statements while attending Jewish school (find word) as a child, which in turn reinforced an understanding of her standing as a Palestinian in her local Jewish community in the United States. It is worth noting that, while three participants shared both Jewish and Muslim backgrounds, this individual was the only one who felt comfortable discussing the relationship between her Jewish and Muslim identities. This speaks to the tensions in identities currently felt by Palestinians and may even hint at why certain participants choose to distance their Palestinian identities from any religious affiliation.

Gender

There is a fairly even split in gender identities amongst interviewees. Three candidates openly identified themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Gender undoubtedly shapes how participants engage with family, and therefore shapes how they inherit family narratives. For example, studies have shown that family members tend to be more elaborate when sharing autobiographical memories with daughters than with sons. However, this may change in accordance with the relationship shared between the offspring and their relatives. This is explored in more detail in Chapter Two.

Male participants sometimes spoke of a “toxic” Palestinian masculinity, which they claim inhibits them from expressing emotions with others, especially other boys or men. They describe this feeling as pressure by family and peers to withhold from exhibiting passionate displays of emotion, or to brand themselves as brave, tough,

or unphased by strong feelings. Of course, this was not always the case, as some young men felt comfortable emoting, as seen with the one young man who cried while discussing his postmemorial trauma. However, the difficulties men sometimes experience when emoting should be taken into consideration when interpreting responses from male participants, as well as understanding how the storytelling settings that involve men shape respondents' recollections regardless of gender.

Conversely, female respondents, although not all, felt more comfortable expressing their emotions during interviews. Two women asked not to discuss certain topics, topics with certain emotional saliences, due to the political and social risks they associate with them. If they did not want to share details or answer a question, and felt comfortable enough to clearly state so, they justified their stance with a desire to protect their family (as opposed to themselves), rather than an inability to share their emotions. On the other hand, elaborative women went as far as to comment on the level of the reflection they noticed during and after our time together. A small handful, perhaps two or three women, noted rather serendipitously that these interviews allowed them the opportunity to reflect on their personal identities. This hints at female respondents' inclination to more elaborate and emotive storytelling, as well as the degree of agency they exhibit when selecting which details to share, as well as their associated reflections.

At times, female participants conflated Palestinian culture with its traditional values, or with traditional Islamic values. The definition of these values was subjective, but sometimes associated with the domestication and overprotection of women. There were two separate responses seen in such instances: 1) the downplaying of their Palestinian-ness, as if it was irreconcilable to the feminist ideals cultivated throughout each woman's lifetime; or 2) a reinterpretation and reappropriation of Palestinian culture to meet their unique definitions of femininity. This, of course, impacts how they relate to other Palestinians who share or do not share the same worldview as them; as a result, storytelling dynamics between family members may be affected.

Membership to the LGBTQ+ community undoubtedly affects this research, oftentimes in ways that combine the factors discussed above. In one case, family ties were severed because of the person “coming out” as a transgender male. In the second case, family ties remained intact, but the individual withholds his homosexuality from his family, fearing the same fate. Lastly, one young woman, who openly identifies as queer, lives with her family. However, she still finds it difficult relating to her parents, accrediting the emotional distance to misunderstandings about her queer identity. As we can see, the relationships between queer Palestinians and their family members varies significantly. This, in turn, affects their opportunity to communicate and exchange stories with family members, with the level of relating between family members affected by the degree to which parents accept their children’s queerness.

Generation

It is important to note that I do not presume subjective awareness among research participants regarding their generational belonging. Rather, the classification of generations is rooted in birth cohorts and the events that respondents recall and perceive as significant. Hence, the individuals included in this research are actively experiencing or have recently experienced, their formative years, with ages ranging from twenty to thirty-five years. As Mannheim asserts, this age range signifies a crucial period of personal experimentation and grappling with life’s challenges, as individuals forge their sense of self in relation to the present.²³⁷ This demographic is transitioning from dependency to partial or complete independence, yet without committing to a specific occupation, residence, family structure, or way of life. Such experiences leave a lasting impression on their sense of self, in that they become the focus for this age group, compared to older generations, who “cling to the re-orientation that had been the drama of *their* youth.”²³⁸

At one level, this demographic is identified as third-generation survivors, meaning they are the grandchildren of individuals who survived mass atrocity. However, a more nuanced examination reveals two distinct social generations within this

²³⁷ Karl Mannheim, “The Sociological Problem of Generations,” 1952, https://1989after1989.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/01_The_Sociological_Problem.pdf.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 178.

group, namely Millennials and Gen Z, each characterized by unique attributes and shared markers that undoubtedly shape their interactions with the world. This distinction extends beyond age groups, encompassing individuals ranging from twenty to twenty-five years old to those up to fifteen years older. Fourteen belong to the Millennial generation (born between 1982 and roughly 2005), while thirteen belong to Gen Z (born after 1997 or through 2012).²³⁹

Examining a Pew Research Center study on Millennials and Gen Z in the United States reveals that generational events, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 2008 election, shaped these cohorts in distinctive ways, establishing a discernable generational divide.²⁴⁰ For participants, Millennials reported witnessing a cultural, social, and political shift towards Islamophobia post-9/11, with some also old enough to observe the First Intifada broadcasted by media outlets like newspapers and televisions. This becomes particularly challenging for those residing in non-Arab speaking countries, subject to social scrutiny and exposed to Western media representations that historically favor a Zionist narrative. Notably, most Gen Z individuals were either not born or too young to remember these events firsthand.

Technology is another variable that divides these generations. Accessing news through social media provides Gen Z with a broader array of news outlets compared to traditional sources like newspapers, radio, or television. This allows them to be more discerning in their news consumption,²⁴¹ focusing on stories that they believe more accurately represents Palestinians, aligning with the 1948 exilic narrative. Instead of relying on institutional and conventional media, Gen Z members are inclined to depend on personal and close networks cultivated both in person and online to seek answers to their questions, thus forming entire communities outside traditional media channels to make sense of the world.²⁴²

²³⁹ Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," Pew Research Center, January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

²⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁴¹ Marguerite Jacqueline Augier, "Tap, Like, Learn: Understanding Gen Z's Social Media-Powered News Engagement," *etd.ohiolink.edu*, 2023, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ouhonors168270222509057.

²⁴² Lisa Collins, "Social Media Usage News Consumption, Behaviors, and Online Civic Reasoning among Generation Z" (2019), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2445941831?pq-origsite=scholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>.

There were two or three decades during which Millennials did not have access to the level of information that Gen Z has always known. Consequently, their relationship with media sources representing Palestinians may differ. The range of Millennial interactions with social media varies, with some creating multiple social media accounts, engaging in online discussions, and even utilizing their platforms to promote Palestinian-branded products and artwork, while others abstain from social media, potentially limiting their exposure to information about Palestine.

Many participants reside away from their familial homes, with some even dwelling in different countries. With their newfound independence, they consolidate a *sense of ego identity*. Drawing on Erikson's framework, ego identity refers to the confidence one possesses in the alignment of one's inner self with external perceptions.²⁴³ This age group endeavors to comprehend their own identity, aspirations, and the image they wish to project to others, thus shaping their actions accordingly. Simultaneously, they encounter the risk of *identity diffusion*, experiencing a sense of displacement or hovering between social identities.²⁴⁴ This phenomenon, as aptly examined in Edward Said's memoir, *Out of Place*, adds an additional layer of complexity to the process of consolidating one's sense of self during formative years.²⁴⁵

Nationality/Location

The citizenship status of individuals significantly influences the perspectives, needs, and ideals voiced by interviewees. Those born in Western countries find themselves grappling with a torn sense of belonging – while feeling entitled to representation and a sense of belonging within their birth countries, they also endure instances of racial and religious discrimination. As such, they perceive themselves as part of Western society, yet persistently othered by it. This group also reports feeling distanced from what they deem as 'authentic' Arab culture, engaging with it from a place that is once-removed, compared to those who enjoy it directly in countries like Palestine, Lebanon, or Jordan. Language becomes a

²⁴³ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1980).

²⁴⁴ Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, 97.

²⁴⁵ Edward Said, *Out of Place*.

notable challenge as well, due to the lessened use of Arabic as a language in the United States and United Kingdom. Age appears pivotal in resolving this ambiguity, as older participants (aged twenty-five and older) expressed a diminished sense of confusion around their identity as adults, reflecting on past experiences marked by ambivalence toward both Western and Arab identities. A prevalent response within this group manifests as a profound assertion of the self, deeply rooted in personal and Palestinian pride. Strikingly, economic and political concerns are not immediately articulated, hinting at their either being met or not being the immediate focal point.

In contrast, individuals born in MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries adopt a distinct perspectives to their Western counterparts, refraining from questioning their identities based on race and instead perceiving discrimination through the lenses of class and citizenship. Recounting instances where their families had their rights denied to them, such as lost job opportunities due to lacking citizenship or low economic status, despite being born in a certain country, their common response involves a recognition of that unfairness, albeit unsurprising to them, and acknowledging the frequent occurrence of such incidents among Palestinians. Their strategy for addressing this insecurity revolves around creating economic and political safeguards to avert its recurrence for themselves and their families. Of particular interest, is the divergence in worldview between individuals from higher economic classes and those from lower economic classes in MENA countries. The former, possibly due to the consistent fulfillment of basic physical needs, accentuate the social and identity-based concerns over immediate economic and political security needs. The latter, on the other hand, focuses on narratives with political and economic themes.

Analytical Approach

My analysis started after I finished half of my fieldwork, or after the end of the second year of interviewing, when I decided to take some time to sift through the data. The decision to begin analysis in the midst of data collection was intentional, as I wanted to be able to analyze the data while it was still fresh in my mind, while still being able to compare it to other interviews. Gillespie argues that analysis

without complete withdrawal from the field poses certain advantages, one of them that informants become part of an “interpretive community.”²⁴⁶ As I honed my skills as a researcher and interviewer, and developed a precise understanding of my topic, my questions became more succinct. I contextualized later interviews against previous ones, identifying common themes as time went on, which gave me the ability to uncover niche details that I may have missed in earlier interviews.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis. The research employed theoretical thematic analysis, following the approach developed by Braun and Clarke,²⁴⁷ as well as a grounded theory approach.²⁴⁸ Due to the limited research on Palestinian identity in subsequent generations, especially the third generation, this study aimed to explore and compare various methods of analysis. The research adopted a phenomenological and contextualist approach, examining participants' experiences, exploring the meanings derived from those experiences, and investigating the contextual factors influencing the meaning-making process. The analysis involved both inductive and deductive reasoning, identifying and thematizing experiences through interviewees' accounts (inductive), exploring these topics through different theoretical lenses (deductive), and finding connections to personal testimonies (inductive).

The analysis process consisted of six steps:

- 1) Dataset familiarization through transcription, note-taking, and repeated readings of the materials.
- 2) Coding the data to identify relevant information pertaining to the research question.
- 3) Organizing codes into broader patterns of meaning, revisiting themes to establish their purpose and suitability.

²⁴⁶ Marie Gillespie, *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* (Routledge, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203133996>.

²⁴⁷ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (Sage, 2006).

²⁴⁸ Barney G Glaser and Anselm L Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967).

- 4) Assessing the initial fit of possible themes against the data and the overall viability of the analysis by referring back to the full dataset.
- 5) Clearly naming and demarcating each theme, ensuring they are built around strong core concepts.
- 6) Selecting extracts to illustrate each theme and contextualizing the findings within existing theories and evidence. This process evolved over time with each subsequent interview, allowing for comparisons and the structuring of future dialogues based on previous insights gained.

CHAPTER ONE: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STORYTELLING AND THE IMPACT OF INHERITED FAMILIAL NARRATIVES ON SELF- AND FAMILIAL EXPLORATION

The tradition of storytelling and oral history has deep roots in Palestinian society, preserving collective memory and fostering continuity in Palestinian memory.²⁴⁹ This chapter examines the dynamics of storytelling in Palestinian families, including its cultural, social, and psychological dimensions. By analyzing the functions of storytelling and the role of storytellers, this research aims to shed light on the interplay between narratives and the formation of Palestinian identity, as well as their contribution to personal and familial histories. By situating Palestinian storytelling practices within broader scholarly discourses, this research connects them to storytelling, family ties, and personal identity. While it is well documented that parents share intergenerational narratives with their children, how offspring hear these stories and use them to make connections between themselves and their parents is less studied.²⁵⁰

To offer a comprehensive analysis, this chapter adopts a thematic structure, focusing on two key dimensions: elaborative storytelling and the presence of silences within Palestinian families. Elaborative storytelling is characterized by its

²⁴⁹ Farah Aboubakr, *The Folktales of Palestine* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

²⁵⁰ Robyn Fivush, Widaad Zaman, and Natalie Merrill, "Developing Social Functions of Autobiographical Memory within Family Storytelling," in *Collaborative Remembering: Theories, Research, and Applications* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 38–54, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198737865.003.0003>.

intricate, nuanced descriptions and its incorporation of personal and collective experiences. In contrast, silences within storytelling emerge from various factors, including language barriers, the lingering effects of trauma, and social environments that inhibit the expression of culture. By categorizing these cases into elaborative storytelling and silences, this research investigates the transmission of narratives and memories. Each case is subject to meticulous analysis, considering the narratives recalled each interviewee, the motivations behind storytelling or silence as expressed by these individuals, and the familial relationships that shape their present perceptions. Additionally, this chapter explores how storytelling contributes to their collective understanding of family and Palestinian narratives on a broader social level, as well as its effects on personal meanings, self-perception, and the sense of purpose described in the cases that follow. Through this thorough exploration of storytelling within Palestinian families, this chapter aims to contribute to a nuanced comprehension of memory, identity, and the preservation of culture within Palestinian communities.

Psychological Factors and Implications of Family Storytelling

In familial settings, the act of storytelling is a frequent occurrence, an intergenerational ritual where family members engage in reminiscences with their children from infancy through adulthood. These narratives, both personal and communal, serve as a means of fostering connections and transmitting knowledge across successive generations, encompassing the intricate web of family histories, values, beliefs, and traditions.²⁵¹ Within these narratives lie emotional and psychological themes that possess the power to shape the remembrances of their audience and evoke distinct psychological responses. These narratives engender resilience, bolster self-esteem, and cultivate a sense of belonging, anchoring the family unit and its individual members with specific temporal and spatial contexts. Moreover, they serve as conduits, bridging the present with past generations by facilitating a connection to cultural heritage. By engaging in the shared act of storytelling, younger generations are afforded the opportunity to navigate the

²⁵¹ Robyn Fivush, Jennifer G. Bohanek, and Marshall Duke, "The Intergenerational Self: Subjective Perspective and Family History," in *Self Continuity: Individual and Collective Perspectives*, ed. F. Sani (Psychology Press, 2008), 131–43, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2008-10052-009>.

intricacies of their own lives and make meaning their experiences. Furthermore, within the familial space, these exchanges of stories provide solace and support, offering a sanctuary in times of adversity and emotional distress.

However, it is crucial to recognize that family storytelling can also engender instances of inherited trauma, exemplified by the phenomenon of postmemory. Descendants of trauma survivors find themselves entwined with their parents' traumatic experiences through the narratives passed down to them, thereby exerting influence on their personal sense of self.²⁵² Through postmemory, the offspring of survivors construct an understanding of the world that encompasses their values, beliefs, and identities, forging connections between personal histories and lived experiences of preceding family members. Consequently, it becomes imperative for researchers to approach the domain of family storytelling with a discerning eye, particularly within social groups like the Palestinian diaspora, wherein the practice often intertwines with inherited memories of trauma. In such cases, the act of engaging in autobiographical storytelling during instances of past trauma raises significant questions.

Storytellers, in their role as transmitters of information, select and omit details that mirror their individual, familial, and broader social identities and ideologies. The stories exchanged within the family unit adhere to societal expectations of what constitutes a "good story" and reflect the environmental, societal, and historical influences that shape the storyteller's narrative.²⁵³ Indeed, the nature of storytelling within each family is a product of the interplay between personal, familial, and wider social factors, rendering each narrative a unique testament to the perspectives of the storytellers.

In order to navigate the complexity inherent in family storytelling, scholars must adopt an analytical approach that embraces the subtleties embedded within each specific context. The ecological model of family narratives offers a framework that dissects the various layers comprising these stories. At the core, lies the individual's autobiographical memories, which are molded by personal traits and

²⁵² Marianne Hirsch, "Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile," *Poetics Today* 17, no. 4 (1996): , <https://doi.org/10.2307/1773218>.

²⁵³ Quote by Nimr Sirhan derived from Aboubakr, *The Folktale as a Site of Framing and Identity*."

constantly interact with broader social structures. The microsystem encompasses intimate interactions, encompassing stories shared within the family and about the family, which are collectively remembered. For instance, a mother might recount a young child's fall and scraped knee, with the child's memory of the event by the maternal retelling. The exo-system encompasses intergenerational and communicative family narratives, as well as narratives related to parental work and life experiences. These narratives, not experienced firsthand, are learned through stories and conversations, providing further context and coherence to a child's understanding of their familial framework and offering glimpses into the world beyond their immediate sphere. These layers of storytelling within families interact and influence one another, perpetually shaping the narrative landscape.

In particular, elaborative storytelling is crucial to the development of an individual's autobiographical memory. It provides children with examples of how to structure a personal narrative by equipping them with reflective tools and a template with which they can structure and make sense of their experiences. Family stories can provide individuals with a sense of purpose and direction, as they can learn from the experiences and struggles of their family members.²⁵⁴ In addition to that, it allows them to connect their experiences to a broader life story, one characterized by the collective experiences among family members.²⁵⁵ The sense of continuity and shared history with family and ancestors can create a feeling of belonging and identity with a family and cultural group, in turn shaping their overall sense of identity.²⁵⁶

Diasporic Identity and Storytelling

The study of collective memory and orality in diasporic groups demonstrates that collectives suffering from political or social instability feel a need to preserve and consolidate their cultural or collective identities. In these contexts, collective memory plays an active and vital role in constructing the identities and cultures of

²⁵⁴ Robyn Fivush et al., "Functions of Parent-Child Reminiscing about Emotionally Negative Events," *Memory* 11, no. 2 (January 2003): 179–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/741938209>.

²⁵⁵ Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden, *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Psychology Press, 2013).

²⁵⁶ Dan P. McAdams, "The Psychology of Life Stories.," *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 100–122, <https://doi.org/10.1037//1089-2680.5.2.100>.

groups who experienced historical defeat. As argued by Nancy and Raffoul, when one's identity is compromised that we actively seek to identify its components.²⁵⁷ For example, research conducted by Miller and Miller explores the collective memory of diasporic Armenians who fled Turkey between 1915 and 1918. They found that across three generations of Armenians in the diaspora, their cultural/collective memory remained strong and vivid. This was due to the active effort of Armenians to preserve this memory through storytelling and folklore by not interacting with other communities. Perhaps most famously, but be the efforts to preserve and highlight Holocaust memory and the construction of Jewish diasporic identity. In academia, the Jewish diaspora has been identified as "the diaspora of diasporas." [Find source] The existential threat experienced by the Jewish diaspora, in the face of Nazi persecution and massacre, galvanized a desire to strengthen the collective identity of a global Jewish community, as well as to secure the continuity of this community. Examples of such efforts appear in the forms of art, literature, and historical commemoration, ensuring its prolonged remembrance.

A primary function of diasporic storytelling is to preserve cultural traditions outside the homeland. Upon migration, families are faced with environments and social settings that challenge or deny their histories or cultural heritage.²⁵⁸ This can be seen in the narratives below, such as in Raghad's life, where growing up in the Old City meant that she and her family, by Israeli law, could not publicly express themselves as Palestinians without dire consequences. In this way, family storytelling, which can be conducted safely and secretly within one's home, severs as a form of resistance against instances of cultural erasure or homogenization.

Additionally, just as much as storytelling in diasporic families preserves the culture of the homeland, it also serves as a source of information that explains the family's current circumstances. Narrative exchange in diasporic families helps younger generations make sense of their place in the world and understand past social,

²⁵⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy and François Raffoul, *Identity : Fragments, Frankness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

²⁵⁸ Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram, "Theorizing Identity in Transnational and Diaspora Cultures: A Critical Approach to Acculturation," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33, no. 2 (March 2009): 140–49, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.12.009>.

economic, and political forces that shaped, and still shape, their identities.²⁵⁹ The shared memories between family members, and, to a greater extent, wider community members, allows members of a cultural or other social group to connect with ancestral heritage and develop a sense of collective identity through the shared meanings that the narratives symbolize.²⁶⁰

As discussed throughout these chapters, the collective remembrance of familial and communal stories serves as a means of connecting individuals to their ancestral heritage and cultivating a collective identity through the shared meanings embedded in the narratives. This is particularly true for families within the Palestinian diaspora, who rely on storytelling to reinforce familial bonds, unite members with a wider social narrative, and convey collective ideologies across generations. Through these practices, they can preserve their historical culture and memory even as they live in exile. As with many diasporic communities, the Palestinians interviewed here descend from families who witnessed historical rupture, collective traumas that have indelibly imprinted themselves upon their memory and history. In addition to this, as El-Nimr observes, the official history of Palestinians is often incomplete and falsified, which has led to the development of alternative modes of documenting and preserving their collective memories.²⁶¹

To ensure the preservation of these memories and prevent forgetting, the older generations have taken it upon themselves to instill these narratives into the hearts and minds of their offspring. The children and grandchildren of those who witnessed these atrocities are now entrusted with the crucial task of preserving their families' and, to some extent, their broader culture's traumatic memories. This has created an urgent need to listen to and make meaning of the stories of ancestors, a task made more pressing by the looming threat of historical erasure. As such, this passing down of stories from one generation to the next has become

²⁵⁹ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Routledge, 1994).

²⁶⁰ Brady Wagoner, "Collective Remembering as a Process of Social Representation," *Cambridge University Press EBooks*, May 1, 2015, 143–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781107323650.013>.

²⁶¹ Sonia El-Nimr, "Oral History and Palestinian Collective Memory," *Oral History* 21, no. 1 (1993): 55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40179316>.

essential in maintaining the collective memory of the Palestinian people and a testament to their resilience in the face of adversity.

The importance of Palestinian storytelling and its role in preserving cultural traditions and identities has been the subject of extensive scholarship. Historically, Palestinian storytelling has been intimately linked to the community's folklore, including the proverbs, legends, and folktales passed between individuals. Muhawi and Kanaana, for example, analyzed the thematic elements of Palestinian folktales and uncovered how these tales reflect individual cognition across the lifecycle, from childhood to old age. By grouping folktales in this way, they effectively demonstrated how individuals interact with wider social contexts throughout their lives, which, they argue, "ground details and the culture from which they arise."²⁶² As Rosemary Sayigh discovered during her research among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the 1970s, individual storytelling was influenced by the culture of the storyteller's origin. She found that even the way a Palestinian tells a story – their accent, for example, or which words they choose when orating – hints at their origin.²⁶³

Additionally, Sayigh found that the storytelling practices found in refugee camps reflected the desire of diasporic Palestinians to retain their cultural and historical memory. Through the same research she conducted in Lebanese refugee camps, she documented their histories, as well as their storytelling practices. In her notable works, including *Palestinian Peasants: From Uprooting to Revolutionaries* (1979) and "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History" (1998), she highlights the importance of documenting the history of each Palestinian village and the attempts of camp residents to regain the places that were either destroyed or forgotten. Sayigh's research also emphasizes the critical role of women in preserving and communicating this history, which she considers a crucial element in the national history of Palestinians. In fact, without their involvement, the historical narrative of

²⁶² Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana, *Speak, Bird, Speak Again: Palestinian Arab Folktales* (University of California Press, 1989), 11.

²⁶³ Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979).

Palestinians would be incomplete, omitting narratives of ongoing resistance efforts.²⁶⁴

In recent years, a number of scholars have observed the efforts of diasporic Palestinians to safeguard their cultural heritage and memory through storytelling. Aboubakr, for instance, identifies different categories of Palestinian storytellers, with the first category pertaining to Palestinian rural areas. As discussed by Al-Sarīsī, this group is particularly vigilant in preserving folkloric elements of Palestinian culture, as evidenced through their decisions in house décor, clothing, customs, songs, and oral traditions. The abrupt relocation and loss of material possessions and security that resulted from al-Nakba significantly affected this social group. The lack of stability, both financially and existentially, correlated with their concern about the threat of losing their local identities. Indeed, there is a wide body of literature that commemorates the Palestinian *falaheen*, which takes a nostalgic glance at their way of life before 1948.²⁶⁵ From these works, we see a focus on those amongst refugees and of the peasant social and economic class. This research looks to build upon that knowledge by including different economic classes existing within the diaspora. Some of my interviewees include those from prominent political and business classes, whose families do not share the experiences of those who lived in refugee camps. In doing so, this research will expand upon these different points of intersection in Palestinian identity and collective memory.

As previously mentioned, the main participants in storytelling within Palestinian groups were usually elderly women, who told stories to their extended family, mainly children, in large groups. In addition to Sayigh's scholarship, El-Nimr conducted research about pre-1948 revolutions in Palestine, unveiling that, in Galilee and other areas governed by Israel, the traditions, habits, and communal marriages within villages remained almost completely preserved from those that took place before 1948. One individual told her that "peasants in general are passive people, they don't accept new things easily, especially if they are imposed

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 58.

²⁶⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 42–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538283>.

upon them. We keep our traditions, and we took a strong hold on them as a way of expressing a refusal of the new life and culture the Israelis are imposing upon us.”²⁶⁶ Through this, storytelling became a vital component in preserving Palestinian life in environments that risk forgetting. Another category of storytellers, according to Aboubakr, pertains to those who lived in the city or Palestinian urban society. Storytelling by those who lived within these contexts has been influenced by modernization; the consequential changes in lifestyle and customs, as compared to those that occurred within rural settings, inevitably influenced the content and delivery of the stories that were transmitted intergenerationally.²⁶⁷ Other groups in Palestine, such as the Bedouins, also share stories intergenerationally, as seen in the work conducted by Henkin.²⁶⁸ Despite their different backgrounds, what is common across all contexts is the apparent desire by Palestinians to make younger generations aware of their collective ancestral narratives. Through storytelling, Palestinians hope to preserve their cultural heritage and memory and pass them on to future generations.

Overall, the intricate practice of storytelling plays a paramount role in preserving the rich and multifaceted memory of Palestine, especially among diasporic communities. From one generation to another, the passing down of stories is a vital act of upholding the collective memory of the Palestinian people and thwarting any attempts at historical erasure. Palestinian storytelling is intertwined with the community’s folklore and reflects the cognitive processes of individuals throughout their lifecycles. It is imbued with the culture of the storyteller’s origin and serves as a means of connecting individuals with their ancestral heritage, fostering a collective identity. While extensive research has been conducted on the efforts of diasporic Palestinians to safeguard their cultural heritage and memory through storytelling, with particular attention given to those among refugees and of the *falaheen* social and economic class, there is a pressing need to expand the analysis to different intersections of Palestinian identity and collective memory,

²⁶⁶ El-Nimr, “Oral History and Palestinian Collective Memory,” 54.

²⁶⁷ Aboubakr, *The Folktales of Palestine*, 19.

²⁶⁸ Roni Henkin, “Narrative Styles of Negev Bedouin Men and Women,” *Oriente Moderno* 19 (80), no. 1 (2000): 59–81, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25817701>.

including those of the prominent political and business classes present in the diaspora.

In seeking to expand our comprehension of Palestinian storytelling and memory, I am to investigate the modern contexts that inform and summon these narratives. What does contemporary Palestinian diasporic storytelling look like? Who are the storytellers, how do they craft their stories, and what are the underlying circumstances that shape the delivery of these narratives? The ensuing inquiries endeavor to widen our understanding of these aspects of intergenerational storytelling within Palestinian families. As seen above, previous scholarship primarily concentrated on the myths that pervade Palestinian culture on a communal level, as well as the expressive storytelling methods that capture the essence of each myth. This study seeks to contribute to this scholarship by unpacking the stories transmitted between family members across generations. While past research underscored the communal myths that characterized Palestinian society, or at the very least, in local or village contexts, this inquiry focuses solely on the family. By centering the family and not the village, I offer a perspective that is currently absent from the academic literature on Palestinian diasporic communities after al-Nakba, one that is deeply personal, intimate, and nuanced. However, this research remains aware of the economic, political, and social origins of each family when contextualizing their storytelling. To this end, this study incorporates a blend of families originating from both rural and urban areas, which is a novel addition to the examination of Palestinian collective memory and heritage (as previously stated, past accounts primarily centered on the *falaheen*, leading to an oversaturation of research on this community).

To my knowledge, research into storytelling in Palestinian families appears to be confined to the recounting of Palestinian myths, folklore, and the oral transmission of culturally-specific knowledge. These narratives effectively capture the beliefs, ideals, and symbolic elements of Palestinian memory and culture, but their content manifests in abstract forms – through talking animals, mythical voyages, or in other

ways that transcend reality.²⁶⁹ The memories shared in the tales that follow, however, hold the same symbolic value as the folklore that originated in Palestinian villages. Yet, the myths and legends that emerged from villages and cities have transformed to encompass migration memories, creating a new genre of Palestinian storytelling that awaits examination. Equally, significant, I argue, are the stories exchanged within the family, with are more concrete and include events with which the audience either shares or attempts to create what Hoffman describes as a “living connection,”²⁷⁰ joining words with experience.

Another conventional approach to documenting Palestinian memory and storytelling has been to conduct interviews and record the oral histories of those who witnessed al-Nakba. In this sense, the traditional storytellers are the survivors themselves, whose accounts provide firsthand perspectives of the memories at hand. While this undertaking is undoubtedly important, the objective of this chapter is not to document the narratives themselves. Rather, this research centers on what is remembered across generations, paying close attention to how a story is transmitted intergenerationally, as well as the psychological traits of both the storyteller and the audience, as observed, remembered, and understood by the recipients of such intergenerational narratives. This generation never lived through the events described to them by their ancestors, but instead imagine them through the stories shared, a process that further contextualizes their understanding of Palestinian collective history and identity. Here, the emphasis is less on the objective truth of a narrative, and more on the nature of its transmission, as well as the impact of its inheritance and adoption by later generations. These narratives not only reinforce identification within the family but also connect the individual to the family’s broader social and cultural networks. Aboubakr, reflecting on her childhood, stated:

As a child who has never lived in Palestine, I grew up learning about my roots and origins through storytelling...The fact that childhood memories have always been associated with my mother and her stories about Palestine has helped me to overcome the amnesia of

²⁶⁹ Farah Aboubakr, “Peasantry in Palestinian Folktales: Sites of Memory, Homeland, and Collectivity,” *Marvels & Tales* 31, no. 2 (2017): 217–32, <https://doi.org/10.13110/marvelstales.31.2.0217>.

²⁷⁰ Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (London: Vintage, 2008).

diaspora. My life was always on the move from one place to another, leaving me completely dependent and seeking with nostalgia to protect my childhood memories, as to me they represented the only comforting and stable source of identification.²⁷¹

Aboubakr's poignant statement exemplifies the powerful emotional connection that individuals forge with the narratives inherited from their families. These stories not only reconnect them with a culture that feels lost to them but also aid in charting their personal and familial timelines. Through concurrent remembering, family members align their narratives, creating a collective identity anchored in shared memory. This reinforces the bonds between family members, and for children, remembering specific elements of inherited narratives serves as a way to connect with their ancestors. The stories that follow provide evidence of this process, contributing to the body of knowledge that outlines the psychological consequences of storytelling within families. This research also incorporates under-represented cultural perspectives, expanding Western psychology and social psychology to include cases outside normative observation. By exploring the experiences of interviewees as Palestinians and members of a diaspora, this study highlights the ongoing intergenerational effects of war and forced displacement on family dynamics and individual identity construction.

In each case, the questions at the forefront of my analysis are as follows: What are the narratives that are remembered within a given context, and how are they perceived by the audience? In exploring the reasons for storytelling or silence, I consider the individual's own interpretation of the storyteller's motivation. This includes whether the storyteller chooses to share the narrative or not, and the reasons behind those choices. Additionally, I consider the impact of familial relationships and the level of exposure to the storyteller on audience perceptions. When exploring the social implications of the narratives, I pay close attention to how the individual understands both the family and the larger Palestinian narrative. Such narratives may shape an individual's social identity and connections to larger communities outside the family. Finally, I examine the personal impact of these narratives, including the meanings derived by the individual and their impact on a

²⁷¹ Aboubakr, *The Folktales of Palestine*, 1.

sense of self and purpose. Through this analysis, I seek to gain a better understanding of how narratives are remembered, transmitted, and transformed within familial and cultural contexts.

The Role of Language

According to Halbwachs, the role of language during storytelling and in the construction of collective memory cannot be overstated. To situate their personal memories within a social framework, individuals must use language to discourse upon them. This discourse connects their opinions to those of their social circle, creating a system of ideas that relate to their experiences.²⁷² Through language, individuals name and categorize their memories and link them to larger, socially constructed thought systems, generating a web of relationships and meanings between themselves and their ingroups. The use of language is particularly critical in communication between the family members discussed in this chapter, as it shapes their felt understanding of one another. The words chosen, tone of voice, and cultural contexts in which family members communicate impact their ability to comprehend and be understood by each other. A common language, or at the very least, knowing common names serves as a tool for conveying information, ideas, and emotions among family members, enabling them to express their thoughts and feelings to each other.

For example, the names of family members possess a certain emotional resonance and set of associations, even after those family members pass away. This can be seen in the case of Taylor's family. He and his siblings were named after family members who passed away before the children were born. "It's about knowing whom we're named after, hearing about our grandparents and where they're from, and what their struggles were,"²⁷³ he told me. A common practice in this family is to share pictures and stories of the deceased family member with younger generations. Doing so keeps their memory alive and connects younger generations to those who are no longer alive but remain emotionally relevant to the family. Taylor, a transgender man, was originally named after his great-

²⁷² Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 53.

²⁷³ Taylor, Interview Number Six, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

grandmother on his mother's side. After transitioning, he began referring to his previous name as his "dead name." In the following quote, he explains the story behind it:

I'm trans. My dead name comes from my mom's side of the family. It's kind of ironic – we make jokes about it – that my name came from my mom's grandmother, so mom's mom's mom. They changed her name because all these terrible things happened when she came to the small village to marry her husband. People died. I mean, it was all pure coincidence, but they looked at her and thought she was cursed, a jinx. She was the only thing that changed in that tiny village, right? So, they changed her name to something God-awful. Her name originally meant flower. So, we joke because my parents gave me that name, and I think it's a jinx. Here I am, trans, changing from the name again. That's what I mean when I say knowing the stories and knowing where those names come from.²⁷⁴

Through this story, Taylor connects his life and narrative to that of his great-grandmother. His decision to change his name, while emotionally significant to him for existential reasons, is also meaningful because of the similarities in narrative structure between his and his great-grandmother's similar histories. Both individuals changed their names in response to either personal or social demands, the knowledge of which allows Taylor to develop a felt relationship between himself and his deceased great-grandmother, despite never meeting her. There is a simultaneous connection between the past and present, the past of which is presently commemorated through name and narrative. Yet, the very thing that is being commemorated – in this case, the name of the deceased relative – is also being forgotten. There are a couple of concepts forgotten through Taylor's decision to change his name: his "dead" name, which signifies his transition from his previous identification as a woman, but also, his grandmother's name, which she also changed for equally personal reasons. By discarding the name, he distances himself from the individual his family envisions of him or expects from him. At the same time, the act of discarding the name ironically pulls him closer to his familial identification, in that he feels he is repeating his ancestor's actions.

The name is accompanied by a narrative he understands because he experienced a similar memory firsthand. In these contexts, Taylor can identify his thoughts with

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

a collective narrative and attain a form of social representation exemplified by it. He attaches one notion, that of his deceased family's narratives, to another, that of his own life experiences, grouping both of them into more complex representations.²⁷⁵ Continuing with this theme, Taylor feels the connection between inherited family names and the personal narratives and personality traits of the latter generations is not limited to himself, but instead is part of a wider phenomenon experienced within his family. He feels that his siblings experience this as well:

It could be a coincidence, but it's crazy to me that those of us, even my extended family, those of us who have been named after people have some sort of visible tie to that individual. For example, my youngest brother is named after my dad's brother. He looks just like him. He is the only one, of the four of us, who does not have dark brown eyes, black hair, and an olive complexion. He is white as paper, has curly red hair, and has honey-brown eyes. I get it, it's genetics and is going to come from somewhere, but it always seems like a weird, universal rule. There's always going to be some kind of tie that brings you back to where your name comes from.

Another crazy example is that we're all kind of musical, to a certain extent. My brother and I, the oldest brother, were both in band class. We played instruments, but we can't sing at all. Neither of my parents can sing. Singing does not run in our family. However, my sister is left-handed. She plays the guitar and is a beautiful singer just like the grandmother she was named after. Do we put this in the universe, by putting our names after someone else? Is it pure coincidence? Or, do we become so obsessed with the story of where our names come from, that we create this?²⁷⁶

In this passage, Taylor ponders the relationship between the namesakes of his family members and their corresponding individual attributes. Taylor observes that his brother, who was named after their uncle, shares a physical resemblance to him, while his sister, who was named after their grandmother, inherited her singing abilities. Through the perspective of Tajfel and Turner, one can observe that Taylor established clear links between family members who share similar names, forming an in-group of sorts between the "juniors" and "seniors" of the family.²⁷⁷ The shared

²⁷⁵ Halbwachs, , *On Collective Memory*.

²⁷⁶ Taylor, Interview Number Six.

²⁷⁷ John Turner and Henri Tajfel, "Social Comparison and Group Interest in Ingroup Favouritism," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 9, no. 2 (April 1979): 187–204, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420090207>.

sense of identity and belonging within the family that arises from these connections reinforces and gives meaning to what may have initially appeared to be happenstance events. While it remains unclear if Taylor's siblings share the same perspective on family names and inheritance processes, he established a deeper meaning to the connection between name and personality. The concept of a link between one's name and identity is hardly new. Many cultures demonstrate a long-standing tradition of believing in the influence of a name on an individual's personality and destiny. Psychologist Carl Jung, for instance, contended that one's name could impact their cognition and interaction with the world.²⁷⁸ David Lester, another researcher, discovered that people tend to live up to the meanings of their names.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, even though Taylor no longer keeps in touch with his family, he still feels a sense of connection to them, particularly when reflecting on family names and other related narratives. Despite the physical separation of family members, a feeling of kinship persists, constructed by both the lived and inherited memories Taylor shares with his family. His personal identity is intertwined with these stories, and he uses them to explain how and why he has embodied certain personality traits. He regards his ancestors' narratives as an extension of his own, using the synchronicities between family members to reinforce his beliefs.

At the same time, and in the narratives gathered, I discovered that the absence of names and other common words could significantly affect the reception of stories and the subsequent sense of familial identity and belonging. In multiple interviews, I heard statements that followed along these lines:

I didn't understand what anyone was saying. They were all speaking Arabic, and I didn't speak it. It was a disconnection. My family on my mom's side is so loving towards me, but I always wanted to be able to connect with them and what they were speaking without having cousins translate for me. Also, when watching the news, one of the levels that made it unsettling was that I couldn't understand what was being said, or even the words that were going across the screen. I had no context.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Carl Jung, *Collected Works. Vol. 12. Psychology and Alchemy* (Pantheon Books, 1953).

²⁷⁹ David Lester, "A Multiple Self Theory of the Mind," *Comprehensive Psychology* 1 (January 2012): 02.09.28.CP.1.5, <https://doi.org/10.2466/02.09.28.cp.1.5>.

²⁸⁰ Arabella, Interview Number Eight.

The individual who shared these feelings with me is a young woman named Arabella. American-born, she was socialized within an English-speaking environment, and as a result, is monolingual. This limitation presents a challenge for her, as her mother's side of the family speaks Arabic, a language that Arabella is unable to understand. The language barrier causes her distress, as she finds it difficult to communicate with her family members and grasp moments that appear concerning, including Palestinian-related news updates playing on television. It is evident that Arabella's inability to speak her family's language created a sense of disconnection from her familial roots, which is exasperated by her sense of isolation as a monolingual individual in a multilingual family. As the interview progressed, she shared how she felt the language barrier impacted her relationship with her mother throughout the past:

With my mom, when I was younger, communication would be so impossible. I honestly thought to myself, is it the language barrier? Is she literally not understanding what I'm saying? That's the extent to which I felt like we miscommunicated. I always thought, if I learned Arabic, I would communicate with her.²⁸¹

Arabella's desire to learn Arabic to improve communication with her mother suggests a strong link between language and identity. In this statement, she expresses a sense of disconnection between herself and her mother due to a perceived language barrier between the two. She believes that the communication issues she experiences with her mother are a product of the language barrier between them and that learning a common language, or Arabic in this instance, could facilitate better communication. This experience highlights how a lack of mutual identification through language can impact communication. She reported feeling that her Arabic skills were not developed enough to communicate effectively with family members. At the same time, she felt that her mother's ability to speak English was also underdeveloped. As a result, she describes her mother as less elaborate than those interviewees whose parents shared a common first language as themselves. This coincided with a perceived lack of understanding of inherited narratives, as well as a lessened sense of connection to the storytellers, a limited synthesis of intergenerational narratives with the self, and, in some cases, a

²⁸¹ Ibid.

confused sense of both familial and Palestinian social identities, as will be discussed in further detail throughout the chapter. Particularly in multicultural or multilingual families, language barriers can drastically impact communication and understanding between family members. Across interviews, a common thread was expressed regarding the challenges of multilingualism and its impact on familial connections. For some participants, the language barrier between themselves and their families limited their ability to share thoughts and feelings. This caused them to feel disconnected from their family and torn between two languages, as found in a study by Aning.²⁸² Even the expression of complex emotions between family members is limited when languages are not shared equally, leading to misunderstandings and tension.

This experience is often unrecognized by those who grew up in both Arabic-speaking cultures and households. However, there is a noteworthy instance in which an individual from an Arab-speaking country shares their experience grappling with language barriers. Yousef, who was born in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and spent much of his formative years in Arabic-speaking countries, found himself conversing in English with his mother at home. Because his mother spent much of her upbringing in the United States, Yousef claims, she feels most comfortable speaking English. Yousef reflects on this linguistic dynamic, stating:

I spoke English, so I never encountered any difficulties in spaces where English was the prevailing language. I feel more at ease expressing myself in English, as it was the language I shared with my mother. I felt unsure to which level I could claim my Palestinian identity, given that there were people around me whom I thought of as being more Palestinian than myself.²⁸³

While Yousef refers to a broader theme of language and communication in this statement, it still underscores the significance of language when communicating comfortably and effectively in different linguistic and cultural settings. In this case, as with many others, Yousef's linguistic preferences shape his self-perception. When it comes to his sense of identity, Yousef experiences a sense of uncertainty

²⁸² Kailen Sallander, "Identity and Intergenerational Language Barriers," (Sociology Honors Program Thesis, 2020), <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/pr76f8867>.

²⁸³ Yousef, Interview Number One, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

in fully embracing his Palestinian heritage. He perceives others around him as embodying a stronger sense of Palestinian identity, which raises questions about the extent to which he can authentically claim his own. This uncertainty is, of course, tied to the role of language as one factor that impacts his connection to his cultural identity. In this case, the perceived absence of a language possesses the power to validate or negate an individual's profound ties to their cultural roots.

At the same time, one must acknowledge that the sense of being misunderstood surpasses the mere lack of shared words. Arabella and Yousef's cases also underscore the significance of a shared language that extends beyond the transmission of thoughts and information. It assumes a role as a foundational element of shared identity. When this foundation is absent, it exacerbates feelings of disconnection and isolation. Each testimony provides a vivid illustration of the predicaments faced by those whose first language differs from those spoken within the household or larger community, where a sense of exclusion lingers on the part of the individual. An intriguing dimension emerges in these cases, characterized by the dynamics of ingroup and outgroup identification, amplifying their perception of misunderstanding. It is entirely possible that their inability to forge a complete connection with their family and its narrative might be attributed to acts of projection and the complexities of social identity. Through the lens of social identity theory, we can discern that a common language serves as a unifying force and source of ingroup identification. It is where these individuals lack full command of the Arabic language that they perceive a crucial element of their Palestinian identity to be missing, rendering them underdeveloped or incomplete members of the ingroup. As such, they may harbor a sense of inadequacy in comprehending Arabic narratives, further compounding their estrangement from family and cultural heritage.

Building further on this concept, it is important to acknowledge language is not the sole determining factor in the dynamics of storytelling. Various elements, both psychological and social, interplay to shape the nuances of communication.

Returning to my interview with Taylor, we encounter a case where understanding Arabic is not the primary concern. While he and his father do not share a common language, their bond transcended linguistic barriers: "He and I would talk about

absolutely anything. He was the one who mostly taught me what I know about my culture and history.”²⁸⁴ Taylor’s father, born in Jaffa, possesses Arabic as his first language. Upon marrying Taylor’s mother, he relocated to the United States, where he has since resided while raising his family. As previously discussed, the presence of common names within this family interweaves narratives and life experiences, forging a shared sense of identity and storytelling. It can be argued that when the possibility of a shared language is impeded, individuals find alternative ways to establish connections through shared words and understandings, as exemplified by the significance of family names. Remarkably, despite the divergence in their first languages, Taylor does not report any miscommunication with his father, at least in the realm of family storytelling. In fact, as we shall delve into further in this chapter, Taylor’s past relationship with his father evokes a sense of closeness. These sentiments starkly contrast with his relationship with his mother, despite sharing English as their first language. The historical strain between Taylor and his mother, he claims, can be attributed to ideological and personality differences. It is worth noting that Taylor felt that his mother’s work commitments limited her presence with her family, whereas his father exhibited greater involvement in the children’s lives, placing less emphasis on his professional obligations. This anomaly introduces an additional facet of family dynamics that influences miscommunication, surpassing the language-related issues previously outlined. In this particular case, the bond between Taylor and his father transcended the absence of shared language, superseding any potential hindrances to effective communication.

In contemplating the intricate dynamics of communication between families, it becomes evident that, while a language barrier certainly contributes to miscommunication and misunderstandings between family members, it is not entirely the root of the issue. Rather, mismatched languages interact with a lack of shared identification, creating a complex interplay between the two. The severity of inhibitions caused by apparent language barriers is subjective and influenced by one’s perception of distance and connection between family members. When

²⁸⁴ Taylor, Interview Number Six.

individuals already perceive a strained relationship with a family member, the language barrier intensifies this sense of strain. Conversely, those who feel close to a particular family member may not view language differences as an obstacle to communication and understanding. Therefore, the factors that shape storytelling and its reception, including the conveyance of narratives and the construction of meaning, are intricate and multifaceted. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, we will delve into these cases, exploring themes of narrative elaboration and omission, as we strive to unravel the complexities of family communication.

Elaborative Storytelling

We will begin with one end of the spectrum, with family members who spoke openly about their experiences either during or after al-Nakba. These narratives of war, exile, and survival permeated the lives of our interviewees from a young age. Such narratives were woven into their lives, manifesting in conversations around the dinner table, in the televised images of occupation and resistance, in the photographs adorning the walls – images of departed or estranged family members alongside embroidered depictions of the Dome of the Rock or the map of pre-1948 territory lines. Objects such as documents and old keys served as tangible reminders of lost homes, bearing witness to their ownership. Each instance, each object, carried a story that sought to convey meaning and understanding of moments not just passed but ripped away. Within these families, the legacy of al-Nakba, whether personally experienced or inherited, seamlessly blended into the fabric of this generation's upbringing. From an early age, some interviewees were aware that their parents and grandparents endured something “bad,” evoking painful reactions whenever those memories were discussed. However, the full depth and significance of these experiences remained elusive, and they were not poised to investigate further. In contrast, there were family members who shared their narratives less candidly. Certain interviewees recalled instances when their relatives purposefully conveyed autobiographical and familial memories to younger generations. This deliberate sharing may be driven by various motives, such as the storyteller's desire for ideological transmission or to ensure the preservation of memories necessary to justify ideologies. In these cases, participants displayed a

clear understanding of their family histories, although the degree to which they incorporate inherited memories into their sense of self varies.

Henry

In one case, there was incessant talk about Palestine, al-Nakba, and familial legacy. “When our families get together,” Henry tells me, “Palestine will always come up.”²⁸⁵ Henry recalls that growing up, his mother, grandmother, and father talked about their lives before and after al-Nakba constantly, as well as their family’s political involvement during those times. Henry’s family, including his great-grandfather, were heavily active in Palestinian politics, a fact that highlights the deep roots of the conflict and the importance of understanding the impact of its historical trajectory on the lives of those involved. It is only natural that, given his family’s legacy, Henry’s family continued to discuss these topics in their daily lives.

However, despite both families living through al-Nakba, he did not inherit his family’s survival narratives. When asked about this part of his family’s history, he was unable to recall details. This, he claims, is due to his family’s privileged positions throughout history, which allowed them to migrate from Palestine more comfortably than other refugees. “They had connections, they had money,” he said, “they could do what they needed to do.”²⁸⁶ Even so, he believes that his great-grandfather’s status caused his family to experience al-Nakba “before anybody else,” as his political involvement meant his family was predisposed to the issues faced by Palestinians after 1948. At the same time, because their wealth relieved them from focusing on basic needs after al-Nakba, such as the search for food, water, and shelter, Henry’s family was able to concentrate on alternative priorities, such as their heavy involvement in the politics of the region. As such, these were the stories he inherited. “I was brought up with these stories,” he told me, “stories about the King of Egypt, about Abdel-Nasser, stories about al-Mahdi Yousefh, stories about assassination attempts. That’s what I grew up with.”²⁸⁷ His father shared stories about his own father, who, according to Henry, had “the money to be able to buy all of the most valuable parts of Jordan.” He goes on to

²⁸⁵ Henry, Interview Number Four, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

share other details that support his claim for status, such as how his father's family was one of the first families in Palestine to own cars.

Many of the stories received by Henry came from his grandmother, who was the daughter of a prominent political figure. She lived with Henry before passing away when he was sixteen and recalls sharing a very good relationship with his grandmother. "She'd always tell people good things about me," he said, "When I wanted something that my parents were refusing to get me, she'd offer to get it for me." He feels that his grandmother used her stories to guide his own behaviors and sense of purpose: "I also grew up with her trying to tell me, or telling me every day, that I was going to take in [my great-grandfather's] footsteps." His grandmother held her father in extremely high regard, described by Henry as "a sense of grandeur for her father," which he felt was redirected towards him:

She'd always call me a prince. Just constantly getting that on a day-to-day basis, this subconscious effect that has, the confidence that builds in a person, the ambition it creates, that is, at the end of the day, one of my core purposes. It's been one of the most constant threats in my life, the ambition to free Palestine.²⁸⁸

Henry feels a strong attachment to the way he was raised and the language his grandmother used to describe him. It is possible that his attachment to the label of "prince" that his grandmother gave him is a self-defining memory, which Fivush claims are fundamental to his self-understanding.²⁸⁹ In this case, the label "prince" was not only a nickname but also a way to instill a sense of confidence and ambition. Additionally, Henry's desire to free Palestine appears to be intertwined with his sense of self and personal narrative.

Even though Henry claims that his postmemory does not take the usual form as those found in many descendants of survivors – in that of anger, despair, or guilt – it is still present. As a result of their constant relocation, his family frequently experienced uprooting. This led them to become very risk-averse, always "looking behind their back just in case something happens and trying to make sure they have security." Despite recognizing that his family did not suffer from certain types

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Robyn Fivush, "The Development of Autobiographical Memory," *Annual Review of Psychology* 62, no. 1 (January 10, 2011): 559–82, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.121208.131702>.

of insecurity commonly found among refugee narratives, which he accounts to their privilege, he acknowledges that they still suffered from insecurity all the same. This left a psychological impact on their decision-making and priorities. “That’s why we have four passports,” he says, “who the hell has four passports? They’re afraid that something might happen and they’re not going to be able to use one, that it won’t be valid anymore. It’s always having a backup.”²⁹⁰ Henry’s family history, particularly their experiences with the instability that resulted from their participation in Palestinian politics, has had a lasting impact on his life through postmemory. In this instance, it manifests in the form of a constant sense of insecurity, a fear that something might happen to disrupt the life his family built. This fear is justified by a history of uncertainty, which is a common theme among those interviewed. Henry describes his family as “risk-averse,” always anticipating potential threats and taking measures to mitigate them, as is seen in their decision to obtain multiple passports. Now, having a backup plan is crucial to his family’s sense of safety and is deeply ingrained in their psyche.

Further psychological ramifications of trauma are present as well, as Henry observed in his mother: “My mom has the trauma of living through the civil war in Lebanon,” he told me, “She’d tell me stories of times where she’d be visiting friends and would have to run behind bins, to wait for the shooting to stop.”²⁹¹ The mother’s experiences with trauma became evident through her mannerisms, which included the exaggerated responses to surprises he observed as a child: “Whenever I used to surprise her, like say ‘boo!’ or something, she’d really react to it.”²⁹² In this case, his mother’s trauma manifested in her body and psyche, as evidenced by her exaggerated bodily reactions to her son’s surprises. These physical and emotional responses are commonplace among those who survived trauma during their childhood.²⁹³ Henry’s description of his mother’s behavior also underscores the generational transmission of trauma, as he notes that her reactions to surprises persisted throughout his own childhood. This suggests that

²⁹⁰ Henry, Interview Number Four.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Abdel Aziz Thabet and Panos Vostanis, “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Reactions in Children of War: A Longitudinal Study,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 24, no. 2 (February 2000): 291–98, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0145-2134\(99\)00127-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0145-2134(99)00127-1).

the trauma his mother endured was not simply a personal experience that she could forget, but rather a condition that continued to shape her interactions with the world and her relationship with others. While Henry does not claim to have inherited this form of trauma, the knowledge clearly impacts him, as he is acutely aware that, as his mother's child, he feels compelled to grapple with the legacy of the ongoing Nakba in his own life.

Additionally, his family's legacy during al-Nakba supersedes his own narrative, inasmuch that he is consistently reminded by family members of his role in continuing or redeeming that narrative. However, he does not seem to be traumatized by the experience. "It's a nice thought," he claims, implying a positive association. In this case, his family's legacy plays a significant role in the development of his own life story, and his connection to it has helped him develop a sense of purpose. Henry feels that he and his family possess a unique tendency to demonstrate a deep connection to the family name and legacy, one that, in his own words, comes from a place "beyond the money, the wealth, and the power."²⁹⁴ In fact, he identifies his descendency from his grandfather as the reason for his family's sense of drive and purpose.

His great-grandfather's legacy, he feels, motivates him and his family on an existential level: "When I look at my mom, her brothers, my grandma and her siblings and their children, I feel like you get the sense of this sincerity or this connection to something deeper, especially those who are connected to him, especially those who seek out the connection to him."²⁹⁵ It is clear that Henry's narrative is shaped by his relationship with his family, particularly with his great-grandfather, who he views as a source of inspiration. This connection to his family's past gives his life a sense of purpose. Through his family's narrative, Henry can construct a positive sense of self that is grounded in a deep connection to his family's history and values.

The grand legacy inherited from his family, Henry claims, fills the family with an immense sense of pride. While Henry shares this admiration, he also feels that this

²⁹⁴ Henry, Interview Number Four.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

sense of pride causes pressure to conform to familial expectations, and represent himself and behave in socially-appropriate ways: “You can’t do certain things because people will say things about you. Like, me having long hair, that’s a big no, especially on my dad’s side.”²⁹⁶ Despite this, Henry also recognizes the significance of these narratives in shaping his sense of purpose and providing a more desirable alternative to the disorientating mental state he experienced as he transitioned into adulthood:

I went down a path of trying to figure out myself. I felt lost in myself, very lost in myself. I went through depression, anxiety, and had a dark phase. I’d like to think it’s just part of the natural vicissitudes of life. It really made me start to question who I was and how I defined myself. After that, I really delved into my inner psyche and into trying to figure out a lot of different things, what made me function, and what would allow me to be the best person that I could be.²⁹⁷

At this point in Henry’s life, he experienced a period of self-exploration and introspection, which is indicative of his emerging sense of identity during his adolescence and young adulthood. Henry’s experience of feeling lost in himself and going through depression and anxiety is not uncommon during this stage of development, as individuals seek to understand their place in the world and define themselves.²⁹⁸ His period of introspection, he claims, led to a deeper understanding of his identity and purpose. His exploration of his inner psyche and attempt to understand what makes him function is apparent, and he feels the experience allowed him to develop skills that persist into the present:

I have the privilege of being able to search for my family history. But even then, there’s the wider political history and the wider history of the events that transpired. We can make a conscious effort to find that information, figure it out, and understand what the actual realities are. At the end of the day, for me, that trauma, that’s where we are today... We have to understand the circumstances and why they are where they are. For me, that’s how I connect to it on a day-to-day. I find security in it. I feel like it’s something I can engage with, which only Palestinians can engage with...

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Erik H Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London: Vintage Digital, 1950).

When I get lost, I go back to it. With that, there's a sense of purpose that comes with it, right? My Palestinian identity makes me feel good about myself. That's what's always been rooted.²⁹⁹

Based on this quote, it is clear that Henry places a great deal of importance on understanding and connecting himself to his great-grandfather's legacy and his identity as a Palestinian, both of which are intimately intertwined. He acknowledges his privilege in being able to search for his family history, but also recognizes the larger political and historical context that surrounds his inherited and lived experiences. Henry's desire to understand his family's history and the wider political history involving Palestine is also indicative of his interest in his cultural heritage, which further shapes his social identity. His emphasis on finding security and a sense of purpose through his Palestinian identity is noteworthy, in that it highlights the importance of his Palestinian identity in reinforcing his psychological well-being. This suggests a strong narrative identity, as Henry is actively constructing a story about himself and his place in the world based on his family's stories and his Palestinian heritage.³⁰⁰ His use of the term "faith" in relation to his identity and sense of purpose suggests a deeply held belief in the importance of this aspect of his identity, demonstrating narrative coherence, or a sense of completeness in the narrative that allows him to draw meaning from past events in his family's history.³⁰¹ This identity provides Henry with a sense of security and purpose, even at times when he feels lost or uncertain.

Raghad

In the following case, the individual interviewed possesses a profound awareness of the power of stories in shaping perception and association. Raghad and her family trace their roots back to the Old City of Jerusalem, where their ancestors

²⁹⁹ Henry, Interview Number Four.

³⁰⁰ Jordan A. Booker, Robyn Fivush, and Matthew E. Graci, "Narrative Identity Informs Psychological Adjustment: Considering Three Themes Captured across Five Time Points and Two Event Valences," *Journal of Personality* 102, no. 3 (September 2, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12668>.

³⁰¹ Majse Lind, Salome Vanwoerden, Francesca Penner, & Carla Sharp, "Narrative Coherence in Adolescence: Relations with Attachment, Mentalization, and Psychopathology," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 102, no. 3 (April 16, 2019): 380–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2019.1574805>.

lived for generations. Currently residing in Canada, Raghad reflects upon her Palestinian identity and family history peculiar:

I come from Jerusalem and might have a different perspective. I never lived through war, displacement, or anything that is so violent. I was born and raised there. None of my family members, even my extended family members, none of them was involved in politics at any point. Growing up in Jerusalem there were no wars. We were never taken to jail. So, I maybe I'm not your traditional Palestinian, but I have happy memories, thankfully.³⁰²

Raghad's statements demonstrate her perception of her experience as an alternative to what she regards as the predominant narrative of Palestinian life after al-Nakba. She contrasts her own happy memories, which she considers atypical for Palestinians past and present, with the prevailing image of historical violence, displacement, and political resistance. Nevertheless, she remains aware of the complex history between Israel and Palestine and acknowledges the negative impact it had on her life: "But, there is still part of me that grew up realizing that these are the bad guys. These are the people occupying us. They don't like us. They hate us. They don't speak our language. They force us."³⁰³ Though Raghad does not claim to have personally experienced occupation, animosity, communication breakdowns, and a sense of oppression, she recognizes these instances as integral aspects of the Palestinian narrative. Since she did not gain this knowledge firsthand, nor did she claim to inherit it through family narratives, it suggests that Raghad observed the more overt aspects of occupation through sources beyond her own upbringing.

Unlike many participants in this research, Raghad finds herself constrained by the law growing up, unable to outwardly manifest any forms of Palestinian nationalism or represent her heritage. Consequentially, her understanding of identity and history as a Palestinian assumes a nuanced form that surpasses superficial demonstrations of affiliation. "You know that you're Palestinian," she said, "but you don't practice it. You say this to your kids, and you say this to your family, and

³⁰² Raghad, Interview Number Ten, interview by Kristine Sheets, March 2022.

³⁰³ Ibid.

when you read and news, you are on the Palestinian side of the story. But, you don't practice it, you don't act upon it."³⁰⁴ Instead of assimilating cultural and historical knowledge through commemorative acts, like waving the Palestinian flag or wearing a kufiyah, Raghad's learning took place primarily through local storytelling:

Usually, you would hear stories. You would know. Jerusalem was a very small city, and now I'm talking about a neighborhood in that city, right? So, growing up there, you will definitely know certain stories that happened in that particular house, or in that particular area. You're surrounded by Palestinians. It's not like they don't exist anymore, right?³⁰⁵

Raghad's formative years unfolded amidst a rich backdrop of stories that shaped her understanding of her family's Palestinian experiences. It was through these stories, which she shared throughout the remainder of our time together, that the weight of occupation became increasingly apparent. Reflecting on the narratives passed down to her by her family, she recounted an anecdote shared by her father:

Remember, I told you Jerusalem was divided, right? The division was actually physical, so there was actually no man's land. No one can enter. There was a gate that connected the two sides together. It's called Mandelbaum Gate. The uncle of my dad used to be the soldier standing on that gate from the Jordanian side. My dad used to tell me memories, about how he used to go to the gate and get some candies.

In my memory, I would imagine Mandelbaum Gate in my head. In Jerusalem, if you drive along the no man's land now, of course, now the gate does not exist, because Israel united the two sides.

If you drive along the no man's gate now, you will find a little clock memorial to the gate, in the middle of the street, in one of the main streets of Jerusalem. My dad used to say there's where Mandelbaum Gate was, and I would make these memories up in my head. I would imagine the setting myself. When I was doing my studies, this story kept coming back and forth to my head, to the extent that I actually

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

Googled Mandelbaum Gate. I actually saw its pictures, and was like, finally I can see it.³⁰⁶

As stated by Raghad, Mandelbaum Gate no longer exists; a clock tower sits in its place. Raghad's awareness of the existence of Mandelbaum Gate stems from the story shared by her father. Through his narrative, she envisions a life marked by military occupation, wherein her father and uncle were affected. Although Raghad asserts that her family was not profoundly impacted by occupation, their presence remains deeply intertwined within this historical juncture, as they navigated its local terrains while following through on their everyday lives. At the same time, this account, from the outset, confirms Raghad's original claim. It challenges the perceived or commonly accepted Palestinian narrative, which often emphasizes the collective experience of suffering and exile. As seen here, not all Palestinian narratives are bound by trauma, even when grappling with factors that could potentially be traumatic, such as occupation and the lived realities of war. The fact that her father would visit her uncle, seeking a small moment of happiness while her uncle dutifully fulfilled his military responsibilities, encapsulates a pocket of innocence amidst conflict. It underscores the pursuit of happiness irrespective of circumstance, manifested through a child's navigation through "no man's land" in the pursuit of candy.

The second half of Raghad's statement demonstrates her own comprehension of the interplay between narrative, place, and time. Through her own words, it becomes apparent that Raghad's imaginative constructions both shape and are shaped by *les lieux des memoires* – the representations of places, spaces, and objects that no longer exist in the present but endure in essence through memory and commemoration.³⁰⁷ While she comprehends the current manifestation of this location as a clock tower, she recognizes that its identity and narrative have evolved over time. The memories associated with this space imbue it with deeper significance than what meets the eye initially. This depth comprises two intertwined layers: one, the stories relayed to her by her father, and two, the broader

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, no. 26 (1989): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>.

contextualization of Palestinian collective or localized knowledge, which further informs and shapes the meanings she attaches to the site. Thus, in addition to the inherited narratives passed down within her family, she reconstructs this scene using external images, facts, and details shared with her. It results in a multifaceted and somewhat hazy imagining, contextualized by a multitude of factors. When she finally undertook the endeavor to research the gate and produce its photograph, she substituted her own imaginings with a tangible image of the gate. While this image is inevitably reconstructed each time Raghad contemplates the Mandelbaum Gate, therefore imagined, it further contextualizes the scene that unfolds in her mind whenever she contemplates the accompanying story. This process bears resemblance to Hirsch's observations on postmemory, where descendants of Holocaust survivors employed familial narratives and photographs to construct imaginary scenes of survival within concentration camps.³⁰⁸ In this sense, although Raghad distinguishes her story from what she deems as typically Palestinian, she nevertheless partakes in the imaginative process of postmemory, akin to the postmemorial imaginings of other Palestinians, both within Palestine and the diaspora. These imaginings are saturated with narratives of occupation, wherein everyday life is punctuated by the intrusion of military existence.³⁰⁹

Raghad proceeded to recount another narrative, focusing on her mother and the lineage on her maternal side. A Jerusalem native, her mother attended the university at Ramallah. Presently, the intercity commute for Raghad and her family necessitates sourcing a pass to navigate through checkpoints, a timely process that Raghad describes as "torture." Without the checkpoints, she explains, the journey between the cities could be accomplished in a mere twenty-minute drive, and with much less hassle: "My mom always used to tell us how she used to wear her high heels, and then go on something called the express bus, that will take you

³⁰⁸ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames : Photography Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 2016).

³⁰⁹ We can find further evidence of this phenomenon in Lebanese contexts. Craig Larkin explores urban memoryscapes in Lebanon, as well as how they influence the postmemory of Lebanese youth. Craig Larkin, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past* (London: Routledge, 2012), <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9780203137970>.

straight from Jerusalem to her college and then come back and forth.”³¹⁰ At the same period, her mother’s family operated a small grocery store in the Old City:

The shop is still there until today. My cousin takes care of it, but then he transformed it into an IT shop, repairing computers and all that. I also keep imagining my grandfather, from my mother's side, sitting in that little shop in Jerusalem. I know where the shop is now. I usually go there and greet my cousin, and we usually talk. I keep imagining my grandpa sitting there, and how the shop was filled with food, people come and go and recognize him.³¹¹

In Raghad’s account, we once again encounter the interplay between her personal connection to specific locations and the multifaceted layers of its past forms.

Through her story of her mother’s commute to Jerusalem, she describes the mounting complexity and frustration that permeates daily life for Raghad and her family. Within this recollection, a nostalgic yearning for simpler times emerges, times untouched by the demands that now define her existence. To this past, she juxtaposes the inadequacies of the present. Particularly intriguing is the mention of her mother’s choice to don heels, a subtle yet evocative detail that unveils her mother’s lack of necessity for more practical footwear typically mandated by the arduous demands of passing through checkpoints. Within this context, Raghad unveils a transient juncture where her family experienced a greater sense of liberation, enjoying unrestricted movement and an ability to lower their guard. This freedom allowed for seemingly trivial expressions of agency, such as opting for high heels as a fashion choice for a day at school.

In her exploration of urban spaces, Raghad intertwines her everyday encounters with a level of engagement that reflects the narratives she received from her family. These narratives infused her childhood experiences within the Old City with a significance that extends beyond the immediate and the current. By revisiting these locations, a fusion of lived present and inherited memories animates her mind. Temporal boundaries blur as past and present coexist, allowing her to engage in a reflective examination of the shop space each time she visited her cousin. In this interplay, Raghad’s gaze looks backward into the past to make sense of the

³¹⁰ Raghad, Interview Number Ten, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2022.

³¹¹ Ibid.

present. The operation of her cousin's IT and computer repair shop in the present moment is made possible because their grandfather created the space beforehand, which he was able to take over in his stead. The interconnectedness of ancestral legacies and present realities finds resonances in Raghad's contemplations, illuminating the intricate dynamics of space, time, and familial connections that shape her understanding of her surroundings.

Raghad possesses a keen awareness of the intricate interplay of time and experience that permeates her everyday existence. Reflecting on this interconnectedness, she shared with me, "My own experience in the space now maybe relates to what I was told about it before." This heightened perception is deeply engrained in her being, as a result of her formative training as an architect. "I can see the value in being an architect," she told me, "I can see how I see things differently."³¹² As a student, she diligently examined the architectural elements and physical manifestations of space, recognizing their impact on shaping human experiences and contributing to broader social and psychological phenomena. Her academic pursuits focused on the study of cities and their transformative processes, delving into the phenomenological realm of these urban landscapes. Rejecting the notion of space as a passive backdrop, Raghad actively seeks to unravel its various roles and functions. This mindset undeniably spills over into her everyday life, permeating her interactions and observations. Her scholarly education lends an additional dimension to her understanding of family narratives, intertwining them irreversibly with the spatial realms occupied by her and her family. In this intricate web of perception, her training as an architect merge with her personal experiences, enriching her comprehension of both the physical and imagined spaces that shape her life.

Within the narratives shared above, three distinct elements come to the fore: the gate, the commute, and the alluded-to shop. These physical manifestations serve as sites where stories unfold, layered with the amalgamation of her professional training, societal influences, familial narratives, and her own subjective encounters. Raghad astutely acknowledges her presence within the current spatial context

³¹²ibid.

recognizing that her present experiences may be subtly shaped by the narratives she has inherited about these places. Furthermore, her research endeavors involve conducting interviews with family members, delving deeper into the intricate interplay between space and lived experience. Through this multifaceted exploration, she demonstrates a heightened level of awareness and a more nuanced capacity for introspection regarding familial narratives and their impact on the dimensions of her existence. Her engagement stands out, illuminating a heightened sense of understanding that surpasses that of other participants in the interview. Of course, her reflective abilities also applied to her understanding of narrative and her personal and social identities:

It's not only my family. My family is part of a bigger community. Speaking about Palestine, it's those different bits and pieces that you collect from your own experiences, from what you've been told, from what you read, from your surroundings; it's a mix of all of that, and how it interacts, It's an ongoing thing. It's not something that you take and then you store in your hand, and then you leave it, so when someone asks you about it you just open the box. I'm still trying to find my way as I'm talking to you. That has to do a lot with my experience, now, as an adult in a different part of the world, and the guy who I married, and all that.³¹³

Inherent in Raghad's capacity for reflection is her profound comprehension of narrative and the intricate interplay between personal and social identities. She openly acknowledges that the stories ingrained in her upbringing wielded a deep influence on her Palestinian identity. "It's an ongoing process," she explains, emphasizing that this process remains dynamic and far from stagnant. For Raghad, the only avenue to apprehending her own self, her familial roots, and the milieu in which they are situated resides within the realm of personal connections and narratives. No written records or external sources offer a historical account of her family's past. As she previously asserted, her very sense of self and her history as a Palestinian hinge upon the stories conveyed to her by those who surround her. Over time, her comprehension of her family, and consequentially her own being, underwent transformation, shaped by both the narratives relayed to her and

³¹³ Ibid.

her own observations and experiences. This transformative trajectory unfurled throughout her formative years, as she spent her childhood in the Old City, wherein she absorbed the stories heard during her youth. As she grew older, she found that she began to question and reassess these narratives, embarking on a journey of forging her own interpretations while scrutinizing the world in which she participates. It is within this broader tapestry of experience that she situates herself, and labels herself as a Palestinian.

Mohammed

The topics discussed during reminiscing, which usually pertain to people and relationships, reflect the values that define those relationships. As such, these conversations serve to maintain social identities, whether they be familial identities or larger social constructs, thus highlighting the significant ways through our identities are connected to others. Put simply, having a shared history ideologically and emotionally connects family members, as well as social groups, through time. In familial contexts, one way of creating a shared history is through the communication of intergenerational narratives, which are the lived experiences of older relatives, as expressed to younger generations through the autobiographical storytelling of parents or grandparents.

Indeed, respondents did agree that, to understand themselves, they situated their lives within their families' histories. Additionally, who shared more time reminiscing with family members about their collective pasts, they demonstrated a heightened sense of self and placement within the larger narrative, so long as no other factors ruptured that connection. Those who do spend less time reminiscing with family members about their collective pasts, while they still demonstrated a sense of self-awareness, which they attributed to other factors, their sense of self was not scaffolded by larger familial contexts in the same way as the former group.

Faisal

Faisal's ten-year sojourn in the United Arab Emirates met an abrupt end when his father lost his job. "He was fired because he was a Palestinian refugee," he told

me.³¹⁴ In the Emirates, Faisal explained, Palestinians are subject to perpetual outsider status, barred from obtaining citizenship, regardless of whether they were born within its borders. This lack of citizenship restricts employment prospects, limiting access to positions exclusively reserved for citizens. Faisal came to the unfortunate conclusion that his father could not keep his job due to his outsider status as a Palestinian. Ironically, his father found himself bereft of the very citizenship that he supplied for others or, in Faisal's words, "he worked in immigration and couldn't get citizenship."³¹⁵ As his father searched for new employment, Faisal and his mother sought refuge in a camp close to the borders of Lebanon. The camp, as he shared, evoked within him a lasting impression, engendered by the resolute aspirations of its elder tenants, who clung fervently to the belief in reclaiming their long-lost homes in Palestine. "Old people still had hope," he said, "as shocking as it is. I think it's really bittersweet, how they still have this inkling of a thought that things will finally be okay, and we will go back to where we were born and where we were supposed to grow up."³¹⁶ After two years, his father amassed enough funds to relocate Faisal and his mother to the United Kingdom, where they have since created new lives.

Faisal's roots trace back to the village of Akka, Palestine. He exuded a sense of palpable pride about this fact, evident in his insistence that our interview partly took place at a restaurant where we could enjoy *akkawi* cheese. This served as the backdrop for Faisal's poignant narratives. As we ate, he regaled me with stories about his father's family, offering a glimpse into their modest beginnings:

We were villagers. We were farmers. That's all we'd known. I think he had maybe four sheep, six odd goats, or something like that. We even had horses. My family was quite big, in terms of title, in the village that we lived in. My granddad was the village elder. That continued on when he lived in the refugee camp in Lebanon.³¹⁷

Curiously, though Faisal's recall of his family's agrarian background came forth with clarity, he admitted that his knowledge fell short when it came to the narrative of their departure from Palestine during al-Nakba. It is unclear why he could

³¹⁴ Faisal, Interview Number Three, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

summon inherited memories before al-Nakba more easily than the survival story itself. It is possible that certain elements of the story were deliberately edited by either himself or by earlier generations. It is also possible that these details simply went unmentioned to him, or unprobed by him, or that the story was too painful for Faisal's family to share. It is even possible that Faisal simply forgot. Conversely, given his emphasis on familial possessions and the social standing they commanded in the village, it is conceivable that the family chose to accentuate those aspects that engendered a sense of pride and fulfillment, particularly when told in environments rife with indignation or dissatisfaction. Faisal's emphasis on his grandfather's enduring social status, even in exile, demonstrates such longing to continue a legacy despite displacement. Such narratives, I discovered, often assumed these themes, as seen in the stories shared by other interviewees. Henry's family, for example, placed emphasis on the previous generations' triumphant or famous exploits, sidestepping any pitfalls and disappointments along the way, thus ensuring Henry's reverence for his ancestors.

Despite not knowing the intimate details of his family's al-Nakba story, Faisal nevertheless unearthed a story that resonated deeply with him:

She was in the main city. As she was walking back there was a bunch of people running away, and they were saying that the Israelis were coming. They had overrun the village and come to build over everything. The UN Partition Plan already gave them the land. They already had everything.³¹⁸

This story, which Faisal stumbled upon while browsing social media, serves as a connection between his family's life in Palestine and their subsequent exile. Here, he engages with external narratives – external in the sense that they occurred outside his or his family's lived experiences – to fill the gaps in his own understanding and imagine the experiences his family might have endured. Like Raghad's efforts to research Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem, both individuals draw upon broader societal representations of history, underscoring the ways in which individual memory, cognition, and the construction of familial recollection are shaped by social representations. Moreover, these instances raise thought-

³¹⁸ Ibid.

provoking questions regarding the influence of media on imagination and the construction of narratives. It is intriguing how something as serendipitous as a stranger's social media post has the potential to profoundly impact one's psychology and social alignment. However, unlike Raghad, whose stories encompass a life persisting under occupation, Faisal envisions a life ruptured by displacement. Thus, as he immerses himself in the narrative presented online, he recognizes himself and his family embedded within these tales. This phenomenon echoes the familiar dynamics of postmemory, in which the offspring of survivors employ media to explore or visibly depict their ancestral traumas.

As is often the case with Palestinian families, the migratory trajectory of Faisal's family after departing from their homeland traversed various countries. This perennial state of uprootedness, spanning across four generations, undeniably imprinted upon Faisal's life:

We've traveled from place to place, whether it be from Palestine to Lebanon, or Palestine to Kuwait, then the Emirates. I was a first-generation immigrant. My parents were first-generation immigrants, and my grandparents and great-grandparents were first-generation immigrants. Now, I'm here, and I'm a British citizen. My kids will be British citizens. They won't be first-generation immigrants, because they will finally have a place that they call theirs rightfully, within the law.³¹⁹

In this statement, we discern the detrimental effects of the family's constant state of rootlessness on Faisal. Through his upbringing in refugee camps and the narratives passed down by his family, he comprehends the vulnerability that comes with being Palestinian, unprotected by any governing authority, as well as the ensuing suffering that accompanies it. In his formative years, he witnessed his father lose employment due to a lack of citizenship in the Emirates, leading to the loss of their home and his own residence in a refugee camp. Amidst the camp's confines, he encountered elderly individuals who spent their lives burdened by a sense of displacement, yearning for a return that eluded them. It is evident that Faisal aspires to break this cycle within his own lifetime. "Instead of the American Dream, there is a refugee dream, where we build better lives for ourselves," he told

³¹⁹ Ibid.

me, “It’s all about living a better life than your parents did.”³²⁰ Now living in the United Kingdom, he aspires to provide his potential children with the luxuries and political rights bestowed by British citizenship. For Faisal, this will ensure they possess a place they can genuinely call home, a privilege denied to his family, and other Palestinians like him, for generations. Through this lens, we perceive how Faisal perpetually looks to the past to imagine the future, unveiling the intricate layering of time that shapes his plans and steadfast commitments.

It is within the realm of retrospective understanding that Faisal’s deep sense of duty towards his family, to whom he feels he owes an immense debt, takes shape. Were he to recount his family’s choices and subsequent life following their departure from Palestine, he would depict them as acts of selflessness. Even his own existence owes itself to the economic and physical sacrifices undertaken by his parents, as he reveals: “Infertility runs in the males in my family. The only reason I’m born now is that my parents did IVF. They were married 16 years before I was born. I’m considered a miracle child. Also, my dad is the oldest son. So, for him to have a kid was a huge thing. Everybody celebrated in my family.”³²¹ Having experienced life in a refugee camp and possessing an intimate knowledge of the struggles his family endured on his behalf, coupled with an acute awareness of the weight of their trauma as evidenced by personal and extrinsic narratives, Faisal’s sense of purpose becomes inextricably entwined with his feelings of obligation. He carries an overwhelming sense of indebtedness to his parents, cherishing each decision made to secure his birth and bestow upon him a life of quality. Economic sacrifices and the trials that ensued propel this obligation, forging a more powerful and intimate connection to this facet of their shared struggle. This connection binds him to their collective journey, even when he feels doing so interferes with his own endeavors toward individual aspirations:

Growing up as an only child in my family, to the eldest son of my family, has always been a huge responsibility. You have to succeed in life, eventually. You can’t just sit by, be idle, and live however you want to live. You have to be the one who supports your parents all the time. There’s no one else, for me or them.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

At times, it gets really overwhelming for me, as an individual. I have so much to do, and so much responsibility. If I don't make it, I don't succeed. There's always the thought, in the back of my mind, that it's really unfair that I have to live this life. It's almost as if my life has been dictated to me. That's just a Palestinian child in general because you feel like you don't have control over where you're born.

Do I let the weight on my shoulders keep adding on, or do I be selfish and focus on myself, my future relationships, and my future life? Do I sit here and help my parents along the way?

For example, this kind of dilemma came to fruition when I wanted to go to university. I wanted to move out to the University of Kent, but that would require me to move south. But, in doing so, my parents wouldn't receive the entire benefits package they get from the government, because I would no longer be their dependent. I chose to get a degree, that I didn't really want, at a closer university, just so I can stay with my parents.³²²

Faisal finds himself burdened by an overwhelming emotional weight, as the eldest and sole offspring in his family, which casts a long shadow upon his everyday life and the choices he must make for the future. He is acutely aware of the efforts exerted by his parents to bring him into being, including using in-vitro fertilization and uprooting their lives to establish roots in the United Kingdom. Faisal contemplates these realities in light of his own recollections from the refugee camp in Lebanon, which serve as the foundation from which he draws insights and envisions the hardships his family endured prior to his birth. "Because I know they struggled all this way," he told me and they pretty much sacrificed all of their life for me to come to this country and do what I have to do to become successful, that's why I can't just leave them."³²³ In this manner, Faisal establishes a link between his parents' preexisting sacrifices and their unwavering commitment to his well-being.

As we delve into the unfolding narrative, a complex layer of psychological pressure emerges, self-imposed by Faisal. He demonstrates an awareness of how his gender and age intertwine with his perception of the family's expectations, placing upon himself a sense of responsibility and accountability. While recognizing that, as the sole child, the burden of caring for his parents rests solely on his shoulders, he also feels that being the eldest son would have naturally thrust this

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

responsibility upon him regardless. Perhaps this intertwines with broader patterns of gender roles and societal expectations within Palestinian families, although it is noteworthy that Faisal stands as the sole interviewee to articulate such a magnitude of obligation. Nevertheless, he experiences a sense of isolation stemming from both aspects. Regardless of the angle from which he contemplates the matter, he adheres to the notion that this responsibility lies solely with him, with no one else to support him. This palpable weight of responsibility towards his family significantly impacts Faisal's life and overall well-being. To such an extent that he now finds himself making pivotal life decisions, such as choosing a university, based on how they will best support his parents. However, within this sacrificial framework, Faisal grapples with the realization that he may be forfeiting his own life and personal aspirations in order to fulfill the perceived obligations of being a dutiful son.

Faisal's contemplations on the matters of inheritance, familial narrative, and social obligation revealed a profound ethical struggle. It was evident that he grappled with the psychological turmoil reminiscent of the weight of familial postmemory. Like the recipients of ancestral trauma,³²⁴ Faisal was deeply affected by the overpowering emotional inheritance, where the events preceding his birth loomed large and shaped his sense of self. This awareness of being bound by history rendered him acutely conscious of the forces at play, perhaps even more so than others in this research. As Faisal approached adulthood, he found himself confronted with choices that demanded his attention: Should he embrace his own individual identity, a path he perceives as less burdensome albeit self-centered and at the potential expense of his parents? Or should he continue to anchor himself close to his parents, allowing the narrative of their experiences to dictate his life, even if it meant sacrificing his own desires? Within these dilemmas lies the delicate balance of negotiating personal agency and the interconnections of familial bonds and collective memory.

Within the realm of young adulthood, where the negotiation between personal and familial obligations unfolds, Faisal's experiences take on a heightened significance

³²⁴ Hirsch, *Family Frames*.

intertwined with his Palestinian identity. While it is not uncommon for individuals to navigate the complexities of obligation during this developmental stage,³²⁵ Faisal perceives his encounters as intensified. While Faisal does not view his responsibilities towards his parents as a burdensome weight, his narrative reveals the presence of burdensome emotions. Interestingly, he does not attribute his frustrations solely to his parents; instead, he associates them with his Palestinian identity. This observation underscores the intricate interplay between broader social narratives, familial stories, and one's personal sense of self and purpose.

Faisal's understanding of the Palestinian experience resonates deeply with his own frustrations, so much so that he draws parallels between their narratives. He perceives the Palestinian experience as one characterized by powerlessness, enduring suffering, and being subjected to unjust circumstances solely due to their Palestinian identity. In this recognition, he establishes a connection between his family's Palestinian identity and their enduring struggles across generations, which mirrors a pervasive sense of powerlessness. Faisal's own sense of unyielding indebtedness to his parents aligns with this perceived helplessness of Palestinian children, both grounded in a broader narrative that shapes their lives in ways that they yearn to transcend.

In this complex acknowledgment, Faisal also reveals a hint of resentment toward his Palestinian identity, as it shapes and determines the trajectory of his life in manners he wishes were not the case. The weight of his obligations and the sense of being confined within the boundaries imposed by his identity surface as sources of emotional strain. These reflections highlight the intimate entanglement of personal agency, societal narratives, and the multifaceted dynamics of selfhood within the Palestinian context.

Familial Silences

As seen in the first half of this chapter, remembering itself is intricately intertwined with acts of communication, particularly in cases where children inherit narratives

³²⁵ To learn more about developmental stages, look to Gabriel A. Orenstein and Lindsay Lewis, "Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development," PubMed (Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing, November 7, 2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK556096/>.

from openly communicative family members. The second half of this chapter delves into the narratives of family members who were perceived by interviewees as reluctant to share their experiences. Just as families with elaborate storytellers exhibit variations in their narrative-sharing experiences, the same applies to the ways in which family members choose to remain silent. Often, the boundaries between different types of silences within families are not clearly defined. These exchanges are characterized by selective recall, where certain aspects are retained and emphasized while others are gradually forgotten. Through repetitive selective recall, individuals not only reinforce actively remembered fragments but also reinforce the process of forgetting itself. Similar to how social groups mutually reinforce their collective memories through communication, they also forget in equal measure, propelled by similar processes.

By deliberately omitting certain elements from their narratives, they accentuate the details that align with their ideologies and reinforce social bonds within their group boundaries.³²⁶ We saw that to be the case in previous interviews, such as with Henry, and potentially Faisal. Alternatively, parents may choose to omit details not to protect an image, but to protect their offspring from any hardship or emotional burden that comes with the knowledge of familial trauma. There are also instances within families where the witnesses to mass atrocities remain silent not out of choice, but out of an inability to communicate their pain. In these cases, family members find it too painful to communicate their memories, latent with emotion, to their children. In this light, one may wonder whether the act of forgetting can hold any potential benefits. For those seeking to reconstruct their sense of self, their identity, and their narrative, forgetting assumes a practical purpose. Memories that do not align with the underlying themes that one wishes to emphasize when narrating their life inevitably find themselves excluded from the narrative. These themes are shaped by present desires and aspirations. When engaging in the act of recollection, individuals recall details that are specific to the narrative they prioritize, one that affirms their place in the world.

³²⁶ William Hirst and Jeremy Yamashiro, "Social Aspects of Forgetting," in *Collaborative Remembering: Theories, Research, and Applications*, ed. Michelle L. Meade et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 76–99, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198737865.001.0001>.

Complete remembrance, in some cases, causes too much cognitive dissonance. For those who survive trauma, the event is so rupturing that it shatters any pre-existing notions of the rules that govern life; this rupturing awareness is what is inherited by the descendants of survivors. In these instances, the individual negotiates which pieces of knowledge are allowed to continue in the narrative. Those which are willingly forgotten, regarded as deviations from the norm, may even develop a negative connotation – a sense of “that’s not me,” or “that’s not who we are,” even though it most certainly occurred. Regardless, what is allowed to be forgotten provides the space for the maintenance of prioritized memory and present conceptions. In the interviews that follow, various factors contribute to the presence of silences: the limited connection among family members, disengaged offspring, and parents who may be physically or emotionally unavailable to elaborate on their experiences. Across different contexts, several questions emerge for consideration. Firstly, what influences the narratives shared by storytellers in these circumstances? Secondly, what specific content is conveyed during autobiographical storytelling? Additionally, to what extent are the narratives elaborated upon, and how frequently are they exposed to the audience? Lastly, what are the psychological implications stemming from these narratives?

Khalid

Khalid’s upbringing unfolded within the framework of mixed and elusive narratives, both of which characterized his family’s existence. Their roots can be traced back to Wadi Chanin, a town that, as Khalid puts it, is “known for having been totally erased off the map.”³²⁷ In the wake of the post-1948 exodus, his grandfather, joining the wave of middle-class migrants,³²⁸ sought refuge in the United Kingdom after securing a position with the United Nations. It was in England that Khalid’s father was born and socialized into its society’s respective norms and customs. Throughout Khalid’s upbringing, his father intentionally withheld extensive details about their family’s past, leaving a veil of uncertainty surrounding their history. It

³²⁷ Khalid, Interview Number Sixteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

³²⁸ Dina Matar expands on this demographic in her work, “News, Memory and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain,” PhD, London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom), (2005), <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/1820/>.

remains uncertain whether Khalid and his sibling actively sought to investigate their father's life story. "My dad was never interested in talking about it," he shares, "he was never interested in raising his kids to be conscious of that."³²⁹ According to Khalid, his father put forth tremendous effort in distancing his family as far as possible from their Palestinian origins, establishing an entirely new life that bore no ties to Palestine whatsoever.

During our conversation, Khalid shed light on the difficult circumstances his father faced, existing within an environment steeped in racial discrimination. Born in the United Kingdom, his father balanced the expectations of his immigrant familial culture while contending with a British society that stigmatized him as both an Arab and a Palestinian. "There was a real sense of shame about being an Arab in Britain in those days, in the '80s and '90s," he reveals, "For the most part, you didn't want to be identified as an Arab by any means, especially not Palestinian. The racism was intense."³³⁰ Moreover, Khalid highlights that his parents bore witness to what he terms "the failure of the Palestinian liberation movement." This phrase, he explains, captures the intense disappointment evoked by the political and social ramifications of the Arab-Israeli conflict that unfolded throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. He maintains that these layered experiences significantly influenced his father's perspective on his Palestinian identity. Reflecting on his father's conduct during Khalid's childhood, he discerned a tendency to downplay and conceal their Arab and Palestinian identities, rather than openly embracing them. His father, in turn, encouraged his children to adopt a similar approach:

I remember, there was an implicit expectation on me and my sister, that we would forget that part of our lives. He didn't want me to go to Palestine in the first place. He never encouraged us to be interested in our pasts. He would always just say it was easier. You don't have to explain anything. It's just a lot easier.³³¹

Drawing a connection between his father's encounters with identity-based prejudice and his decision to discourage Khalid from exploring his Palestinian heritage, Khalid weaves together their life stories, intertwining them with his own

³²⁹ Khalid, Interview Number Sixteen.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

understanding of self. There is a significance he attaches to this story, not merely in that it allows him to understand his father, but also in comprehending the reverberations of those experiences upon his own life. In his eyes, his father emerges as an individual who learned to survive in British society through assimilation, surrendering one's distinctiveness to become undetectable. As his father guided him through life, he cautioned against displays of identity that he believed were burdened by stigma, aiming to shield his children from the pains of discrimination. In many ways, Khalid understands his father's stance: "I get it, it's because you don't want to have a half-hour conversation with every mother f***er in the street that stops and starts talking to you."³³² All the same, Khalid consequentially believes that his father veiled the politically charged history enveloping their family's past. "I've always assumed [my parents'] whole approach was to make life as easy for us as possible,"³³³ he remarks. Ironically, however, his father's influence yielded what Khalid describes as an "ambiguous" relationship with the past. "You're nostalgic for another world that you know you belong to," he states, "but never really experienced, but at the same time, you're embarrassed by it or you're ashamed of it."³³⁴ Khalid is burdened by the weight of his own ignorance, a yearning for a familial legacy to which he feels tethered and a cultural knowledge to which he feels entitled. Because of the familial trauma he inherited, he finds his identity to be one entangled in a complex interplay of pride and shame, simultaneously and paradoxically intertwined.

Amid Khalid's narrative, he reveals that his mother's narratives possess an enigmatic quality on par with those spun by his father. He candidly discloses that his late mother, who grappled with alcoholism, oftentimes recounted memories that left him confused, particularly he sought corroboration from other family members who refuted her claims. "Events that happened, the way her parents treated her," he explains, "Others would have a completely different experience of the same childhood. That way of seeing the world had a huge influence on me and the way I tell stories now, which is all about ambiguity and inconsistency."³³⁵ Khalid portrays

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

his mother's life as one tinged with remorse, an explicit sense that she lamented the path her life had taken: "There was this explicit sense, growing up, that my mother regretted her life went in this direction."³³⁶ Descending from a well-to-do family in Egypt, his mother possessed a background in archeology, dabbled in painting, and reveled in the world of music – a life he describes as teeming with untapped potential. "She felt like she gave it all up to raise a family," he confides.³³⁷ Such sentiments are not uncommon among interviewees whose mothers migrated from Arabic-speaking countries to English-speaking ones. Bereft of their communal connections and severed from their former lives, they withdraw into introversion and exhibit reluctance in engaging with their new, foreign surroundings. Some interviewees recount witnessing their mothers adopting an entirely new persona upon returning to Arab countries, one characterized by an affable and charismatic disposition. However, in Khalid's case, he perceives his mother as coerced into a life of motherhood, a predicament further exacerbated by the isolation of migration. Khalid conjectures that his mother's regrets spill over into his father's life as well: "My dad, I always got this feeling that maybe he regretted marrying her, or having children with her, or who knows."³³⁸

In contrast to the mixed narratives presented by his parents, Khalid's grandmother played a pivotal role in shaping his understanding of his family's history, thanks to her elaborate storytelling style. Khalid describes his grandmother as "gregarious and loud," with an unflagging desire to pass down her personal history to her grandchildren. As much as his parents did not talk about the past, they did not stop his grandmother from sharing her own narratives with him. "She wanted to impose it on us and make us aware of where we're from," he says, "She was the typical refugee, who still clung to that history and still aspired to go back."³³⁹ This phenomenon is not uncommon among first-generation immigrants, and, as previously discussed, especially for members of a diaspora, who may fear that their cultural heritage will be lost as their descendants assimilate into their adopted culture. It is not uncommon for diasporic Palestinians, especially those who belong

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

to the generation of al-Nakba witnesses, to harbor a fervent commitment to preserving their ancestral culture amidst the challenges posed by existential and historical erasure in the diaspora. As a result, storytelling becomes a vital medium for conveying family narratives to younger generations, while imparting wisdom and values. During visits to his grandmother's house, Khalid and his sister engaged in a ritual of delving into photo albums, gleaning insights into his family's past. "That's probably how they became memories for me," he said, "by looking through the photo albums. Occasionally, you'd get to these amazing black-and-white images of my grandmother when she was in her twenties."³⁴⁰ These visits provided Khalid not only with a foundation to comprehend his family's historical trajectory over space and time but also acted as the primary source of encouragement when engaging with his Palestinian identity during his youth.

As an adult, Khalid reflects upon the mixed narratives presented to him throughout his childhood. Amongst these narratives, a prevailing theme emerges – one tinged with regret, a sentiment he ascribes to his parents' lives in the United Kingdom. Fueled by an acute awareness of this recurring theme, he adamantly rejects it. "My perspective, I feel like you'd be lying about who you are," he said, "How is that easier, especially when I see the consequences of lying about who you are, which is a really miserable life? It was a life that my parents had."³⁴¹ Intriguingly, even as Khalid endeavors to assert his agency over his family's history and dismantle what he identifies as a cycle of trauma, his very reaction serves as an indication of his continued connection to it. Similar to other participants in this research, the knowledge of his family's sufferings, coupled with the emotional significance and lessons intertwined within these memories, becomes a wellspring from which Khalid draws guidance and inspiration to shape his own path. In contrast to Faisal, who finds deepens his bond with his parents through their shared ancestral struggles, Khalid deliberately distances himself from his family, envisioning such a detachment as a means to grasp the happiness that perpetually eluded his parents.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

In the midst of untangling himself from what he perceives as the missteps of his parents, a yearning takes place within him – a yearning to forge a deeper connection with himself, his familial history, and his heritage as a Palestinian, through which he can immerse himself in the currents of history. The intertwining memories of an emotionally absent father, a mother shrouded in sorrow, and a grandmother who became his historical anchor were all underscored by an innate longing to unravel a past that felt withheld from him. “The idea of being a filmmaker,” he told me, “Of being doggedly determined that was going to be my life, came out of that experience...seeing how miserable both my parents were because they compromised on deciding, so I decided not to compromise.”³⁴² Through his films, he endeavors to give shape and form to his interpretations of the fragmented identities and narratives bequeathed to him by his family:

I find it difficult, even in my own films, to keep track of the narrative. Narrative consistency is really difficult for me. The way I experience the world is a series of vignettes, and every once and awhile, there’s some consistency and linearity. We fool ourselves into thinking it’s a logical story. That’s what storytelling is, taking all the pieces and trying to convince someone that it makes sense. Pretty much everything I’ve ever tried to make has that sort of central image... A lot of the bits [in my films] I just took from my own life, and my own family stories, and other images I’d seen. I just stitched them together. For me, the narrative is just an excuse to connect all of these scenarios together.³⁴³

In the statement above, Khalid articulates the personal impetus behind his cinematic endeavors. “It’s all very confusing, but I think that’s what made me get interested in storytelling because you can explore those things,” he muses.³⁴⁴ Through his creative work, Khalid embarks on a cathartic journey, traversing the inherited traumas of his family, as well as the reverberations of that inheritance upon his own existence. He draws inspiration from the recesses of his own mind, he delves into the ambiguity, overlap, and gaps that shape his life and sense of self. Interpreting his family’s history becomes an act of making order out of chaos, a metaphor he embraces as a reflection of life itself. In this quest for understanding, he unearths the weight of ancestral legacy, a burden that compels

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

him to seek avenues for comprehending and envisioning a past that indelibly influences his own trajectory. While his films only draw from his familial encounters, rather than attempting to recreate them, they serve as a testament to his interpretations of his family's legacy. This creative outlet not only allows Khalid to discover himself but also provides a medium through which his emotions and thoughts can be conveyed to others. By documenting these emotions and interpretations, he blurs the boundaries between documentary and aesthetic, offering a wellspring of insight that invites audiences to forge their own understanding of the Palestinian experience in the aftermath of al-Nakba.

Taylor & Arabella

As seen throughout the previous passages, various factors shape the dynamics of storytelling, with gender being an influence. Previous studies have consistently revealed that mothers tend to exhibit greater elaboration and emotional expressiveness compared to fathers when engaging in storytelling with their children.³⁴⁵ However, it is important to note that maternal elaboration during reminiscing may not necessarily translate into the same level of elaboration in other conversational contexts.³⁴⁶ Furthermore, an intriguing gendered pattern emerges in research on parental storytelling: both mothers and fathers exhibit higher emotional expressiveness when sharing stories with their daughters as opposed to their sons. These findings not only shed light on the social function of storytelling within parent-child relationships, highlighting the significance of narrative detail, but also underscore the reciprocal influence between gender and the very constructs it shapes and reinforces. Additionally, research has consistently demonstrated that the act of reminiscing between mothers and their children plays a vital role in building social bonds.³⁴⁷ Simultaneously, these findings also suggest that fathers, while still finding their unique avenues for bonding, tend to display

³⁴⁵ Fivush et al., "Developing Social Functions of Autobiographical Memory within Family Storytelling."

³⁴⁶ Robyn Fivush, Catherine A. Haden, and Elaine Reese, "Elaborating on Elaborations: Role of Maternal Reminiscing Style in Cognitive and Socioemotional Development," *Child Development* 77, no. 6 (November 2006): 1568–88, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00960.x>.

³⁴⁷ S. Kulkofsky, Q. Wang, and J.B.K. Koh, "Functions of memory sharing and mother-child reminiscing behaviors: Individual and cultural variations," *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 10 (2009): 92-114.

lower levels of elaboration compared to mothers, consequently influencing the dynamics of the father-offspring relationship.

As previously discussed, Khalid's father's reticence had a significant impact on his relationship and identity. His father's narratives were noticeably lacking in elaboration, a trait coupled with a diminished desire to express oneself as culturally Palestinian. "He never talked about his feeling as much," he told me.³⁴⁸ Khalid partly attributes his father's tendencies to Arab gender norms. According to him, Arab culture tends to discourage men from engaging in emotional processing and communication: "It doesn't encourage much self-awareness or self-analysis. It doesn't encourage being emotional, or any kind of vulnerability. I think that's probably the most harmful part of it, seeing vulnerability as a weakness. I think it's extremely detrimental and hurtful, holds back Arab societies immensely, and leads to a lot of suffering."³⁴⁹ Consequentially, it can be inferred that, due to these gendered influences, Palestinian fathers may exhibit less elaborative storytelling compared to Palestinian mothers.

Nevertheless, there are instances where Palestinian mothers exhibit a similar tendency to omit details from their narratives, mirroring the behaviors of the aforementioned fathers. These cases, involve mothers who were themselves born and raised in the United States, both, incidentally, in Florida. Despite their shared experiences of upward social and financial mobility, having transitioned from lower-income, first-generation immigrant families to pursuing new employment opportunities that significantly transformed their lives, an interesting dynamic unfolds. This active shift in gender roles reflects an adaptation to the psychological dynamics within the household, shaped by the mother's interactions with the broader social world.

During his interview, Taylor revealed the enigmatic nature of his mother, who oftentimes refrained from sharing the intricate details of her life. While Taylor possessed a general understanding of his family history and his mother's overarching narrative, he still regards her as a figure shrouded in mystery. In the

³⁴⁸ Khalid, Interview Number Sixteen.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

1960s, Taylor's maternal family relocated from Silwad, a village northeast of Ramallah, to North Florida. According to Taylor, this move was primarily driven by economic considerations: "From what I've heard, it was always part of their plan. It seems like, and I can't speak for everybody, like the United States is the golden land, the land of opportunities."³⁵⁰ As the sole member of her siblings born in the United States, Taylor's mother stood apart from her older siblings who were born in Palestine, more than a decade prior to her birth. "We discovered that my mom doesn't have Palestinian citizenship," Taylor discloses, "Her parents never did it for her."³⁵¹ In this sense, Taylor describes his mother as an individual who, from the start, was not just disconnected, but barred, from her Palestinian identification. He regards his mother as the black sheep of the family, diverging in demeanor, educational background, and aspirations from the rest of her kin, who embraced the cultural practices prevalent in the rural areas of the southern United States.

While the family attempted to forge connections and integrate into their local community through the preparation and sharing of meals, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, their efforts did not alleviate the challenges faced by Taylor's mother during their upbringing in the United States. From Taylor's perspective, his mother grappled with a sense of not belonging, caught between her Palestinian origins and her American environment in the present.³⁵² Despite what he describes as his mother's ability to pass as Caucasian, enabling her to blend in with the prevailing demographic in the area, Taylor narrates her as an individual deeply troubled by internal conflict, an experience that indelibly shaped her self-presentation and approach to life. "My mom does not accept her current situation to be as good as it's going to get," he elucidates, "She always strives for greater and bigger."³⁵³ This mindset resonates with the sentiment expressed by Faisal, who underscores the significance of surpassing the achievements of the preceding generation. It is possible that Taylor's mother's desire to "do better" than the previous generation pushed her to adopt forms of identity and expression that

³⁵⁰ Taylor, Interview Number Six.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² This is not uncommon for the second and third generation of Palestinian-Americans. Edward Said discusses this in his autoethnographic work, including *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2012); and *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta Books, 1999).

³⁵³ Taylor, Interview Number Six.

allowed her to follow the path she believed would lead her to what she defines as success. In contrast, the remaining members of Taylor's family achieved relative success in assimilating into the simplicity of rural Florida culture, a result he attributes to their varied upbringings. While his aunts and uncles grew up socialized into Palestinian culture and yet were able to seamlessly adapt to Southern culture, his mother rejected both cultures, instead striving for a life that would bring her economic and social security.

Taylor was left oblivious to these stories by his mother, whose introversion intensified the underlying tension between them. It was through sporadic visits from his mother's sister that he glimpsed into their shared history, piecing together the fragments that constitutes his mother's past:

Through these stories, I found out about why my mom treated school the way she did...I don't think my mom saw my grandparents in the same positive light as my aunt and uncle. It's solely about schooling. My mom was the only one born and raised here [in the USA], so her identity is more American than Palestinian. She was the only one in my entire family, I mean both sides of the family, to finish college, much less finish first in her class, and to go to law school and finish first in that class. She ended up being a really successful attorney.

I started to understand, through these stories, why she saw things the way she did. When she was in high school, and should be reading, for example, at my grandparents' music store that they owned, my grandmother would go up to her and ask her why she was reading. 'That's such a waste of time,' she would say, 'put down that book. If you're too smart, no man is going to want you.' Things like that.

I think my mom took that, and it hardened her. She just said, 'screw you, I'm going to be the best I can be.' That's where she ended up.

So, very different outlooks, how my mom and her siblings saw my grandparents. It was always weird to hear the dynamic difference. My aunt would talk about all these amazing stories, and she'd shed a tear of joy. My mom would shed tears of anguish and anger.³⁵⁴

Through Taylor's narrative, we witness the interplay of influences shaping his mother and aunt's communication skills, leaving lasting imprints on their relationships as adults. Taylor identifies how his mother's interactions with her family, especially the gender roles imposed upon her by her mother, have

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

significantly shaped her perspectives on education and achievements. In recounting the distinctive trajectory that set his mother apart from her siblings, he unravels the complexities that strained their familial bonds, including the bond he shares with her. As Taylor delves deeper into his mother's past, the origins of her relationships come into focus, revealing the impact of her mother's, or Taylor's grandmother's, disparaging attitude towards education and the intellectual abilities of women.

The mother's American identity also plays a role in shaping her perspective, in that it sets her apart from the rest of her family. In this way, the disjointed identifications and cultural values add further difficulty for Taylor's mother when trying to understand and relate to her own mother, and vice versa. The grandmother's belief, that women should not be too smart and that their primary concerns are to attract a man, reflects her perspective and subjective experiences as a woman, which in turn were shaped by her own upbringing. This attitude overflows into other areas of life, as seen in her perspective towards education, which she considers irrelevant in the grander scheme of a woman's ultimate goal, i.e., to marry and raise a family. With this mindset, she attempts to raise her daughter to abide by the same set of beliefs, in turn cultivating the experiences that her mother remembers pushing against. Rather than following the domesticated direction taken by Taylor's aunt and pressed upon her by her mother, Taylor's mother participated in the broader cultural values and beliefs of American society. From Taylor's narrative, it seems that the latter belief system, that success is achieved through education and hard work, best complimented his mother's ambitions and is evident through her success as an attorney.

The familial dynamics and the distinct bonds each person forged with Taylor's grandmother played a pivotal role in shaping their unique perspectives and communicative skills. As mentioned by Taylor, the differing recollections of her aunt and mother reflect the differences in their lived experiences, as well as how they impacted their relationships then and in the present. His aunt's openness and willingness to not only communicate with Taylor about her memories but to do so elaborately, reflect her comfort with feeling vulnerable in familial settings. His mother's reluctance in sharing her perspective, on the other hand, demonstrates

that she feels less comfortable expressing herself openly and elaboratively with her family. It is clear from Taylor's testimony that the lack of comfort his mother demonstrates with her mother also emerges in the relationship she shares with her son. These findings expand upon prevailing assumptions derived from extensive intergenerational storytelling research,³⁵⁵ which claim that women are the more elaborate storytellers in the family. The data found in this case suggests that elaborative storytelling is a trait engendered by social conditioning more so than gender, and that, when conditioned to be so, a woman may demonstrate the same reluctance in storytelling as previously observed in men.

In Taylor's quest to discern the bond he shares with his mother, he delves into the depths of their connection with an intensity unmatched by any other topic in our interview, even any inherited memories stretching back to the pre-1948 era. By reciting his understanding of his familial history, he attempts to construct a narrative that sheds light on the complexities of his childhood relationship with his mother. Undeniably, the memories woven through their shared experiences have molded him, leaving an imprint on the person he has become. In many respects, Taylor's own life path mirrors that of his mother, both grappling with the task of reconciling familial expectations that run counter to their personal aspirations. This is particularly evident in the realm of gender norms, where Taylor's mother defied the prescribed roles imposed upon her by her own mother. Similarly, Taylor, who identifies as a transgender male, embarked on his own transformative journey when he transitioned from the female gender assigned to him at birth. Strikingly, Taylor discerns a parallel between his own experiences and that of his mother, characterized by the weighty burden of striving to fulfill the lofty expectations set upon them as women. Reflecting upon his own upbringing, he candidly shares the psychological toll elicited through such experiences: "When I was in high school,

³⁵⁵ Look, for example, to Robyn Fivush, "Women Are the Keepers of Family Stories | Psychology Today," www.psychologytoday.com, February 17, 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-stories-our-lives/202102/women-are-the-keepers-family-stories>; Elif Bürümlü-Kisa, Basak Sahin-Acar, and Hande Ilgaz, "Maternal Storytelling and Reminiscing Styles in Relation to Preschoolers' Perspective-Taking Abilities," *Cognitive Development* 66 (April 2023): 101323, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2023.101323>; Gigliana Melzi, Adina R. Schick, and Joy L. Kennedy, "Narrative Elaboration and Participation: Two Dimensions of Maternal Elicitation Style," *Child Development* 82, no. 4 (2011): 1282–96, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289842>.

the expectations for me were much higher, not only because I was the oldest, but also because I was the first-born girl. My mom wanted me to follow in her footsteps... The constant feeling of not being good enough was very traumatic for me.”³⁵⁶ Rooted in his mother’s pursuit of ambition, an ambition so often thwarted by his grandmother, Taylor concludes his mother endeavored to afford him the unwavering support and opportunities she herself felt were unjustly withheld throughout her life.

In a heart-wrenching turn of events, Taylor found himself faced with rejection and abandonment by his parents upon their discovery of his sexuality and gender identity, a painful rupture that severed both financial support and the shelter of his childhood home. Recounting this pivotal moment, he shares with raw honesty, “For me, when I came out, my mom all of a sudden thought that all these concepts, which she had to work so hard to be able to do – like raising a family and still being successful – I was never going to be able to do that.”³⁵⁷ The sheer repetition and emotional intensity with which Taylor conveyed these sentiments laid bare the enduring sensitivity of this deeply personal topic. Nevertheless, by exploring the depths of his mother’s own experiences in relation to the rest of his family, Taylor unearths moments of understanding, shedding light on the fact that his mother’s relationship, to an extent, was shaped by factors outside of their control. Through this, it allows Taylor to understand the intricate forces that shaped the trajectory of his life, particularly in relation to the demanding standards imposed upon him.

Like Taylor’s experiences, there were other accounts of mothers who withheld autobiographical memories, particularly in cases where they were employed in historically white- and/or male-dominated industries, such as governmental positions in the United States. The repercussion of this selective sharing left each interviewee grappling with a sense of psychological distress, acutely aware of the gaps in their family narratives. Arabella, for instance, reflects on her mother’s reticence when it comes to discussing the past. Following the displacement of al-Nakba, her family journeyed from Jaffa to Jordan, until finally settling in South Florida, where they established a home. Arabella holds a deep admiration for her

³⁵⁶ Taylor, Interview Number Six.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

mother's fortitude, forged as a third-generation refugee navigating the diaspora. During her earlier years, despite facing myriad barriers rooted in language, class, race, and gender, Arabella's mother ascended the ranks across various careers, including her tenure in the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI):

The fact that her story is so special, I think it speaks to her character. She's brilliant. She's amazing at business and great with people. That was her very unusual path, in that sense... I've always been impressed by her confidence. She's had this very innate confidence from the start. I think she also mentioned it having been fostered by her mother.³⁵⁸

Prior to Arabella's birth, the FBI approached her mother, seeking her services as a translator. However, according to Arabella, her mother encountered considerable difficulties in adapting to this new environment, finding herself surrounded by individuals who were strikingly dissimilar to her and, in Arabella's imaginative projection, likely harboring a measure of disrespect towards her gender and cultural heritage, or, in her words, "being in that space away from home, and with people who were nothing like her, and probably who I imagine were at least disrespectful to her background."³⁵⁹ After a brief tenure in this role, Arabella's mother made the decision to part ways. "It sounds sort of terrifying and ridiculous," Arabella states, "but I think she has this inexplicable quality of having survived it... She uses this funny story, that they were trying to teach her how to use a gun, and she almost shot someone in the foot. She just was not good in that realm."³⁶⁰ It is worth noting here, as in Taylor's case as well, that while it is not possible to confirm the authenticity of these details, Arabella's understanding may reflect her own views towards these industries, as well as what it means to be a Palestinian woman in American society.

Arabella encountered considerable difficulty in delving into her mother's past, particularly when it came to discussions surrounding al-Nakba and the intertwined memories of survival, diaspora, and immigration. "I beg her for stories, she expressed, "or anything, because she seemed like a very mysterious person to me. I didn't see her a lot, and she's not very verbal, and basically never willingly shared

³⁵⁸ Arabella, Interview Number Eight.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

about her childhood.”³⁶¹ Much like her avoidance of taking a clear-cut political stance on her family’s historical trajectory, as outlined below, Arabella’s mother also shied away from divulging intricate details or intense emotions pertaining to her own life. Above all else, her mother’s primary focus resided in ensuring that both Arabella and she could pursue their chosen aspirations. The measure of achievement attained by their family, according to what Arabella perceives as her mother’s standards, emerged as her central pursuit, with all other concerns relegated to secondary significance.

However, Arabella’s aunt, who shared her upbringing in South Florida alongside the mother, offers significantly more elaborate narratives concerning their family’s history. It is through her that Arabella gained access to the following inherited memory:

In the forties, they took in a Polish/Jewish refugee, to stay in their house with them. This Polish refugee women lived in their house. The children had a little nickname for her. It wasn’t mean or anything, the nickname, more playful. She was a real woman. I don’t know how much longer later, this would have been in the sixties, when my grandmother took her children to Palestine to visit that home.

She knocked on the door, and the woman who answered the door was the Polish woman who lived in their home. They took over the house after they all left, because of the Nakba. So, my grandmother asked to show her children the house she grew up in, and the woman threatened to call the police and told her to leave. So, she left, and she cried.³⁶²

In recounting the story, Arabella contemplates the emotions her mother, who witnessed the event, might have experienced, both in the moment and whenever she recalls its memory. “It’s sad,” she expressed, “They took her in, and now she’s kicking them out.”³⁶³ Yet, she finds that the emotional resonance of the memory does not align with her expectations of her mother’s response. “My mom just wants peace, almost like a coexistence,” she confided, “She just doesn’t have that political of a way of looking at it. I think she sees it more like a personal tragedy, rather than something systemic.” Arabella maintains that her own perspective

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

diverges significantly from her mother's: "It feels like a very visceral example of the fundamental thing that happened, which, in my eyes, is a settler-colonial situation. You lived somewhere, then someone came in and took your home. It also speaks to the political situation, boiled down, and the fundamental injustice at the center of the situation."³⁶⁴ Through this statement, we can see that Arabella feels at ease in engaging in discussion about this topic, as well as expressing her perspective. She commented that, to some extent, she wishes to share these narratives to raise awareness about Palestinian history and dispossession. While the source for her comfort remains unclear, it is plausible that she does not associate her outspoken nature regarding Palestine with the same reservation as her mother.

When discussing her mother, Arabella often compared her to her aunt, who she claims exhibits more politically charged sentiments, which naturally accompanied her more elaborate narratives. Arabella linked this to her aunt's immersion in family and Palestinian culture: "Her sister, who also went to college, but went the housewife route, stayed at home, and raised four children. She's a very different parent than my mom as a parent. My aunt is a lot more verbal and will tell me these stories. When she tells me the story, she has a stronger political perspective about it."³⁶⁵ From this statement, Arabella regards her family as socialized into American culture to varied extents. She associates her aunt's outwardly Palestinian identity and strong political stances with her domestication. Unlike her mother, Arabella suggests, her aunt felt no need to hide her views about Palestine. In an intriguing contrast, Arabella portrayed her mother as her opposite: politically detached, unwilling to adopt a firm stance on her Palestinian identity. She attributed her mother's reserved nature and unconventional worldview to her professional aspirations, particularly her experiences as a minority woman employed within the United States government during a period fraught with gender and racial discrimination. "I think it has to have been because of the conservative experience," she said, "as well as from working in Miami. I think there were just points in her life when she was surrounded by rich, older people."³⁶⁶ Arabella

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

believes that, in order to succeed in this environment, her mother adapted her demeanor to obtain the acceptance of her peers.

When we juxtapose this response to those of Taylor and Khalid, we uncover recurring themes interwoven across their narratives. A common thread emerges; the parents of these individuals are descendants of immigrants, born into environments where the prevailing social norms diverge significantly from that practiced within their family. In the world outside their homes, they underwent a process of socialization, conditioning them to downplay the cultural distinctiveness that sets them apart, perceiving visibility as a potential catalyst for stigmatization and discrimination. Connecting this, as well, to Raghad's lived experiences of the same nature, we see how each person molded their behaviors and identities to align with the norms and values of their environment. This inclination extends to their stance on discussing Palestinian politics, a topic they often sidestep in conversation. We can interpret these phenomena as manifestations of a wider theme of ethnically based discrimination against Palestinians, which has occurred over generations and has left an indelible impact on their lives and relationship with their environments. On a broader level, these examples shed light on the impact of migration and the interplay of cultural identities, revealing the propensity for immigrant cultures to undergo a subtle dilution as a means of societal adaptation and survival.

Arabella's transition into adulthood brought with it opportunities for introspection, during which she contemplates these experiences and their resonance with her life story. Like her mother, Arabella's world is imbued with the complexity of dual heritage; while she has a Palestinian mother, she also has a Jewish father. This confluence of identities often left her entangled in a complex web of narratives about Palestinian culture and history. It was not her father who imparted these mixed messages, but rather those whom she knew in the South Florida Jewish community. In these encounters, Arabella witnessed acts of social invalidation perpetrated either directly against her mother or against her mother's social identity, which were often met without outward reproach:

I would say that I perceive [my mother's] issue today as constantly making concessions that she might resent later but thinking of them

as being a service to the marriage or the family. Take, for example, the [South Florida]³⁶⁷ Jewish community and my mother's experiences dropping me and my sister off at synagogue every Sunday. I think they were not positive. Sometimes, she would tell me things and I would be very confused as to why my dad wasn't standing up for her.

One, there was just a teacher at my synagogue who was super rude to my mom. Two, my sister came home one day saying Palestinians are monsters, using that language, and my mom asked where we heard this. Another example was at some kind of gathering. I don't know if it was a mitzvah or just some other Jewish thing. My dad is fairly involved in the local Jewish community. Someone said something about bombing Palestinians out of existence, something absurdly offensive, with her present. It seems very mixed to what extent she would stick up for herself.

It was hard because, going into the reason why I didn't learn Arabic...sometimes she would make it seem like, 'How can I raise you Arab if you were also going to temple?'³⁶⁸

As a child, Arabella bore witness to a disheartening spectacle within her own community, where her mother's Palestinian identity became a target for stigmatization. As she reflects upon these tender memories, a profound sense of disappointment emerges: "It bothered me because I think it was a failure on my mother's part to communicate anything."³⁶⁹ It is as if the fabric of understanding and communication between her parents and their environment had frayed, leaving her mother's dignity hanging by a fragile thread. The weight of unspoken words and unaddressed slurs hangs heavily upon Arabella's heart, evoking a poignant realization that her mother was left vulnerable and undefended in those trying moments. Amidst this recollection, Arabella extends her emotions to her father as well, for he, too, seemingly fell short in providing the protection that their shared commitment and union needed in order for her mother to feel accepted and valued.

Within the context at hand, it is crucial to acknowledge the landscape of perspectives among American Jews concerning Israel and Palestine. The community remains deeply divided, with the crux of the division revolving around the treatment of Palestinians, both past and present. While a significant segment of

³⁶⁷ City names omitted to protect the family's identity

³⁶⁸ Arabella, Interview Number Eight.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

American Jewry openly condemns the illegal Israeli settlements and advocates for the rights of Palestinians, expressing dissenting views on Israel still carries the weight of social condemnation within many American Jewish communities. Such voices risk social ostracization and being cast into a state of perpetual marginality.³⁷⁰ Historically, even the most dovish families have faced resistance from more hawkish segments of the community.³⁷¹ Given Arabella's father's deep involvement with the Jewish community in South Florida and the relative success and influence of that group in the United States compared to the Palestinian community, it is understandable that Arabella's parents prioritized the socialization of Arabella and her sister into Jewish culture during their formative years. This prioritization is evident in Arabella's sister's choice to participate in Taglit Birthright Israel, a program advertised to "motivate young people to continue to explore their Jewish identity and support for Israel and maintain long-lasting connections with the Israelis they meet."³⁷² As Arabella articulates, it is entirely plausible that her mother, cognizant of the level of Jewish socialization that her daughters had undergone, harbored concerns about their ability to embrace their Palestinian heritage. Arabella confesses, "Now that I talk about it, part of me wonders, did my mom want to keep us from her heritage and culture, almost before we could reject it?"³⁷³ Such introspective musings hint at the delicate negotiations that take place within families grappling with the tensions between different social narratives.

Nevertheless, according to Arabella, her parents' decision came at the cost of her Palestinian identity, a fact she keenly emphasizes. Contrary to her own convictions, she grew up with the notion that she could not simultaneously embody both Jewish and Palestinian identities, despite her unwavering desire to embrace both facets of her family's pasts. She sensed an overwhelming pressure to make a definitive choice, echoing her mother's struggle to navigate the complexities of her Arab and American identities. This ongoing tension serves as the recurrent

³⁷⁰ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe : The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018).

³⁷¹ Tamar Liebes, "Decoding Television News: The Political Discourse of Israeli Hawks and Doves," *Theory and Society* 21, no. 3 (1992): 357–81, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/657581>.

³⁷² "Birthright Israel | a Free Trip to Israel | Taglit - Birthright Israel," www.birthrightisrael.com, n.d., <https://int.birthrightisrael.com/about-us>.

³⁷³ Arabella, Interview Number Eight.

battleground for Arabella's inner conflicts: "I don't see any contradiction between being Jewish and being something that isn't, like, Ashkenazi. I think [my mom] just had some sense that you can't do both."³⁷⁴ Arabella readily admits that, in the past, she harbored resentment toward her mother for refraining from celebrating their Palestinian heritage and educating her on their approach toward history. As previously mentioned, the language barrier further distanced Arabella from her mother and maternal culture, intensifying her longing to delve deeper into this vital aspect of her family history.

Simultaneously, Arabella grasps the disparities between her own life and her mother's engendering different social responses and ideologies: "I grew up with things so easy. No one has ever made me feel uncomfortable, mostly because of my identity. If they did, it's not in ways that actually affected me. I think I have this immense comfort and privilege now."³⁷⁵ Arabella conveys a nuanced understanding that, while she navigated the labyrinth of her maternal family's memories and heritage with a sense of bewilderment, squandered by the negative associations of her maternal family's social identity, she recognizes the prologue of events that created this environment. Moreover, she compares the diverging paths between her own experiences and those of her mother in the same way that she compares her mother and her aunt, all of which highlight the varying degrees of comfort in outward expressions of Palestinian culture in the diaspora.

It is only through knowing her mother's story that Arabella is able to understand and empathize with her. Exiled from Palestine, her mother's family began anew in Florida, where they started with only pennies to their name. From there, her mother struggled for the esteem and recognition she now enjoys while, according to Arabella, sacrificing her cultural identity in the process. She is fully aware that her mother's demeanor is the psychological byproduct of generations of discrimination. Unfortunately, the decisions and personality traits that contributed to her mother's financial success inevitably led to a strained relationship between the two. If Arabella were to approach her mother's decision to downplay her Palestinian heritage through the lens of her own upbringing, we can find the source of her

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

original resentment. Because she could not communicate with her mother in the past, she feels disconnected with her in the present. Additionally, the culmination of her family's experiences undoubtedly added to Arabella's postmemory trauma, and she grapples with understanding where she stands as a Palestinian as a result. However, despite the difficulties she describes in connecting with her mother, she is very sympathetic towards her: "As I've gotten older, I've become a lot more understanding towards my mother's shortcomings. I've matured and understood her contexts a lot better. In that sense, I feel like I owe her some slack and compassion."³⁷⁶ This is not uncommon for young adults as they come of age, Wright and Turner measure feelings of parental warmth, self-conscious emotions, and forgiveness in college students, finding that, as participants reached early adulthood, they were better able to empathize with parents, which in turn positively influenced their abilities to forgive as well.³⁷⁷ The forgiveness Arabella experienced later in her life can certainly provide her the opportunity to reinterpret more traumatic aspects of her postmemory.

Conclusion

This chapter delves into the intricate forms of storytelling that unfold within families, exploring two distinct types: reveries, triggered by external stimuli, and intentional narratives shared by older family members with their offspring. The act of remembering is intimately intertwined with communication, whether through spoken words, written accounts, or visual representations. However, the boundaries between remembering and communicating memories often blur, making it challenging to discern one from the other.³⁷⁸ In many instances, individuals do not recall a story and subsequently retell it; rather, they simultaneously remember and communicate their memories. Take, for instance, the grandmother who recounts her past experiences to her grandchild. She does not selectively forget certain details or deliberately choose to omit them from the

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Christina Wright, Lisa Turner, and Danny McCarty, "Perceived Parenting, Self-Conscious Emotions, and Forgiveness in College Students," *Counseling and Values*, 62, no. 1 (2017): 57-71.

³⁷⁸ W. Hirst, A. Coman, and D. Coman, "Putting the social back into human memory," in *The SAGE handbook of applied memory*, edited by T.J. Perfect and D.S. Lindsay, pp. 273-91, (Washington, DC: SAGE Publishers, 2014).

narrative. Instead, certain aspects may simply elude her memory, particularly in stories driven by thematic motifs where specific plot points serve to convey particular messages.

The initial segment of this chapter delves into the psychological factors and implications of familial narratives among members of the Palestinian Diaspora. It sheds light on the pivotal role that family storytelling plays in transmitting knowledge, values, beliefs, and traditions across generations. These narratives foster strong bonds, resilience, self-esteem, and a profound sense of belonging within the family unit. However, storytelling can also have adverse consequences, such as the transmission of inherited trauma. In such cases, the offspring become intertwined with their parents' past suffering, profoundly shaping their worldview and sense of self. Particularly in times of stress and hardship, storytelling serves as a vital coping mechanism, especially for Palestinian communities living in exile. It not only preserves cultural traditions and identities but also connects individuals to their ancestral heritage, reinforcing a collective identity and shared history.

To truly comprehend the distinctive nature of storytelling in these contexts, I delve into the personal, familial, and broader social factors that come into play. This exploration involves delving into individuals' autobiographical memories, memories inherited from previous generations, and the larger social narratives that shape their experiences. Scholars such as Fivush et al. argue that these factors are crucial for the development of an individual's autobiographical memory, providing them with reflective tools and a framework to make sense of their own experiences.³⁷⁹ Through this exploration, the intricate interconnectedness of storytelling, family dynamics, and personal and social identities comes to light. This research builds upon existing analyses of Palestinian identity and collective identity within the diaspora, offering nuanced insights into the world of Palestinian storytelling.

Language assumes profound significance in the communication between family members, acting as the medium through which shared memories and narratives

³⁷⁹ Robyn Fivush, Jennifer G. Bohanek, and Marshall Duke, "The Intergenerational Self: Subjective Perspective and Family History," in *Self Continuity: Individual and Collective Perspectives*, ed. F. Sani (Psychology Press, 2008), 131–43, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2008-10052-009>.

are constructed. It allows individuals to contextualize their personal recollections within a broader social framework, connecting them to larger systems of thought. Family names hold a special place in this process, carrying emotional and mnemonic depth that persists even after those who originally bore the names have passed away. Sharing a name with an ancestor evokes a sense of connection and resonates with ancestral narratives, establishing an intimate bond between the bearer and the attributes associated with that name within the family lineage. However, language can also create barriers within multicultural or multilingual households, impeding communication and understanding. The inability to speak Arabic, for instance, can lead to a sense of disconnection from familial roots and a profound feeling of estrangement. Language serves as a monumental force and a source of identity, uniting members of a group and enabling them to share their stories.

Shifting the focus towards elaborative storytelling in the context of al-Nakba, I explore the narratives that have been passed down through generations within Palestinian families, examining their impact on personal and collective identities. I begin by delving into the story of Henry, who grew up in a politically engaged Palestinian family. His grandmother, a central figure in his narrative, instilled in him the ambitions that drive him today, intertwining his sense of purpose with his Palestinian identity. Through the experiences of Raghad, we witness the intricate interplay between personal narratives, space, time, and identity. Raghad's understanding of her Palestinian identity evolves through the inherited stories, personal observations, and reflective exploration of her own multiple identities. Mohammed's narratives, on the other hand, emphasize the significance of family histories in self-understanding as he weaves his own life experiences into the rich tapestry of his family's past. Faisal's narratives shed light on the generational migration experienced by many Palestinian families, a journey that engenders feelings of rootlessness and vulnerability. These stories uncover the complex interplay between personal agency, societal narratives, and selfhood within the Palestinian context.

This chapter also delves into the theme of familial silences and their impact on shaping personal narratives. Individuals selectively recall and emphasize certain

aspects of their family history while leaving others unspoken, inadvertently reinforcing the process of forgetting itself. The reasons for these omissions vary, ranging from protecting one's image to shielding children from emotional burdens or struggling to articulate pain. Khalid's narrative exemplifies the profound impact of omitting familial pasts, engendering a sense of uncertainty and shame surrounding one's Palestinian identity. Khalid employs filmmaking as a means to explore and give shape to his family's fragmented identities and narratives, thereby highlighting the intricate interplay between memory, silences, identity, and storytelling.

Lastly, I delve into the gendered nature of storytelling through the cases of Taylor and Arabella. This examination of gender's significance in shaping storytelling and its impact on both storytellers and the audience challenges prevailing assumptions regarding intergenerational exchange. While mothers are often assumed to be the primary and most elaborate storytellers, two cases have emerged where mothers are less forthcoming in their storytelling, resulting in enduring tensions within the parent-offspring relationship. To truly understand the reasons behind these mothers' diminished inclination to engage their children through storytelling, it is imperative to scrutinize how their experiences have been shaped by factors such as ethnicity, economic class, and linguistic abilities. Adopting an intersectional approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the motivations behind their distinct modes of communication.

Through these narratives, it becomes evident that postmemory cannot be divorced from other family memories. Younger generations receive a myriad of narratives from their ancestors, alongside other family memories encompassing emotions such as pride, love, sadness, confusion, and obligation. While trauma may permeate across generations, family members retain agency in choosing what to share or withhold from their offspring. They focus on the elements that have caused them pain, endeavoring to pass on narratives that encapsulate the lessons they have learned. The interviews conducted in this study demonstrate that postmemory coexists with other emotionally charged memories within the fabric of family recollections. Although these narratives cannot be generalized, they lay the groundwork for envisioning alternative relationships and practices within survivor families where trauma does not wholly dominate.

Moreover, an analysis of how postmemory is constructed within each context reveals the agency wielded by both the storyteller and the audience. The majority of survivor family members exercise agency in determining what aspects of their lives to share or withhold. Each family member skillfully manages and controls the information they impart to their offspring, focusing on elements that have caused them pain while seeking to shield their loved ones from experiencing similar suffering. The interviews also shed light on the fact that many family members strive to bestow positive life lessons, fostering experiences of pride, connectedness, and purpose. Affirming family memories intertwine with the postmemory of al-Nakba survivors' offspring, coexisting alongside other family memories. These narratives offer profound insights into the dynamics of intergenerational trauma transmission and the affirming relationships that flourish within survivor families.

CHAPTER TWO: “IF SOMEBODY HAS TO DO IT, THEN WHY NOT ME?”: ECHOES OF SUMUD

To be Palestinian, as discovered by many members of the Palestinian Diaspora, is to have a cause, and to approach that cause with a steadfast resistance. Within the historical context of diasporic Palestinians, this psychology traditionally served as a means of resistance against occupation within settler-colonial environments, a form of resistance that has taken on varied forms. However, contemporary manifestations of resistance in the diaspora diverge significantly from the practices observed amongst Palestinians in the past. The latest generation of Palestinians to come of age, which comprises of the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors, have tacitly inherited fundamental aspects of Palestinian resistance, known traditionally as *sumud*. Specifically, young Palestinians appear to embody its psychological, cultural, and resilient aspects, but have adapted and expressed in ways that are shaped by their diasporic experiences. This adaptation encompasses the very language used to articulate and engage with resistance – the terminology itself and the embodiment of its principles. Such dimensions undergo ongoing negotiation among Palestinians in the diaspora, influenced by the cultural frameworks and concepts cultivated in the environments in which they were socialized outside the home, which is distinct from that of their ancestral homeland in Palestine.

The narratives that ensue serve as affirmations of younger generations' alignment with the overarching Palestinian "cause" that frames their social identities. In recent years, Palestinian resistance efforts have taken on novel and distinct forms compared to the past. Nonetheless, the extent to which young Palestinians engage in the practice of sumud vis-à-vis psychological resistance remains uncertain. It becomes evident that these individuals actively embody psychological resistance in their daily lives – a resistance characterized by an unwavering commitment to selfhood, a yielding adherence to personal authenticity despite stigmatization, discrimination, or the disconcerting sense of otherness. While no participants labelled their resistance as sumud – in fact, many of those interviewed actively dissociate themselves from what they have identified as the sumud of previous generations – their psychological disposition bears striking resemblance to the sumud of previous generations. As such, this research suggests that this generation participates in resistance efforts that "echo" sumud ideologies and deftly apply it in ways that resonate with the demands of their respective environments, thereby resulting in its evolution across space and time. The aim of this chapter is to offer theoretical insights into the emergence of this novel form of resistance, a resistance that appears to "echo" sumud. By contextualizing these ideas within such a framework, this chapter will explore the mnemonic foundations that underlie its enduring resilience over time, as well as its transformative trajectory, while concurrently offering illustrative instances of its manifold manifestations.

The psychological dimensions of contemporary diasporic resistance find their roots in the interplay between inherited memories and lived experiences. Among third-generation Palestinians, their sense of moral obligation emerges because of their postmemory, which in turn shapes their initial understanding of resistance. Cognizant of their familial narratives, they bear a sense of indebtedness not only to their own family, as seen in certain instances in Chapter One, but also to those whose histories are analogous. Consequentially, they develop an understanding of the Palestinian "cause" as bequeathed by preceding generations. In their ongoing journey, young Palestinians persist in the preservation and dissemination of the memories of those who endured the tragedies of al-Nakba. They employ this knowledge as a tool for educating those who are unfamiliar with the Palestinian

narrative, thus perpetuating the age-old practice of steadfastness that has been embodied by Palestinians across generations. However, even as they carry forward the legacy forged by their forebears, the methods of resistance they have developed and employ bear the distinct imprint of their generation. While they commit themselves to preserving and perpetuating their families' stake in history, they do not fully align themselves with other core tenants, which center around a nostalgic gaze towards pre-1948 Palestine and the anticipation of return. Rather than passively inheriting established themes and meanings, which some perceive as outdated, they engage in a process of personal interpretation of the Palestinian historical narrative, allowing it to inform their own sense of Palestinian identity and, to a certain extent, shaping their distinctive approaches to resistance. So, their obligation to resist manifests locally, through their engagement with localized, day-to-day "causes" that reflect their immediate, identity-based concerns. In doing so, they bridge the psychological divide that separates them from identifying as authentically Palestinian. It is through these actions that they find a sense of purpose and forge a deep personal identification, ultimately shaping their own understanding of what means to be truly "Palestinian."

Within the diaspora, where the majority of this generation resides, *sumud* "echoes" take on personalized forms that resonate with their individual needs and convictions, molded by the cultural contexts in which they were socialized. It encompasses the entirety of their everyday encounters as members of a post-Nakba generation – a struggle not only against historical erasure, but also against the multifaceted oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class experienced within the diasporic context. For many young Palestinians interviewed for this research, who are scattered around the globe, the sheer act of embracing their authentic selves becomes the primary act of resistance. What they resist, though, depends on where they are located in the diaspora, and which challenges they face in relation to their personal identities. Ultimately, they achieve this in distinct ways: firstly, by reconfiguring the meanings derived from their cultural historical memory, transforming narratives traditionally associated with postmemory and tragedy into narratives of empowerment and survival; and secondly, by expanding

the very definition of Palestinian-ness to encompass modern diasporic experiences.

Defining Psychological Resistance Within the Contexts of Sumud

To understand how sumud echoes through the psychological and everyday resistance of third-generation al-Nakba survivors, we must establish a framework that situates resistance with the contexts of Palestinian sumud and vice versa. Palestinian resistance efforts can be understood against a longstanding history of settler-colonialism, and later on expulsion – both of which resulted in a threat to Palestinian cultural memory and identity. In response to this, Palestinians residing in both the diaspora and Occupied Territories committed to a psychology of resistance, understood to them as *sumud*. While theoretical conceptions of sumud are varied, as will be discussed later in this section, certain aspects of sumud will be analyzed here in order to analyze third-generation Palestinian psychology. Namely, this research focuses on its psychological, cultural, and resilient characteristics, as they overlap with how we understand everyday forms of anticolonial and psychological resistance. Bhabha notes that resistance is not merely an intentional, oppositional act or a negation of another culture. Instead, he characterizes resistance as an ambivalent effect produced within dominating discourses, which reimplicate signs of cultural difference within the deferential relations of colonial power.³⁸⁰ Such ambivalence comes subtly, especially when contrasted to the forms of colonial resistance that were more apparent to the colonisers such as military conflict and vocal protest movements. This type of resistance is subtle and psychological, particularly in response to experiencing disadvantage. At its core, psychological resistance opposes dominance by allowing individuals to determine the psychological significance of their disadvantage.³⁸¹

The varied manifestations of psychological resistance share a common thread – they represent active attempts, sometimes subtle or covert, to resist material disadvantage on psychological grounds rather than through direct confrontational

³⁸⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2012), 110.

³⁸¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

protests.³⁸² While some may view these psychological efforts as inadequate substitutes for overt protests, psychological resistance is a distinct form of opposition. Moreover, it is a more practical exercise of power than many psychological treatments acknowledge. In contexts marked by violent repression, structural disadvantage, political marginalization, and societal devaluation, the psychological meaning of one's position is the aspect over which the disadvantaged have the most control.³⁸³ By refusing to internalize external disadvantage, psychological resistance empowers individuals to assert that financial, political, or social poverty does not equate to a poverty of the spirit.³⁸⁴

Fakhoury coins these acts as “quiet resistance.” Diverging from activism, quiet resistance operates on a non-political plane and often goes unnoticed or undervalued. Individuals engaging in quiet resistance pursue personal projects, preferences, or ideals that are banned or discouraged by the oppressive forces they experience.³⁸⁵ This form of resistance opens definitions of resistance to include mundane actions. In this way, anyone can resist what they regard as oppression. Closely related, is the notion of everyday resistance, which is explored through four key dimensions. They consist of practices, and not solely those that are conscious or intentional. They are historically entangled with everyday power, and they engage with power at various intersections. Their methods are consistently changing in response to the shifting needs in a person's or group's environment.³⁸⁶

Over the course of decades, Palestinian *sumud* assumed a profound significance in the everyday lives of those who practiced it. In doing so, it became firmly

³⁸² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*.

³⁸³ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*.

³⁸⁴ Colin Wayne Leach and Andrew G. Livingstone, “Contesting the Meaning of Intergroup Disadvantage: Towards a Psychology of Resistance,” *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 3 (September 2015): 614–32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12131>.

³⁸⁵ Tamara Fakhoury, “Quiet Resistance: The Value of Personal Defiance” (Doctoral Thesis, 2019), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2308215401?parentSessionId=%2Fz20ZqZDI8G9lt5g5otWxfWpnAuWzIYAWa1ktwRJxdQ%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=10792&sourcetype=Dissertations%20%20Theses>.

³⁸⁶ Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson, “‘Everyday Resistance’: Exploration of a Concept and Its Theories,” *Resistance Studies Magazine*, no. 1 (September 2013): 1–46, <https://resistance-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Vinthagen-Johansson-2013-Everyday-resistance-Concept-Theory.pdf>.

established as part of the bedrock of Palestinian collective ideology. Ideologies, as social constructs, exert significant influence in shaping individual and collective worldviews. Mullins defines ideology as a fundamental element of belief systems,³⁸⁷ while Hamilton expands this definition by encompassing the “ideas, beliefs, understandings, and attitudes” held by individuals or groups.³⁸⁸ Ideologies are mutually constructed, agreed upon, and implemented within social groups, serving as guides and justifications for collective behavior and allegiances. They filter personal and collective schemas, influence decision-making processes, shape the recollection of memories, and mold individuals’ interpretations of the past. Moreover, ideologies elucidate a society’s position in the world, shedding light on how and why political institutions align with the people they purport to govern. It is through this interpretive framework that we can apprehend the development of *sumud* as an ideology and its intergenerational transmission.

Sumud, an Arabic term denoting steadfastness and perseverance, carries historical significance for Palestinians. Palestinians have employed this term to describe their unwavering resolve to remain on their ancestral land, in their homes, and to resist occupation, undeterred by the adversities they confront. Its manifestations are diverse, encompassing the cultivation of the land, the reconstruction of destroyed homes and communities in the aftermath of conflict, and the preservation of memory, cultural traditions, and heritage. It also emerges as an artistic endeavor, a medium through which individuals convey their deepest human qualities, whether through poetry, film, embroidery, or performance. Scholars, drawing from various disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, political science, and Middle Eastern studies, undertake comprehensive analyses of *sumud*.

³⁸⁷ Malcolm B. Hamilton, “The Elements of the Concept of Ideology,” *Political Studies* 35, no. 1 (March 1987): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1987.tb00186.x>.

³⁸⁸ Willard A. Mullins, “On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science,” *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 02 (June 1972): 498–510, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1957794>.

Abu-Lughod identifies *sumud* as a form of non-violent resistance that finds its roots deeply embedded in Palestinian history and culture.³⁸⁹ Toine van Teeffelen³⁹⁰ identifies three concepts of Palestinian *sumud*: participation, agency, and aesthetics. The act of rebuilding one's home after its demolition, the unwavering commitment to remain in the land or one's house, and the resolute continuation of daily life while clinging to faith and ideals despite hardships and setback – all these exemplify traditional forms of participation in *sumud*. Furthermore, *sumud* embodies the essence of agency, representing the spirit and energy to make choices even when confronted with dire circumstances. In essence, *sumud* encapsulates the resilience and inner strength that empowers Palestinians to navigate their existence with purpose and determination.

The concept of *sumud* emerged as a poignant response to the cataclysmic events of the al-Nakba in 1948.³⁹¹ This pivotal moment in Palestinian history signifies a rupture, a rupture that heralds the onset of ethnic cleansing and the relentless onslaught of settler colonialism perpetrated by Zionist forces.³⁹² It was during this fateful period that the Palestinians found themselves subjected to a systematic campaign of expulsion and forced migration, compelling countless families to flee their ancestral villages in order to evade the persecution and violence inflicted upon them by Israeli forces. Consequentially, the dispossessed Palestinians scattered across the vast expanse of the diaspora, while Israeli families usurped their homes, erasing their towns and renaming buildings, cities, and streets.³⁹³

Ever since, the occupying State has maintained its political and economic dominion over Palestinian territories, imposing a system of control that pervades every

³⁸⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (February 1990): 41–55, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1990.17.1.02a00030>.

³⁹⁰ Toine Van Teeffelen, "The Story of *Sumud*," in *The Future of Palestinian Identity*, ed. Sharif Kanaana (Papers Presented at the Third International Conference Held at the Centre for the Study of Palestinian Society and Heritage, Society of Inash al-Ustra, 2008), https://www.academia.edu/5596248/The_Story_of_Sumud.

³⁹¹ Wafa Meari, "Sumud: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (July 1, 2014): 547–78, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2692182>.

³⁹² Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London, England: Oneworld, 2006).

³⁹³ For more information, see Noga Kadman and Dimi Reider, *Erased from Space and Consciousness: Israel and the Depopulated Palestinian Villages of 1948* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015).

aspect of Palestinian existence. In the face of this oppressive reality, Palestinians devised both individual and collective strategies of resistance to challenge the occupying power. These practices of resistance encompass culturally contextualized mnemonic rituals, which function as repositories of collective memory and acts of cultural preservation. Such endeavors serve as powerful means of safeguarding Palestinian identity and culture in the midst of existential threats, while simultaneously serving as potent forms of protest against the perceived forces responsible for these perils. Moreover, Palestinians engaged in more direct forms of action, such as protests and boycotts, which emerged as potent instruments to contest the authority of the prevailing powers and disrupt the mechanisms that perpetuate their predicament.

According to certain scholars, the momentum behind sumud surged in the years that followed al-Nakba, reaching its peak in the wake of the Six-Day War in 1967. It was during this period that Palestinian national consciousness experienced a renaissance, coinciding with the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the resistance movements sprouting in the refugee camps scattered across Jordan and Lebanon. Against the backdrop of the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s and 80s, Palestinians defended these camps, becoming emblematic figures of sumud. These stories of bravery and sacrifice elevated the status of Palestinians martyred or imprisoned during armed struggles, encapsulating the spirit of sumud within a militant narrative.³⁹⁴ Simultaneously, the notion of sumud became closely associated with the Palestinians residing within the confines of Palestinian land itself. In the wake of the 1967 War, those who found themselves in the affected territories faced a momentous decision – to abandon their ancestral homes and become refugees or to remain and withstand the encroachment of occupation. Many families chose to stay, refusing to relinquish their homes and land. These intertwined notions of resilience and rootedness steadily solidified over time, particularly as Palestinian refugees continued to grapple with subsequent cycles of conflict both within the Occupied Territories and across the diaspora.

³⁹⁴ Meari, "Sumud."

Following the eruption of the Second Intifada the lives of Palestinians residing in the Occupied Territories underwent another dramatic transformation. The daily navigation through military checkpoints and the pervasive disruption of their daily routines became formidable hurdles that tested their endurance and unwavering resolve.³⁹⁵ These experiences, among others, came to be regarded as emblematic of the essence of *sumud* – a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people and their unyielding commitment to forging a sense of normality, rekindling home, and seeking moments of positivity amid the prevailing hardships.³⁹⁶ In this manner, the meaning of Palestinian *sumud* underwent a process of constant evolution, adapting to the changing demands imposed by the complex environments in which Palestinians found themselves. It became a multifaceted expression of resistance, endurance, and the relentless pursuit of a dignified existence in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

The adoption of *sumud* as a way of life has become ingrained in the daily existence of Palestinians, whether residing in the Occupied Territories or scattered across the diaspora. It has transcended mere personal resilience to become a collective ideology shared by individuals within this social fabric. Some argue that *sumud* now represents a culturally rooted form of resilience, serving as a conduit for Palestinians to uphold their identity and forge an unbreakable bond with their land.³⁹⁷ Others contend that *sumud*, owing to its psychological nature, embodies a form of passive resistance³⁹⁸ or what can be termed as everyday resistance³⁹⁹ – a subtle yet potent force that, in certain contexts, proves more impactful than overt acts of force or violence. Moreover, it has been lauded as a positive form of

³⁹⁵ Ibid

³⁹⁶ Cindy A. Sousa, Susan Kemp, and Mona El-Zuhairi, "Dwelling within Political Violence: Palestinian Women's Narratives of Home, Mental Health, and Resilience," *Health & Place* 30 (November 2014): 205–14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2014.09.005>.

³⁹⁷ Jeyda Hammad and Rachel Tribe, "Culturally Informed Resilience in Conflict Settings: A Literature Review of *Sumud* in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *International Review of Psychiatry* 33, no. 1-2 (2021): 132–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2020.1741259>.

³⁹⁸ Taylorandra Rijke and Toine Van Teeffelen, "To Exist Is to Resist: *Sumud*, Heroism, and the Everyday," *Institute for Palestine Studies* n/a, no. 59 (2014), <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/165375>.

³⁹⁹ Nijmeh Ali, "Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security Lifestyle of Resistance: Palestinian *Sumud* in Israel as a Form of Transformative Resistance," *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security* 6, no. 2 (2018), https://cesran.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/JCTS_Vol_6_No_2_A_2.pdf.

resistance, one that places emphasis on the construction of alternative narratives and the promotion of values such as dignity, justice, and freedom.⁴⁰⁰ Irrespective of the various interpretations, one undeniable truth emerges: sumud functions as a vital coping mechanism, equipping Palestinians with the means to preserve their sense of self and to withstand the dehumanizing effects perpetuated by occupation or the life of a refugee.

As evidenced above, sumud has evolved over time, incorporating a range of practices and representations that resist fixed meanings. Scholars grappled with this complexity, seeking to unravel its intricate layers of meaning.⁴⁰¹ Layla Al Ammar's insightful article, "That hateful limit," explores the writings of contemporary Palestinian authors and suggests that these young Palestinians, born after the era of sumud practiced in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, engage with its legacy through the lens of postcolonial subjectivity.⁴⁰² Paradoxically, while this generation offers tremendous potential for new academic discourse, it remains under-researched in the context of sumud. The gap in knowledge is also evident in Western theories of psychological resistance, where insufficient attention has been given to the resilience found in conflict-affected and diasporic settings within Arab cultures.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, the understanding of how individuals cope in the Occupied Territories and broader diaspora in relation to sumud remains ambiguous.⁴⁰⁴ Across disciplines, the comprehension and adoption of sumud by the offspring of survivors, as well as its practices in the diaspora, remain elusive. This chapter seeks to bridge this gap in understanding by adopting a subjective and generational lens to examine sumud. It aims to contextualize sumud by providing detailed accounts of its diverse manifestations, shedding light on its

⁴⁰⁰ Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*, JSTOR (Pluto Press, 2011), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183p294>.

⁴⁰¹ Hammad and Tribe, "Culturally informed resilience in conflict settings."

⁴⁰² Layla AlAmmar, "'That Hateful Limit': Narrative Distancing and Palestinian Subjectivity in the Post-Sumud Fiction of Adania Shibli," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, August 1, 2022, 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2098679>.

⁴⁰³ Mohammad Marie, Ben Hannigan, and Aled Jones, "Resilience of Nurses Who Work in Community Mental Health Workplaces in Palestine," *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing* 26, no. 4 (June 13, 2016): 344–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12229>.

⁴⁰⁴ Abdelhamid J Afana et al., "Coping with Trauma and Adversity among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip: A Qualitative, Culture-Informed Analysis," *Journal of Health Psychology* 25, no. 12 (July 5, 2018): 2031–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105318785697>.

significance in the lives of Palestinians today. Through this exploration, this research hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of sumud and its relevance within the contemporary Palestinian experience.

Ultimately, we can see the conceptual connections between psychological resistance and sumud. Sumud extends beyond physical resistance to occupation, involving a deeply psychological dimension. Both sumud and psychological resistance embody the principles of steadfastness and perseverance, with sumud reflecting the determination to remain on ancestral land and resist occupation, while psychological resistance emphasizes resilience and inner strength to navigate challenges. The non-violent nature of both concepts is evident, as sumud is often portrayed as a form of non-violent resistance, and psychological resistance operates through subtle, non-political means. Empowerment through control is a common thread, as psychological resistance empowers individuals to determine the psychological significance of their disadvantage, paralleling the empowerment seen in sumud by refusing to internalize external disadvantages. Both concepts emerge in response to historical events, such as al-Nakba, addressing structural disadvantages as a way to resist oppression. Additionally, both sumud and psychological resistance highlight the importance of everyday forms of resistance. Lastly, cultural and collective factors are integral to both concepts, shaping individual and collective worldviews of those who take part.

Accepting Disillusionment, Rejecting Sumud?

Surprisingly, the notion of sumud remained conspicuously absent in the narratives of those I interviewed. Not once did they express a conscious identification with this widely embraced ideal, nor did they spontaneously broach the subject in our conversations. At first glance, this peculiar omission is quite the conundrum, considering the historical prevalence of sumud as an influential concept in both Palestine and the diaspora. These individuals, whose inherited memories were explored in the narratives shared in Chapter One, descended from predecessors who, in many cases, embodied sumud, even if they themselves never explicitly labeled it as such.

Even among those interviewees who did not inherit a legacy of sumud, a handful of those interviewed lived through pivotal moments in Palestinian history, notably the First and Second Intifadas, which thrust the concept into the international spotlight. Yet, it remains uncertain whether each person I interviewed was even acquainted with the term. The silence surrounding sumud was so pervasive in our conversations that it was only during my encounters with Raghad, two years into the interviewing process, that I became aware of its absence and the significance of this silence:

Sumud means steadfastness. It's a very common word that you need to know if you read about Palestine and Palestinians. If you ask a Palestinian why they didn't leave the country, they say, this is sumud. They will tell you that this is our land, and our country, and all that. Some people say that the people of Jerusalem are doing a great job for Palestine because they're staying there, they are sticking to their land, in our country, and they're the only Arabs left there. Our legal status is a manifestation of the Palestinian crisis.

I don't identify with any of that, none of it. To me, Jerusalem is home because that's where I grew up. My relationship with the city is not a national one. It's a personal, cultural one, and it's not political. That's why we left.⁴⁰⁵

During our conversation, Raghad elucidated her understanding of sumud, presenting it as a form of tenacity and resoluteness, an unwavering determination to thrive amidst formidable circumstances. It remains unclear from whom exactly she acquired this definition – she vaguely alludes to those who would impart this knowledge, most likely her peers. Nevertheless, she employs this understanding to conceive a notion of expected behaviorisms for Palestinians, grounding her definition in social experience. Within this framework, sumud emerges as one of the foundational pillars of Palestinian psychology, with the residents of Jerusalem embodying its practice most adeptly, their actions serving as tangible manifestations of the broader Palestinian predicament. Raghad, however, sets herself apart from this prevailing ideology, as evidenced by her demeanor and response. It seems as though she encountered this perspective not through direct experience of overt coercion, but rather through the social pressures that

⁴⁰⁵ Raghad, Interview Four, interview by Kristine Sheets, March 2022.

permeated her upbringing in Jerusalem. This aligns with the broader theme she foreshadowed at the outset of our interview – that she, in many ways, diverges from the typical Palestinian narrative – and that her own account would reflect this divergence.

Explored in greater detail in Chapter One, Raghad's upbringing in the Old City revealed a stifling of her Palestinian identity, as the Israeli government failed to acknowledge her cultural and national heritage. Within the confines of Jerusalem, she encountered the weighty expectations imposed upon her, compelling her to temper her conduct and conform to the social and political demands of the Israeli establishment. Only in select settings does Raghad feel the freedom to introspect and share herself as a Palestinian – an emancipated space, be it within the walls of academia or during journeys abroad. In our interview, she continued to exercise restraint in openly sharing her Palestinian self, even within her current surroundings that ostensibly mirror those in which other diasporic Palestinians find solace in unabashed self-expression:

Until today, I will never practice being Palestinian in public. I will never participate in a protest that is pro-Palestine: one, I grew up refraining from participating in any such activities because they were illegal in Jerusalem; two, if I do protest here or in Britain, that might affect my right to return to Jerusalem, if I want to live there. I might get blacklisted.⁴⁰⁶

Raghad's predicament was laid bare in her honesty. A visible hesitancy seized her, at times even morphing into apprehension, whenever the prospect of openly embracing her Palestinian heritage, entwined as it was with political engagement, presented itself to her. As she explains, vocalizing her sentiments carried the weight of dire consequences, be it the adverse impact on her own person or, even worse, repercussions visited upon her family, who remain in Jerusalem. Within this statement, she demonstrates the dangers connected to participating in pro-Palestinian activism – a fear of blacklisting or losing one's right to return home, representing the very crux of her hesitance. Faced with the unease that such

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid

threats arouse, Raghad chooses to maintain a safe distance any activities that might elicit comparable emotions. Such a response, a recognizable reflex, surfaces time and again in the lives of individuals compelled to subdue their authentic identities to navigate social environments wherein harm threatens those who bear such identities.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, she refrains from decorating her home with the Palestinian flag, or herself with the kufiyah. She obtains from marching in street demonstrations, or any other outwardly symbolic gesture intertwined with the assertion of Palestinian identity.

While embracing this philosophy affords Raghad peace of mind, she remains cognizant of the disparities between her outlook and that of other Palestinians encountered throughout her life. She notes a distinction that sets her apart from both older and younger Palestinians, perceiving them as more at ease with assuming the role of activists and readily demonstrating their convictions in public spaces. Raghad contrasts her reflections upon herself with those of the actions and perspectives observed amongst her Palestinian peers, be it within the confines of the Occupied Territories or the wider diaspora. She perceives a prevailing inclination among the Palestinians she has encountered, a yearning steeped in illusory nostalgia.

“That is a nostalgia of return,” she shares with me, “of throwing Israel in the sea, pretending it did not exist, and starting over again.”⁴⁰⁸ However, Raghad remains unconvinced of the practicalities inherent in such desires, contending that Palestinians lack the requisite means to educate, sustain, or safeguard themselves, let alone effect a complete rupture from their occupiers. “If you really want to do something for your own Palestine,” she asserts, “you need to be realistic.”⁴⁰⁹ Engaging in conversations with other Palestinians, whether huddled in the alleys of Jerusalem, on university campus, or in her home in the diaspora, Raghad maintains this as her customary stance, unswayed by challenging perspectives. In her candid reflections, she admits that these exchanges shed light

⁴⁰⁷ Henri Tajfel and John Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” in *Intergroup Relations: Essential Readings*, ed. Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams (Psychology Press, 2001), 94–109.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid

upon the dissimilarities that underpin her thought processes vis-à-vis those of her fellow Palestinians:

When we start talking, it really hits me that they are stuck in a different time in history and that is the Nakba. They don't know, or maybe they know, but they're not comprehending, the fact that there's a different reality right now. If you really want peace, if you want a state, and if you want freedom and all that, then you need to compromise on other issues.⁴¹⁰

Raghad's distinction becomes further evident as we explore her motivations for engaging in practices that many other Palestinians, particularly those residing in the diaspora, embrace as a means of forging a connection with their Palestinian heritage. In light of her previous statements, I seized the opportunity to ask whether she and her family consciously practiced customs and traditions within the privacy of their home, shielded from the prying eyes of the public, as a deliberate endeavor to safeguard Palestinian culture and preserve their family's collective memories. I also posed the question of whether this inclination intensified now that she found herself living in Canada, distanced from the pressures exerted by Palestinian and Israeli influences. To my intrigue, this line of questioning elicited a snap-response, as seen in the following statement:

I do things, and I wear things, and I cook things, and I dance in a certain way, because that's how I've been brought up. Not because I'm Palestinian. This is the clear distinction that I have. I told you before, that yes, I grew up in Jerusalem. I do things in a certain way, but I do not refer to myself as a Palestinian, you see? It's more just how I was brought up. So, yes of course I dance dabke, we celebrate it in a particular way, which is the traditional way.⁴¹¹

Raghad insists that in her everyday life, she does not find it necessary to exhibit unwavering commitment or overt displays over her cultural heritage and Palestinian national identity. The qualities she accumulated over the course of her life, which she continues to embody in her daily routines, she acquired serendipitously. For her, her Palestinian identity is not constituted by performative

⁴¹⁰ Ibid

⁴¹¹ Ibid

gestures intended to commemorate a culture perceived to be at risk of fading away. This statement illuminates the impact of her personal encounters on her inclination to align herself against sumud, even at its most rudimentary levels. When considered in conjunction with her personal history, her response implies that she fashioned a definition of sumud that intertwines with notions of nationalism and patriotism.

As previously mentioned, Raghad firmly believes that any association with Palestinian pride carries the risk of adverse repercussions from the Israeli government, a circumstance she actively seeks to evade. Consequentially, she distances herself from such identification, despite engaging in activities that other diasporic Palestinians practice as forms of cultural resistance, such as storytelling or folklore, culinary traditions, and donning the traditional Palestinian attire. Her perspective represents just one of the varied responses observed among Palestinians in the face a history marked by occupation and displacement. In this instance, her reflections underscore the sense of powerlessness that can pervade such a situation, where political opportunities are severely limited. This sense of powerlessness is a common experience for individuals ensnared within such contexts.⁴¹² The only domain in which Raghad perceives agency, within these confines, is over herself and her outward presentation. This becomes her means of safeguarding both herself and her family. Consequently, she acknowledges that this perspective sets her apart from the Palestinian majority. While she may differ from those whom she distinguishes herself, she does not perceive this distinction as inherently positive or negative. Rather, she acknowledges the multifaceted and overlapping nature of diverse experiences, thus exemplifying her comprehension of the complexity that constitutes Palestinian collective identity. By recognizing the differences between herself and other Palestinians, particularly those outside her

⁴¹² Doowon Suh, "How Do Political Opportunities Matter for Social Movements?: Political Opportunity, Misframing, Pseudosuccess, and Pseudofailure," *The Sociological Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (July 2001): 437–60, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2001.tb02409.x>; Steven E. Barkan, "Legal Control of the Southern Civil Rights Movement," *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 4 (August 1984): 552, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095468>; Charles Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory: The Iranian Revolution of 1979," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 1 (February 1996): 153, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096411>.

immediate family in Jerusalem, she grasps that her own experiences form part of a range of responses to the enduring legacy of historical trauma.

In her interview, Raghad's stance on Palestinian identity shifts from one that is personal, to circumstantial, to social, to political, mirroring the confused construction that characterizes her generation's perception of themselves, their identities, and their responsibilities as Palestinians. While she identifies her perspective as distinctive from the Palestinians she encounters, her disillusionment is not new amongst Palestinians. Her dilemma resonates with the struggles faced by many participants in this study. Numerous individuals do not align themselves with the notion of Palestinian nationalism and perceive most endeavors to resist occupation as exercises in futility. This sentiment is particularly pronounced among those residing in the diaspora, who often feel geographically distant and thus perceive their capacity to effect meaningful and positive change in the lives of Palestinians as limited. The ensuing interviews mirror Raghad's viewpoint, as participants express their belief that the concept of return, which lies at the heart of *sumud*, while once an imperative, may no longer be an option. However, unlike Raghad, many actively and intentionally engage in Palestinian traditions that they believe bring them closer to their ancestral heritage and serve as acts of ongoing resistance. Through such practices, they preserve and celebrate Palestinian culture and memory. Simultaneously, by carving out a space in the diaspora to safely and authentically express their culture, they defy stigmatization and discrimination, adversarial forces that only reinforce their unwavering commitment to their ancestral identities. In this manner, these individuals "echo" aspects of *sumud*, or at the very least, its psychological dimension, as they persistently resist identity-based persecution and the threat of cultural erasure.

Yet, as previously noted, respondents do not ascribe their endeavors to *sumud*. At most, they refer to it as "resistance," or "having a cause." This raises a crucial inquiry: can we recognize their actions as Palestinian *sumud* if they themselves do not label it as such? Are the younger generation of Palestinians disconnected from the legacy of *sumud*, or do they consciously distinguish themselves, much like

Raghad does? It is worth noting that they do identify with its synonymous, Western counterpart, psychological resistance, implying that the essence of sumud has been transmitted, even if not explicitly acknowledged. This suggests that the actions surrounding sumud have come to be unconsciously performed where they may have been once actively relayed. Let us turn our attention to a statement Khalid shared with me during our interview:

There is an approach, it's very controversial, that is essentially developing resistance has moved into a cultural resistance phase. The armed resistance, we have to accept as a failure. Political resistance was more or less a failure and totally stalled now. *The only option we have left is cultural resistance. The sense that the most powerful thing we can do now is assert our identity, that will give us historical continuity.* Whenever this solves itself, which would seem to me will most likely happen because of the collapse of the state, then Palestinian culture still exists and there's space for it to create an identity, either as a nation-state or just a perpetual nation in exile. Which is horrible, but it's sustainable.⁴¹³

According to Khalid, cultural resistance emerged as the sole viable avenue for Palestinians in their struggle against oppression. Similar to Raghad, he holds the belief that exiled Palestinians will never be able to return to their homelands. This sets him apart, along with like-minded individuals, from previous generations of Palestinians who fixated on the idea of return (as exemplified in Faisal's narratives from Lebanon's refugee camps, found in Chapter One), employing it as a foundation for how they express sumud. Khalid contends that cultural resistance and the assertion of the Palestinian self is now imperative for Palestinians to evade erasure. In a context where he perceives previous forms of resistance, such as armed and political struggle, to have faltered, cultural resistance offers a means for Palestinians to assert their existence and uphold a sense of historical continuity. This adaptive form of resistance can be understood as a response to irreversibly transformed circumstances that necessitates endurance rather than reversal.⁴¹⁴ While Khalid acknowledges the remaining option as cultural, involving the assertion of identity, he also alludes to the psychological dimension of how he chooses to

⁴¹³ Khalid, Interview Sixteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020. Italicization added.

⁴¹⁴ Joseph Zacker and Morton Bard, "Adaptive Resistance to Change in a Community," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 1, no. 1 (January 1973): 44–49, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00881245>.

resist. However, his use of the term “horrible” implies that he views this situation not as ideal, but as a last-ditch effort to safeguard Palestinian identity amidst the culturally eroding realities of a “perpetual nation in exile.”

Khalid’s perspectives on resistance are reminiscent to those found within other indigenous communities, encapsulated by the concept of “survance.” This term elucidates how oppressed peoples uphold psychological resilience and assert their public voice amidst conditions of political social, and economic subjugation.⁴¹⁵ For these groups, the path to political and economic liberation commences with psychological emancipation. It necessitates breaking away from the “fatalistic determination” of the future and redirecting their thoughts toward active engagement with politics and envisioning alternative futures outside the confines of white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal, heteronormative, and ableist systems.⁴¹⁶ These actions exemplify the agency exhibited by communities historically subjected to dominant powers, thereby expanding our understanding of subjectivity and agency. In these contexts, agency emerges from a rational, internally coherent, and proactive subject.⁴¹⁷ The emergence of agency, taking form as resistance, can be attributed to the experiences of the oppressed⁴¹⁸ and their reactions to the oppressive forces they confront.⁴¹⁹

This leads us back to our initial query. Should we designate the psychology of this generation of Palestinians as *sumud*, or as something else more attuned to participants’ word choice? The sentiments they express do not precisely align with those expressed by previous generations, thus it cannot be considered the same as traditional *sumud*. However, it would be mistaken to assert that their thoughts

⁴¹⁵ Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

⁴¹⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Discourse*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998.; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, (Boston, Massachusetts, Beacon Press, 2002); Christine Rosales and Regina Day Langhout, “Just Because We Don’t See It, Doesn’t Mean It’s Not There: Everyday Resistance in Psychology,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 14, no. 1 (December 27, 2019), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12508>.

⁴¹⁷ Eleanor MacDonald, “Feminist, Marxist and Poststructural Subjects,” *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 35, (1991), Pages 43-72.

⁴¹⁸ Henry Giroux, “Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis,” *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1983), Pages 257-293.

⁴¹⁹ Rebecca Raby, “What is Resistance?,” *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (20 August 2006).

diverge completely from those of preceding generations, as the ideological roots of each act of resistance practiced by this generation can be traced back to the ideologies cultivated amongst Palestinians who intentionally performed *sumud* in the past. Furthermore, their terminology suggests an affinity for Westernized words for resistance, as discussed earlier. In light of their own omission of the word, is it the place of the researcher to ascribe it to their actions?

Ultimately, it is important to analyze modern Palestinian resistance efforts in diaspora against what we already know as *sumud*, because the Palestinian community specifically developed a concept of resistance that speaks to it. Therefore, it can become a key part of the self-definition for this group, and it is through this lingual marker that we can understand their psychology. To further highlight this point, we can turn to Hannah Arendt's interview with Gunter Gaus, during which she famously claims, "there is no substitution for the mother tongue."⁴²⁰ In her discussion on language, Arendt suggests that meaning is intricately tied to context, particularly one's mother tongue or the language of one's familiar environment. The significance of using one's first language is irreplaceable, and attempting to communicate in a foreign language will inevitably result in the absence or distance of that meaningful connection. Ngũgĩ's *wa Thiong'o* echoes this in his work, *Decolonising the Mind*. His ideas address the connection between language and culture, where both carry meanings that extend beyond their conventional linguistic definitions. Thiong'o asserts that culture manifests through language, encapsulating worldviews closely tied to our personal identity and sense of place in the world. Thus, using the language of European colonizers in writing perpetuates the legacy of colonialism, leading to the erasure of indigeneity.⁴²¹

Following this line of thought, one could suggest that, without the original word, it is possible to lose the "Palestinian" essence of resistance that is implied through *sumud*. It is only by retaining the word, therefore, that one can understand its

⁴²⁰ Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains": A Conversation with Gunter Gaus, interview by Guenter Gaus, *Essays in Undersanding, 1930-1954*, October 28, 1964, <http://newdoc.nccu.edu.tw/teasyllabus/117154104580/A%20Conversation%20with%20Guenter%20Gaus.pdf>.

⁴²¹ Ngũgĩ *Wa Thiong'o*, *Decolonising the Mind : The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: East African Educational Publishers, 1992).

irreplaceable meaningfulness. Rejecting the term risks othering it, outdating it. Additionally, if we trade Palestinian terminology for Western lexicon, we risk perpetuating the West's colonization of language and thought in the Arab region.⁴²² This raises another crucial question: would eliminating sumud from this analysis, purely on the grounds that those interviewed never identified the word directly, push into colonial interdict of the Arabic language and of Palestinian social psychology?

Ultimately, however, the goal of this research is not to put words into the mouths of its contributors, even if those words are spoken in their ancestral "mother tongue." Therefore, a balance must be sought when establishing an analytical framework. This line of inquiry invites further academic speculation regarding the classification of this phenomenon. In order to contextualize such a dialogue, the forthcoming passages suggest that the resistance efforts by the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors be classified not as sumud in its traditional understanding, but as "echoes" of sumud.

Why might one call this phenomenon an "echo" of sumud? An echo, put simply, reflects a sound. It is its repetition, usually heard when the original sound encounters a barrier or reflective surface, which then serves to bounce the sound back towards a listener. The delay between the original sound and its echo is determined by the distance between the source and the surface upon which the sound wave reflects. In this way, an echo *resembles* the original sound, but is not quite; instead, it is a reinterpretation of that sound contextualized by the surface that reflects it. It repeats itself, yet not wholly. Each repetition is slightly different from the one that came before. While it may be arguable that the resistance efforts performed by those interviewed are not sumud in its traditional form, they undeniably *echo* it. I say this because these individuals *want to resist*. It makes them feel authentically Palestinian. In doing so, they perpetuate an ideology originating generations before them, while reappropriating it to fit modern

⁴²² See, for example, Jacques Derrida's critique of the French language usurping Arabic as the Algerian 'mother tongue,' as explained by Jennifer Gaffney in "Can a Language Go Mad?: Arendt, Derrida, and the Political Significance of the Mother Tongue," *Philosophy Today* 59, no. 3 (2015): 523–39, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday201551471>.

demands, an inevitable fate for any ideology or tradition reenacted over space and time.

A Bell Echoes: The Psychological Tolls of Remembering

The individuals interviewed in this study perceive themselves as deviating from the archetypical Palestinian narrative. They possess a keen awareness of the factors that distinguish them from both their predecessors and contemporary Palestinians residing in Palestine. Their lives are not directly plagued by the realities of occupation, as they perceive an “authentic” Palestinian would be, nor have they personally experienced forced displacement from their homes. For many interviewees, their connection to Palestine remains solely through their heritage and familial connections, often hindered by displacement or denied entry at Palestinian borders. Consequently, this group lives in confusion about their Palestinian identities, constantly questioning the authenticity of their lives. It is this insecurity that they wish to resolve, constituting an aspect of this generation’s intrinsic motivation.

This generation constructed an archetypical imaging of an authentically Palestinian experience, shaped by narratives. Whether transmitted through intergenerational or communal narratives or experienced firsthand, it is evident that their conceptions of Palestinian identity are deeply rooted in postmemory. Despite the denial of Palestinians’ history in hegemonic discourses,⁴²³ al-Nakba remains vividly imprinted in the collective memory of Palestinians. Decades of forced displacement, conflicts between Israeli and Arab nations, living in refugee camps, the denial of self-determination, and the persistent face of ethnic and religious discrimination in host countries have become integral parts of Palestinian history and collective remembrance. It is through personal shared encounters that this community finds connection, forging a memory that Matar describes as a “significant and emotional site,”⁴²⁴ informing the ideologies of the Palestinian

⁴²³ A wide body of work purports to discuss the discourse of memory on Israel and Palestine. For example, look to Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine : One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Benny Morris, *1948 : A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁴²⁴ Dina Matar, “News, Memory and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain,” PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, (London: Proquest LLC, 2014), 105.

people. In the aftermath of al-Nakba, to “be Palestinian”⁴²⁵ meant to preserve, to maintain familial bonds, and to preserve an identity inexorably intertwined with a land they can no longer access freely.

In affirming their stance in history, they affirm their enduring presence in Palestine, predating both the historical and contemporary periods of occupation. Their historical existence and the collective identity intertwined with it establish a primordial claim to the narrative and identity of the land. This assertion poses a challenge to Israeli endeavors aimed at legitimizing their dominance through historical displacement.⁴²⁶ For this reason, traditional sumud is deeply intertwined within the workings of postmemory, harnessing the historical traumas of preceding generations to mold it as a concept. From this history, survivors and their descendants establish a connection to the past while affirming their own identities, propelling further acts of sumud as generations pass. This symbiotic interplay between postmemory and sumud becomes apparent, as postmemory provides the very bedrock from which sumud emerges, and, in turn, acts of sumud become assimilated into the historical memory of the Palestinian people. It stands as the product of memory and the impetus for memory itself, firmly grounding the present in the enduring legacy of the past and offering a beacon of hope for the future.⁴²⁷ Thus, it furnishes a vital framework for future generations to apprehend the multifaceted nature of their identities as Palestinians.

This element of Palestinian collective psychology reverberates strongly within the younger diaspora generations. Postmemory assumes a commanding role in molding their Palestinian consciousness. After the first generation of exiles departed from Palestine, they imparted their memories, ideals, and traditions unto their offspring but also implored them to safeguard and transmit this legacy to future generations. Thus, Palestinian culture, intertwined with the historical memory of pre-1948 Palestine and the traumatic al-Nakba, remain an inseparable

⁴²⁵ Ibid

⁴²⁶ Ronald Aronson, “Never Again? Zionism and the Holocaust,” *Social Text*, No.3 (Autumn, 1980), 61.

⁴²⁷ Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: A Palestinian Case-Study*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/militarization-and-violence-against-women-in-conflict-zones-in-the-middle-east/31CB226ADD393B50F8AED038F2B8D879>.

component of daily life within the diaspora. It is within this setting that interviewees became aware of Palestinian history; the recipients of these narratives instinctively grasp their significance, recognizing that they not only connect them to their personal and familial history but also symbolically encapsulate the essence of the Palestinian struggle itself.

One way through which sumud echoes within this generation, is the manner in which younger generations undertake their own endeavors to preserve and recount the narratives passed down to them by ancestors. If one is to speak with a grandchild of an al-Nakba survivor about their identities as Palestinians, they will recount tales of ancestral presence in Palestine, and of a familial bond to the land that was severed. These narratives portray a thriving culture, wherein its inhabitants actively participated, forged meaningful connections, and flourished in their pursuits. However, the prevailing theme that emerges is that of rupture, when the prospects of continuity were tragically extinguished by violent forces. The following excerpt comes from Khalid, who shared with me the harrowing account of his family's flight from Palestine:

I know, generally, what their story was. They were living Wadi Chanin, which is in the Ramallah district. Around the end of 1947, Jewish troops entered Wadi Chanin. There was a campaign of terror in the surrounding areas, and they led everyone at gunpoint onto buses. My family was forced to leave. My grandmother's sister was living in Damascus at the time, so they went to Damascus. Now, it's a town called Ness Ziona, one of the towns that's known for having been totally erased off the map and renamed. They kept the local mosque and they kept two houses in town, which belonged to our family.⁴²⁸

Much like others from Khalid's generation, narratives of loss permeate his upbringing – the loss of community, the loss of property, the loss of an entire way of life. These human cataclysms rupture both time and narrative, distorting the life trajectories for all those entangled within its grasp. It is not solely the witnesses' timelines that undergo transformation, but it casts a shadow upon the entire family. Consequently, descendants are left to ponder the alternative paths their lives may

⁴²⁸ Khalid, Interview Number Sixteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2019.

have taken had their ancestors not endured colonization decades earlier. Echoing Khalid's story, Samir recounts his grandfather's lived experiences, unfolding against the backdrop of events that precipitated al-Nakba:

I think it was in the early forties. There was a battle between some Palestinian factions and the Hagana. There were several Zionist gangs, all worse than each other. Hagana was the biggest. They were fighting in Jerusalem, and my grandfather wanted to go. He went to one of his brother's houses and convinced him to go with him. Now, my great-uncle was a quiet guy. He mostly kept to himself. Newly married, he had a stable job working at a store. He had no business taking part in this fight.

My grandfather must have been very good with his words. He somehow convinced my great uncle to go with him. They travelled to Jerusalem. During the battle, my uncle was shot and killed. My grandfather had to carry him back home, from Jerusalem to Hebron. It's not too far by car, but it could be hours. On his way home, word got to my great-grandfather that his son died. He was in complete disbelief, until he saw the body.

People were expecting my grandfather to die, but not my great-uncle. I assume there was some resentment. My great-grandfather had high hopes for my great-uncle. So many high hopes.⁴²⁹

For those who participated in the interviews, the act of preserving these stories serves as a means to confront the looming threat of historical erasure. They assert that the powers that occupied their land for decades must be held accountable for their transgressions against the Palestinian people. Until a sense of justice is attained, they consciously choose to keep alive the pain endured by their ancestors. Consequently, their commitment to retaining and recounting ancestral histories becomes a perpetual challenge to a historical narrative that they perceive as endangering their own lived reality. It is precisely for this reason that the younger generation of Palestinians endeavors to unravel the "truth" of history, one that accommodates for their ancestral narratives. They delve into the pages of Palestinian history books, diligently pore over Palestinian authors and poets. They participate in classes that delve into Middle Eastern history and politics and join pro-Palestinian discussion groups within their local communities. What we witness

⁴²⁹ Samir, Interview Number Eighteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2019.

from this generation is an unwavering and discerning engagement with history and narrative, fuelled by their relentless pursuit of a narrative that validates the memories passed down to them by their family members.

According to Hirsch, the act of uncovering and retelling ancestral stories serves as a vital mechanism for the descendants of survivors to conceptualize, imagine, and process their familial trauma.⁴³⁰ I contend that there exists a broader dimension to this phenomenon, although it is deeply entwined with the psychological underpinnings she outlines. Among the young Palestinians, the pursuit of what they perceive as the truth holds significance as it allows them to perpetuate a storytelling tradition that has been passed down through generations. Armed with a comprehensive understanding of both ancestral and historical narratives, these individuals actively engage in educating others about their heritage, history, and identities, correcting and misconceptions that may arise. In this way, they echo tenant of traditional *sumud*, as practiced by their ancestors, albeit under a different label that may simply be referred to as engaging in conversation, as exemplified in Taylor's statement:

My best advice is to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. You're part of the solution in small ways as just having a conversation. Conversations with your friends who have kids, so that they're talking to them about these important subjects...I think that stories, like mine, can help people. Growing up, thinking that I was different, it was really hard. I thought I was the only person like that. Now that I'm aware that's not the case, I only hope that I can help others realize that they're not alone, even if it's just one person at a time.

I think it is important, especially because I know that not everyone is comfortable with those kinds of conversations and talking about that side of themselves. I am comfortable, and if my story can help at least one other person, then I'm going to do that.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory : Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁴³¹ Taylor, Interview Number Six, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

The strategy outlined here resonates with many of the interviewees, as it bestows upon them a sense of agency, purpose, and meaning. They exercise agency not only in how others perceive them but also in how they perceive themselves. In their narratives, they emerge as heroes, embodying resilience and triumph over adversity. Their families traversed the depths of despair, experiencing the loss of their homes and livelihoods during moments of ill fate. Yet, they managed to rebuild their lives from the ground up, reclaiming their place in the world. In Taylor's case, he seeks to share his story with others, offering it as evidence that even amidst their own journeys of struggle, there is hope for a brighter future. Unlike those interviews with more latent demeanours, such as Raghad, Taylor proudly embraces his identity and encourages others to do the same. Granted, Taylor's background differs significantly from Raghad's. While he did not face political persecution due to his Palestinian identity, he did grapple with being transgender in a Muslim family, as explored in Chapter One, which led to his estrangement from his kin. While persecution can often reinforce the suppression of identities, in certain instances, it serves only to embolden them. Taylor's case proves just that.

However, as the statements below elucidate, discussing Palestinian history is not as simple as holding a conversation. Palestinian history incites debates in even the most mundane and unexpected settings, making conversation risky if not practiced in a safe environment:

People always ask me questions about my experiences, or more so my family's experiences with being Palestinian. I will always get questions like, 'how do you know that happened?' or 'how do you know you're Palestinian?' I can trace back fifteen generations. If I have to provide somebody with receipts, I expect that I have to provide myself with those receipts, so to speak.

That's why I try to be as knowledgeable as I can on any subject I want to discuss. I know that I'm always going to get asked those questions, that I'm expected to defend myself. I hate to say it, but most people aren't expected to defend themselves in that way.⁴³²

⁴³² Ibid

This form of resistance clearly does not come without its complications. Not everyone aspires to be a living encyclopedia for all that is Palestine. In certain respects, some find this method of resistance to be immensely taxing and intrusive upon their day-to-day lives. “I know one percent of Palestinian history,” Khalid confides, “It’s never the place or time, but it’s so interesting to them. I’m in a club, where I’m drunk, the music is loud, and we’re screaming at each other. This is where you want to ask me how it feels to be Palestinian?”⁴³³ Khalid’s words exemplify the extent to which Palestinian postmemory eclipses the lives of those born in the aftermath of rupture. Even beyond the confines of the family, the offspring of survivors dwell in the shadow of al-Nakba, a reality that becomes apparent when they articulate their identities and histories to individual unaccustomed to their perspective on history. In this way, these individuals feel compelled to incessantly clarify and defend themselves, even in situations where they look for pleasure, as seen in Khalid’s case at a night club. When we draw parallels between this predicament and Raghad’s experiences, we discern the external pressures to either conceal a Palestinian identity or endure the resulting tribulations.

Third-Generation “Echoes”:

This brings us to yet another way through which sumud’s echoes resonate in the lives of third-generation Al-Nakba survivors. As evident in the aforementioned statements, many of them construct a narrative rooted in historical trauma, going to great lengths to engage in research and dialogues that revolve around uncovering and substantiating these truths. Through this comprehension, diasporic Palestinians acquire the ability to identify fellow Palestinians and bestow upon one another a sense of identity. In this way, they are able to locate themselves within this narrative, recalling the very dates that impacted their families in manners akin to those affecting other, “authentic,” Palestinian families. They are well aware that those who remain in Palestine are, primordially, equally Palestinian as themselves. They devote considerable attention to the narrative of resistance that shapes Palestinian collective memory and align the way they communicate themselves

⁴³³ Khalid, Interview Number Sixteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2019.

with this narrative, although the extent to which this occurs is a matter of debate. These narratives mold their definition of the archetypical, or what they classify as the “authentic” Palestinian experience, thereby reinforcing the ideology that being Palestinian signifies the inclination to resist injustice, or to embrace a cause for which one fights.

With regards to the narratives outlined earlier, those interviewed expressed a degree of diminishment and distress as they find it challenging to align their own experiences with those of Palestinians from the past or those who remain within the Occupied Territories. It manifests as a form of survivor’s guilt; they bear a burden of guilt and perceive themselves as inauthentic for not having endured the inherent “Palestinian” suffering that other members of their community have endured. While they can recite a familial narrative that resembles the overarching Palestinian experience, their connection is only semantic; some admit to feeling a sense of dislocation from such stories. This is only exasperated while they continue to encounter gaps in memory or in stories, further diminishing what was already an incomplete picture. Living in the diaspora and removed from the daily and historical violence that originally engendered Palestinian *sumud*, certain circumstances many no longer resonate or feel applicable to them. Regardless, they persist in forging connections with these conventions, aware that they can never fully replicate them.

In light of the precariously political nature that underscores their identities, young Palestinians find themselves on a perpetual search to establish connections with their experiences – be it as Palestinians, as the offspring of refugees, as the children of immigrants, or as individuals residing in societies that stigmatize their social identities. Undeniably, the experiences of this generation echo those of previous generations. At the same time, they differ. The new locations of Palestinians across the diaspora exposes them to different cultures, prompting the emergence of hybridized identities that extend beyond their original notions of “Palestinian-ness.”⁴³⁴ As generations traversed through time, they found themselves situated in an age defined by increased global connectedness,

⁴³⁴ Coin termed by Dina Matar in “News, Memory and Identity: The Palestinians in Britain” (2014), <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/1820>.

allowing them to access information on and discuss their concerns with like-minded individuals. Additionally, the grandchildren of survivors are highly educated; each person I interviewed attended university, where they developed a keen awareness of different social, racial, economic, and political tensions that mark their environments. This unique positioning enables them to express their Palestinian identity on a global scale and articulate their methods of resistance.

Let us consider the case of Albaraa. He describes a phase of his life as a series of endeavors aimed at exploring, comprehending, and championing his Palestinian heritage, fully cognizant that resistance is an integral part of this process. While he does not align himself with the notion of resistance solely for the sake of Palestine as a nation, he finds resonance in the struggle for the defense of human rights. “I identify with Palestine because of the cause,” he conveys, “If there wasn’t an injustice against Palestine and the Palestinians, I wouldn’t mind being anything else.”⁴³⁵ We can see that his fixation on his Palestinian identity stems from his postmemory and a personal alignment with the notion of resisting for a collective Palestinian “cause.” As Albaraa transitioned into adulthood, he sensed the latent possibilities that could have unfolded, had he and his family lived in Palestine. He harbors the sentiment that his authentic Palestinian self remains in Palestine, in the time when his family once enjoyed a sense of normalcy. He recognizes that part of the diasporic Palestinians experience is grappling with this gaze:

I think it’s to do with an imagined past. I think of being a Palestinian, and I imagine that it’s like a counter-history or counter-future. I should have been there. I should have been born in Palestine. I should have had citizenship where I could live in the same country, die in the same country, and I can technically run for office.

In Albaraa’s contemplation, he confronts the dissonance between how he imagines his life could have been versus how it came to be. This schism, born out of the weight of historical trauma, engenders Albaraa’s grief. He mourns not only for what he has lost but also for the part of himself that remains elusive, snatched away by the tragedies of events that preceded him. He became fixated on Palestine, looking to understand all the potentials he could have been. This, he claims, is the source

⁴³⁵ Albaraa, Interview Number Eleven, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2023.

of his resistance, to create a space for himself in which he can feel authentic as a Palestinian. This experience, he feels makes him acutely aware of the political nature of his identity. “I believe politics is imposed upon you,”⁴³⁶ he said to me, reminiscent of Raghad’s Khalid’s and Taylor’s own feelings of social pressure to engage politically. Yet, uniquely for Albaraa, this facet of his psyche evokes parallels of the psychological makeup of those who inhabit the camps of Lebanon, as observed by Faisal in Chapter One. Herein lies the essence of his loss – his legacy as a Palestinian, which he feels is denied to him in diaspora. This poignant realization, he confessed, fuels his passion:

You’re angry most of the time. You think that Palestinians are the best, the most important people in the world, and highly defensive. You become consumed. I think this passes the mind of every young Palestinian, at least male, I would say, maybe now that goes for females too. You would think of becoming a *fidai*. You would think about going and fighting and being a martyr.⁴³⁷

Albaraa claims to have carried this anger for years, guiding his behavior through young adulthood. Despite his relatively young age, Albaraa acknowledges that in his earlier years, he felt much more impassioned to vocalize his unwavering support for Palestinian political rights. He attributes his fervor to the natural zeal of youth and his evolving understanding of Palestinian history. For him, this impassioned advocacy served as a means to comprehend and, in some measure, compensate for the losses he felt and the accompanying emotions that followed. He further contends that these emotions, shared by many young Palestinians, are an integral part of the journey of growing up in the diaspora, an experience that leaves a permanent mark on their collective identity:

Palestinians, I think it’s part of their identity, now, to be hard-headed, revolutionary, resisters, sometimes just saying no for the hell of it. It’s a mode of trying to liberate yourself from the shackles that you have, which is that you’ve been born into the prison of the *shatat*. You need to both own it and escape it. By resisting, it’s a way of liberating yourself and asserting yourself onto the world.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Ibid

⁴³⁷ Ibid

⁴³⁸ Ibid

Albaraa posits that the inclination for Palestinians to engage in acts of resistance has become deeply ingrained within their identities. In this regard, it substantiates the notion that their resistance efforts echo *sumud*; suggesting that an ideology of resistance has been inherited as a social trait, one that has become so deeply embedded in the Palestinian psyche that it manifests as an instinctual response, done “for the hell of it.” His assertion, echoing Khalid’s discussion of cultural resistance, contends that by embracing their Palestinian identity, individuals can assert their presence in spaces where they have historically been marginalized or excluded, an experiences that he classifies as the *shatat*, or prison. We have already witnessed glimpses of this phenomenon through Wafa’s dedication to *tatreez*, as well as Taylor’s desire to share his personal journey of self-discovery as a source of inspiration for those who are still seeking to authenticate their own identities. The crux of the matter, it appears, lies in the embrace of their entire being as Palestinians, thereby fortifying themselves against the psychological and social pressures that aim to cast doubt upon their very authenticity as bearers of Palestinian heritage.

It is worth noting again that the experiences of third-generation diasporic Palestinians differ significantly from those of previous generations. As a result, their approach to these concerns takes on a different perspective and employs different tactics. This generation’s approach is less driven by nationalism, and it even be less overtly pronounced at times compared to their predecessors. Instead, their concerns seem to be rooted in local contexts, shaped by the hybridized identities they have cultivated in the diaspora and their response to the pervasive sense of otherness they encounter in their daily lives. Through their actions, we witness a departure from the traditional preoccupations of exilic Palestinians, whose primary focus was to survive in their new environments while they awaited and fought for return. This new generation has shifted their goals towards a different aim: convincing others of the authenticity they strive to feel, as Palestinians and as members of the societies in which they were born. Firstly, as evidenced in the statements of Raghad, Albaraa, and Khalid, they depart from national attachment, seeking instead to align themselves, with aspects of their Palestinian identities that

are less geographically centered and more imagined,⁴³⁹ such as the preservation of memory, moral obligations, and a desire for authenticity and acceptance. Secondly, because of the fractured attachment to the land, members of this generation do not feel the same compulsion to physically return to and live in Palestine. Instead, they redirect their attention towards carving a space out for themselves within the cultures where they have been raised.

For some, excessively romanticizing the past or fixating on lost potential risks undermining their ability to find contentment in their present environments. This sentiment is evident in Ward's statement, as she reflects on her connection to her family's home in Palestine:

I don't understand how people can identify with a place. I understand if you feel a certain sentiment towards something, or if it adds certain value to your life, or if it makes you feel a certain way.

But, for me, I've never been there. I've never even thought about it. We don't really discuss it at home. It's very controversial, but I don't particularly agree with the Palestinian outlook, their view on the Right of Return...

The other day, I was listening to a guided meditation. I was halfway through, when part of the mantra went, 'Home is within me.' My body is home. I am my home. You *are* home. It's internal, not external. If you're looking for somewhere to feel connected, where should you be more connected aside from yourself?⁴⁴⁰

Ward's statements shed light on the nature of identity and belonging, revealing its imaginative qualities and dependence on social conditioning. Through her statement, it becomes evident that she cultivated a more fluid and subjective understanding of her identity, one that transcends specific geographical attachments. At the time of our interview, Ward lived in the United Kingdom to attend university. She is of Palestinian heritage but identifies herself as Jordanian from a political standpoint, mainly due to her place of birth and the identification on her passport. However, the origins of her family, currently residing in Qatar, remain a subject of debate. "Originally, way back when," she said, "I think we came from

⁴³⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; repr., London: Verso, 1991).

⁴⁴⁰ Ward, Interview Number Twenty-One, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

Yemen.”⁴⁴¹ Despite her diverse origins, Ward admits feeling compelled to emphasize her Palestinian identity when she is among her friends. She believes that they, unlike herself, place their Palestinian-ness at the forefront of their identities.

Ward struggles to comprehend the attachment she sees others feel towards the land. She shares her confusion, saying, “I don’t get it. When I go over to my friends’ houses and I chill with their parents, they’ve very pro-Palestine, anti-Zionist, ‘they took our homes.’ They’re very aggressive about it.”⁴⁴² Time and again, we see this thought – *I’m not like them*. This sentiment of not belonging, of being different from others, resonates throughout the narratives found in this work. And yet, despite how much she feels different, Ward shares much in common with her peers. Her family sought refuge from war, their lives marked by exile. It is not as though she is devoid of memories regarding al-Nakba, either, and it is this narrative that typically instills a sense of solidarity with the Palestinian cause amongst interviewees. When recounting an interaction with her grandmother, traces of postmemory became apparent: “She had dementia. She thought I was my mother. She was telling me, ‘Go and get your things before they come into the house. In her head, she was in Palestine, and someone was coming to invade her home.”⁴⁴³ Like each Palestinian Ward knows, she is able to comprehend the historical events that forever altered her family’s lives in the same way that it did to those around her. However, unlike the majority of Palestinians she claims to know, she was not raised within the framework of sumud ideology. The compulsion to commit to what she perceives as the Palestinian cause, to fight for Palestine and reclaim ancestral homes, does not resonate with her. This, she believes sets her apart from other Palestinians.

Perhaps her disposition towards Palestine stems from her family’s relative financial stability since their departure from Nablus, or Jenin, “but nobody knows which one.”⁴⁴⁴ She regards her family’s lack of indignation regarding the loss of their

⁴⁴¹ Ibid

⁴⁴² Ibid

⁴⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid

ancestral homes as tempered, at least in contrast to other Palestinian families she encountered. She relates the disparity to the relative ease with which they established new homes, secured livelihoods, and preserved their wealth. “A lot of people who lose their wealth struggled more,” she shared, “Whereas people who found ways to get by and start over, or at least not struggle, were able to live on more easily.”⁴⁴⁵ She identifies herself as belonging to a group of Palestinians who departed Palestine comfortably, setting herself apart from the narrative she deems more emblematic of the exilic Palestinian experience. Given the lack of adversity that she feels characterizes her family’s history, as well as her own life, she contends that she does not resonate with the traditional struggle. As a result of her identification, she grapples with reclaiming a future in Palestine that always seemed to elude her. This standpoint, she believes, it was others her from the rest. At the same time, we see instances of psychological distancing for Palestinian land across classes, including amongst refugee camp residents. In 2005, Diana Allan noticed similar sentiments amongst those living in Lebanon’s Shateela refugee camp. While camp residents felt it was important to remember Palestine and appreciate the grief associated with its loss, they also felt it important to focus on how to improve present circumstances and redirect their gaze towards the future.⁴⁴⁶ This suggests a shift away from Palestinian nostalgic gaze on the past and an emphasis on cultivating an inner resilience to cope with the demands of the present. The descendants of al-Nakba survivors seem to view the act of remembering al-Nakba as a means to regulate individual subjectivity. According to interviewees, the emphasis within families on past losses is seen as overshadowing their own personal experiences, as well as the broader challenges faced by Palestinians globally and their current hardships. By redirecting attention towards their present needs rather than solely fixating on the right of return, these individuals are breaking away from a nationalist code. This departure involves replacing the authenticity associated with a nostalgic gaze with a plea to be

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁴⁶ Diana Allan, “Mythologising Al-Nakba: Narratives, Collective Identity and Cultural Practice among Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” *Oral History* 33, no. 1 (2005): 47–56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40179820>.

allowed to live in the present, signaling a shift in focus from historical grievances to a desire for acknowledgment and stability in the contemporary context.

Regardless if Ward's sentiments are class-based or simply disillusionment, it does not seem to burden her, unlike what we sometimes see in other testimonies. Her disconnection from Palestine was not imposed upon her, her identity was not suppressed; rather, her disposition is a matter of happenstance, if not serendipitous. Besides, wrestling with otherness seemed too much work. She articulated to me that it would require excessive energy and emotional turmoil to concern herself with becoming or affiliating with something for which she was not inherently conditioned. Instead, her focus remains on her own personal journey and the immediacy of the present. *I am my home*, she asserts. Her experiences shed light on the consequences of generations living without a fixed sense of place or culture. This perspective is undoubtedly rooted in the nomadic nature that has characterized her family members' lives over decades, even predating their departure from Palestine. Although she currently finds stability in one location, she comprehends that each place is transitory. The only constant is her sense of self.

Can we interpret Ward's contemplations of identity and attachment as an echo of *sumud*? If so, it is not as overtly pronounced as in others. She explicitly stated her disconnection from Palestinian nationalism and from fighting for the right of return, both fundamental aspects of *sumud*. Throughout our conversation, she never mentioned resistance or being driven by a cause. In fact, she only seemed to disapprove of efforts aimed at advocating for Palestine or facilitating return, demonstrating her disillusionment. However, it is also plausible that her stance is a mode of resistance, one that counters the potential loss of any tangible external markers of identity, be it in the past, present, or future. By perceiving herself, as a Palestinian, as the source of her sense of home, then her identity and home transcends any physical displacement. This liberates her from what she deems as a futile (in her words) endeavor: the need to engage in a losing physical battle.

"Okay, we're fighting, but people are dying, people are getting hurt, people are getting tortured," she explains, "Regardless of the outcome, this shouldn't be happening. It's not a means to an end, for these people to die if we're going to get

our land back eventually."⁴⁴⁷ Ward articulates her frustration and disillusionment regarding traditional methods of resistance in the name of Palestine. While she comprehends the underlying significance of Palestinian resistance in history and acknowledges the continuing struggle, she raises poignant questions about its practicality, particularly when considering the human toll involved. By challenging the rationale behind such suffering, she suggests that the costs outweigh the benefits, regardless of whether Palestinians achieve a return to Palestine.

Although

she acknowledges that her perspectives may not be welcomed by most Palestinians, stating, "I probably wouldn't dare say this to anyone,"⁴⁴⁸ we witness this viewpoint resurfacing repeatedly. Again, referring back to Allan's paper, we see how the prolonged unmet needs of multiple generations of Palestinians produce a sense of disillusionment that discourages alignment with traditional sumud ideology.

This also suggests that Ward's disillusionment, like those of the Shateela residents, is not class-specific, but rather a broader response to unrealized collective aspirations. At this point, these individuals understand that it is unlikely that they or their families will return to Palestine, and so respond in a way where they can enact their identities and beliefs through intensively private rituals.

Despite young Palestinians quietly harboring these thoughts, thereby experiencing a sense of isolation, their shared sentiments serve as a unifying force, forming the bedrock of the latest evolution in Palestinian psychology.

As we contemplate Ward's commitment to her individual identity, her sense of belonging, and her quest for authenticity, we encounter yet another psychological trait that resonates with her peers. Embracing the notion that home is within her, she constructs a self-understanding firmly rooted in present experiences. These experiences encompass the diverse environments in which she and her family traversed throughout the passing decades. Within these contexts, her priorities

⁴⁴⁷ Ward, Interview Number Twenty-One, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid

revolve around carving out a space for herself to live freely and flourish. This is the truth she purports to authenticate. Her steadfast adherence to this self-conception arguably echoes Palestinian steadfastness against changing one's identity to external pressures. It also bears resemblance to the experiences featured in this narrative, such as Khalid, Albaraa, Taylor, and Mohammed, yet one individual comes to mind at this moment: Faisal, who, as explored in Chapter One, posits that an inherent aspect of Palestinian psychology entails aspiring to forge a life "better" than that of the generation before. By claiming a sense of home within herself, Ward attains a grounding that she perceives to be absent in prior generations due to their nostalgic gaze towards Palestinian land. In doing so, she shapes her understanding of her identity as a Palestinian, one emphasizing a rooted self that persists defiantly, even when faced with the possibility of never enjoying Palestinian culture on Palestinian land. To her, she can continue being Palestinian, she can continue feeling at 'home' with herself as a Palestinian, outside Palestine. This is how she answers the disillusionment stemming from the unmet aspirations inherited from previous generations; this is how she heals her postmemory. By redirecting one's focus from her family's past unmet needs, she can instead focus on individual and collective present-day demands as a Palestinian, which includes her own experiences, aspirations, and desire for psychological well-being.

Echoing Ward's sentiments is Shahed. To a certain degree, Shahed perceives Palestinian identity as intrinsically tied to being born in or having once inhabited the land of Palestine. However, she feels like her obligation towards her Palestinian identity is one that is forced upon her:

Parts of me wonder, why am I forcing it? Am I doing it because I come from a family of Palestinians, or am I more connected with, let's say, queer rights in Jordan? That's another important part of my identity that I don't feel is represented here. How do different identities matter in different stages [of our lives]?

My Palestinian identity, for example, played a big role in Lebanon and when I was in the UK. Here, I feel like, maybe because everyone is Palestinian, or a lot of people are Palestinian – although not all of them are politically active, and although apartheid, how, maybe, does the personal become more than the political?

I think, for me, a Palestinian identity always felt more political than it did personal. I think that's because I didn't feel the feelings that my parents felt. I heard of them. I feel obliged to do something about them, but they're not my feelings at the end of the day. I feel like I faced a lot more discrimination for being queer than I did for being Palestinian. So, I was wondering, how do these identities play out differently?⁴⁴⁹

Throughout her interview, she subtly hinted at a distinction between herself – a young woman of Palestinian heritage but born in Qatar – and those born within the borders of Palestine. This discussion gains further prominence in Chapter Three, wherein Shahed delves into the repercussions of exile on the community, as evidenced through communal food practices. Yet, Shahed's understanding of Palestinian identity extends beyond the familial bonds forged prior to their expulsion. For her, being Palestinian encompasses embodying a mentality of resistance. "I'm Palestinian," she told me, "I hadn't been to Palestine at that point, but I had this willingness to resist injustice. There's something that you can do against any form of injustice – there's so much injustice in the world – but obviously, you feel more inclined to do it when it's something personal and very near to you."⁴⁵⁰ Within this statement, we catch glimpse at the way Shahed's resistance efforts echo one of sumud's core ideological tenants – to remain steadfast against pressures to lose or change aspects of one's identity through acts of resistance.⁴⁵¹ By simply engaging in acts of resistance, regardless of what she resists, she asserts herself and connects to her Palestinian identity. Through this act, she also connects herself to other Palestinians who resist injustice alongside her. In other words, participating in individual acts of resistance connects her to a collective resistance effort. Although Arabic is her first language, she does not explicitly classify her actions as sumud, opting instead to labeling her disposition as a propensity to "resist injustice." This implies that "sumud" may not hold a prominent place within her English lexicon. Yet, as she further explains her affiliations, we can spot the fundamental ideological components that underpin her perspective.

⁴⁴⁹ Shahed, Interview Number Fifteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

⁴⁵⁰ Shahed, Interview Number Fifteen, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

⁴⁵¹ Rijke and Van Teeffelen, "To Exist is to Resist."

Once again, we encounter an individual who blurs the boundaries of identity, loyalty, and politics within the Palestinian context. As an observer, I am struck by the persistent question that these individuals struggle with: To which end of the spectrum does their affiliation truly belong – to themselves, to other identities, or to Palestine? For some, this struggle feels insurmountable, a web of complexities too difficult to untangle. As we have witnessed, Shahed explicitly articulates how her political affiliations consistently reflect her immediate, identity-based concerns. This insight informs her unwavering advocacy for Palestinian rights during her time in Lebanon and the United Kingdom, environments where she felt more pushback against her identity as a Palestinian. Similarly, her focus shifts to LGBTQ+ activism while residing in Jordan, driven by a belief that her queer identity is under greater threat within those contexts than her Palestinian identity.

Shahed's experience is not unique in this regard. Another interviewee, Habib, shares similar reflections upon his relocation from Dubai to Scotland: "Leaving Dubai, I was going to a place where everyone accepts me for being gay...but, then you're confronted with different struggles that you didn't know existed, like racism."⁴⁵² In the cases of Shahed and Habib, each social context engenders unique conditions that compel those within it to reassess the social masks they wear and the issues they prioritize. Habib's concealment of his homosexuality in Dubai suggests the perceived opportunities (or lack thereof) for expressing his gay identity, while his active advocacy for Palestine in Scotland, including joining a pro-Palestinian group at his local university, signals another shift in focus. In Shahed's, case, such oscillations in alignment and priorities prompt her, like many of her peers, to express feelings of confusion about where she truly finds authenticity. She acknowledges that her Palestinian identity sometimes feels "forced" in certain contexts, even eclipsing to other parts of her identity that she prioritizes. As a result, she finds it challenging for her to fully relate to the hardships endured by her parents during and after al-Nakba, particularly those that still tie them emotionally to Palestine. Interestingly, we see these exact words amongst the testimonies of Shateela residents nearly two decades prior, found in Allan's research:

⁴⁵² Habib, Interview Number Two, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2019.

Although we are still living the results of *al-Nakba*, my generation didn't experience it, and I refuse to inherit it [...] when I think of *al-Nakba* and how Palestine used to be, I don't think of it as just some beautiful place where people sat under the trees eating fruit – I think of it as a normal life that I was not part of, but now it has become almost obligatory to turn memories of Palestine into a myth.⁴⁵³

These statements strongly imply that younger generations feel expected to miss keenly something they never experienced losing, expectations that eclipse their own experiences of crisis in diaspora and their present concerns. This recurrent theme emerges frequently among the young Palestinians in this research, who contend that the fixation on a single, traditionally informed, and out-of-date identity, one that fixates on a nostalgic gaze towards Palestine, fails to align with their immediate concerns and identifications. Their inability to connect with Palestine on a personal level, consequently, diminishes their attachment to their community's original cause.

However, it is important to note that Shahed's' journey of self-discovery does not negate her commitment to resistance. Rather, it means that she has moved on to a different cause, one with which she aligns herself. This cause, she claims, is one that echoes her peers; Shahed wants to live authentically. To her, this definition means to live freely as a queer woman in Arab society. Like her Palestinian identity, she explains that her rights as a member of the LGBTQ+ community are marginalized. As seen both Shahed's and Habib's statements above, as well as Taylor's throughout this thesis, those who identify as Palestinian, Muslim, and as part of the LGBTQ+ community feel it is difficult to synthesize these identities together, as they feel their identities oftentimes conflict with each other. Many believe they were raised to believe that these identities cannot coexist. The difficulty lies in the stigmatization of queer folk in both Arab and Muslim communities, reasons for which are normally associated with religious belief. In 2021, Glas and Spierings found that Arab Muslims widely reject homosexuality.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Quote derived from Allan, "Mythologising Al-Nakba," 52.

⁴⁵⁴ Saskia Glas and Niels Spierings, "Rejecting Homosexuality but Tolerating Homosexuals: The Complex Relations between Religiosity and Opposition to Homosexuality in 9 Arab Countries," *Social Science Research* 95 (January 2021): 102533, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2021.102533>.

Returning to Shahed, the issue at hand holds a more immediate impact on her life. For this reason, her inclination to devote her time advocating for her rights as a member of the LGBTQ+ community over the ones prioritized by other Palestinians becomes more apparent. In this shift, we witness Shahed's embodiment of being Palestinian through her engagement in a struggle that allows her to assert her Palestinian identity within the diaspora through acts of resistance. Her shifts between individually chosen, identity-based concerns may seem like a deviation from sumud's collective characteristics. However, through this example, we continue to see how the ideology's tenants echo across generations. Irrespective of her chosen cause in the moment, which may be shaped by individual priorities, Shahed participates in an ongoing process of resistance to external pressures, one that also connects her needs to those of the groups with which she identifies. Whether campaigning for Palestinian rights in Lebanon or LGBTQ+ rights in Jordan, she advocates for the rights of the collective as much as she advocates for her own.

In our final exploration of how sumud "echoes" intergenerationally, we delve into Mary's story. Born and raised in the United Kingdom, Mary identifies herself as a blend of Palestinian, Mauritian, and Pakistani heritage. Raised primarily by her half-Mauritian, half-Pakistani mother, she perceives her Palestinian father as a distant figure. As a result, her mother took on the task of acquainting her with her Palestinian roots through her upbringing. While Mary possesses an awareness of the overarching narrative that shapes Palestinian history, including the 1948 al-Nakba, Mary remains relatively uninformed about how this narrative specifically relates with her own experiences and her father's family. This knowledge gap is the result of her father's limited presence, leaving her disconnected from her family's memories of living through al-Nakba and their subsequent displacement. As a result, these experiences have not become integrated into her individual narrative.

During her interview, Mary confessed to an absence of knowledge pertaining to her family's survival story and the experiences they endured during displacement. "I think that's the point of me," she claims, "As traumatic as those inherited memories

can be, it's almost like I don't even have that experience of having heard them."⁴⁵⁵ In this, she joins the group of Palestinians who do not feel they are truly Palestinian. At the same time, and in this realization, she recognizes a recurring pattern in Palestinian narratives, particularly those she encountered through media, which she feels often emphasize themes of trauma. While she acknowledges the prevalence of postmemory and collective trauma in the personal and familial narratives of many Palestinians, Mary also acknowledges that not all Palestinians, including herself, grapple with postmemory. From her unique standpoint, she perceives identifying solely through postmemory as an incompletely portrayal of Palestinian life, identity, and purpose in the diaspora when she feels the images of war, exile, and suffering monopolize the narrative.

Mary finds other representations of Palestinians problematic as well. She recounted observing Arab representation in British and American news outlets, films, and television shows, which she feels typifies them into two categories, either as victims of violence or as violence's perpetrators. "That's something we felt a lot growing up," she said, "not seeing anybody like me on screen, or, if they are there, they're subservient women or they're terrorists. It was very isolating."⁴⁵⁶ This became problematic for Mary, who looked to these portrayals, consciously or tacitly, to shape her definitions of what it means to be Palestinian. She still worries that the limited narratives risk miseducating those who know nothing about, or who are in the early stages of learning about, Palestinian culture:

I'm very conscious of framing the whole Palestinian experience as a tragedy. It doesn't take into account just how much there is in a culture and in an identity. We only hear about things that they've gone through that have been terrible. We don't know what the people are like, and we don't know about the culture and the history. I think that's important as well, especially when understanding what's being lost and threatened.⁴⁵⁷

These are the contexts that shape Mary's beliefs and actions, which inevitably echo those of sumud. She feels that current representations of Palestinians, shaped by the contexts of both British and Palestinian cultures, deprive her and

⁴⁵⁵ Mary, Interview Number Twenty, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2020.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid

others of understanding not only her own multifacetedness but also that of Palestinians in general. Yearning for a transformation in media portrayals of Palestinian stories, she believes such a shift will also impact the narratives and self-perceptions of those like her, born in the diaspora and with no way of informing their Palestinian identities. These cumulative experiences propel her towards action, both literal and symbolic. As she grew older, she pursued a career in film and theatre, recognizing that acting grants her a measure of control over the depictions of Palestinians presented to wider audiences. “I do think representation is very important,” she said, “If somebody has to do it, then why not me? I suppose that is a way for me to feel more Palestinian. That’s my way of having a cause.”⁴⁵⁸ Once again, and as seen in Albaraa’s statement previously, we see a diasporic Palestinian conflate their Palestinian identity with “having a cause.” Just as to be Palestinian was historically associated with resisting steadfastly, Mary’s current conceptions of performing her Palestinian identity include adopting her own cause. By advocating for the ability to assert her identity in a way of her choosing, she continues to resist the erasure of what she believes accurately represents Palestinians. In doing so, she further connects herself to other Palestinians worldwide under the umbrella of resisting injustice.

Mary holds the belief that her stories, alongside those of Palestinians everywhere, possess the potential to challenge and debunk the sensationalized narratives that surround Palestinians. Her thoughts and convictions stand steadfastly, not only against the negative stereotypes imposed upon her culture and ethnicity but also against the victim-orientated psychology she feels Palestinians adopted after 1948. This reflects the interplay between the ideologies she inherited and her deeply rooted desire to rectify the misconceptions surrounding her heritage, history, and self, ultimately manifesting in her intentional selection of acting roles that refrain from defaming Palestinians:

I suppose it’s about visibility more than anything else. If I can say I’m Palestinian, I can explain it to someone. If someone hasn’t met a Palestinian before, I could be that. I could be someone who is, surprisingly, neither a victim nor a terrorist. I think that would be great. I think that’s what’s important to me, just to own it and say it.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid

Just to remind people that we exist. We exist outside of a news story.
We are just people.⁴⁵⁹

In this quote, we can see the manifestation of Mary's unwavering commitment to advocate for her Palestinian identity in a manner that aligns with her own sense of authenticity. This commitment stems from a deep recognition and embrace of her distinct sense of otherness that she feels in her day-to-day life. First, as a member of one of the United Kingdom's minority groups, Mary keenly perceives instances where her Palestinian identity is diminished and misrepresented in the public sphere, particularly within British media. In response, she exercises resistance, firmly asserting that these stereotypes do not define her. Second, Mary acknowledges that her personal identity is not rooted in postmemory, setting her apart from many Palestinians born after al-Nakba. Consequently, she actively seeks acting opportunities that allow her to represent herself in a way that she feels is most authentic to her and other Palestinians, according to her own discernment of what is fitting. Mary's case is truly unique, as her sense of duty towards her Palestinian identity does not stem directly from the influence of Palestinian ancestors. However, she was raised in an environment that instilled an activist mindset, thanks to the nurturing guidance of her mother. Like others of her generation, Mary's priorities diverge from nostalgic yearnings or the pursuit of physical return to Palestine. Instead, her focus remains firmly fixed on the present, as she endeavors to unravel the intricacies of her Palestinian self and strives for its recognition and validation within the diaspora.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this chapter, we delved into the concepts of psychological resistance. We also discussed the origins of Palestinian resistance, or *sumud*, its origins and evolutionary path, as documented throughout history. Following the tumultuous events of the al-Nakba in 1948, Palestinians responded to occupation, expulsion, and exile in ways that mirrored their unwavering determination to remain connected to their ancestral land and preserve their indigenous identities. It is from these experiences that the concept of *sumud* emerged, embodying an ethos of

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid

steadfastness and perseverance in the face of adversity and occupation. It became an intrinsic aspect of their collective identity, particularly decades following al-Nakba. As such, it profoundly influenced the individual and collective perspectives of those who identify as Palestinians, shaping their behaviour and attitudes towards the past. Sumud materialized in diverse forms, including the cultivation of land, preservation of culture and artistic expression, all of which are viewed as acts of resistance. Notably, sumud continually adapted to the shifting circumstances faced by Palestinians in the diaspora, transforming into a flexible collective ideology that individuals could tailor to express their identities and resist in their new environments. Thus, sumud became a vital coping mechanism, enabling Palestinians to endure, resist dehumanization, and assert their identities.

While existing scholarly works extensively chronicle the cultural and political resistance efforts among two generations of Palestinians – namely, the survivors of al-Nakba and their children – these accounts fail to capture the contemporary efforts in the diaspora and lack a generational perspective. In this chapter, I take the initial steps to bridge this gap by examining testimonies that shed light on the scepticism expressed by the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors towards traditional forms of sumud. Instead, they emphasize the significance of asserting their identity and historical continuity through their own interpretations and expressions of cultural resistance. I do so by delving into the experiences of young Palestinians who hesitate to engage in Palestinian-centred political activism, due to a combination of feeling disempowered, disillusioned, and disengaged with a nationalistic cause. These narratives, I argue, illuminate the external pressures, present both in the Palestinian territories and the diaspora, that compel Palestinians to suppress aspects of their identities for self-preservation, thereby impacting their approach to participate in Palestinian political discourse or activism.

Nevertheless, despite feeling disempowered or disillusioned by the political dynamics surrounded their identities, this generation does not entirely abstain from resistance. Rather, they embrace alternative approaches and perspectives, adopting a form of psychological resistance that aligns with their immediate needs in the diaspora, where they perceive greater stakes, opportunities, and influence. However, since they do not explicitly label their actions as sumud, we must

question whether their endeavours can still be considered as sumud. It seems that this generation, even without overtly recognizing it, has tacitly inherited ideological concepts related to sumud, such as cultural resilience and personal steadfastness, from generations before. Hence, I employ the concept of sumud “echoes” to capture this unique manifestation of Palestinian psychology. Furthermore, as this study marks the first exploration of this phenomenon, it invites further investigation into how this ideology manifests henceforth.

From the collected narratives, it becomes evident that this generation’s inclination to “echo” sumud through psychological resistance would not exist without the presence of postmemory, which arises from intergenerational narratives and personal encounters with historical traumas like al-Nakba. The experiences to which their families were subjected inevitably shape their lives and their relationships with their kin, in turn shaping their perception of their Palestinian identities and defining their place in the world. Moreover, some interviewees grew up immersed in narratives of resistance, teaching them that resistance is not only inherent to the Palestinian experience but also expected as a testament to their authenticity as Palestinians. For this group, preserving and recounting these narratives serves as a means of countering the threat of historical erasure and empowers them, allowing them to portray themselves as heroes in their narratives, embodying resilience and triumph over adversity. Thus, the interplay between postmemory, psychological resistance, and sumud establishes a vital framework for future generations to understand their Palestinian identities.

However, it is crucial to note that understanding Palestinian history and the rupture caused by al-Nakba does not automatically entail an emotional attachment to the land or a commitment to the fight for return. Based on the gathered interviews, the prevailing definition of sumud, as recognized by this generation, revolves around active political engagement. This suggests that, despite the multitude of definitions found in scholarly works, the definition understood on the ground revolves around political involvement. As this generation distances itself from that notion, it appears they do not fully grasp the diverse forms that sumud can assume, nor do they perceive themselves as integral to that process. Alternatively, if they do, they do not feel compelled to partake in it due to the challenges and the costs involved.

Consequently, they explore other forms of resistance that serve a source of self-empowerment.

As a result, their “echoes” assume a distinct form compared to previous generations, reflecting the hybridized identities of those who embody it. Their focus lies in persuading others of their authenticity as Palestinians and as members of the societies in which they were born. They prioritize the preservation of memory and seek acceptance and security in the diaspora as their primary responsibilities, rather than a physical return to Palestine, which they no longer perceive as a feasible goal. By relinquishing their nostalgic yearning for return, they redirect their energy towards other identity-related concerns present in their surroundings. Feeling that the traditional notions of *sumud* are imposed upon them, they critically engage with the utility of the concept in their lives and question how different identities matter to them at different stages of their life journeys. In some way, each person interviewed here finds authenticity through the intimacy of everyday, personal experiences, more so than the outwardly demonstrative efforts practiced by earlier generations.

In conclusion, this chapter delves into the nuanced expressions *sumud*’s “echoes,” which I contend is the form of psychological resistance that has emerged in the Palestinian diaspora. Understanding these dimensions of *sumud* and resistance enable us to explore how individuals and communities respond to prolonged oppression, providing a framework for comprehending and contextualizing ongoing struggles for self-autonomy. It demonstrates the fluidity of the diasporic experience, where the emotional and symbolic significance of identities is underpinned by inherited trauma. Recognizing the role of memory and inherited trauma is vital to understanding their connection to their identities, not just as Palestinians, but as the descendants of survivors. This integration of inherited trauma with everyday experiences establishes connections between the social and the individual, and vice versa. Furthermore, this article contributes to the expanding body of literature that analyses the role of cultural constructs in shaping forms of resilience originating in the Global South. It also broadens our understanding of psychological resistance efforts in the Global North by presenting examples related to *sumud*, as practiced by Palestinians born and/or residing in the United States and United

Kingdom. In doing so, it highlights the significance of indigenous understandings and forms of resistance and resilience, particularly those contextualized by the diasporic experience, which may diverge from dominant Western conceptions of resistance.

CHAPTER THREE: EMBROIDERED ARCHIVES: THE MNEMONICS OF PALESTINIAN TATREEZ

The previous two chapters discussed the role inherited narratives play in the identities constructed by third-generation, diasporic Palestinians. In Chapter two, I examine remembrance as a form of psychological resistance, or, as more commonly known by Palestinians, as a form of psychological resistance that “echoes” the *sumud* of previous generations. Inheriting memories of life in Palestine before 1948, as well as postmemories of al-Nakba and subsequent life in exile, the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors use these narratives to develop their understanding of an archetypical Palestinian identity. Feeling simultaneously connected to and othered from this archetype, one that is characterized, to an extent, by *sumud* and psychological resistance, they pursue day-to-day actions and forms of expression that allow them to explore their heritage and make sense of their postmemory. I explore the storytelling component of this process more deeply in Chapter one, where I explain that the meanings derived from inherited memories hinge on the delivery of the story. Whether a parent overshares or says too little, the language in which the story is told, the relationship of the storyteller to the audience – these all determine how an individual inherits a memory, what that memory means to the recipient, and how it influences their sense of self. In both chapters, life in the diaspora led to various offshoots of Palestinian identity, which are contextualized by the social, economic, and political contexts of each interviewee’s upbringing. These, in turn, facilitated the evolution of different mnemonic, storytelling, and social practices commonly found amongst diasporic Palestinians and employed on a regular, at times even day-to-day basis.

Of these practices, includes *tatreez* (transl. *taṭrīz*), or embroidery, a commonly known symbol of Palestinian heritage. Much less known, at least in academic contexts, is *tatreez*’s capacity for documenting stories for future audiences to read.

While only a handful of those interviewed adopt *tatreez* as a practice – three interviewees to be specific, and only two of whom are quoted directly,⁴⁶⁰ both the embroidered object and the process of embroidering carry immense potential for documenting and sharing intergenerational memories, including those marked by collective trauma. By both reading *tatreez* and participating in its creation, Palestinians communicate narratives about their lives, as well as the lives of those who lived before them. Yet, despite how commonplace this knowledge is amongst certain Palestinians, the mnemonics of *tatreez* still need in-depth exploration by academics. Through their symbolism and language, embroidered *thobes* carry a “mnemonic energy,” which enables an individual to document their past experiences for others to read, interpret, and remember. With this memorial power, and given the narrative of trauma that characterizes Palestinian memory, *thobes* also become *postmemorial objects*, possessing the same mnemonic value as that of a photograph when communicating *postmemory*. At the same time, the process of creating each *thobe*, which is inherently a familial or communal process, facilitates narrative sharing between individuals, strengthening the bonds between them, creating greater felt understanding, providing a space to transmit and reinforce group ideologies, and allows younger generations to situate themselves within their familial timelines. Both processes of interpretation and creation are influenced by imagination, retrospection, and emotion, occurring simultaneously between the storyteller and the audience.

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, the way through which stories are told – specifically, the level of elaboration, emotion, and personal reflection from the storyteller – influences the relationship between those telling the story and those receiving, as well as the receiving party’s sense of self and narrative. Building from this, I examine how particular emotions influence the way the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors receive the inherited, traumatic memories of their grandparents and parents. I pay close attention to the themes of comfort, community, and resilience, arguing that, when they are present in familial storytelling, they correlate

⁴⁶⁰ This is due to a request by one interviewee, who will remain anonymous, to assimilate their interview material into the analysis and not quote them directly.

with a greater level of narrative synthesis and a positive sense of self for those who are on the receiving end of the inherited narratives.

Lastly, I explore how life in the diaspora changed the presentation and interpretation of tatreez amongst younger generations of Palestinians. What classifies as authentic Palestinian embroidery? What stories should they convey, and who should tell them? How do they continue Palestinian memory? These are the questions I am looking to answer. I argue that the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors create forms of Palestinian tatreez that both communicate their postmemory and reflect upon their everyday experiences in the diaspora. Similar, albeit different in aesthetic, composition, and narrative, each artist's designs continue a traditional Palestinian practice of storytelling, all the while creating and documenting new categories of Palestinian identity. I examine the impact of time, location, and experience on motif design and construction, as these factors, as seen in previous chapters, shape the nature of storytelling and memory transference in Palestinian families and the wider community. I then address the adoption of embroidery by male members of the diaspora, disrupting the previously matrilineal transference of knowledge and practice. As such, these individuals are changing the gendered notion of Palestinian embroidery and, to an extent, of Palestinian storytelling and memorial inheritance as a whole.

Memories, Tatreez, Archives

Previous Research on Tatreez

Early observations of tatreez and thobes can be found in traveler's logs from Victorian times (find the exact date); however, at this point, they were not objects of extensive analysis, but rather a detail of the overarching experiences of exploration in Palestine. At most, they ascribed Palestinian embroidery as an "attire of the past,"⁴⁶¹ demonstrating the extent to which outside observers underestimated the social power behind the craft. At the time of even its earliest documentation, Palestinian women used tatreez as a language, through which they expressed themselves artistically, and over which they understood and bonded with each

⁴⁶¹ Widad Kamel Kawar and Tania Nasir, "The Traditional Palestinian Costume," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 1 (1980): 118, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536487>.

other. Only recently has this fact appeared in publications.⁴⁶² A thorough investigation in tatreez, which brought about the previous acknowledgment, occurred after al-Nakba when academics increased their interest in understanding the full characteristics and meanings of Palestinian cultural traditions. Since then, and increasingly so over the last four decades, researchers approached tatreez from numerous angles, including relating its importance to Palestinian culture,⁴⁶³ as a symbol for Palestinian resistance and nationalism,⁴⁶⁴ and as a means of economic empowerment for those displaced throughout the diaspora.⁴⁶⁵

The works of Iman and Maha Saca,⁴⁶⁶ Kawar and Nasir,⁴⁶⁷ Weir,⁴⁶⁸ and Munayyer⁴⁶⁹ all document the craft's evolution throughout the early twentieth century, tracing changes and similarities in patterns and thobes that occurred across Palestinian villages. They do so by outlining variations in motif designs and detail, locating them to their original villages. They explain the factors that shaped the craft's creation and evolution over time. Most who researched Palestinian embroidery during this time, if not all, analyzed the unique qualities of tatreez and its symbolism. Each dress has a style of its own, possessing some mark of distinction that, to the informed observer, immediately hints at the wearer's origins. With each pattern – its color, stitchwork, and thread – comes a story, one that changes with the artist and her personal experiences. This is because Palestinian women embroidered what they observed daily, in the everyday contexts of the village or city and the family, making these experiences as diverse as the people and terrain of Palestine itself. Women from each village in Palestine produced

⁴⁶² See, for example, Wafa Ghnaim, Safa Ghnaim, and Feryal Abbasi-Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora* (Brooklyn, New York: Self-Published By Wafa Ghnaim, 2018).

⁴⁶³ Hanan Munayyer and Nathan Sayers, *Traditional Palestinian Costume: Origins and Evolution* (Northampton, Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2020).

⁴⁶⁴ Tina Sherwell, "Palestinian Costume, the Intifada and the Gendering of Nationalist Discourse," *Journal of Gender Studies* 5, no. 3 (November 1996): 293–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.1996.9960651>; Annelies Moors, "Embodying the Nation: Maha Saca's Post-Intifada Postcards," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 5 (January 2000): 871–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870050110940>.

⁴⁶⁵ Laura Lamberti, "Palestinian Embroidery, Collective Memory and Land Ownership," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, East Jerusalem, 25, no. 1 / 2 (2020):185-188.

⁴⁶⁶ Iman Saca and Maha Saca, *Embroidering Identities: A Century of Palestinian Clothing*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁴⁶⁷ Widad Kamel Kawar and Tania Nasir, "The Traditional Palestinian Costume."

⁴⁶⁸ Shelagh Weir, *Palestinian Embroidery*, (London: Shenvall Press, 1970).

⁴⁶⁹ Karaman Munayyer, *Traditional Palestinian Costume*.

patterns and styles unique to their families and communities, with each pattern handed down by memory from mother to daughter. Because of the ornate detail and variation in motif and dress styles, tatreez is commonly regarded as a symbol of the Palestinian women who created them, both individually and collectively. "It's something strongly linked to national culture and identity. The patterns recall stories of women and their surroundings," explains Abbadi.⁴⁷⁰ Each dress was a direct reflection of the personal circumstances of the artist, displaying her social and marital status, wealth, and even village of origin.⁴⁷¹

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the purpose of tatreez evolved to meet the changing demands met by Palestinian women in new and different environments. After 1948, they faced unprecedented levels of economic and political hardship, contextualized by forced displacement and the silencing of Palestinian outward nationalism across the diaspora and occupied territories. As such, the design, creation, and display of tatreez developed political connotations and became a method of psychological empowerment for Palestinian women, one that gave them agency as refugees.⁴⁷² Take, for example, the embroidered maps of Palestine documented by Salamon, who considers their creation and display as an overtly political act. By choosing to embroider the pre-1948 map of Palestine, particularly in the high-risk settings of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, these women demonstrate Palestinian nationalism and resistance to settler-colonialism.⁴⁷³ Echoing Salamon is Farah, who claims that the creation and display of these pieces become "resistance, which in turn, is key to the survival of memory and identity."⁴⁷⁴ Tatreez allowed Palestinian women to communicate their thoughts in a way that both served them and kept Palestinian cultural tradition and memory alive, in turn becoming a key site of Palestinian historical memory and national narrative:

⁴⁷⁰ Quote by Fatima Abadi, derived from Jan Tomes, "Embroidery Helps Palestinian Women Achieve Independence," *dw.com*, March 8, 2018, <https://p.dw.com/p/2toku>.

⁴⁷¹ Iman and Maha Saca, *Embroidering Identities*.

⁴⁷² Lailah Farah, "Stitching Survival: Revisioning Silence and Expression," in *Silence, Feminism, Power: Reflections at the Edges of Sound*, ed. Sheena Malhotra and Aimee Carillo Rowe (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 239-51.

⁴⁷³ Hagar Salamon, "Embroidered Palestine: A Stitched Narrative," *Narrative Culture* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.13110/narrcult.3.1.0001>.

⁴⁷⁴ Farah, "Stitching Survival," 240.

Throughout history, cultural heritage has served as proof of land ownership and belonging, and the specific case of Palestinian tatreez perfectly exemplifies the natural transformation of a cultural tradition into a form of political engagement and resistance, an artistic political statement that very loudly voices the determination of a people not to be erased.⁴⁷⁵

As outlined by Lamberti, the preservation of tatreez went together with Palestinian nationalism, to the extent that embroidery, as an act, became synonymous with resistance. “In a period of Palestinian history so dominated and defined by dislocation and dispossession,” states Gharad, “tatreez represents a powerful means of connection – to the homeland, to ancestors, and to a sacred past.”⁴⁷⁶ Because tatreez was so intimate to the Palestinian woman and her experiences, it became a symbol of her emotional bond to her home, as well as her life in Palestine before al-Nakba. Through that symbolism, it embodied Palestinian nationalism in the desire of Palestinians to remain or return to their indigenous homeland, as well as the counterclaim to the hegemonic Israeli historical narrative, which justifies their prolonged colonial presence.⁴⁷⁷ Thus, as both an act and a mnemonic device, tatreez transformed from a cultural tradition to a form of political resistance.⁴⁷⁸ Surviving thobes crystallize the memory of the past at risk of erasure, supporting claims to villages from which women were expelled, and to which they wish to return. The continued creation of Palestinian traditional costumes continues this memory. As such, the craft turned into a “national duty,” for the Palestinian woman, one that compensates for the lack of Palestinian national historicity by archiving personal museums where official ones are lacking.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁵ Lamberti, “Palestinian Embroidery,” 185.

⁴⁷⁶ Amin Gharad, “Author, Artist Wafa Ghnaim Shares Centuries-Old Art of Tatreez,” Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, October 2018, <https://www.wrmea.org/music-and-arts/author-artist-wafa-ghnaim-shares-centuries-old-art-of-tatreez.html>.

⁴⁷⁷ Tina Sherwell, “Palestinian Costume, the Intifada and the Gendering of Nationalist Discourse.”

⁴⁷⁸ For examples of patterns created to reflect political presences in Palestine, look to the work of Margarita Skinner, *The Journey of Motifs: From the Orient to the Occident*, (Limassol, Cyprus: Rimal Books, 2018); and Jeni Allenby, “Symbolic Defiance: Questions of Nationalism and Tradition in Middle Eastern Textiles,” *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, (2002).

⁴⁷⁹ Vera Tamari, “Tawfik Canaan – Collectionneur Par Excellence: The Story behind the Palestinian Amulet Collection at Birzeit University,” in *Archives, Museums, and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World*, ed. Sonjya Miecher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwarz (Surrey, United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2012), 85.

In conjunction with representing Palestinian national identity and historical memory, Palestinian women recently began practicing tatreez as a form of economic support for their families. Schools were formed in the latter half of the twentieth century, mainly in Jordan and Lebanon, to teach young girls and women traditional Palestinian embroidery.⁴⁸⁰ One of these programs is the Association for the Development of Palestinian Camps (INAASH), erected in 1969 in Lebanon to address “the necessity of preserving the heritage of the traditional Palestinian embroidery which would also bring means of financial support to many needy families in the camps,” which is still in existence today.⁴⁸¹ Historically, international funding agencies provided women with economic support, which allowed them to purchase materials necessary for the mass production and sale of embroidered textiles.⁴⁸² More recently, in the past decade or so, diasporic, Palestinian women turned to the internet and online businesses to sell their textiles. By making their products internationally and, at times, globally accessible, they simultaneously find a means of economic empowerment while reclaiming and spreading awareness about their cultural traditions.⁴⁸³ If Weir is correct in her claim that the, before al-Nakba, the production of tatreez directly correlated with women’s amount of free time (or, in other words, a lack of obligation to work),⁴⁸⁴ then the creation of tatreez changed in purpose throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, towards one underlined by economic incentivization and activism, just as much as creative expression.

Despite scholars’ success in documenting and cataloging the hundreds of tatreez patterns that currently exist, as well as the modern-day political and economic motivations for their production, their work is limited to the temporal contexts in which their research originated. This is because, for much of their existence, tatreez patterns only served the purposes outlined in previous sections. Existing scholarship on tatreez does not analyze, in detail, the mnemonic power of thobes, let alone identify them as postmemorial objects. There is an absence in the

⁴⁸⁰ Kamel Kavar and Nasir, “The Traditional Palestinian Costume.”

⁴⁸¹ Moors, “Embodying the nation,” 876.

⁴⁸² Iman and Maha Saca, *Embroidering Identities*.

⁴⁸³ Silvia Ulloa, “Tatreez Online: A Transformation of a Palestinian Tradition,” (Master’s Dissertation, Stockholms Universitet, 2020), <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-185537>.

⁴⁸⁴ Weir, *Palestinian Embroidery*.

scholarship on tatreez that explores the relationship that young, diasporic Palestinians share with thobes, as well as how they use them to imagine the lives of those who previously owned and created the designs. It is only recently, in the last decade or so, that tatreez gained its newest meaning, particularly as latter generations in the diaspora interpret and employ patterns as mnemonic devices that connect them with their familial and collective histories.

In addition to this, current scholarship on tatreez observes the craft as purely feminine. However, in recent years, it has been used by Palestinians of different genders as a method through which they may identify with and experience their ancestral culture. I believe this is due to their experiences as the grandchildren of survivors/child of immigrants and the resultant desire to learn about a perceivably distant culture and past, which is felt regardless of gender. I also believe that changing gender norms contribute, particularly amongst the men who identify as gay, as their very existence as queer men challenge the traditional Palestinian gender norms that would inhibit them from embroidering, as well as their upbringing in the diaspora, which adds further separation from traditional gender norms. In doing so, they continue the pattern of reinterpreting Palestinian culture and norms in a way that suits their generational identities, all the while maintaining the elements that are meaningful to them and continuing the Palestinian cause.

Thobes as Postmemorial Objects

As an inspiration for Amer Shomali's 2018 artistic work, *Broken Weddings*, he found a Palestinian dress for sale at an Israeli auction in 2017. He discovered that the dress was taken from a Palestinian home in 1948 by a Haganah member. It was never used, reminding Shomali of the Hemingway story, "For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn."⁴⁸⁵:

I started wondering: why would a bride leave behind a dress that she spent years embroidering? Was her fiancé a fighter, then a martyr, that's why she abandoned the dress, which became a burden of past memories, to run to a shelter. Or perhaps she was in her home and then killed by the man who stole the dress? In all cases, the wedding never took place...I reconstructed the details of dresses from several depopulated villages using balls of yarn. I replaced each stitch with a

⁴⁸⁵ Amer Shomali, *Broken Weddings*, 2018, 2018, <http://www.amershomali.info/broken-weddings/>.

whole new ball that was never used to embroider any piece...Dresses that were not embroidered, broken weddings, unperformed songs, unbuilt homes, unborn children...Threads unable to liberate themselves from their balls to say what they have to say...broken weddings, witnesses of the possibilities of lives that were amputated in 1948.⁴⁸⁶

In his observations, he raises questions about the woman who previously owned this garment. He speculates about her life, and imagines, with a retrospective gaze, how her day-to-day experiences and sense of normalcy were “amputated” by the sudden violence of 1948. His questions are shaped by his knowledge of his family’s history, the history of Palestinians, whose timeline was forever ruptured in the legacy of al-Nakba. The embroidered patterns found on thobes offer clues to a past that haunts the present. They dictate the “visitations of memory,” that occur upon narrative recall, characteristics of which are described by Shakkour: “Over time, the scents of lemon and orange trees, and the shade of olive trees, become so repeatedly experienced in storytelling that they haunt the listener, who has never experienced them almost as much as they haunt the teller.”⁴⁸⁷ Such narratives are reminiscent of Hirsch’s reflections on postmemory.



Figure 1: Amer Shomali, Broken Weddings (Exhibition): <http://www.amershomali.info/broken-weddings/>

⁴⁸⁶ Amer Shomali, “Broken Weddings.”

⁴⁸⁷ Suha Shakkour, “Return to Palestine,” in *Sacred Mobilities: Journeys of Belief and Belonging*, eds. Avril Maddrell, Alan Terry, and Tim Gale (New York: Routledge, 2016), 190.

When analyzing the mediums through which memory travels, Hirsch discusses the significance of photographs in the construction and transmission of postmemory. “It is the technology of photography itself,” she claims, “and the belief in reference in engenders,” that connects the survivor generation to those who come after.⁴⁸⁸ We approach photographs with an understanding of what came afterward; as we look at them, we know the fates of those which the picture portrays. We know their pains, their joys, their choices, and their deaths. While Hirsch isolates much of her focus to photography, in that it “is precisely the medium connecting memory and postmemory,”⁴⁸⁹ this paper argues that tatreez, in its own retrospective irony, carries equally symbolic value. Like photos, certain tatreez patterns symbolize what no longer is. In post-1948 contexts, these patterns, like all postmemorial objects, offer a glimpse into a way of life that no longer exists, one that faced a violent end. Yet, simultaneously, they represent a defiance of fate, a persistence through time which, through its continual narration, remains immortal.

To understand the meaning ascribed to tatreez and thobes by the descendants of their creators, one must know how textiles like thobes archive intimate experiences. Thobes hold what Assman calls a “mnemonic energy,”⁴⁹⁰ retaining the memory of the women who created and wore the garments. As much as tatreez patterns reflect what the Palestinian woman observed in day-to-day life,⁴⁹¹ they also express her hopes and expectations, and, to an extent, her personality. Through both its production and symbolism, tatreez acts as proof of her existence and provides an aperture through which one may imagine her subjective experiences. Yet, as much as it symbolizes the life of the person, it concurrently symbolizes their death, because we, as the viewer, approach the image with subjective hindsight. Thus, although once there physically, the person behind the pattern becomes, at most, a concept; what remains is a representation of the

⁴⁸⁸ Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>.

⁴⁸⁹ Marianne Hirsch, “Family Pictures: Maus, Mourning, and Post-Memory,” *Discourse* 15, no. 2 (1992): 9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41389264>.

⁴⁹⁰ Aleida Assmann, “Fury of Disappearance: Christian Boltanski’s Archives of Forgetting,” in *Boltanski: Time*, ed. R. Beil (Germany: Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz: Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, 2006), 89-87.

⁴⁹¹ Weir, *Palestinian Embroidery*.

person who once existed. In the context of postmemory, this absence is caused by death and rupture.

The emotional and memorial connection made between a woman and her thobe comes into fruition through a process coined by Derrida as “archivisation.”⁴⁹² He posits that the composition of any archive determines what can be preserved; history and memory both are derived from the technical methods that underly the archive’s design. *How* one inscribes a thought or memory acts as the basis of archivisation. This, argues Derrida, occurs irrespective of the space in which this inscription occurs. However, the nature of the inscription is only possible through the available methods with which one can inscribe. There must be something ready to receive and hold information. This is particularly pertinent when focusing this concept on memory and its materialization. Put simply, it is possible to save, preserve, and inscribe memory into or onto something, and that something must be readily available to the documentarian. In the case of tatreez, the “something” that holds information, is a woman’s thobe.

Like most textiles,⁴⁹³ thobes can retain memory in two ways. Firstly, following the observations of Stallybrass, cloth, in its everyday use, can naturally record and preserve human imprints, simply by retaining the smells and shape of its wearer.⁴⁹⁴ The second form, which is the focus of this study, employs what Tanner describes as “inscribing practices,” or physical acts that hold and trap information.⁴⁹⁵ Hunt expands upon this, stating that “the receptive surface of the cloth,” its malleability, allows it to act as a canvas, one that is “susceptible to deliberate inscription.”⁴⁹⁶ This is certainly the case with the thobe, its panels heavily embroidered with imaginative and deliberately-placed symbols that document a woman’s thoughts, wishes, and experiences. For example, if a woman from Hebron wished to have

⁴⁹² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁴⁹³ Carole Hunt, “Worn Clothes and Textiles as Archives of Memory,” *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty* 5, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 207–32, https://doi.org/10.1386/csfb.5.2.207_1.

⁴⁹⁴ Peter Stallybrass, “Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage,” in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, eds. D. Grazia, M. Quilligan and P. Stalybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 289-231.

⁴⁹⁵ Laura Tanner, *Lost Bodies: Inhabiting the Borders of Life and Death*, (New York: Cornell, 2006).

⁴⁹⁶ Hunt, “Worn Clothes and Textiles as Archives of Memory,” 225.

children, she might embroider “doll” figures on the back panel of her dress to express this desire.⁴⁹⁷

Tatreez demonstrates the capacity to “hold” information, thereby enabling the memory of the dispossessed and deceased to exist within the present, particularly through the imagination and contextualization of the observer. Ash discusses the visual and emotional salience ascribed to clothes, their smell, and texture, which reminds the observer of the past presence of the person to whom they belonged, the individual’s presence within the materials, and the moment when they wore them.⁴⁹⁸ She argues that “the associative memory of an absent person, stimulated through the viewing or sensing of an item of clothing, requires us to be imaginative about the past, about the object or person when they did exist.”⁴⁹⁹ However, although the ascription of memory can be positive, contemplation is inspired by absence.

Initially, tatreez creates understanding; the woman’s garment is a cultural signifier, exposing and parodying inherited experiences and symbology. As seen in the example of *Broken Weddings*, it is the notion of apparel and representation that the thobe displays, one that is entirely feminine, the intimation of a woman’s form, and the simultaneous feeling of presence and absence. “It is the intimation,” argues Hunt, “of the person that was and is now without their clothes.”⁵⁰⁰ Wafa Ghnaim echoes this in her statement, “Tatreez designs have meaning, depth, and important information about the women who created them...The craft of your own creation was sometimes the only proof of your experience.”⁵⁰¹ In this way, the images represented in tatreez patterns hover between life and death. Images found within the textiles that depict a past way of life, provide us with a direct connection to the person they represent, a sense that the person was there, at that moment, as if to say, simultaneously, *I am here*, and *I was here*.

One Thread, One Family, a Motif of Memories:

⁴⁹⁷ Iman Saca and Maha Saca, *Embroidering Identities*.

⁴⁹⁸ Juliet Ash, “Memory and Objects,” in *The Gendered Object*, ed. P. Kirkham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 219-224.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid 20-22.

⁵⁰⁰ Hunt, “Worn Clothes and Textiles as Archives of Memory,” 14.

⁵⁰¹ Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 20.

I thought about these concepts while reading Ghnaim's *Tatreez & Tea*. Like the patterns found in her book, the stories they represent are woven together by a single thread to create an interconnected mural, one riddled with memories, symbolism, and narrative. With this thread, she and the other women in the Ghnaim family create a one-directional stitched piece that, like all tatreez, represents the unity of each woman's, and each piece's, origin, despite the variety of experiences and patterns.⁵⁰² "In my book..." Wafa told me in an interview, "I documented my mom's story, the Nakba story of my family, and how she passed it on to me and my sisters, and how we grew up with this art form."⁵⁰³ Beginning with the family's original expulsion in 1948, to the movements of its members across the diaspora, to Wafa's experiences growing up as a third-generation survivor in the United States, this book outlines the Ghnaim family's survival during the 1948 al-Nakba and their subsequent lives as refugees, as well as how embroidery became a medium through which they reflected upon and communicated these experiences:

These stories of my family explain why we passed on certain traditional embroidery designs over others. The motifs became timeless for us, using the past to contextualize the present. Some designs that were passed on have been created by my mother, to describe her experience or reflect on her experiences. Others have been recreated by my mother and grandmother from dreams and memories because the patterns and embroidery were left behind in Palestine when they fled Safad in 1948.⁵⁰⁴

At the core of *Tatreez & Tea*, sits a commentary on the connection the Ghnaim women share, and how that connection is brought out through the embodied practice of embroidery. As Wafa and Feryal explain, Palestinian embroidery acts as a language between women, a practice that originated in Palestine and continues, in its rare forms, throughout the diaspora. For Wafa, tatreez was not just a method of communication, but *the* method of communication that links her to the women in her family, as well as these women to their wider culture. For generations, the Ghnaim women understood the communicative power behind

⁵⁰² Randa Otaibi, "Tatreez: Preserving Palestinian Identity," *Kalimat Magazine*, 1, no. 4 (2012): 53.

⁵⁰³ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

⁵⁰⁴ Wafa Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 43-44.

tatreez, regarding it as “a powerful storytelling tool that has its own language.”⁵⁰⁵ The following excerpt from Feryal’s autobiographical text, accompanied by the “Two Birds” design, describes how women communicated with one another through embroidery:

My grandmother had a friend in the other village, and my grandfather was going to that village. He used to spend two or three nights in his friend’s house, where the wife was my grandmother’s friend also. That woman’s son had just gotten married, and my grandmother was wondering whether they were happy or not. She wanted to tell my grandfather to ask her about that, but didn’t like to involve the men in the conversation.

She wondered ‘How can I send her a message? We cannot write, we cannot read...’ So she just embroidered a piece which is like this. She made it as if it was a pillow cover and she instructed my grandfather ‘just take this as a present for her.’ So when he gave it to her, she understood the message right away. The design asked her ‘Do you still live in the same house? Are you happy or are you fighting?’ She had to send my grandmother the answer, so she spent the next two nights that my grandfather was there to embroider the answer, and was pleased not to hear my grandfather’s opinion on the matter! Best of all, he didn’t even know they were communicating... This was how they sent messages to each other. They didn’t write, they didn’t read, and there were many examples of this, sending messages to one another in embroidery.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵ Wafa Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 14.

⁵⁰⁶ Feryal Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 138.

The motifs and patterns found on women's thobes and other creations act as points of communication, which the trained eye can understand and interpret. By isolating such knowledge to the women in the community, thereby safeguarding conversations from the outside, male gaze, this craft inherently becomes a feminine form of communication, one that can be employed actively and conveniently by its practitioners. This point is argued fervently by both Feryal and Wafa. "For hundreds of years," Wafa writes, "tatreez was a socially acceptable method for Palestinians to express themselves – and to have a voice... Instead of pen and paper, Palestinian women used clothes to document their lives."⁵⁰⁷ In Wafa's decision to include this passage in her work, she continues her mother's



Figure 2: Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, "Untitled," in *Tatreez & Tea*

efforts to recognize the intelligence behind and empowering qualities of tatreez. Still, there remains meaning to this act, one that is even more latent: by recognizing and emphasizing this point, she also extends her mother's ambitions into her narrative, inheriting it as a goal. There is a clear connection in ambition

⁵⁰⁷ Wafa Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 20.

across generations, one motivated by each women’s desire to prove the agency of Palestinian women, regardless of circumstance, and throughout time.

At the same time, while the patterns act as a visual form of communication, the oral tradition of storytelling is also situated within the framework of embroidery. For generations, familial *tatreez* circles functioned as a site of what Assmann describes as “group memory” formation, a process of familial transfer of embodied experience and practice to the next generation.⁵⁰⁸ Women oftentimes embroidered together, either working concurrently on their pieces or all together on a single garment. “Art can be a place of understanding one another,” explained Wafa in our interview, “Frankly, just sitting here and stitching together creates community. It creates community no matter what craft is being preserved.”⁵⁰⁹ In the process, they exchanged family stories and day-to-day experiences, using group *tatreez*

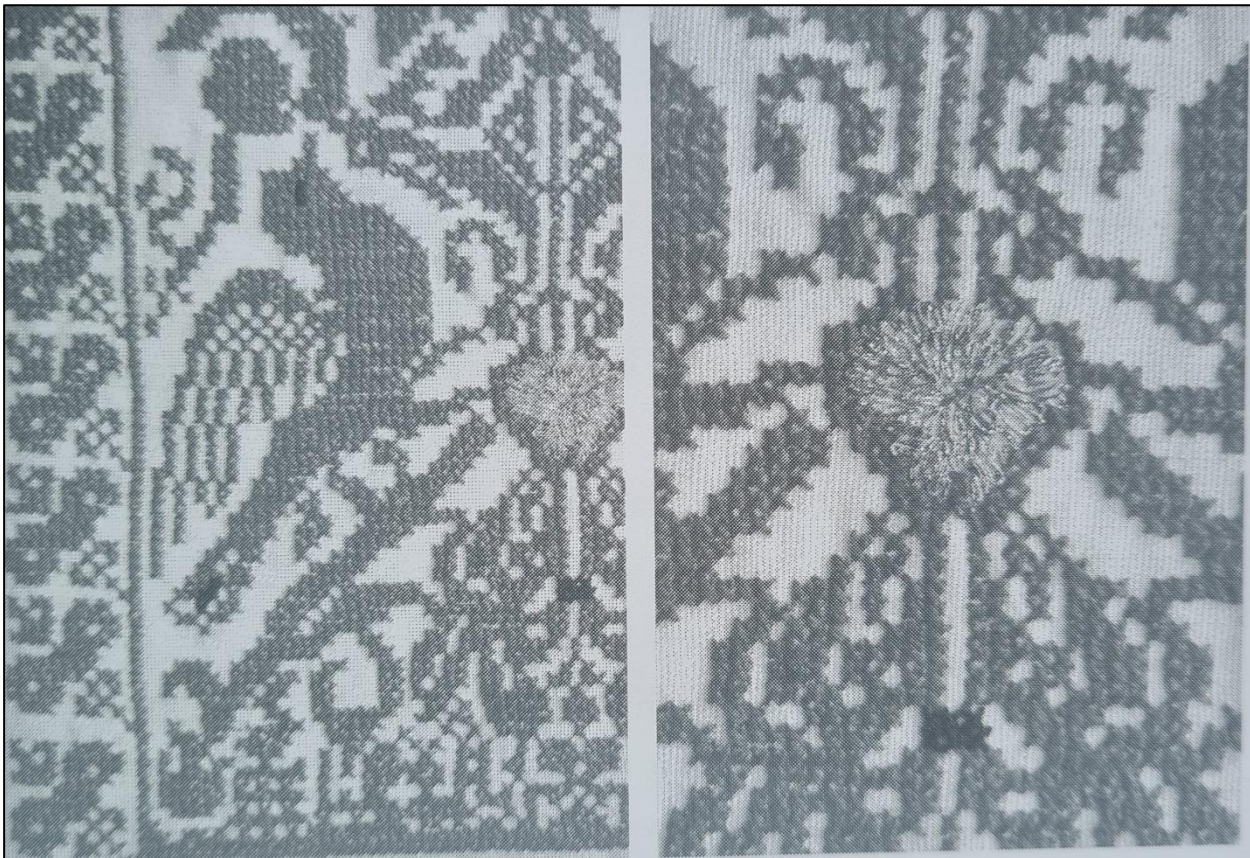


Figure 3: Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, “Close up of a bird,” and “A gold nest that represents the home,” in *Tatreez & Tea*

⁵⁰⁸ Assman, “Fury of Disappearance.”

⁵⁰⁹ Wafa Ghnaim, interview with author, November 2020.

sessions as opportunities for older generations to forge relationships with and communicate ideals to later generations within the family. By doing so, Palestinian women utilized tatreez as an embodied practice of storytelling, and to the same extent that the product itself represented the stories shared during the embroidery process.



Figure 4: Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, “My mother wearing The Birds dress, created in 1965,” in *Tatreez & Tea*

As refugees fled their homes in 1948, the process of transfer previously practiced within Palestinian culture, including within the family, became complicated by the erasure of personal records, the destruction of archives and possessions, and the bulldozing and renaming of towns and landmarks. What resulted, was the near historical erasure of the Palestinian people in the aftermath of al-Nakba. *Tatreez*, both as a practice and object, was subject to the same magnitude of destruction, its knowledge dispersed just as much as the people from which it derived. Wafa communicates the effects of al-Nakba on her own family through the reflections outlined in *Tatreez & Tea*. In particular, she describes the way the catastrophe severed her family from their previous lives through “The Missiles” pattern, created by refugee women after expulsion to document the experiences of occupation, the story of which is narrated through Feryal’s words:

When the British came into Palestine in 1920, they brought missiles and heavy weapons which confused they had lived in peace and couldn’t understand the need for all those weapons and so much destruction. But at that time, the people weren’t able to speak out about it, especially women. Men were arrested or killed during demonstrations, until there was no choice and the risks were too high to protest. It was very dangerous to speak out. Women began to speak in silence, through their embroidery. She was fearful of the weapons, but she couldn’t open her mouth. So she kept it inside of herself until she started to make designs on her clothes without putting herself or her family at risk...⁵¹⁰

Missiles cause destruction in every place that it’s in. Every place that it touches. From the top to the bottom of the dress, it is all destruction. But the flowers are safe, They are far away, and they are preserved. This is the message from the Palestinian women, to the whole world. We wish that this message will reach everyone in every place, because this is a message that all women – not only Palestinian women – want peace for their children and not war. Nobody likes war. We want our kids raised in a healthy nature, in a healthy society. Flowers are the place where there is no war, and that love and peace dominates our lives.⁵¹¹

“The Missiles” pattern represents the radical breaks in narrative and experiential continuity, such as those elicited by the destruction of occupation and al-Nakba; it is a clear message that contextualizes the emotional impact of the motif. “The

⁵¹⁰ Feryal Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 110.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*, 109.

stories give this design an entirely different presence and demeanor after my mother explains them,” states Wafa, “The motif represents more than the story or observation of a single person... The dress conveys the magnitude of tragedy that occupation and violence has imposed upon the Palestinian people for almost a century.”⁵¹² These breaks complicate the connection between the individual and the family, as well as to the wider community and historical archive, in that they no longer share the same link to the past as enjoyed by generations before.⁵¹³ That lost link, severed by exile and diaspora, explains Hirsch, becomes counteracted by subsequent generations, who attempt to “reactivate and reembody” their ephemerality by “reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial norms of mediation and aesthetic expression.”⁵¹⁴ As such, postmemorial work is a way for the descendants of survivors, dubbed the “postmemory generation,” to engage with and communicate their interpretations and imaginings of the narratives they inherited. Their work is a display and expression of this generation’s link to the past, of the “living connection” they share with it, one that, in these contexts, is mediated by embroidery, and the narratives that accompany it. Through this process, individuals create and attach meaning to what Pierre Nora describes as *lieux de memoire*, sites of memory that occupy the space where the original or authentic *milieux de memoire* once existed.⁵¹⁵ However, while Nora’s observations of memory pertained to sites and places with mnemonic power, one can apply this concept to the thobe and the embroidery circle, both of which act as sites of memory production and communication in environments where traditional cultural traditions are no longer possible.

As the descendant of al-Nakba survivors, Wafa uses her book, as well as the patterns it contains, to process and communicate her relationship to her family’s past, including her connection to 1948. When narrating, memories of a blissful life in Palestine are implicitly contrasted to memories of exile during al-Nakba, as well as the mother’s life as a refugee in the United States. Narratives of fear, loss, and

⁵¹² Wafa Ghnaim, *Tatreez and Tea*,

⁵¹³ Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory.”

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, 111.

⁵¹⁵ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations*, no. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 7-24.

confusion amongst Palestinians as they left their homes are discussed in detail. She chronicles her family's departure, from their home village of Safad to various locations in the Middle East:

My mother's family has been twice displaced. From Safad, Palestine to Damascus, Syria to Amman, Jordan. My mother fled Palestine in 1948 at two years old with her family. My grandmother, in one of my last conversations with her before she passed away, told me about the keys she still held, belonging to the family home in Safad. The keys are a relic and an immortal reminder of what we will always be denied.⁵¹⁶

When Wafa narrates her family's experiences during 1948 and onwards, she reserves thirteen pages. To tell the story, she uses interviews with her grandmother and aunt (as her mother was only two at the time of the family's departure from Palestine). Wafa shares the experiences of the women in her family as they remember them, which in turn preserves their truth and authenticity. The stories stand alone, without the support of any patterns or images, as if to isolate the reader's attention to each woman's testimony, as well as the event, with reverence. At the end of their stories, she continues the familial narrative, as well as her pattern of storytelling that is layered with biography, autobiography, and motifs. The only time Wafa interjects her voice in those thirteen pages is when she is contextualizing how she obtained each testimony, whether through the firsthand accounts from her grandmother and aunt, or through interviews of her family by other researchers. Through this information, she demonstrates both her desire to understand and talk about the past, as well as her efforts to connect the fragments of her familial narrative to construct a fuller imagining of al-Nakba and its impact on both her and the people she loves. As such, this section demonstrates the piecemealing done by Wafa to understand a story she did not experience firsthand, but which still influences her own life and sense of narrative. These actions and desires are characteristic of those located within a postmemory generation.⁵¹⁷ It symbolizes her effort, not just for this book, but throughout her life, to sew her personal experiences into her family's pattern of narratives. Not only does she feel compelled to understand such a legacy, but she feels obligated to retell it, not just

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, 85.

⁵¹⁷ Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory."

for herself, but for her mother and family: “[My mother] started, you'll read in the introduction, she started talking to me about writing a book when I was like thirteen, twelve or thirteen. It's always been something that was in the back of my mind, that this was something that I needed to do.”⁵¹⁸

Emotion, Trauma, Meaning-Making

Fivush, when commenting on the effects of reminiscing in families affected by trauma, found that how families reminisced about negative experiences influenced the child's self-esteem and emotional adjustment.⁵¹⁹ Families who elaborated upon and more thoroughly explained negative emotional experiences, including how the storyteller reacted to and worked through these experiences, showed higher levels of perceived social and academic competence.⁵²⁰ Discussing negative familial experiences facilitates a more positive sense of self. Examples of this can be found in the Ghnaim family.

For Wafa, her knowledge of and interest in *tatreez* is shaped by her connection to her family's traumatic history. As part of the generations after those who witnessed the wars and subsequent exile from Palestine, she grew up acutely cognizant of these events, as well as how they inform her biography. The writing and embroidery produced by Wafa are irrevocably shaped by her attempt to unpack and comprehend the long-term effects of living with those who survived massive historical trauma. However, while Hirsch recognizes the “pain, depression, and dissociation”⁵²¹ that characterize intergenerational transmission between survivors and their children, this quality is not present in either Feryal's or Wafa's testimonies. Stories of resilience and survival were threaded through the tales of trauma shared intergenerationally, demonstrating a duality of themes and meaning-making occurring within the family's narrative. While Wafa recognizes the

⁵¹⁸ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

⁵¹⁹ Robyn Fivush, *Family Narratives and the Development of an Autobiographical Self: Social and Cultural Perspectives on Autobiographical Memory*, (New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁵²⁰ Kelly A. Marin, Jennifer G. Bohanek, and Robyn Fivush, “Positive Effects of Talking about the Negative: Family Narratives of Negative Experiences and Preadolescents' Perceived Competence,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 18, no. 3 (September 2008): 573–93, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2008.00572.x>.

⁵²¹ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 34.

psychological impact of al-Nakba, her sense of narrative is not dominated by the pain and suffering previously found within other descendants of historical trauma. Although her family's experiences acknowledge the tumult that characterizes forced displacement, the loss of family and friends, and a ruptured narrative, the stories shared also emphasize resilience and strength, and, in some cases, serendipity. When Wafa's mother told the story of her father's death, she juxtaposed her struggles and grief against pleasant memories, of those with her mother and other women in the community:

We have a custom that each mother in a neighborhood makes one day a month her special day for all the rest to come visit her... One day, they made large amounts of tabouleh to bring and told us girls that we are going to a picnic. I was maybe six or seven years old... The women spread blankets on the ground, prepared our picnic, and we sat waiting for our tabouleh... All of a sudden, we started to see the parsley, lemon juice, and other ingredients flying over our heads as if it was raining tabouleh. Women went crazy with laughter, the biggest tabouleh food fight in Palestinian history... Clearly, this was planned. They didn't add olive oil to the tabouleh so that it didn't stain their dresses... I will never forget how much fun all the women had together on that day.⁵²²

Feryal's story demonstrates how her mother, with the assistance of the women in her community, made the hardship she experienced in Syria – as a widow, as a newly single mother, and as a refugee – easier. Their narrative demonstrates their agency, achieved through the help of the community. The storyteller, with the help of the other women in her neighborhood, found happiness and support amid testing circumstances. Equally significant, is that the narratives presented by Wafa and Feryal suggest that, for her family, the postmemories of older generations' history and trauma are embedded alongside other positive family memories, which fits under the definition of Rigney's "memories of positivities."⁵²³ Within these contexts, postmemories of trauma do not supersede more positive family memories, as seen with other cases, such as those identified by Hirsch in the

⁵²² Feryal Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 167-9.

⁵²³ Ann Rigney, "Remembering Hope: Transnational Activism beyond the Traumatic," *Memory Studies* 11, no. 3 (July 2018): 368–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018771869>.

Jewish Diaspora. This suggests, in agreement with the work published by Wolf,⁵²⁴ that the postmemory of parents' trauma does not automatically traumatize the children and grandchildren of survivors. Rather, the emotional salience of inherited memories correlates with the themes in the narrative, as well as the method of transmission.

In the Ghnaim family, there is a positive relationship between embroidering, the person, and their connection to the women in their family. This is partly the result of the positive themes in the narrative outlined previously; however, it is equally a product of *how* the story is told, otherwise described by Hirsch as the “language of the body,” during the transmission process.⁵²⁵ In addition to the visual and aural elements of embroidery, it is also an embodied practice, meaning its language is understood not just through storytelling, or the symbolic representation of the patterns, but also through the body and its mannerisms during storytelling. Keeping this in mind further contextualizes the postmemory transmission process, as well as how members of the Ghnaim family demonstrate their agency during this process.⁵²⁶ Feryal exerted her agency in the ways she told her children about her, and her family's, survivor stories. She controlled when and how she told her stories, using her creativity to turn their history into a bonding and connecting experience. “In retrospect,” states Wafa, “my sisters and I found art to be so fulfilling as children, maybe because it gave us the many opportunities to see my mother in her most sanguine self.”⁵²⁷ The women in the Ghnaim family are open with their experiences, and the language of the body is that of comfort. “You should know,” explains Feryal, “when you do your crafts at home, you should always be comfortable, otherwise you will never do it. You should always have things that make you comfortable near you.”⁵²⁸ Since their practice is centered around togetherness, their embroidery an extension of their “most sanguine” selves, Wafa positively associates the narratives that accompany her with embroidering

⁵²⁴ Diane L. Wolf, “Postmemories of Joy? Children of Holocaust Survivors and Alternative Family Memories,” *Memory Studies* 12, no. 1 (February 2019): 74–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018811990>.

⁵²⁵ Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” 109.

⁵²⁶ Wolf, “Postmemories of Joy?”

⁵²⁷ Wafa Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 231.

⁵²⁸ Feryal Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 53.

experiences. In fact, because of this, certain positive concepts remained constant, despite the loss and disruption that sometimes characterized the Ghnaim family's lives after 1948. These running themes, such as togetherness, resilience, and mutual support, could be expressed and practiced through embroidery, irrespective of their location throughout the diaspora. As such, for this family, in the absence of the communal tatreez circle and its opportunity for storytelling, tatreez became a rare art form through which memory is preserved, and thobes became unofficial archives of the Ghnaim family. As the opportunity to exchange narratives over tatreez became more infrequent, it exasperated the mnemonic, sentimental, and cultural value for the women who practiced this craft. Throughout her life, Feryal felt a strong emotional connection to tatreez, one that developed from a young age and increased in intensity as she grew older:

[For] my entire life, I've felt connected to embroidery. I did not feel any connection towards the general history classes I took in university because I felt that those were just books. Books are not going to give you a familial connection, or help you to understand a part of yourself. But when you do something, an activity, that feels like it is a part of your identity, part of your heritage, that connects with your daily life. It becomes something that will stay and will accompany you for the rest of your life. It is something that is natural, that is inside the body, part of the pulse, in your blood...⁵²⁹

Feryal immersed her daughters in the craft from a young age, making sure the knowledge continued in the family and inevitably ensuring that they inherited her passion. Embroidery and storytelling were ways to bring Feryal closer to her children, and it worked. She and her daughters were inseparable when they were young. "My sisters and I have always been her world," explains Wafa, "She dedicated her life to us and always kept us by her side. While we were growing up, we were never away from my mom."⁵³⁰ Feryal brought her daughters alongside her when she embroidered, hosted workshops, and spoke to public audiences at events about her memories and craft. They were involved in their mother's life to such an extent, that Wafa claims the embodied memory of her mother's embroidery is now part of her. "Memories span beyond just open eyes," she told me, "We were in utero and she was stitching. She was doing interviews when we

⁵²⁹ Ibid, 155.

⁵³⁰ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

were in utero. I think this has always been a part of my DNA.”⁵³¹ The close relationship between Feryal and her daughters carried over to the relationship they share with embroidery, in that it became symbolically synonymous with their mother’s identity, their own identities, and their love for and connection to each other. For these women, tatreez is much more than a craft or an expression of cultural tradition; it is an extension of themselves. Wafa communicates this as she discusses “The Gardens” dress, otherwise known by the Oregon Historical Society as the “Dress of a Million Stitches,” stating, “This dress chronicles...my childhood. Each cross stitch represents a moment of achievement or a sudden and amateur miscalculation...”⁵³² When discussing this motif, she expresses the psychological and emotional connection between herself (the embroiderer) and her work (the embroidered), emphasizing how certain stitches express the sense of *I was here* at the time of its creation. Not only does she see herself in her work, but she sees the dress as an entity in itself:

The Gardens dress... had her own sisterly presence. Nagging us for attention time and time again, we would attempt to please her, giving her colorful flowers, keeping her clean and making sure she never got hurt... Our fourth sister was as blossomed and boisterous in fullness and spirit as we had hoped. As we had hoped for ourselves.⁵³³

Wafa’s personification of “the gardens” dress demonstrates the intimate affinity she feels toward embroidery. By identifying the dress as a sister, as part of her family, she further confirms her craft as an extension of herself, and as a symbol for her and her family’s existence through time. This is one example of the way through which tatreez represents the experiential self, of one woman and her experiences at that moment in time, as if to say, “I am here, at this moment, and these are my thoughts and feelings.” This connection elevates tatreez beyond a simple representative of village origin

⁵³¹ Ibid

⁵³² Wafa Ghnaim, *Tatreez & Tea*, 331.

⁵³³ Ibid



Figure 5: Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, Untitled Photograph, in *Tatreez & Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora*.

or social/economic standing, but of *who* the designer was, as well as what was meaningful to her while she stitched the pattern.⁵³⁴



Figure 6: Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, Untitled Photograph, in *Tatreez & Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora*.

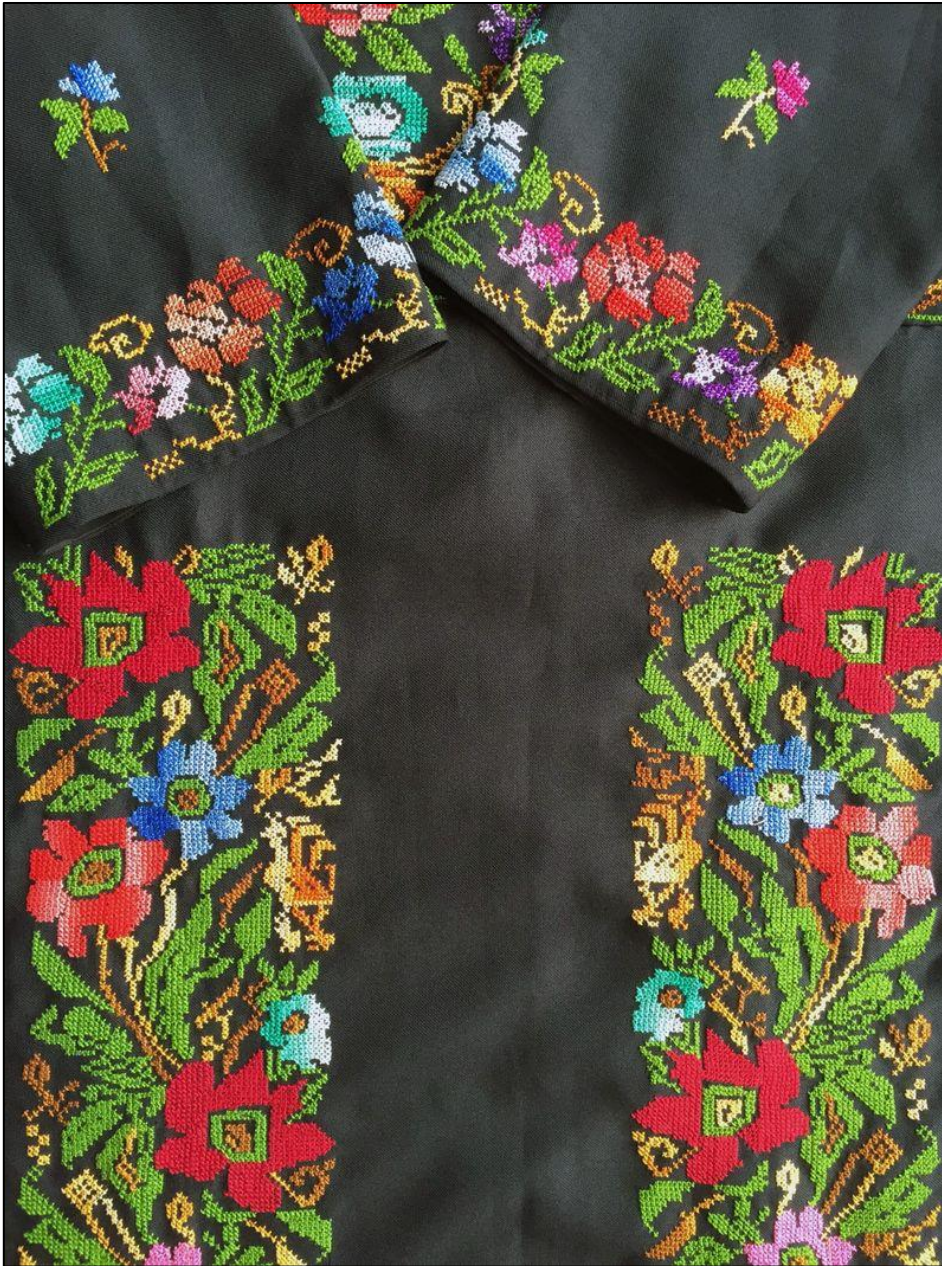


Figure 7: Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, Untitled Photograph, in *Tatreez & Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora*.

As Wafa told me about *Tatreez & Tea*, she explained to me how the production of the book became an opportunity for her to stitch together her storyline with that of her mother. However, the connection she shares with her mother was not always apparent. “When I was writing my book,” she

states, “the last couple chapters I wrote were more about me. I just wanted to write the book about my mom. Then, it sort of became about me.”⁵³⁵ She characterizes her narrative as a process of becoming, in which she inherited a legacy from her

⁵³⁴ Photographer Wafa Ghnaim, Untitled Photograph, in *Tatreez & Tea: Embroidery and Storytelling in the Palestinian Diaspora*.

⁵³⁵ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

mother, and is now taking it upon herself to communicate that knowledge through artistic production. Ghnaim's work raises the question of how historical traumas like al-Nakba can be represented, as well as how different mediums – embroidery motifs and testimony, namely – intermingle to create a nuanced and colorful narrative. It demonstrates tatreez's relevance as a postmemorial object, a predominantly feminine one at that, carrying the same historical and analytical value as that of a photograph. In doing so, the patterns and stories provided by Wafa and Feryal mediate how memory and postmemory are communicated through visual representational forms, and contribute to what Cooke describes as the "fight to retain the authority to [act upon] the experiences[s] that they are supposed not to have had."⁵³⁶ When juxtaposing the imagery of thobes against her mother's written words and words of her own life story she further complicates the distinction between documentary and aesthetic. At the same time, Wafa's work challenges traditional postmemorial tropes, shedding further light on how postmemory is digested and interpreted during the process of narrative construction. Wafa's and Feryal's stories suggest that postmemory, albeit traumatic in origin, is not always told with traumatic details, and does not always result in traumatizing conclusions. This suggests the need for a new understanding of the transmission of memory, traumatic and non-traumatic alike. Although their narratives cannot be generalized to entire postmemory generations, they certainly provide the groundwork for imagining alternative relationships and practices of memorial transmission within survivor families, particularly those in which trauma does not take a dominating position in the family's collective narrative. In doing so, it contributes to the empowerment of those whose experiences – whether lived or inherited – have changed their conceptions of who they are.

New Memories, New Tatreez, New Archives

Not only do these artists add new content to the existing embroidered archive of Palestinian memory and history, but they are also changing the rules of how memory should be documented, who should be documenting, and how history should be read. In her embroidery, Wafa incorporates elements from both

⁵³⁶ Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 5.

Palestinian and American fashion. In addition to embroidering on thobes, she chooses to embroider onto textiles that are more accessible and comfortable for her day-to-day wear. “I’m stitching on a denim jacket,” she told me, “I’m not a traditionalist when it comes to this art form.”⁵³⁷ Wafa posted her finished piece on social media with the following caption:

“Invisible” (2019) I completed my denim jacket in 2019, after one long year of painful, emotional and isolating recovery from four herniated discs and a curvature in my spine that left me unable to walk, stand, sit or lie down... I began stitching my denim jacket in 2018 as a way to cope. There are some mistakes, because the only way I could stitch was sedated or in excruciating pain. I stitched The Missiles Design, a design I detail in my book that represents weaponry and destruction. I stitched the motif on my back to show the destruction of my body.⁵³⁸

In her design, Wafa uses a motif she learned from her mother, titled *The Missiles* design. As previously discussed, the original purpose of the motif was to narrate the experiences of destruction during warfare, as seen in the placement of upturned cypress trees. However, Wafa channels the emotive qualities of the piece – of destruction and pain – and relates them to her experience with her spinal injury. Despite the design’s traditional origins and meaning, Wafa reappropriates the motif in a way that relates to her day-to-day life, as a result, both modernizing the piece and documenting her unprecedented experiences. Doing allows her to maintain a connection with the design to the same, personal extent as those women before her, and in a way that continues the tradition of the women who originally designed the motif. At the same time, her personalization redefines the way tatreez is practiced, leading to the craft’s evolution.

When interviewed, Wafa claimed to receive backlash from members of her audience for her non-conventional designs. They criticize her embroidery for deviating from traditional tatreez styles, which they claim is, like Palestinian culture, already at risk of erasure. However, in changing the ways through which tatreez is imagined and constructed, Wafa does exactly what previous generations of Palestinian women did before her: she innovates. Each embroiderer looks to the

⁵³⁷ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

⁵³⁸ Wafa Ghnaim (tatreezandtea), “Invisible,” *Instagram*, (22 June 2021), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQbWaeSM2Yr/?igshid=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng==>.

resources they find around them for inspiration – their everyday experiences, the textiles and threads available, and the patterns they learned from previous generations. Such resources undoubtedly change as people travel, whether they go between villages or across countries. Certain items may become unavailable, needing replacing; other textiles may be easier to mold; perhaps a person simply prefers the look and feel of one fabric over the other. Regardless, this inevitably leads to variations in the substances and construction of embroidered textiles that we can classify as *tatreez*, and which differ from those created and embroidered in Palestinian villages before 1948. Despite critiques, Wafa's design choices are of profound significance. The introduction of new fabrics into *tatreez* design also reconstructs the embroidered archives that document Palestinian memory and history. If we return to Derrida's conception of archiving, we note that the content of an archive is determined by the inscriptive resources available to the documentarian. By incorporating new textiles, like jean jackets, into her repertoire of designs, Wafa introduces new mediums upon which *tatreez* may be embroidered, meaning new mediums upon which memory may be inscribed. In doing so, she creates another instance in which the lines between documentary and aesthetic become blurred.



Figure 8: Wafa Ghnaim (tatreezandtea), "Invisible," *Instagram*, (22 June 2021), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQbWaeSM2Yr/?igshid=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng==>

In addition to expanding upon the substances and inscribing practices that constitute Palestinian archives, Wafa contributes to the totality of narratives that they house. By embroidering textiles with designs she imagined, Wafa documents the experiences of a Palestinian-American woman navigating through life in the twenty-first century – experiences that, before now, were never before documented through embroidery. “I’m an American in the United States, which is a huge supporter of Israel, one of the main funders of the Israeli military,” she told Middle East Eye, “and it can be really hard growing up, because your identity is

stigmatized.”⁵³⁹ Wafa constantly negotiated between Palestinian and United States social identities, as well as their associated norms, as she lived through her childhood and formative years. She came of age during the post-9/11 era in the United States, a period she vividly characterizes as rife with Islamophobia and anti-Arab prejudices. In her lived experience, her identity was unjustly stigmatized during her formative years as she was cast as the “other,” and she harboured no inclination to rectify such treatment. As a result, she found herself grappling with ambivalence when faced with the subject of misrepresentation:

I have to start by saying that there isn't going to be a single thing to debunk or redeem the Palestinian image. We're talking about a counter to over a century of propaganda, as well as hundreds of years of racism that [the United States] was based on, before its founding and through slavery. I also don't agree with the idea that we hold responsibility to redeem [our image] or that we should have a hand in its redemption. It's like victim-blaming. It shifts the responsibility. Ultimately I think it's on the community, the media, and various other groups – especially liberal Jews in this country – who are pro-Palestinian, to engage in their own communities and make those changes.⁵⁴⁰

Wafa, in alignment with her convictions, acknowledges the prevailing misrepresentations that cast Arab and Muslim cultural identities in a stigmatizing light. Nevertheless, she steadfastly maintains that it is not her duty to rectify the misconceptions harbored by those who engage in such stereotyping. Instead, she opts to forge her own path, guiding by her own volition and undeterred by the thoughts and judgments of others. As seen in other cases in Chapter Three, Wafa's commitment to her identity ‘echoes’ the psychological underpinnings of sumud in its resistance against pressures to confirm, adapt, lose, or change one's identity. She does this not only by adopting an ancestral narrative as her own, but by wearing it on her body as a badge of identity. Wafa cherishes the value of unfettered self-expression, employing her apparel, embroidered with tatreez, to express herself. “I think it's because of the way I was raised,” she explains, “that fabric says so much about who you are. You can tell your stories through fabric.”⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁹ Nadda Osman, “The Palestinian woman hoping to preserve tatreez embroidery for future generations,” *Middle East Eye*, 5 August 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/palestine-tatreez-embroidery-traditional-craft-wafa-ghnaim>.

⁵⁴⁰ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid

To her, continuing tatreez is not solely concerned with preserving the craft, or her heritage, in its traditional form; rather, it manifests as a mode of artistic expression that symbolizes the thoughts and experiences of its creator, transcending the confines of space and time. Embracing this truth, simply knowing how to embroider like a Palestinian, is deemed sufficient to keep her culture and its memories alive. She extends her knowledge to others by hosting workshops, thus facilitating the transmission of this artistry:

I think that's why I feel so committed to teaching it, even though I don't always like teaching, even though sometimes I don't really feel like teaching. I still feel committed to it, because, if I could share the basics with people, and it stays alive in that way, then someone else might have that fallback too, when they are feeling really out of touch with themselves, when they're alone, or when they're trying to understand their identity more. Maybe this can serve as an avenue for that. I work really hard to make this as accessible as possible.⁵⁴²

The actions undertaken by Wafa can be identified as a manifestation of cultural appropriation, deployed as a means of resistance. While the concept of appropriation as resistance is typically examined from a class-oriented perspective, particularly when regarding subculture, where cultural artifacts are consumed and reappropriated to align with subcultural ideologies,⁵⁴³ its principles can also be applied within this context. This echo, therefore, is characterized by the subcultural defiance of dominant narratives or forces through the contestation of meaning. The prevailing ideologies, along with their associated symbols and meanings, are appropriated by the subcultural group, rearranged, and imbued with novel and resistance meanings, serving to “represent the experience of contradiction itself.”⁵⁴⁴ The individual engages in a critical dialogue with motifs that epitomize popular ideology, transforming and reinterpreting them to forge a personal connection and assert ownership over their own narrative.

⁵⁴² Ibid

⁵⁴³ Laurence Wai-Teng Leong, “Cultural Resistance: The Cultural Terrorism of British Male Working-Class Youth,” *Social Theory* 12 (1992): 29–58.

⁵⁴⁴ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 121.

At the same time, and while Wafa dedicated much of her adolescence and young adulthood to forging her own identity as a member of a Palestinian-American immigrant family, she also grew up as a grandchild and child of al-Nakba survivors, the inherited memories of which play a significant psychological impact on her sense of self and narrative. In turn, her postmemory exasperates the experientially schismatic tensions between her social identities. Wafa's experiences inspired her to create new designs that she felt more accurately represented the identities she assumes, identities steeped in memories both lived and inherited. As novel in Palestinian history as her experiences like hers are, they are also quite common, constituting the collective memories of an entire generation of young Palestinians living in the diaspora. By recording them on fabric, Wafa adds these experiences to the overall story that narrates Palestinian memory and history. She continues the narrative that began generations earlier, as told through the language embroidered by historians and archivists before her. Her work, particularly when juxtaposed against the motifs created by previous generations, demonstrates the fluidity in experiences encountered by Palestinians worldwide, as well as their efforts to document these experiences wherever and however possible, the totality of which represents the multitude of changing identities and experiences encountered by humans as they migrate.

It is difficult to determine the full reception of Wafa's art amongst her diasporic cohort. While *Tatreez & Tea* is available for purchase on Amazon, only four reviews are visible, and it is uncertain whether diasporic Palestinians wrote them. Additionally, while Wafa posts pictures of her art on social media platforms such as Instagram, the comments on each post are limited, meaning that Wafa moderates and deletes comments of her choice. Only positive feedback is visible, meaning any disagreeing perspectives may have been deleted. From what is visible on her social media, we can see an alignment from her followers. Referring back to her 'Invisible' design, user comments indicate a worldwide reception, as seen in statements such as "big hugs from Kuwait,"⁵⁴⁵ requests to ship books to Canada, and responses from American profiles as well. Bedouin Silver recognizes Wafa's

⁵⁴⁵ Prettygreenbullet comment on Wafa Ghnaim (tatreezandtea), "Invisible," *Instagram*, (June 2021), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQbWaeSM2Yr/?igshid=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng==>.

work as “powerful,”⁵⁴⁶ while other users adorn the comment section with words like “inspiring” and “amazing.” This all suggests a wider positive reception of Wafa’s work, as well as her acclaimed authority over tatreez as a craft. Additionally, subtle comments, such as “it resembles my dearest teta’s toub,”⁵⁴⁷ suggest that younger generations of Arabs, perhaps Palestinian-Arabs (as it is too difficult to determine the nationality from a profile name alone), connect with her work on an emotional level. Through this comment, we can see how Wafa’s work, as well as her willingness to share her knowledge and identity with others, symbolizes a wider collective identity as the offspring of Palestinians or Arabs. However, when asked whether she feels her art represents diasporic Palestinians, she confesses uncertainty: “With Palestinian embroidery, there’s just so much variation between families and between communities. The diaspora magnified that. So, I don’t want to feel responsible for speaking for everyone. I just want to be able to share what I know and what has been taught to me.”⁵⁴⁸ It is clear that, while Wafa does not claim to represent diasporic Palestinians through her new perspectives on tatreez, her practices resonate with her audience. They feel represented by her art, not just as Palestinians, but as the offspring of Palestinian grandparents in diaspora.

Wafa is not the only individual to innovate tatreez. Jordan Nassar, a half-Palestinian, half-Polish, second-generation American immigrant artist, also practices embroidery as a form of expression. Uniquely, he uses tatreez as a medium to explore how latter-born, post-Nakba generations perceive their ancestral pasts and their relationship to their Palestinian homeland. As seen in Wafa’s embroidery, Nassar’s designs represent his distinctive outlook as a diasporic Palestinian and incorporate new stylistic choices that expand upon traditional notions of embroidered archives. He channels his multidimensional perspective into his artwork, creating unprecedented tatreez pieces, both in content and style. In doing so, he, like the others in this chapter, reconstructs the

⁵⁴⁶ Bedouin Silver comment on Wafa Ghnaim (tatreezandtea), “Invisible,” *Instagram*, (June 2021), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQbWaeSM2Yr/?igshid=MTc4MmM1Yml2Ng==>.

⁵⁴⁷ Mays.alhamad comment on Wafa Ghnaim (tatreezandtea), “The Gardens Dress, by my mother Feryal Abasi-Ghnaim,” *Instagram*, (October 2020), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CB6GIYODbiC/?igsh=eHI6cnBpZHBncDVv>.

⁵⁴⁸ Wafa Ghnaim, Interview Number Nine, interview by Kristine Sheets, 2021.

dimensions that dictate how Palestinians express themselves and document memory.

Nasser grew up in New York's Upper West Side. With his diverse upbringing, he received mixed ideas of life in Palestine before the 1948 war. According to the artist, he felt that "the whole outside world was telling me something conflicting with what my family was telling me at home."⁵⁴⁹ Throughout his childhood and teenage years, he lived surrounded by narratives of what he identifies as an idealized Palestine. "My father internalized this Palestinian identity and is very attached to it, but it isn't real – it's romanticized nostalgia of this utopian homeland."⁵⁵⁰ These narratives are commonly recalled among interviewees as well, as discussed in Chapter One. Because of the traumatic nature of Palestinian migration post-Nakba, survivors often reminisced about their previous homes in Palestine, emphasizing the sudden loss of land, to which they still felt connected, and a nostalgic lens on the moments when they still lived there. When they shared these stories with their children and grandchildren, the younger generation inherited their nostalgia, which they now use to shape their understanding of how Palestine should look and feel to them. In turn, they imagine a Palestine, as described by their parents and grandparents, shaped by a gaze developed out of longing, but which has little grounding in the present, especially for those who live in the diaspora and never saw Palestine firsthand. The Palestine that exists, for many of these people, is imagined.

The idealized vision of Palestine constructed by Nasser ended abruptly after his first visit. Faced with the reality of Palestinian day-to-day life, he quickly realized that it was not as romantic as once thought, the irony of which he is aware: "I've been going to Palestine since I was a teenager. It is beautiful, but it's beautiful like a lot of places. It's a normal place, on Earth, with people living. It's not a fantasy utopia."⁵⁵¹ Returning to Palestine, for him, did not feel like the longed-for and

⁵⁴⁹ Quote by Jordan Nasser, derived from Clair Wrathall, "New Threads."

⁵⁵⁰ Quote by Jordan Nasser, derived from Katrina Kufer, "American-Palestinian Artist Jordan Nasser Examines The Crossovers of Culture, Identity and Tradition," *Harper's Arabian Bazaar*, 29 April 2019, <https://www.harperbazaararabia.com/artists/reframing-inherited-nostalgia-jordan-nassar>.

⁵⁵¹ Jordan Nasser, "Jordan Nasser: Fantasy and Truth | The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston," September 2022, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhq7n77h_70.

cathartic return impressed upon him by his family. In fact, after being there, he felt like he did not belong. He felt a distance between his sense of self and what he regarded as authentically Palestinian, namely, the daily life that occurred in Palestine, which reflected neither his own life in New York nor what he imagined life in Palestine should be. After his experiences of visiting, Nassar became aware of his attachment to the land through the lens of his inherited nostalgia and idealization. In realizing his felt sense of otherness, he began to recognize it amongst his peers:

I had been thinking about different Palestinians I interact with, in New York, or in America, or outside of Palestine. I noticed, among many different people, this way of talking about Palestine that was very utopian and fantastical. Everything was rolling hills and olive trees; everything was perfect and beautiful in their minds because they don't get to go there.⁵⁵²

Noticing commonalities in the Palestinian-centered fantasies conceived by those in the diaspora, Nassar turned to tatreez to conceptualize and document them. He designed motifs that reflect his and others' imaginings, which he regards as "the Palestine that might exist only in the imagination...the perfect, magic, dream Palestine."⁵⁵³ Recently, he released a piece titled *Brick Walls and Closed Windows*. Using the cross-stitch embroidering technique found in much of traditional Palestinian tatreez, Nassar created a fantastical piece that narrates his experiences being the "other." The embroidery to the far right, in various shades of blues, greens, and grays, depicts Nassar's interpretation of the "dream" Palestine envisioned by him and other diasporic Palestinians. His stylistic choice portrays scenes of rolling landscapes, while never providing any clear recognition of the places he depicts. Rather, he keeps his images purposefully ambiguous, representing the ambiguity of diasporic imaginings. He then combines his embroidery with those of women living in Palestine. After developing the idea for his design, he commissioned the women to embroider parts of the piece for him. In those sections, the women embroidered motifs of their choosing; at most, Nassar

⁵⁵² Nassar, "Jordan Nassar: Fantasy and Truth | The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston."

⁵⁵³ Quote by Jordan Nassar derived from Reem Farah, "Heritage is to Art as the Medium is to the Message: The Responsibility to Palestinian Tatreez," *Third Text: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, 26 January 2021, <http://www.thirdtext.org/farah-tatreez>.

requested specific colors. The pieces embroidered by the women in Palestine closely resemble the motifs embroidered by Palestinian women before expulsion. The blacks, grays, and red patterns found on most of the piece can also be found on the panels of traditional thobes.

The staunch juxtaposition between new and traditional patterns sends a powerful message. Nasser's designs – the rolling hills in non-conventional colors – represent sentimentalized, and at points inaccurate, diasporic visualizations of their distant, ancestral homeland. When placed next to traditional tatreez motifs, created within Palestine and embroidered with traditional colors, the difference highlights the uniqueness of Nasser's perspective, which is intentional:

This notion - that I'm doing this traditional craft, but I'm kind of doing it wrong - is this metaphor for how it feels to be a diaspora. I didn't grow up within the culture. As much as I love the culture, I don't get it exactly right. I'm a foreigner when I'm there. The pieces embody that.

Nasser's art encapsulates images of a way of life “that only really exists in the minds of diaspora Palestinians, a utopian vision based on their parents' and grandparents' reminiscences of the old country, mixed with their own imaginations.”⁵⁵⁴ He uses embroidery to depict the tensions he feels within himself, between what aspects of his life he imagines and expects to be so, and what he accepts as reality. By omitting the specificities of Palestinian day-to-day life from his motifs, he emphasizes the diasporic inclination to romanticize Palestine as an idea, rather than acknowledge its reality. His art ignites a conversation concerning authenticity. Which form of embroidery is authentically tatreez? Which experience, represented by the motifs, is authentically Palestinian? It is possible to see how Nasser's experiences, sometimes disappointing, nevertheless facilitated the creation of new social identities and stimulated the invention of his way of relating to Palestine. The re-framing of the relationships he shares – with his ancestral legacy, with Palestine as a place, and with his diasporic identity – ruptured his previous understandings, a kind of realization that is related to acknowledging his felt sense of otherness. It is the experience of postmemorial imaginings and anticipation, followed by an underwhelmingly disillusioned reality upon return, that

⁵⁵⁴ Quote by Nassar derived from Wrathall, “New Threads.”

makes his narrative different from those who might have never left Palestine. Nassar's unique perspective separates him from what was originally considered the only "authentic" Palestinian experience; at the same time, it is that same experience that distinguishes a new category of Palestinian-ness that is equally authentic.

Like Wafa, Nassar's incorporation of new motifs, colors, and layouts into his tatreez designs reconstructs the embroidered archives that document the Palestinian experience. Although he incorporates the traditional cross-stitch, his design choices are new altogether. At the same time, and despite how different his tatreez might appear from the traditional craft, he continues the Palestinian tradition of embroidering what he sees and feels. Once again, and given that the content of an archive – what is remembered, and how – is shaped by the tools used to record that information, we can see how new designs reconstruct traditional understandings of Palestinian memory, identity, and documentation. Nassar creates new ways in which tatreez can be designed and embroidered, meaning new formats through which Palestinian memory may be documented.

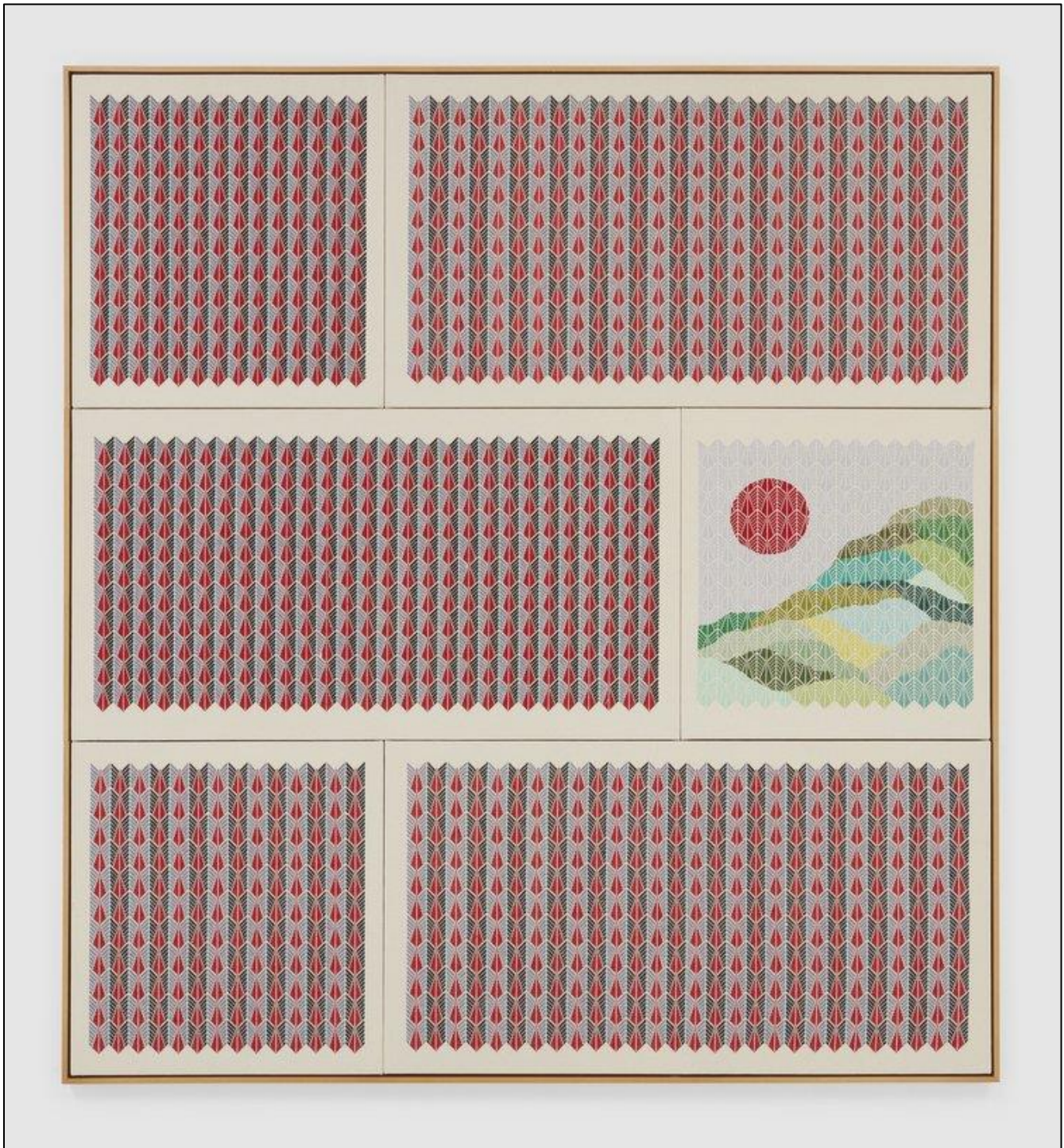


Figure 9: Shomali, Amer. *Broken Weddings* (Exhibition): <http://www.amershomali.info/broken-weddings/>.

Another dimension to Nassar's work is his gender identity, including his cognizance that he is a male practicing what is traditionally a woman's craft. Nassar is not the

only case where this happens, either. Recently, some male members of the Palestinian diasporic community began embroidering tatreez as a form of artistic expression, expanding the practice from what was originally matrilineal to one inclusive of multiple genders. This is part of a wider process of changing gender norms in Palestinian culture, as previously discussed in Chapter One. Once outside the Arab-speaking countries, some respondents, irrespective of gender, expressed their inclination to participate in activities that challenged traditional or hegemonic notions of gender found prevalent within Palestinian families and communities. This is due to the fact these individuals, once living independently, surround themselves with communities of their selection. When creating their social networks, they befriend individuals who are more tolerant towards the androgynization of the self, including reconstructing the norms of traditionally gendered social activities. This demonstrates another way in which Palestinian storytelling, memorial/cultural preservation/commemoration is evolving. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Palestinian storytelling transitioned from a traditionally feminine responsibility to one adopted by people of all genders. This is because, both as immigrants and as refugees, Palestinians living in the diaspora perceive a risk of cultural and memorial erasure, an experience that occurs regardless of gender. To compensate for this, they take up activities that they feel allow them to continue traditions associated with their Palestinian social identities.

One interviewee, Habib,⁵⁵⁵ was born in Jordan, living fully immersed in Arab and Palestinian social norms. His family practices Islam, in which the dominant attitude towards homosexuality is to reject it as an act.⁵⁵⁶ Identifying as a gay male, he never felt he could fully express himself around his family and friends, who rejected any displays of emotion or his gay identity. However, when he moved to Scotland during his formative years, he found that the social culture in his village, composed of LGBTQ+ members or their allies, encouraged him to freely express his full self. Feeling comfortable enough to explore other, more creative avenues of expression, he chose art. Recently, he began practicing tatreez:

⁵⁵⁵ Name of individual has been changed to protect identity.

⁵⁵⁶ Farah Zeb, "Homosexuality and Islam," *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality*, April 20, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118896877.wbiehs215>.

I'm interested in the patterns on women's dresses. Every pattern is a town, or that's what I've been reading. I try to learn all about it, just because it feels like, every time I learn something new about tatreez, I feel like I'm gaining something that was taken away from me. I started surrounding myself with tatreez patterns.

When discussing his interest in tatreez, Habib connects his reasoning behind it to his postmemory. He identifies tatreez as an aspect of Palestinian culture that was “taken away” by al-Nakba, demonstrating his cognizance of the historical trauma that affected previous generations. This sense of loss is simultaneously felt personally, in that he feels his potential to live normally as a Palestinian was also taken away from him during his ancestors' expulsion. To regain a sense of cultural normalcy that he felt deprived of, he searched for activities that he believed symbolized Palestinian heritage. Artistic by nature, and open to adopting crafts without regard to their traditionally gendered constraints, he found tatreez as an acceptable medium through which he can learn about and express his social identity as a Palestinian. Habib's case, like those discussed in this writing, is emblematic of what it means to experience life as a diasporic Palestinian. He expresses a felt sense of disconnect with the culturally contextualized norms practiced by his family, a hybridized identity that results from time spent in a non-Arab country, and a subsequent desire to synthesize experientially separate identities into a seamless sense of self. This is layered upon the desire to reclaim potential identities and experiences lost as a consequence of the collective trauma occurring generations before him. At the same time, his interest in tatreez challenges the dominance of women in Palestinian tatreez, recognizes LGBTQ+ identities when practicing it, and questions assumptions about Palestinian gender norms. This demonstration of plurality makes room for emerging identities to make their way to the forefront as much as it proves that this process has, to an extent, already taken place.

Conclusion:

The research in this chapter analyzes the archival and mnemonic potential of Palestinian tatreez, identifying both the act of embroidering and the embroidered object as sites of postmemory. At the same time, the emotional and social contexts that shape embroidery in the diaspora are addressed, finding that the evolved

multifacetedness of diasporic tatreez reflects the increasing diversity of its creators. Following Derrida's notion of archiving, embroidered objects double as archives of memory, documenting the lived experiences of their creators. Through their mnemonic potential, one can approach thobes, embroidered with tatreez, as postmemorial objects, which diasporic Palestinians born after al-Nakba use to engage with their postmemory. At the same time, as diasporic Palestinians developed unprecedented and oftentimes hybridized social identities, they adjusted tatreez practices in ways that reflected their experiences in the diaspora, all the while satisfying their desire to connect with their Palestinian heritage.

The examples found in Ghnaim's *Tatreez & Tea* demonstrate how exactly tatreez acts as a medium through which their creator's thoughts are preserved for future audiences to witness. The symbolism behind designs, like "The Birds" and "The Missiles," demonstrate the historical employment of embroidery as a language by Palestinian women, and, in unique cases, as sites through which postmemory is documented and communicated. In both events, Palestinian women used tatreez to communicate with others, their thoughtfully designed patterns inadvertently used by Ghnaim, a descendant of al-Nakba survivors, to understand her family's life before and after expulsion. "The Gardens" dress not only provides insight into the personal connection an embroiderer feels with their work, making tatreez a medium through which the nuances of identity are communicated, but also exemplifies how multiple family members collaborate to create a singular, familial narrative, demonstrating the social influences of one's identity. At the same time, *Tatreez & Tea* is, in itself, a postmemorial work, in which the Ghnaim women use autobiographical narratives and embroidery designs to reflect upon their memories of and relationship to the 1948 al-Nakba. In sharing their family's survival stories, they document memories with both negative and positive associations, providing evidence of instances where the intergenerational transmission of familial trauma also included the narration of memories characterized by positive meaning-making.

The engagement of artists such as Ghnaim, Nasser, and Habib in the art of tatreez illuminates the evolving practices of Palestinian embroidery, as it adapts to emerging identities discovered and embraced within the diaspora. These artists provide new avenues for documenting the lived experiences of post-Nakba

generations, diasporic-born individuals and, for the men, as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Their creative endeavors not only exemplify the evolving nature of tatreez but also signify a shifting Palestinian identity among younger generations, one that embraces fluidity of gender and gender roles. This is evident through the adoption of a traditional matrilineal form of artistry by Palestinian men.

While their work branches from traditional Palestinian embroidery, they are still a continuation of the processes that led to tatreez's evolution over time. Village motifs consistently changed as embroiderers accessed new tools and materials, encountered new people, and witnessed drastically changing circumstances, in and out of the diaspora. Nassar and Ghnaim also changed their designs about their medium, demonstrating the same adaptability as the original women who created this craft. Additionally, in the same way that native Palestinian women documented, and still document, their day-to-day experiences, in the village or exile, Nassar and Ghnaim, through their designs and use of media, document their own experiences as diasporic Palestinians. The clear juxtaposition between designs – In Nasser's case, by coupling traditional and modern motifs, and, in Ghnaim's case, by embroidering on Western apparel – demonstrates the fracturing in Palestinian experiences and imagination, and expresses the different ways in which Palestinians gaze upon the idea of Palestine, its culture, and how each should be represented.

The theoretical frameworks and examples outlined above call for a complete reconceptualization of Palestinian tatreez, in both its traditional and modern forms. As Hirsch argues, postmemorial works blur the boundaries between aesthetic and documentation,⁵⁵⁷ and the mnemonic power inherent in textiles and embroidery provides scholars with fresh opportunities to redefine their understanding of documents, archives, their contents, and their creation. As such, this is the first research to apply such an understanding to Palestinian contexts, underscoring the relevance of tatreez as a method of documentation for younger generations within the diaspora. These individuals demand a broader understanding of tatreez and challenge prevailing notions of what constitutes authentic Palestinian embroidery.

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By forging connections with their Palestinian heritage and their uniquely diasporic identities, they embody a departure from fixating on an idealized past and strive to create new narratives independently.

CHAPTER FOUR: “EAT LIKE A PALESTINIAN”: FOOD, MEALS, AND MEMORY IN THE PALESTINIAN FAMILY

In Palestinian diasporic culture, food serves as a crucial site for memory and social identity formation. It dictates the routine for its members, and through this, it becomes intertwined with the physical and psychological aspects of life. People both anticipate and reminisce about past meals, particularly those shared with extended family on special occasions, or with the surrounding community in everyday contexts. This chapter delves into the informal food practices observed by diasporic Palestinians, all of which hold significant mnemonic value. These practices are underlined by various commemorative or memory-based routines that shape how “Palestinian” food should be prepared, eaten, and perceived, and how it shapes the respondents’ view of what it means to be Palestinian.

The first part of this chapter analyzes the mnemonics of food preparation and consumption on various levels. It examines standard conceptions of memory, including three types of memory that occur during regular cognition: semantic, procedural, and episodic memory. These experiences can be activated, whether consciously or unconsciously, during the sensory experiences of a dish’s preparation and consumption, all of which inform an individual’s embodied food memories. In sum, the lived, sensory experiences of cooking and eating a dish contributes to the repertoire of knowledge that informs the semantics and procedures of regional cuisine.

Changes in culinary practices and memory take shape in ways that closely resemble modern documentation and cooking practices found in Western cuisines. In these contexts, standardized cuisine relies on documentation, with written works acting as points of reference and comparison for future meals. However, the availability of printing systematically affects which recipes are transmitted and

which are forgotten,⁵⁵⁸ as well as how these dishes are perceived and understood by readers. This raises questions about the consequences of documenting what was originally only remembered. Does documentation encourage us to forget, or does it restructure what is already remembered? Does it filter out knowledge that can only be retained through embodied memory?

Expanding on this knowledge, I delve into the intersections of these types of memories during recipe production, documentation, sharing, and consumption. The emergence of memory in the kitchen does not follow a clear-cut form; these intersections are just as messy as the act of cooking itself. Through this chapter, I seek to demonstrate the complexities of this process. I begin by exploring the mnemonics of food production, examining the sensory experiences of cooking and eating, and how the memory of food changes across time, space, and medium of documentation.

I then move away from the production of meals to focus on the Palestinian consumption practices in the diaspora. Specifically, I examine how social meal settings serve as mnemonic landscapes for preserving and exchanging memories. Through exploring the everyday contexts in which food is prepared and consumed in diasporic Palestinian families, I highlight the role of food in daily routines, as well as long-term rhythms represented by religious holidays and family celebrations. I also investigated how food and memory intersect in the context of religious commemorations, such as Eid, and less formal, but still unique occasions of overseas visitations by interviewees to family members in other parts of the diaspora.

Food memories are not solely concerned with the tastes and aromas but with people, hospitality, trust, reciprocity, and emotional intimacy.⁵⁵⁹ For this reason, I also argue that embodied food memories originate in contexts beyond the individual, shaped by our everyday interactions with others. In the remainder of this chapter, I extend my analysis to explore how the mnemonics of cooking contribute

⁵⁵⁸ Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁵⁵⁹ Gail Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality*, (New York City, New York: Routledge, 1999).

to social identity, memory, and community-building, both within the family and wider social culture. This includes a theoretical framework on anthropological perspectives on food and eating, as well as the social functions of food in memory work and community building. Furthermore, I examine how Palestinian meals are shared by members of the diaspora with their surrounding communities, focusing on the role of food and cooking when creating new social connections in unfamiliar settings. In analyzing food memory, I aim to provide a sense of poly-temporal consciousness, shedding light on one of the many ways through which one satisfies their longing for home, senses their identity through the recollection of embodied experiences, and expresses these experiences through oral and written forms. For Palestinian families, sharing meals and cuisine serves as a means of connecting with their neighbors, in some cases as a sense of livelihood, and a way to celebrate their culture in environments where it once did not exist.

Embodied Food Memories and Social Tradition

Embodied food memories are a complex and nuanced form of memory that is deeply tied to our sensory experiences.⁵⁶⁰ These memories refer to how sensory experiences that occur during cooking and eating become integrated with our bodily experiences and are recalled through bodily sensations.⁵⁶¹ They include not only the taste and aroma of food, but also the physical sensations that take place during eating, such as the texture, temperature, and feeling of food. Proust's theories center on the embodiment of memory, positing that taste and smell possess the ability to conjure vivid recollections of past experiences. In his text, *In Search of Lost Time (A la recherche du temps perdu)*, he delves into his discussion of sensorial perception and memory.⁵⁶² He argues that certain flavors and fragrances hold the power to transport individuals to specific points in their lives, bringing back to life dormant emotions and sensations. When combined, these sensory experiences within the body produce a deeply rich form of memory that

⁵⁶⁰ Andrew D. Wilson and Sabrina Golonka, "Embodied Cognition Is Not What You Think It Is," *Frontiers in Psychology* 4, no. 58 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00058>.

⁵⁶¹ David Evan Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts : An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2006).

⁵⁶² Marcel Proust, William C Carter, and C K Scott-Moncrieff, *In Search of Lost Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

can be triggered both consciously and subconsciously by different cues in the environment. Embodied food memories can be associated with personal and familial narratives, cultural and social identities, and emotional contexts, making them a powerful means of shaping our understanding of the world in which we live.⁵⁶³

To fully explore the nuances of these memories, alongside their emotional significance, they need to be analyzed through what Abarca and Colby identify as a holistic culinary approach.⁵⁶⁴ This approach connects food to memory in a way that also incorporates personal and familial narratives, each of which fuels cultural and social identities. The sensorial and emotional ties to food facilitate mnemonic mechanisms, which we embody as experiences. We then archive these experiences, using them to shape our understanding of the world in which we live. Narratives, the stories we tell ourselves and to others, allow us to further contextualize and interpret food-based memories.

Shared meals play a critical role in creating embodied memories. The emotional environment in which food is consumed can play a significant role in how embodied food memories are created and stored. For example, a study by Herz and colleagues found that participants who consumed a new food in a positive emotional environment (such as while watching a funny video), showed a better ability to recall the food's taste, texture, and smell than those who consumed food in a negative emotional environment (for example, watching a sad video).⁵⁶⁵

Shared meals also create embodied memories through their connection to cultural and familial traditions. The consumption of specific foods and meals can be closely tied to cultural identity and familial heritage and can serve as a powerful means of transmitting cultural knowledge and values across generations.⁵⁶⁶ The act of

⁵⁶³ Meredith E. Abarca and Joshua R. Colby, "Food Memories Seasoning the Narratives of Our Lives," *Food and Foodways* 24, no. 1-2 (April 2, 2016): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.2016.1150101>.

⁵⁶⁴ Meredith Abarca, "Culinary Encounters in Latino/a Literature," in *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*, ed. Suzanne Bost and Francis Aparicio (New York: Routledge, 2012), 251–60.

⁵⁶⁵ Rachel S Herz et al., "Neuroimaging Evidence for the Emotional Potency of Odor-Evoked Memory," *Neuropsychologia* 42, no. 3 (January 2004): 371–78, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2003.08.009>.

⁵⁶⁶ Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*. (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

cooking and eating with a friend or loved one can elicit positive memories, such as comfort and warmth, and promote nostalgia in instances when that warmth is sought after. In doing so, it can enhance the sensory experience of the food itself. The relative deprivation in the present-day absence of positive food experiences, when juxtaposed, and oftentimes rather nostalgically, against memories of past communal meals, elicits a sense of longing and dissatisfaction with the present for which individuals strive to compensate.⁵⁶⁷

What makes the everyday contexts of food – its smells, tastes, and textures – particularly interesting, is the extent to which embodied memories of warmth and comfort act as a point of production for culturally-specific memories, which inform our social identities. Giard found that everyday eating makes “concrete one of the specific modes of relation between a person and the world, thus forming one of the fundamental landmarks in space-time.”⁵⁶⁸ In Powles’ work, collective memories of displacement amongst Zambian refugees allow them to develop socially constructed identities, particularly through the shared bodily experiences of not eating fish and the associated nostalgia for traditional cuisine.⁵⁶⁹ When interviewing Iranian immigrants in Britain, Harbottle found that certain individuals practiced food selectivity, on the grounds of themes such as pollution, purity, and ethnicity. Participants regarded the mouth as “a gateway through which a person guards and protects the self from the outside,” and structured eating habits around this belief.⁵⁷⁰ Across contexts, food, particularly those consumed daily, becomes a core factor in one’s lived experiences and sense of daily narrative; in turn, it connects the one to the many through the shared experiences of everyday consumption.

Embodied food memories are an integral part of our lives, and they have the power to shape how we understand ourselves, our cultures, and our histories. By exploring these memories, we can gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and

⁵⁶⁷ Strand, “Food and Trauma.”

⁵⁶⁸ Luce Giard, Michael de Certeau, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2, Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1998), 183.

⁵⁶⁹ Julia Powles, “Like baby minnows we came with the current”: social memory among Angolan refugees in Meheba settlement, Zambia,” *Annual Meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Great Britain and the Commonwealth*, Arusha, Tanzania.

⁵⁷⁰ Lynn Harbottle, “Taste and Embodiment: The Food Preferences of Iranians in Britain,” in *Food Preferences and Taste*, ed. Helen Macbeth (Providence, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, 1997), 175–85.

our world, and we can use this understanding to create new experiences and memories that are equally rich and meaningful. As such, it is important that we pay attention to how food and memory are intertwined, and that we actively work to preserve and transmit the knowledge and experiences that are embodied through our food.

Cuisine as a Baseline of Social Identity

What defines cuisine? At its core, cuisine is a set of rituals performed around food, imbued with symbolic meaning. It encompasses the methods, techniques, ingredients, and cultural practices related to food preparation and consumption, and it informs social identity.⁵⁷¹ Traditional foods, organized under the scheme of cuisine, create a shared mnemonic link to past meals,⁵⁷² connecting individuals with their cultural heritage and acting as an important means of maintaining a family's social identity. At the same time, they allow individuals to create and express their definitions of social identities and beliefs, and they can be used to express identity and belief.⁵⁷³

Cuisines evolve and change over time, influenced by migration and the fusion of different ingredients, techniques, and expressions of heritage, memory, and social identity. American cuisine, for example, has historically been associated with starchy, meat-heavy dishes without the use of strong spices like hot peppers or garlic, resembling the meals consumed by British America's earliest ruling class.⁵⁷⁴ However, the diverse demographic of those living within the United States has led to the mixing and experimentation of cultural traditions, challenging previous conceptions of what is considered an authentically American dish and who has a say in identifying certain foods as authentic.⁵⁷⁵ These mixed "smorgasbords" of

⁵⁷¹ Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (January 1988): 3–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500015024>.

⁵⁷² Claude Fischler, "Food, Self, and Identity," *Social Science Information* 27, no. 2 (1988): 275–92, <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1989-15166-001>.

⁵⁷³ Laura B. DeLind and Philip H. Howard, "Safe at Any Scale? Food Scares, Food Regulation, and Scaled Alternatives," *Agriculture and Human Values* 25, no. 3 (January 16, 2008): 301–17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-007-9112-y>.

⁵⁷⁴ Warren James Belasco, *Food: The Key Concepts* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

⁵⁷⁵ Krishnendu Ray, *The Ethnic Restaurateur* (London ; New York, Ny: Bloomsbury Academic, An Imprint Of Bloomsbury Publishing, Plc, Cop, 2016).

cuisine fusions are scarcely a new concept in the history of human consumption practices;⁵⁷⁶ in this case, American cuisine demonstrates the extensiveness of fluidity that underscores the creation and recreation of a dish, its agreed authenticity, and the people it represents.

Shared meals are a crucial component of social life, connecting us to previous moments in the past and producing a sense of stability and continuity between family members.⁵⁷⁷ They link family members together through a shared understanding of consumption practices, creating a sense of eating properly and by the customs of a certain social identity.⁵⁷⁸ Take, for example, the Indian practice of cooking and sharing meals with family and friends on Diwali, the festival of lights. Sharing traditional meals and other festival activities, each embedded in a narrative that explains its origins, allows members to express representations of their social identities that elicit happiness, joy, and pride and reinforces the culture's value of family and communal relationships.⁵⁷⁹ Meal rituals are key to these practices, imbuing them with mnemonic and social meanings.⁵⁸⁰ They are repeated precisely, with little room for deviation and emphasis on preservation, creating a sense of muscle memory or procedural memory.

Recent research, however, argues that ritual is much more fluid than previously understood. While some practices possess a certain pervasiveness in style and affect,⁵⁸¹ others incorporate improvisational elements.⁵⁸² Oftentimes, the intimate

⁵⁷⁶ Donna R. Gabaccia, "Global Geography of 'Little Italy': Italian Neighbourhoods in Comparative Perspective," *Modern Italy* 11, no. 1 (February 2006): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13532940500489510>.

⁵⁷⁷ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁵⁷⁸ Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*. (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 2002); Michael S. Carolan, *Embodied Food Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁵⁷⁹ Trudie Walters and Thamarai Selvi Venkatachalam, "The Difference Diwali Makes: Understanding the Contribution of a Cultural Event to Subjective Well-Being for Ethnic Minority Communities," *Event Management* 26, no. 1 (2021): 141–55, <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599521x16192004803665>.

⁵⁸⁰ Strand, "Food and Trauma."

⁵⁸¹ Neni PaRafalgiá, *Fragments of Death, Fables of Identity: An Athenian Anthropography* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); C. Nadia Seremetakis, *The Last Word* (University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁵⁸² Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents : Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1993); David Parkin, "Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division," in *Understanding Rituals* (Routledge, 2002), 11–25.

and meaningful aspects of the day-to-day are just as important as the grand gestures associated with cultural or religious formality.⁵⁸³ Through this, rituals retain their sentimental value without the “loud”⁵⁸⁴ exhibitionism generally associated with cultural or religious formality. Put simply, mundanity and formality are not mutually exclusive, and they both play important roles in shaping the meaning and identity of cuisine.⁵⁸⁵ Understanding this is especially important when contextualizing food practices and memory in everyday contexts, as this grey area is a point of analysis identified by Cole⁵⁸⁶ as relatively underdeveloped in memory studies.

Everyday Rituals and Meals

For the testimonies that follow, the importance of considering the mnemonics of everyday cooking practices is clear. Everyday experiences, such as those described within the stories that follow possess the power to evoke the memories on which identities are formed and act as a key point in which cooking and memory come together. The practicalities of everyday activities should not be underestimated in their symbolic, and even ritualistic, value. It is not uncommon for the lines between the everyday and ritual to blur; oftentimes, they mutually reinforce one another, especially when activating food-related memories. In this section, I will introduce my interview materials from Palestinians as a background, to give a taste of the foods consumed by Palestinians in the diaspora, while providing some initial suggestions on the importance of food stories to be developed in the remainder of the chapter.

Certain recipes are weekly, even daily, favorites among individuals and families. Each family had their interpretation of a dish, which was subject to further improvisation upon individual preference. The memories these meals evoked are steeped in decades past, bringing forth feelings of comfort and home, and, at times, carrying the sentiments of childhood. Simplicity is a valued trait for meals in

⁵⁸³ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Modernity and Its Malcontents*.

⁵⁸⁴ Parkin, “Ritual as Spatial Direction and Bodily Division.”

⁵⁸⁵ Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” in *Myth, Symbol, and Culture*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Norton, 1971), 61–82.

⁵⁸⁶ Jennifer Cole, “The Work of Memory in Madagascar,” *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 4 (November 1998): 611, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1998.25.4.610>.

these contexts, and each dish is an invitation to participate in an act that reminds them of the very essence of Palestinian culture. As Rafal notes, “The simplest things really matter at the end of the day.” She later goes on to claim that “poor food is the best food,” further highlighting the emphasis on accessibility, cost, and simplicity as key factors in a comforting daily meal. Interestingly enough, another of Taylor’s favorite dishes is labeled just that:

One recipe that I still really enjoy cooking, which is fairly simple, is *bamya*. The closest thing I can compare *bamya* to is gumbo. Everybody has a different recipe for it, right? I’ve had different types of *bamya* that are nothing alike. It’s often called ‘poor man’s food,’ because you throw in anything you’ve got. My mom’s side of the family has a different recipe than my dad’s side. My recipe comes from a mixture of the two. It’s a heavy tomato base with ground beef. I’ve put lamb in it before. The biggest part that makes *bamya* what it is, the one thing that remains consistent, is okra. Okra is a huge Palestinian staple. That’s what I love to cook the most.

Taylor’s description of *bamya* reveals several noteworthy traits. Taylor views the dish as “poor man’s food,” a label that reflects its affordability, particularly when prepared without meat. This recognition of a colloquial title to the dish demonstrates his familiarity with it, as well as to the extent that it represents Palestinian cuisine and culture. Additionally, when Taylor compares *bamya* to the Creole dish gumbo, he also showcases his awareness of American cuisine, undoubtedly the product of his upbringing in and familiarity with both cultures. Comparisons like these are quite common for those living in the diaspora, as they draw on local resources and adapt their traditions to create hybrid forms of cultural expression.⁵⁸⁷ Furthermore, Taylor acknowledges that experimentation and hybridity are common features of *bamya*, as different family members prepare it with ingredients shaped by their unique preferences and needs. Taylor’s version, which blends culinary elements from both sides of his family, further highlights this. However, he also acknowledges that some ingredients, such as okra, are essential to maintaining the dish’s integrity.

⁵⁸⁷ James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–38, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656365>.

As seen in Taylor's statement, in everyday life in the diaspora, simple meals have become a staple of Palestinian cuisine, providing a source of comfort for everyone. These meals are characterized by basic ingredients readily available at local markets, with recipes reproducible outside the Middle East. University students, who comprise a significant portion of those interviewed, place great emphasis on the low cost and easy accessibility of ingredients, favoring them for their simplicity. As Rafal states, "bread, yogurt, olives, are all just so simple and beautiful," and can easily be enjoyed on a Friday lunch. In his interview, Habib also highlights the importance of certain Palestinian staples, such as *za'atar* and extra virgin olive oil, which he always keeps at hand. Despite their simplicity, these basic meals hold a special place in the diaspora, as outlined in the stories that follow, as they provide comfort and evoke a sense of home.

The act of creating certain, everyday dishes is not just motivated by food needs, but also by a desire to connect with social memories that were often centered around these dishes. The kitchen and dinner table are spaces viewed as sites for the transmission of generations' worth of recipes, as well as for the passing down of family, personal, and collective histories. Younger generations often turned to their elders for recipes that reminded them of home or childhood and would frequently assist them in the kitchen as they cooked. The process of cooking and eating together allowed Palestinian families to bond and share experiences over the dinner table. It is also a way for them to maintain a sense of Palestinian social identity while living in the diaspora. By engaging in the routine task of meal preparation and consumption, older generations could share stories with younger audiences and all can engage in conversation about the day's events. Take, for example, a statement shared by Habib:

There's a story of my mom visiting Gaza, that's where she's from. They have this house where there was a tree in the middle of the courtyard. Lemon trees were popular in Gaza. She would be under the tree, picking up lemons, slicing them, then just eating them raw [laughs], just for fun. I think she was six at that point, or five. Stories about them gathering for food, even if it's not that special. Just any other day. It doesn't have to be Eid or Ramadan. It's just gatherings.

In examining Habib's statement, it is evident that his discussion of food memories centers around various moments in time that his mother shared with him. These

moments are representative of the simplicity that was previously described as an aesthetic of daily cuisine in the diaspora. For instance, memories of plucking lemons from a tree during childhood, or casual family gatherings outside of the more demonstrative and ritualistic events of Eid or Ramadan. Habib appears to cherish these memories, as evidenced by his demeanor and laughter, even though he did not personally experience them. This speaks to his ability to inherit nostalgic food-related memories, which he incorporates into his repertoire of Palestinian cuisine. These memories are characterized by specific food items and the experiences of eating them, which he associates positively.

In reflecting upon the role of cooking and food practices, it becomes evident that they are central to the formation for the formation of Palestinian identity in the diaspora. The sensory experience of food and its preparation invokes memories and emotions that have been passed down through generations, and the simplicity of meals in these contexts is particularly noteworthy. The recipes themselves are not static but are subject to improvisation based on individual preferences, and certain dishes have become emblematic of Palestinian cuisine.

However, the act of creating these meals is not merely a means of sustenance but is also a way for families to connect with their cultural heritage and social memories. Social meals are spaces imbued with significance, as they facilitate the transmission of generations' worth of recipes, as well as for the passing down of family, personal, and collective histories. Through engaging in the routine task of meal preparation and consumption, Palestinian families in the diaspora can maintain a sense of social identity and share stories with younger generations. This generational exchange is essential to the preservation and celebration of Palestinian cultural traditions and is a means of creating a sense of belonging in an often disorienting and diasporic context.

Remembering Meals and Forming Social Identities

Discussing recipes with my interviewees never prompted a note card or recipe book, but rather was pulled from memory, and done on the spot. Two types of memory accounts emerged from this portion of the interviews. Some interviewees discussed general information about foods and flavors thought to be involved in

Palestinian cuisine, possibly relying on semantic memory or generic food knowledge.⁵⁸⁸ These individuals tended to combine single identifications of dishes and ingredients, recalled primarily with little detail, into a schema of Palestinian cuisine, and with no specific episodes of personal consumption remembered. This was most often the case when referring to the eating habits of family members that fit into the category of “eating like a Palestinian,” which relied on the semantic knowledge of ingredients and dishes as communicated to them by family members.

When describing Palestinian cooking procedures to me, I heard about the preparation of dishes such as *makloubah*, *dawali*, and *mansaf*, which often involve complex layering processes and/or assembly techniques that require extensive practice and skill. These techniques were observed and performed on the spot, with respondents gaining hands-on experience on how to roll grape leaves or cook meat and rice. Additionally, many Palestinian dishes rely on the use of specific ingredients, spices, and flavor combinations that are characteristic of those used when they previously lived in Palestine or other countries in the Middle East. How interviewees select and prepare these ingredients often involves specific techniques and procedures that they store within their procedural memory. For example, preparing za’atar involves preparing ingredients in a certain order, which requires practice to execute properly. Palestinian cooking also relies on the use of specialized tools and equipment, designed out of the materials and demands found back in Palestine. Other interviewees recalled specific food-centered moments and experiences, characteristic of episodic memory.⁵⁸⁹ These interviewees recalled specific memories linked to schemas of food and the emotions involved, what they did after that experience and whether they ate the food again, as well as other events during which they ate the dish, further substantiating the personalized “Palestinian-ness” of the dishes and ingredients.. The second type of recall tended

⁵⁸⁸ Albert F. Smith, Jared B. Jobe, and David J. Mingay, “Retrieval from Memory of Dietary Information,” *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 5, no. 3 (May 1991): 269–96, <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.2350050308>.

⁵⁸⁹ Endel Tulving, *Elements of Episodic Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Endel Tulving, “What Is Episodic Memory?,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2, no. 3 (June 1993): 67–70, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.ep10770899>.

to be more elaborate in detail, referring to the smells, tastes, and appearances of foods experienced through direct consumption.

However, semantic and episodic memory combine when interviewees reported observing family members eat, or when they attempted to reproduce recipes previously prepared for them by family members. This is particularly the case when observing eating habits, such as eating with one's hands, and food preparation processes, such as dicing or peeling. When individuals could not rely on this repository of information, they defaulted to information told to them by family members to shape their responses. These findings resemble those found in a study conducted by Knibb et al., which concludes that, when specific episodes of food intolerance symptoms could not be recalled, interviewees tended to rely on their semantic knowledge about certain foods and their relevant physiological symptoms after consumption.⁵⁹⁰

In his interview, Mohammed shared a recipe introduced to him by his father's side of the family. Originally from Haifa, his grandparents fled their homes in 1948 as settlers encroached upon Palestinian villages. They spent years in a refugee camp in the West Bank, moving around various countries in the Middle East and Europe until they eventually settled in the United Arab Emirates. Mohammed moved to Britain to attend university over five years ago, where he continues to live while he builds his career. Coming from a lower economic background, his father's family learned to make filling meals using basic, affordable ingredients. Mohammed shared one of these recipes with me, an egg- and tomato-based dish he called *al-hilad kondura*. "It's like shakshuka almost," he said, "I learned how to make it when I was twelve. I don't think there's a week of my life where I go without eating it. It is so cheap. You need tomatoes, two eggs, olive oil, and a piece of garlic. That's all you need to make it." He learned the dish from his father around the age of twelve, and it was a frequent meal in his family. His father cooked the same dish for himself when he was a young man, at the beginning stages of his career:

⁵⁹⁰ R. C. Knibb et al., "Episodic and Semantic Memory in Accounts of Food Intolerance," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 13, no. 5 (October 1999): 451–64, [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(sici\)1099-0720\(199910\)13:5%3C451::aid-acp608%3E3.0.co;2-d](https://doi.org/10.1002/(sici)1099-0720(199910)13:5%3C451::aid-acp608%3E3.0.co;2-d).

My dad used to tell me stories about when he first started electrical engineering, where they would hang electrical wires out in the middle of the desert in Jordan. Every morning, they would bring out this massive gas stove. For the first three hours, and even though they should've been working, they'd sit, cut up tomatoes, make a sauce, crack eggs on top of it, and eat it.

After telling me how he learned this dish from his father, and what it means to him, he shared his father's recipe.: "First, you get tomatoes. My dad cuts them up in circles, but I don't believe in that. [Laughs] He likes to put them flat on the pan. Then, he cracks the eggs on top." He then explained how, and why, his method of cooking *al-hilad kondura* is different from his father's: "I stopped cooking my eggs and tomatoes together because I like them saucier. Once, I started making them, and at one point they started getting really saucy. I had the idea to poach the eggs in tomato sauce. Weird to think of that." The simplicity, accessibility, and low costs of the dish allow him to reproduce it which he often does while living in Britain., and for others aside from himself. "I make it for almost everyone I know at some point," he told me, "It plays such a big role in my life."

Mohammed's story demonstrates the intersections of memory, narratives, relationships, and identity that occur when performing an activity as mundane as cooking a simple breakfast dish. As mentioned before, Mohammed learned how to make *al-hilad kondura* from a young age. He learned the set of habits and skills related to this dish first by watching his father, then by recreating the dish himself. He also refined these skills over time, adjusting them to suit his personal preferences. The repeated practice of making this dish over the years allowed him to develop a procedural memory for it. This fact, plus the fact that he did not have to refer to a mnemonic device when explaining it in his interview, suggests that he has internalized this skill and can perform it at will. Additionally, Mohammed's description of the recipe and the different methods of cooking demonstrates his flexibility when remembering and deciding how this dish should be prepared. By accommodating his methods to meet his own needs, he modifies and refines his skillset in the kitchen, and expands upon the notion of appropriate cooking methods vis-à-vis desired outcomes. That same flexibility is applied to his semantic memory. The consistent identification of the two dishes as *al-hilad kondura*, despite their differing outcomes, demonstrates Mohammed's general schematization of the

dish. Rather than adhering to a rigid identification of this recipe, defined by a strict set of ingredients and techniques, Mohammed incorporates improvisational aspects into his definitions. By changing elements, yet keeping the original label, he creates a network of association between concepts. So, in this instance, to create Palestinian *al-hilad kondura* means to cook eggs, garlic, olive oil, and tomatoes together in a frying pan. This remains consistent despite who cooks it, or how it looks on the plate.

In addition to the semantic and procedural knowledge of the dish, it is clear that memories related to *al-hilad kondura* are deeply rooted in Mohammed's sensory and embodied experiences. In this instance, the dish has the power to evoke both lived and inherited memories episodic memories. These memories shape the way Mohammed experiences his food, therefore shaping his relationship with it. The fact that the dish is described by Mohammed as playing a "big role in his life" suggests that he identifies closely with it. Given that his father taught the recipe to him, it suggests that he also identifies with the conditions that inspired its creation. Keep in mind the age and life circumstances experienced by both Mohammed and his father at the time when they consistently made these meals for themselves. According to Mohammed, both men most frequently cooked this dish in their early twenties, during the budding stages of their careers. The similar life circumstances connect these individuals, giving a sense of narrative continuity between father and son. When Mohammed cooks and eats *al-hilad kondura*, he remembers that his father ate the same food at the same place in life. Mohammed's move to Britain for university represents a continuation of a wider process of migration in his family, one that began generations before, as its members established new lives and build careers in new places. He also supports the memories he inherited with his own, lived experiences of observing and/or cooking alongside his father during his youth. The fact that Mohammed learned how to make it at a young age and still eats it regularly suggests this meal has been a continuous staple in his own life. The repeated exposure to the dish, when coupled with meaningful memories, made this dish a known point of return whenever Mohammed looked for comfort or Refreshment.

The continued production of *al-hilad kondura* across generations reflects cultural continuity even in new contexts. By sharing the recipe and how he adapted it, Mohammed shares his participation and identification with this culinary tradition, one that is part of his both familial identity and his identity as a Palestinian. By claiming that he follows his Palestinian father in preparing and eating this dish, he includes himself in the category of people who know how to cook and consume Palestinian cuisine. At the same time, Mohammed situates his dish at a point of comparison from his father's, suggesting an evolution in thought when imagining authentically Palestinian dishes. Fundamentally, the two dishes are virtually the same, with both containing a base of tomatoes, which are cooked first, then topped with cracked eggs and further sauteed. However, they are different in texture and structure as well, demonstrating a change in the recipe, one that is based on the personal preferences of the cook. The transition between the original dish, which has more consistency and structure, to the second, which is saucier in texture, is representative of how diasporic culture evolves during migration, and as they adjust their methods to meet the demands of the present. While Mohammed acknowledges that his version of *al-hilad kondura* is indeed different from his father's original recipe, he does not question the authenticity of his evolved dish. In fact, his claim of improving the dish per his preferences suggests that he feels proud of his culinary abilities and his approach to cooking this dish in a way that builds upon previous knowledge. By continuing to label it as *al-hilad kondura*, despite its differences, it demonstrates how culinary practices can be passed down through generations and adapted to new contexts, while still retaining their cultural significance. The fact that Mohammed cooks this recipe often, and for others, not only further demonstrates his confidence in his new dish, but hints at how he engages in a process of re-rooting, in which he establishes new cultural and social networks while living in Britain. This is quite common for members of a diaspora⁵⁹¹ and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

As Mohammed shared his story, he shows how his recipe is more than a series of ingredients and recipes performed ritualistically. Rather, it is the sum of

⁵⁹¹ James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–38, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656365>.

observation, practice, and personal narrative, carefully crafted to meet the cook's needs and preferences. Memories, both lived, and inherited, shape his expectations of how the dish should look, smell, and taste. *Al-hilad kondura* was a passport to his past, linking him to the world he left behind upon moving to the United Kingdom, as well as the world experienced by his father in the deserts of Jordan. Through this dish, he relives the memories of home, and he shares that part of himself with others each time he prepares it for them. Through this simple culinary experience, he found a way to connect his family's past to his present life, as well as between his Palestinian identity and his transnational existence.

We can see similar concepts in the stories shared by other interviewees as well. Like Mohammed, Walid's story is an intricate one, woven together by threads of heritage, memory, and identity. Walid was raised by a mother whose family originated from Jaffa; Lebanon was her place of birth, but the family later moved to the United States during the tumultuous backdrop of the Lebanese Civil War. They settled in Southern California, and it was here that Walid's mother spent most of her life, leaving only when she married Walid's father. However, the experience of being Palestinian in the United States was far from easy for them. The identity of Walid's mother oscillated between Palestinian, Lebanese, and American, and consequentially, Walid finds it hard to remain tethered to a single identity. Sometimes, he feels Lebanese, other times Palestinian.

It was through his mother's cooking that he embodied Palestinian identity as if it were an unspoken inheritance. "The cuisine you eat at home informs you are in so many ways," he said, reminiscing about the dishes of his youth. For Walid, the kitchen was a place of learning, where he sat with his mother day after day, observing how she prepared meals. *Waraq anab*, or grapevine leaves, took a great deal of patience and time to prepare, and so they sat together, "rolling, and rolling, and rolling." As he grew older, he tried to help more, but he feels that his attempts were never quite good enough: "I was not very good. I'm still not very good." Still, the lessons he learned in the kitchen remain with him, a testament to the power of food and its ability to shape his identity. For Walid, his identity as a Palestinian is embedded in the art of cooking and preparing meals, which he inherited through his mother's kitchen.

Reminiscing fondly on the memories of preparing and sharing meals with his mother, he admits to the extent to which his food memories connect him to his family as much as they do his Palestinian heritage and social identity. He further elucidated this concept as he transitioned into a story about his grandfather's love for *ka'ek medasi*, a type of bread from the Old City in Jerusalem. Walid's paternal grandfather is from Jerusalem, close to the Old City. At twenty-three years old, he left Palestine in 1948 with his family, whom all sought to flee the violence of al-Nakba.

As a young man, he hopped from country to country, finding work in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and finally the United Arab Emirates. Walid's grandfather descended from a wealthy family, who lost their riches during the British Mandate. The grandfather was a gifted student, and though his family could no longer afford to send him to school, his teachers allowed him to join anyways. One day, during a bout of reminiscing, Walid's grandfather regaled him with a story about *ka'ek medasi* and *falafel*, a dish he synonymized with both his childhood and his family's abrupt run-in with poverty:

There's a particular type of bread they make in Jerusalem. It's famous for being from Jerusalem. It's called *ka'ek medasi*. He told me a story about *ka'ek* and *falafel*, how the school had this fancy cafeteria, but all he ever wanted to eat was *ka'ek* and *falafel*. He couldn't even afford to do that. It's interesting, when I went to Palestine, the one thing he asked me to bring back was *ka'ek*. So, I did. Both times I went, I brought back for him *ka'ek*. Then we found, in my hometown, a small bakery that makes Jerusalem-style *ka'ek*. After that, every couple of weeks, we'd bring him some cake from the bakery.

We often thought that he just wanted the *ka'ek* because it's from Jerusalem. It's something he liked to have as a child. We recently discovered that, actually, he likes *ka'ek* because he couldn't have it when he was a child. He couldn't afford it. So, whenever he could sneak a few dinars, he would go and buy *ka'ek* and have it with *falafel*, even though his school cafeteria had a lot more food because the school catered towards rich families and the children of British officials.

Here we have a story shared by Walid, where his memories hover between differing points in time, and where the individual merges with the collective. The stories of his family and his own are intertwined in this narrative, just like those

seen throughout this chapter. In this recount, Walid dives into his grandfather's past to make decisions in his present life. Through his memories of his grandfather's love for certain foods, which he inherited from his grandfather's autobiographical storytelling, he sought out ways to connect with his grandfather and create memorable moments. He hoped that, by traveling to the Old City in Jerusalem and fetching his grandfather *ka'ek*, he also provided him with a joyful and nostalgic experience, one with the power to transport him to his childhood memories. When Walid discovered the true meaning behind his grandfather's sentiment for *ka'ek*, that it symbolized what was denied to him during his youth, the meal took on a whole new level of significance. In a way, it became a symbol of what was taken from his grandfather, and what was denied to both him and Walid throughout their lives in the diaspora. We can see an instance of postmemory, not one associated with the trauma of al-Nakba, but that of poverty, and, to an extent, feelings of social and economic exclusion during the British Occupation. In this sense, the memories belonging to Walid's grandfather are not only his own but also part of a larger collective memory of Palestinian displacement and loss. Walid's act of bringing back *ka'ek* from Jerusalem, and later from the bakery in his neighborhood, represent his way of connecting with this collective memory and as previously mentioned with the instance of rolling grape leaves with his mother, of reaffirming his own Palestinian identity. At the same time, it creates a space for Walid to honor his grandfather's memory.

As the interview progressed, Walid further shared instances of when he blurs the lines between the past and the present through the recreation of food-based rituals, which he practices while traveling and living away from his family. Born in 1993 in Dubai, he lived there until the age of seventeen, then embarked on a journey that took him around the world. His first stop was in the South of England, where he stayed for three years before venturing to Pakistan. It was a brief visit, lasting only one year before he returned to England to complete a master's degree program. Afterward, he returned to the UAE, where his family had relocated to Dubai. Walid spent three years with them before finding himself back in England, where he currently resides while pursuing his Ph.D.

As previously stated, Walid's identity is torn between worlds, a common trait inherited from his family, and accentuated by his memories of migration. Amid his inner conflicts, he finds solace in the ritualistic act of coffee drinking, which brings feelings of comfort and continuity:

I sip and I have my coffee. This, to me, feels more like a ritual than wearing a *kufiyah*, even though this is just me on my own, whereas a *kufiyah* is in public. Coffee always reminds me of my grandfather, and my grandfather's siblings, who are very insistent on having at least three or four cups of coffee when you sit with them. So, when I make my morning coffee, this is the size of my *rakwa*. I don't make the whole thing. I make half of it, so that's three cups. Most people would just make one, but I make three because it just reminds me of how we would sit together and drink three cups together. I take my coffee black, the way it should be.

In his daily routine, Walid partakes in a ritual that is socially themed, even when he practices it alone. The act of drinking coffee, for Walid, provides a sense of connection to his social identity as a Palestinian. Despite its subtlety and mundanity, he sees this ritualistic expression of his identity as more significant than more demonstrative and flamboyant forms of expression, such as wearing a *kufiyah*. For Walid, the practicalities of everyday activities hold great symbolic and ritualistic value, blurring the lines between the everyday and the ritual. This is especially true when it comes to activating his food-related memories. In the diaspora, Walid's daily coffee consumption is an opportunity for him to display his knowledge of and connection to his traditional culture, reinforcing the value of ritual in everyday life. Second, the act of drinking coffee connected him to his family in a way that spanned generations and had been passed down through the ages. Drinking coffee in this way allowed him to participate in an unwavering consumption practice that connected him to his family's heritage and history. Despite living in England, where he accesses local coffee and coffee makers with more ease, he refuses to let go of his and his family's cultural practices. He continues to drink coffee from his *rakwa*, a tradition that had been passed down to him by generations before him. It was through this simple act that he demonstrates his loyalty to his culture and connects himself to his family and wider cultural heritage. Third, much like preparing *waraq anab* reminds Walid of time spent with his mother, drinking coffee prepared by a *rakwa* reminds him of the fond memories

and sense of belonging that came with drinking coffee with his grandfather and extended family. As he remarks, “most people would just make one...” but for him, the act of drinking three cups of coffee acts as a daily, grounding ritual for him because it recreates the experience of sitting with his family and sharing the ritual of drinking coffee together.

At the same time, his experience contributed to the repertoire of knowledge that shapes Walid’s understanding of Palestinian cuisine. Unlike Mohammed, Walid’s conceptions of cuisine appear more stagnant, as is the case with *waraq anab*, a dish subject to repetition, as if to suggest or create a sense of stability that connects the past and the present. The repetitive experience of rolling grape leaves next to his mother created familiarity, the equivalent of “the pleasure associated with familiar physical surroundings: the comfort of home, of a favorite chair.”⁵⁹² In this sense, while one example demonstrated more fluidity, the other more stagnant, they both are steeped in emotions of familiarity and comfort, which each person embraces and looks upon fondly. The dishes are associated with childhood, and with a family member’s love and presence, and therefore are regarded positively. This seems to be the case in a number of our examples, where dishes create a sense of what is known, the comfortable, through laboring over the familiar, the recipe for *al-hilad kondura* or *waraq anab* recognizable to anyone in the community.

Nostalgia Cookbooks

In my conversations with Shahed, she regaled me with the story of her family’s restaurant in Minnesota, where they have been serving Palestinian and Middle Eastern cuisines to the local community for decades. The foundation of many of the recipes on their menu was laid by her grandmother, who had amassed a wealth of knowledge about each cuisine throughout her life. However, Shahed was quick to point out the challenges they faced in documenting recipes for their restaurant to use consistently. “Arabs cook in a way that’s just like, oh, a little bit of

⁵⁹² Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig, “TALKING VOICES: REPETITION, DIALOGUE, and IMAGERY in CONVERSATIONAL DISCOURSE. Deborah Tannen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Pp. 240.” *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 13, no. 3 (September 1991): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263100010081..>

this, a little bit of that,” she told me, “I’m sure anyone who loves food, that’s how they cook. But, for a restaurant, you need specific increments.” Consequentially, Shahed’s sister recently took to spending extended periods with the grandmother, to capture the essentials of each recipe. This proves a challenging task, as Shahed notes, as Arabs do not write down their recipes, not even for their favorite dishes. Shahed states that her grandmother will prepare two different dishes and call them by the same name. She recreates each dish from memory and tweaks the ingredients each time she prepares recipes. “I’m like,” Shahed told me, “It looks completely different, it tastes completely different. [Laughs] She’s like, ‘No, I swear, I just added this, this, and this. I tried it in a different way.’”

Shahed’s story highlights a key aspect of the tension between embodied and written memory in cooking. The grandmother’s cooking style is steeped in a sense of intuition, in which she employs a great deal of creativity and imagination when recreating dishes. She did not and does not rely on exact measurements when learning how to cook or prepare dishes on her own. Instead, a mix of embodied semantic, procedural, and episodic memories inform her cooking, each serving as a reference point when recreating each dish. As a result, each dish is unique to the previous one. Shahed recognizes the differences in flavor, texture, and appearance, but her grandmother regards each dish as the same. This reflects the fact that cooking is not only about replicating a dish but also about consistent innovation and improvisation. Thus, the use of embodied memory in the recreation of a dish enables the continuity of tradition, while allowing for creativity and adaptation.

Shahed also highlighted the need to quantify recipes for documentation purposes, a departure from the free-flowing and imaginative processes of food creation practiced by earlier generations in her family. This shift has implications for how dishes are remembered and produced, potentially promoting forgetfulness by removing the necessity of embodied memory. It is a curious thought, that the rigidity of documented recipes could strip chefs of their agency. While embodied memory allows for creativity, experimentation, and improvisation, written recipes discourage deviation from their documented authenticity. The desire to document tradition is transforming the way this generation remembers and communicates

their culinary heritage, shifting from embodied memories to cookbooks and recipes. However, it remains to be seen if these written recipes build upon the basic knowledge already developed through practice.

How do the mnemonics of the Palestinian kitchen change when its cooks shift away from embodied cooking apprenticeship and towards the utilization of written cookbooks and recipes? Which knowledge, and which form of memory, remains? Written recipes tend to call for exact replication, which, at times, can hinder creativity and the improvisations that come hand-in-hand with everyday cooking processes. Rather than seeing recipes as part of a larger repertoire of flavors, ingredients, and methods, cookbooks risk isolating recipes as individual pieces of information, devoid of context or meaning.⁵⁹³ The series of steps outlined in recipes, intended to break down complex processes, risk one's ability to understand the overall processes relative to the dish, as well as the interrelationship between various ingredients and techniques. Warde indicates a broader trend in written recipes over a twenty-five-year period, in which the standards for cooking became more exact, placing a greater emphasis on precision, measurement, and calculation.⁵⁹⁴

At the same time, by documenting ingredients and techniques in an exact form, written recipes establish a baseline upon which experimentation and refinement can develop over time, even leading, in some instances, to the development of regional cuisines.⁵⁹⁵ There is no limit to the number of recipes that can be documented in written form, unlike those that are only remembered through oral tradition. Therefore, the degree of standardization and complexity in regional cuisine calls for the availability of cookbooks, as well as the ability of cooks to read and write. This works in contrast to the mnemonic processes and capacities natural to oral traditions passed intergenerationally, where techniques are acquired through observation rather than reading. However, because memory is limited and

⁵⁹³ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past : Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv1nhqp2>.

⁵⁹⁴ Alan Warde, *Consumption, Food and Taste* (SAGE, 1997).

⁵⁹⁵ Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

subject to incorrect recollection, many recipes are frequently forgotten.⁵⁹⁶ As more recipes are written down and shared, a cuisine becomes more complex and diverse, as it incorporates new ingredients and techniques from other regions and cultures.

As Palestinian cookbooks are a relatively new category of publication, their place in this debate remains uncertain and subject to speculation. In this section, I will look at recent self-reflexive, mass-produced 'nostalgia cookbooks'⁵⁹⁷ published in the United Kingdom and the United States by authors who identify as Palestinian, either by descent or geographic origin. As discussed previously, the embodied knowledge of recipes passed down in the kitchens of Palestinian families is usually done so orally, through conversation and storytelling, and unmediated by writing. Doing so provides space for imagination throughout the cooking process. In fact, oral transmission, recipe production, and retention are purely acts of imagination. One must rely on a repertoire of sensorial memories to imagine how a dish should look, taste, and smell, as well as the procedural memory of chopping, stirring, kneading, etc. In addition to this, the sensorial or 'embodied' memories of cooking, when done socially, are accompanied by the sharing of autobiographical and inherited narratives. For this reason, the Palestinian kitchen is never silent, and recipes are constructed socially. However, with the recent documentation of Palestinian cuisine, comes a transformation in how the knowledge is shared and comprehended – as seen in the cookbooks presented below.

On this note, the kitchen has long been recognized as a space for intergenerational transmission, a practice that allows younger generations to connect with their familial and cultural histories. Many people learn from their elders, often accompanying them in the kitchen as they cook. For instance, Ormondroyd describes learning to make borscht from her Russian-Jewish grandmother. This process involves more than just learning cooking techniques and tips; it is a slow, deliberate process that allows for the transmission of stories, memories, and even

⁵⁹⁶ Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2008): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083889>.

⁵⁹⁷ David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006), 142.

poems in Yiddish.⁵⁹⁸ These stories and memories are integral to her apprenticeship in the kitchen, which serves as a sight of cultural and familial inheritance. As such, interviewees in this study noted that many of their meals centered around the theme of “togetherness,” and that the associated memories were particularly special because they involved meaningful moments between the people involved. Meals that interviewees associated with other family members, especially those who had passed away or were held in high regard, had particular emotional salience and commemorative value. These recollections demonstrate the power of food to evoke and reinforce familial memories, a phenomenon that Jennifer Jordan has referred to as “edible memory.”⁵⁹⁹ This form of remembrance is highly individualized and intimate, yet it shapes and is shaped by the “social and material world,” propelling people into action. With this in mind, and despite the importance of recipes in the transmission of food knowledge, it seems plausible that written recipes do not facilitate the same depth of storytelling and connection as the oral transmission and lived practice of intergenerational recipes. Just as embodied memory can be forgotten, recipes can sometimes fail to capture the full complexity and richness of cultural and familial history.

In the cookbooks analyzed below, it seems that each author encounters the same paradox: they long for the oral community that facilitates the embodied and cultural knowledge upon which they reminisce yet communicate their longing and knowledge in perhaps their most commodified form: the mass-market cookbook. So, how do Palestinian cookbooks address this paradox? Those analyzed here fall into distinct categories, from books with short stories and a focus on ingredients and procedures to detailed testimonies, with recipes taking a side role in the narrative. The first type of book I outline resembles a standard cookbook, with certain sets of recipes arranged by course, and accompanied by added elements not found in generic cookbooks. *Palestine on a Plate*, by Joudi Kalla, contains the subtitle: “Memories from my mother’s kitchen.” As we will see, the themes throughout the book relate to memory and family, as is the case in other “ethnic”

⁵⁹⁸ Joan Ormondroyd, “A Beet Recipe,” in *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking*, ed. Arlene Voski Avakian (Boston: Beacon, 2005), 24–29.

⁵⁹⁹ Jennifer A. Jordan, *Edible Memory: The Lure of Heirloom Tomatoes & Other Forgotten Foods* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 2015).

and nostalgic cookbooks.⁶⁰⁰ She describes the recipes contained in her book as authentically Palestinian, justified by its historical use across generations within her family: “The food we ate was always traditionally Palestinian, exactly what my parents had enjoyed when they were children. As we grew up, the dishes stayed the same, the food bonded us and helped to create a real sense of family – a Palestinian family.”⁶⁰¹ She speaks to the importance of food for both her and her family, as it acts as a cultural and emotional touchstone for their individual and collective identities. Identifying herself and her family as a “Palestinian family” elevates the food they ate above that of personal taste. Rather, it was an integral part of their shared identities and cultural heritage to the same extent that it symbolized their belonging to the Palestinian community.

Kalla presents her recipes in a standard fashion for Western cookbooks, divided by meal courses, as well as by the main ingredients in each dish – grains, vegetable-based, lamb, chicken, fish, etc. She also explains her recipes in a typical format: a list of ingredients paired with thorough instructions. However, the book has two main additions. First, in addition to photographs of completed recipes, as is found in most cookbooks, there is a series of vibrantly colored photographs throughout the book, individually and in collages, each covering the size of a page and accompanied by descriptive captions. Each picture displays depictions of cultural life in Palestine: a shop merchant selling cucumbers; bags of spices and grains sold at market; a picture of Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock; a pastry chef holding a plate of *knaffeh*; older Palestinian women in their *thobes*, embroidered with *tatreez*.⁶⁰² These visual representations of Palestinian culture reinforce the claim by the author, that Palestinian cuisine, like its culture, is lively, dynamic, and to be celebrated:

I believe food should be visually beautiful, since you eat with your eyes first – and that is exactly what Palestinian food is. The next most important thing is the flavour, which should outshine the appearance, and I think this is where Palestinian food really comes into its own...

⁶⁰⁰ David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts : An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006).

⁶⁰¹ Joudie Kalla, *Palestine on a Plate: Memories from My Mother's Kitchen* (Jacqui Smal LLP, 2019), 7.

⁶⁰² To learn more about Palestinian embroidery, look to chapter three.

The images, stories and culture of Palestine are reflected in the food in this book.⁶⁰³

Kalla carries her message throughout the book, using it to contextualize the meanings she associates with each dish. She first does so through her six-page introduction, in which she discusses the origins of Palestinian history and cuisine. It is easy to see how this cookbook can be classified as nostalgic, in that it commemorates recipes that originated in an idealized past. Kalla's conception of the past is twofold; there is that of her past, as experienced with her family, but of her family's past and heritage as well, which looks back to life in Palestine before migration. As such, she contextualizes her dishes by explaining the emotional and mnemonic connection she and her family share with them, as well as with Palestinian cuisine as a whole:

Palestine is such a huge part of who I am and how I cook. Everything to me has a story, a feeling, a thought and a memory, and this is how I cook on a daily basis. I am governed by how I feel and what mood I am in. The same dish can be created from totally different feelings of nostalgia, happiness, homesickness and so many other emotions, but the reality is, the food always makes me feel at peace when I am eating.⁶⁰⁴

It is common for cookbooks to introduce their recipes; in doing so, they provide details about the ingredients used or the recipe's origin. Kalla's cookbook follows suit, giving such prefaces to each recipe, particularly in the manner and theme outlined in the quote above. Thus, a recipe for *warak inab ma' lahme wa kousa* (stuffed vine leaves) is prefaced by "My mother used to make this religiously when it was a birthday, Ramadan or Eid, so it holds an important place in our family's life."⁶⁰⁵ However, she also intertwines each recipe with an associated memory belonging either to herself or her family, as seen in her recipe for *shorabet djaj wa khudar* (chicken and vegetable soup): "My mother, and her mother before her, used to make this simple but delicious soup...Family traditions are very important to me and I make this exactly the way my mother did. When I'm poorly or simply missing her, this is one of my go-to dishes, which immediately makes me feel

⁶⁰³ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 128.

better.”⁶⁰⁶ In her view, the meals her mother prepared for her when she was ill constitute an act of love and a source of security, evoking embodied food memories associated with positive emotions. For Kalla, these meals function as mnemonic devices, allowing her to recall her familial culture and cuisine. This theme permeates her cookbook, which is characterized by a nostalgic longing for home, and a desire to spend time with her family and further understand and celebrate their culinary practices and cultural heritage.

Kalla draws an explicit link between herself and the other generations of cooks in her family who, in this instance, are normally women. Through this connection, she suggests that her dishes are timeless, which she regards as a testament to the enduring nature of her family’s culinary practices:

My grandmother Najla was born in Yaffa in Palestine and lived there until she met my grandfather Fouad and then moved to Al-Lydd. She has provided my whole family with some really wonderful memories, mainly around food and cooking, as that was what she spent most of her time doing. Her commitment and love to us all has inspired many a chef in our family. The dish is very typical of both Yaffa and Al-Lydd in Palestine and it has become very popular in Gaza, too. So this recipe is dedicated to all those areas where devoted families have continued the traditions that have been passed onto the lies of me, and hopefully now, to you.⁶⁰⁷

Through the act of sharing her family’s culinary histories, Kalla provides a poignant testimony to the centrality of cooking and food in her family’s life, as well as the profound cultural meaning embedded in each dish discussed. Her narrative also functions as a powerful tribute to earlier generations in her family, whose time-honored recipes were transmitted and sustained across generations in the kitchen. In this way, it becomes clear that Kalla’s connection to traditional Palestinian food transcends the geopolitical and national boundaries of Palestine. The site of Kalla’s sense of home is created by food memories that give her a distinct understanding of her sense of cultural and familial grounding. While Palestine and Palestinian identity hold significance for Kalla, it is clear that what truly distinguishes her family’s cuisine is not its national origin, but rather the personal and familial

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid, 207.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid, 91.

memories that are woven into each dish. This can be seen throughout her book, for example, in her anecdote about *Mana'eesh Za'atar* (Fluffy Za'atar Sesame Breakfast Bread):

These soft, doughy, pillowy wonders are eaten every single day in Palestine and try to make them whenever I can. It is such a comforting food that brings back memories of when my family were all together around the kitchen table picking which flavour of bread was our favourite. Mine is a combination of cheese and za'atar, but you can also make them with minced lamb and kishek...which is a very particular flavour. I made these a lot at my restaurant, Baity Kitchen, and they were a firm favourite with my local clients who were Middle Eastern and missing home – it gave me joy to see their faces.⁶⁰⁸ (65)

Kalla gives personal magnitude to this “traditional” Palestinian dish, one that embodies Kalla’s sense of home and the food memories she gathered throughout her life. Smith and Watson identify these types of narratives as *gastrography*: a “food memoir [that] incorporates food-laced memories that feed readers’ desire to redefine [themselves].”⁶⁰⁹ In each recipe, Kalla provides a descriptive and personal account of its cultural and emotional significance. In particular, *mana'eesh za'atar* evokes fond memories of family gatherings and the joy of picking and sharing food. These narrated memories of a blissful family life, which she claims were disrupted upon migration, are contrasted to the present time of the author’s life away from her family and their ancestral homeland. However, the tumultuous memories and history that usually characterize Palestinian postmemorial works cannot be found in *Palestine on a Plate*. While she describes herself and other Palestinians as “determined and eager to preserve our cuisine and our heritage,” she does not frame this attitude within the contexts of expulsion and forced migration. Rather, she describes her experiences, and thus, her cookbook, as an effort to rekindle an interest in a cultural heritage inevitably be lost upon migration, irrespective of her family’s reason for leaving Palestine. Kalla describes her connection with her cooking, as well as her investment in Palestinian recipes, as a way to participate in her cultural heritage, one she perceives as at risk of erasure against her current,

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid, 65.

⁶⁰⁹ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 149.

“westernized” lifestyle in Europe: “I also became aware of my westernized Arab friends. We were all far removed from our basic culture and background, despite having been so exposed to it during our adolescent years, but we all wanted to learn more about it.”⁶¹⁰

Kalla’s recipe book can be seen as a means of affirming her identity and connection to her heritage; at the same time, it boasts “authenticity,” which, given the steps taken to develop her familial cuisine, seems paradoxical. Without a doubt, cooking is a hybridized cultural activity, shaped by intersections as complicated as those that contextualize identity itself. Her family accumulated recipes throughout their lives – recipes built on experimentation, migration, and the employment of embodied memories to recreate imagined dishes. From this perspective, any notion of authenticity seems misconceived, not only because the word “authentic” hinges on middle-class fantasies of otherness found in cookbooks consumed in the Global North,⁶¹¹ but also because there is simply no such thing as a stagnant, essentialist kitchen. Despite her claim to cling to Palestinian cultural traditions, Kalla also incorporates recipes that she used in her day-to-day life in England. As such, her cookbook reflects the diversity of her cultural experiences upon migration just as much as they do her cultural heritage as a Palestinian. Like the memories Kalla outlines in her book, the way she represents Palestinian cuisine is not stagnant. She builds on a schema of a dish or cuisine, an imagining of how it should look and taste, based on recollections of past meals. However, her recollections are also subject to change, especially within contexts where exact reproduction is impossible. In some cases, the reasons behind variation are as simple as personal preference, “You can make this recipe with okra, but I prefer it with string beans – some countries, Lebanon in particular, use butter beans.”⁶¹² Just as much as new experiences are forged throughout life, brought upon by introducing oneself to new environments and stimuli, new meals are imagined, built both through memory and access to local ingredients.

⁶¹⁰ Mattias Strand, “Food and Trauma: Anthropologies of Memory and Postmemory,” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, April 4, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-022-09785-2>.

⁶¹¹ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*.

⁶¹² Kalla, *Palestine on a Plate*, 186.

In other parts of the book, she characterizes deviations from certain dishes as separate recipes. In her spiced lamb ribs, she states, “I made this dish by accident while trying to recreate something my mother had made. Sometimes memories can be so strong that they create wonderful recipes.”⁶¹³ This suggests a cross between embodied memory, imagination, and documentation in a way that blurs memories. Put simply, Kalla discovers a dish by attempting to recreate another. It adds to her schema of how a dish can simultaneously vary and remain within the same realm via flavor palette, for which she uses the embodied memory of her mother’s cooking to inform. At the same time, and through her imagination, she creates a different conception of the dish and, by extension, something entirely new. It is difficult to determine what differentiates her recipe from the one she attempted to recreate, for she omits the name of the original dish. Yet, in doing so, she replaces the recipe she sought to remember, leaving remnants of what the dish might have once been, tangible only through its main composition and selection of spices. In this sense, the documentation of the variation supersedes the embodied memory of the original dish.

We also find less explicit examples of this practice throughout Kalla’s book. In these instances, she creates new dishes, not as an attempt to recreate recipes from the past, but to make use of ingredients available in the present. For example, her Za’atar Chicken is a dish she created while running the restaurant, Baity Kitchen (Chicken Marinated with Za’atar, Chilli & Pomegranate Molasses): “I had some chicken legs in the fridge that needed using up and wanted something punchy and colourful. This dish became a staple in my restaurant for three years – never changing... I still make this all the time. It triggers good memories, makes me feel good...”⁶¹⁴ Through her words, we can see that this dish became a constant feature in her restaurant for three years, and even today she still prepares it, as it brings back pleasant memories and evokes positive feelings. Like each recreated dish outlined in her book, Kalla’s sensory memories played a significant role in the creation of this dish, as she relied on the schemas of “punchy” and “colourful” to develop it. She also calls about the general knowledge of Palestinian

⁶¹³ Ibid, 192.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid, 25.

cuisine through her use of *za'atar*, pomegranate, and molasses. However, unlike her recipe for spiced lamb ribs, her *za'atar* chicken does not replace the memory or identity of a related meal or inherited recipe. Rather, she associates the dish with memories of her time as a restaurant owner, a time to which she looks back fondly. This fits a wider theme of community, comfortability, and love, which she characterizes as central to Palestinian cuisine as a whole.

Reviews on Amazon.com for Kalla's book originate from either people of Palestinian descent or women married to Palestinian men, who wish to learn Palestinian cuisine to prepare meals for their spouses. In these reviews, Kalla's ability to convey the authenticity of Arab recipes in her cookbook is applauded. Reviewers relate Kalla's stories to their own lived experiences, stating, for example, that her *falafel* recipe "is just like I remember from my youth." One reviewer claims that Kalla's book "takes me to the homeland I've never been to. It's not just a cookbook, it's a story, a short yet compelling and appetizing story." Although not everyone is satisfied with the selection, with one individual lamenting the lack of a *knaffeh* recipe, the emphasis on authenticity is clear throughout each review and is a seemingly common aspect of current culinary discourse.⁶¹⁵ The satisfaction of these reviewers signifies a distinction between authentic and traditional, revealing that authenticity does not necessarily denote primordial origins.⁶¹⁶ Authenticity, in this sense, refers to the dish being genuinely what people of a certain culture eat, rather than a contrived, pseudo-cultural cuisine. This notion of "authentic" as opposed to "traditional" often resonates with Western consumers of "exotic" foods, who are drawn to restaurants where "X people actually go to eat."⁶¹⁷ The appeal of tradition, on the other hand, risks evoking anti-modern sentiments, sacrificing efficiency and innovation in favor of the labor-intensive cooking practices of times past. Kalla's cookbook acknowledges traditional cooking methods, including dishes that require hours to prepare, but it is not the primary focus of her book. Rather, the emphasis is on authenticity and the evocation of memories associated with her Palestinian cuisine.

⁶¹⁵ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 146.

⁶¹⁶ Warde, *Consumption of Food and Taste*.

⁶¹⁷ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 146.

Similar to Kalla's book, Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley open *Falastin* with an extensive introduction. Although it adheres to the conventional format of a cookbook, the introduction also highlights the personal, social, and political history of Palestinian cuisine through the lens of the recipes that follow. The book commences with a short introduction to the evolving practices of Palestinian cuisine amidst migration. The authors acknowledge the politics and history of the region by stating, "Our aim with *Falastin* is to tread the fine line between paying heed to the situation on one hand and remembering, at the same time, that our book is first and foremost a celebration of the food and people of Palestine."⁶¹⁸ This approach might seem political as it delves into the colonial history of Palestine and the experiences of those within the Occupied Palestinian Territories. However, the work goes beyond this scope, directing the reader's attention toward the simple pleasures enjoyed by Palestinians through their cuisine. The author's primary focus is on the idea of identity conveyed through food. The political and historical trauma that contextualizes this identity, while respectfully acknowledged, does not overshadow the stories presented in this book.

In discussing the relationship between food and identity, the authors emphasize the centrality of Palestinian identity to the Palestinian experience. They argue that this identity remains intact regardless of where Palestinians may find themselves in the world. In many ways, they claim, the preparation and consumption of regional cuisine are about affirming, or "owning," one's connection to their cultural heritage. However, the authors also acknowledge that migration and displacement can lead to changes in identity and that these changes can be reflected in how traditional dishes are prepared and interpreted, as seen in the statement, "We haven't felt bound by a set list of 'traditional Palestinian dishes.'"⁶¹⁹ This nuanced perspective on authenticity and tradition is in keeping with Kalla's approach, which emphasizes the importance of honoring culinary heritage while also remaining open to new and evolving interpretations of traditional dishes.

While Tamimi touches on his own experiences growing up in Palestine, claiming that the book is a love letter to his country as much as it is to his Palestinian

⁶¹⁸ Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley, *Falastin: A Cookbook* (Ebury Publishing, 2020), 10.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

mother, he does not use it as his primary source of information in the same way as Kalla. Rather, he and Wigley broaden their attention to exploring the regional dishes that exist between Palestinian villages, paying close attention to the subtleties and histories of their flavor profiles. They caution against speaking in overly general terms, as this fails to account for the distinct people, ingredients, and dishes that differentiate one country from another within a region:

Speaking in general terms...does not pay heed to all the distinct people, produce, and dishes which distinguish a country from another within a region. It doesn't allow for the importance of sumac in a dish such as *chicken musakhan* to shine, for example, or reveal how many Gazan dishes have the trio of dill, garlic and chilli shaping them. It doesn't tell us anything about the red tahini of Gaza or the white salty cheese of Nablus or Akka.⁶²⁰

The authors' acknowledgment of the complexity of not just the regional cuisine, but of the political and social histories that shape it, creates a more nuanced and historical account than the cookbook discussed previously. However, in a similar vein to Kalla's work, this book seeks to simplify recipes to enable their replication in Western kitchens. As a result, *Falastin* omits certain traditional Palestinian dishes that may be difficult to reproduce, while still adhering to fundamental flavor pallets and ingredients:

[You'll] find fewer recipes for stuffed vegetables in *Falastin* than you would in a 'traditional' Palestinian cookbook, fewer recipes for celebratory dishes which take half a day to prepare...Loyalty to the Palestinian pantry, though – and a reliance on the ground allspice and cumin, olive oil, pulses, grains, za'atar, sumac, lemons, yoghurt, dill, garlic and green chillies which fill it.⁶²¹

In a nod to modernity and convenience, the authors make a clear distinction between the laborious nature of traditional Palestinian cooking and the more streamlined processes they employ. Despite this, they still pride themselves on their dishes unmistakable Palestinian character, claiming that they “feel distinctly Palestinian.”⁶²² For instance, a recipe for “warm hummus with toasted bread and pine nuts” is presented in two versions: one utilizing tinned chickpeas for quicker preparation, and the other using the more time-consuming method of boiling and

⁶²⁰ Ibid, 13.

⁶²¹ Ibid, 14.

⁶²² Ibid.

stirring dried chickpeas. While the former takes a mere eight to ten minutes, the latter requires a substantial thirty to forty minutes. This, of course, drastically reduces time spent in the kitchen, and, if cooking with others, the time available to interchange personal and familial narratives. The authors also offer practical cooking tips, such as stirring the hummus to prevent a “skin” from forming before serving. Through their adaptations and careful attention to detail, the authors showcase their appreciation for Palestinian cuisine while acknowledging the demands of contemporary life.

In comparing *Falastin* and *Palestine on a Plate*, we can see how each author presents Palestinian cuisine through their unique lenses of identity and narrative. While both books acknowledge the cultural significance of each dish, they differ in how they approach the subject matter. For Kalla, the focus is on her family’s identity, with recipes that seek to recreate the comfort of home and supported by personal narratives that imbue them with emotional meaning. However, the nuances of regional flavors across Palestine are not addressed, requiring the reader to already possess a basic embodied knowledge of the regional flavors and cooking techniques. On the other hand, Tamimi and Wigley’s *Falastin* explores these regional variations in depth, but at the expense of the intimacy and intergenerational inheritance of family traditions. In both books, memory is conveyed, but in a limited and static way that lacks the dynamic quality of, for example, a grandmother’s recollection of different episodes of her life that revolve around a particular dish.

Family Reunions, Meals, and Remembrance Post-Migration

Across most diasporic contexts, food is a powerful cultural marker, helping to form imaginary bridges that connect an individual with the memories of people, traditions, and sensory experiences that are left behind when abroad.⁶²³ Food and meals serve as a reminder of what was regarded as mundane when at home, but what is now cherished in its absence. However, in commemorating a lost or distant past through food and meals, one changes its meaning, elevating it from ordinary

⁶²³ Paula Arvela, “Ethnic Food: The Other in Ourselves,” in *Food: Expressions and Impressions*, ed. D. Sanderson and M. Crouch (Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2013), 45–56.

to extraordinary. It becomes a representation of this past, one characterized by community and belonging within one's home. This can be found in the case of Portuguese immigrants living in Brazil, who eat their local dish, *bacalhau*, to remain connected to their homeland, its customs, traditions, and the people they left behind.⁶²⁴ Another example includes Australian migrants and their taste for vegemite, as observed by Richardson, who finds that the inaccessibility of such homemade food abroad exasperates nostalgia for it.⁶²⁵

Communal meals, where one can enjoy the tastes of home, allow one to continue a certain sensuous connection with a land from which one was forced to flee. In addition, doing so provides a sense of continuity for immigrant families. In response to the disintegration of their communities, diasporic Palestinians participated in practices that looked to compensate for this loss. They look to a past when certain values were upheld and take action to reproduce them in their new locations. They actively find ways to survive in their new communities and feel do to so is through belonging to the community. Acknowledging this, they employ tactics to help them bond with others, one of which was one they knew well and practiced often, as it was successful for them in their previous communities. This allowed them to express themselves as Palestinians and celebrate their culture in a way that they felt was safe for them.

In the face of radical changes to one's surroundings, particularly in their social dynamics, Diasporic Palestinians use cuisine and social meals to reintegrate the past with the present. This allows them, at least to an extent, to reenact elements of the old way of life that they previously enjoyed before expulsion. To do so, these individuals use memories of previous meals as reference points, attempting to reconstruct them in new and unfamiliar settings. This is not uncommon for those who experienced war or other forms of uprooting, including refugees, migrants, mobile workers, or any others affected by major political, social, or economic

⁶²⁴ Ana Paula Arvela, "Sitting at the Table of Nation: Narratives of Bacalhau, the Portuguese National Dish" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, 2013), <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4035>.

⁶²⁵ Kay Richardson, "Vegemite, Soldiers, and Rosy Cheeks," *Gastronomica* 3, no. 4 (November 2003): 60–62, <https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2003.3.4.60>.

shifts.⁶²⁶ For example, Fernandez examines the development of Bwiti, a religious revitalization movement that emerged in West Africa as a response to the felt alienation and fracturing that characterizes postcolonial societies.⁶²⁷ He describes this movement as an attempt by West Africans to “return to the whole,” to reconstruct present-day circumstances in ways that meet the ideals impressed upon them by past communal experiences. The concept of return is a response to a perception of lacking or missing out. For these individuals, the separate domains of experience, between the homeland and one’s new home, feel irreconcilable. The past does not reconcile with the present when concerning experiential continuity, in that it is impossible to reproduce, to a full extent, a moment from the past, let alone one that occurred in a different geographical location, at a different point in time, and with different people. However, one needs to ask, to which “whole” should one return? How should we define it, what should it look like, and how should it feel? Put simply, these individuals return to what is collectively agreed upon as authentic, a mutually enforced construction based on the sensory experiences they know first-hand or understand as commonly experienced by those with whom they identify. Food, for these individuals, acts as a counter to fragmented lives.

At times, Palestinians move to environments where there are striking differences between where they once knew and where they need to acclimate themselves. Hence the need to recreate familiar scenes or establish some sense of connection between the past and the present, using reference points, such as food, as a tangible site for memory. In the following excerpt, we can see how the past and present are woven together in one woman’s stories of cooking, and watching others cook, in her family home. In it, we see how different kinds of memories – social, sensorial, and nostalgic – intertwine seamlessly. Rafal is a woman in her early twenties, unmarried, and without children. She lives with her parents in an apartment in Qatar. She lives close to her uncle, who visits routinely for shared meals. While she does not spend much time with her family, despite living with

⁶²⁶ Ronda L Brulotte and Michael A Di, *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2016).

⁶²⁷ James W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

them, she does cherish communal memories centered around food. Rafal begins by explaining the different types of dishes prepared by her mother:

Most of the time, my mom cooked for me. But, I would help her out, mostly when we were cooking a feast and we had a lot of people over. I would help her with whatever we would be cooking at that time. She loves to do it. I always tell her, 'Mama, you should open a restaurant. You'd be a great chef.' She loves to cook.

She does these things – it's like dough stuffed with spinach, onions, and a bit of chili. We call them *sabanekh* fillings, or spinach fillings. We do different flavors. We do cheese, cheese with *zata'ar*, which is like thyme. Her most popular is spinach. She uses a really thin dough. I would help her with thinning dough. I would help her with the mixture itself, which is spinach, spices, and onions. I would help her with folding everything, oiling the tray, and putting them on there.

She also makes dishes that are like rice with chicken. There's a dish called *makloubah*, which means 'turned over.' The way you cook it, it's layered. You do everything and then, at the end, you flip it onto the tray. Then that's it, done, you know? Flipping that tray is always like, oh my gosh, for the whole family, right? If that fails, then, the whole thing is gone! So, it's my mom, my dad, and me [acts out struggling while flipping the tray]. We're all trying to flip it over [laughs].

Rafal's memories are embedded in several ways that intersect and overlap between the individual and collective. They are embedded in the stories of both the individual and the family: of her mother's and her own. At the same time, they are about the individual and shared discourses concerning tastes and ingredients, dictating the perspectives and preferences of multiple family members and across generations – at times her mother will fill her pastries with cheese and *zata'ar*, although most prefer her spinach filling. Even more apparent is the elaboration on procedural elements of meal preparation, the folding, oiling, and flipping necessary for a successful dish. Further layered is the collective experience of togetherness while cooking, of cooking for each other and being cooked for by one another, creating a collectively shared discourse on meals within this family, and reinforcing the Palestinian ideology of communal meals.

Rafal associates family meals, particularly her mother's cooking, with feelings of comfort and nurturing: "Food is really important in Palestinian culture, especially food made with love." She regards these experiences positively and mourns them

in their absence. Additionally, as seen in Rafal's statement, the Palestinian kitchen is rarely silent. The production of meals is a social process, often involving multiple members of the family, all of whom are necessary to ensure the timely preparation of elaborate dishes. Amid cooking, stories are shared, and bonds are reinforced. The production and consumption of time-consuming, labor-intensive recipes that symbolize Palestinian culture and tradition, seem to evoke memories of *gemeinschaft*.⁶²⁸ Communal meals are a chance for older relatives in the family to reflect on the good and bad of the past, and to pass on their ideals to younger generations in the present. After al-Nakba, her family dispersed across the globe, moving further and further apart as decades passed on. Rafal no longer feels the tight-knit sense of community she previously enjoyed when her family and friends lived close, exasperating her sense of estrangement. Let us follow Rafal's story further, to examine how memories from the kitchen are intimately related to social action in the present, contextualizing her desire to learn familial recipes and form a larger community out of prospective future generations:

Every year for Eid, my mom makes these date-filled pastries. They were always a huge hit. This year, we had a conversation, my dad and I, when he saw my mom doing them on her own. Both my grandmothers passed away around two or three years ago. They always had the tradition of all the daughters going to the grandmother's house and they all make this date pastry together. But, this year, my mom was doing it on her own. My dad walked in the kitchen and commented, like, "Oh, it's so sad, the days that we're living." Community doesn't feel as valued. We live in a neighborhood where we barely know our neighbors.

Back in Palestine, everyone knew everyone. During this tradition of Eid, everyone would wake up at six o'clock in the morning. They had to get dressed, and they had to go, either by car or by walking, to all their relative's houses to sit there and have coffee and eat these pastries. And there she was, cooking on her own. We just met our uncle that day. It felt like a comment on the disintegration of community. We don't have the same values as they did, back then, in Palestine. You have to ring on a person, and if you don't talk to them on this day...even if you're not close to them, it's something that you have to do. It's about respect, duty, and morals.

⁶²⁸ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 137.

Here, Rafal describes what they used to do, “back then, in Palestine.” She speaks of a practice repeated over many Eids, a memory, as described by her, linked to those of her father and mother. Because families in Palestine remained within proximity of one another, oftentimes living within the same home, apartment complex, or neighborhood, they had enough manpower (or in this case, womenpower) to create time-consuming and intricate dishes, such as the Eid pastries described above. Decades earlier, Rafal’s family moved from Palestine to Qatar, straining the ties between family members by increasing the physical distance between them, as well as the time between visits. Since then, family members either fell out of touch or passed away, as was the case with her grandparents, who passed away in recent years. Note that Rafal’s memory does not actually span back to life in Palestine – she was not alive to experience these moments firsthand – but instead incorporates both lived and inherited experiences. The food memories described here are reinforced and contextualized socially, in this case, by adding the narrative and memories of her family to those of her own. Additionally, they are, just like all memories, characterized by a sort of tunnel vision, in which one’s most idealized moments of the past sit at the forefront of memory.

Interestingly, Rafal laces an un-lived past with this much nostalgia. In doing so, she draws on an imagining of the past as a time of easy community and morality, of closer-knit social relations that have disappeared in the present. This excerpt outlines the perceived loss of community, of *gemeinschaft*,⁶²⁹ of traditional Palestinian communal values that or now unrecognizable in modern contexts. What Palestinian families experience is not just a product of migration, but a response to the loss of the face-to-face relations they shared in village contexts, those moments shaped by the candidness and emotions one simply cannot experience without being in the physical presence of another. In the Palestinian context, the loss of community and rural values is exasperated by inherited memories of forced expulsion. Rafal then shifts to a different memory register

⁶²⁹ James A Christenson, “Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft: Testing the Spatial and Communal Hypotheses*,” *Social Forces* 63, no. 1 (September 1984): 160–68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/63.1.160>.

altogether, the sensorial taste of hand-made food made in intimate contexts, to talk about why her mother's pastries are an essential part of their Eid celebrations, stressing the fact that food "made with love" is essential to her family's, alongside wider Palestinian, traditions. She then goes on to explain why she wishes to continue these traditions as she grows older:

I would pass on food for sure, certain things that we do. I feel like that is something I would love to feel. I would love to connect with my mom and dad over it. I think because, maybe, as a third culture kid, I always struggled to find specific points of connection with my parents. There weren't that many things to connect over ideologically, I guess, because I grew up thinking differently than they did. So, I value the things I can use to connect with them. Food, for sure.

In this passage, Rafal shows her memory's fluidity, as well as its intricate relationship with her emotions. She begins by explaining her decision to learn Palestinian food recipes, which she claims she made based on her past feelings of disconnect with her parents, as well as her desire to teach recipes to her potential children. She follows with her present experiences of living through a generational gap in personal and collective ideologies, touching again upon her perceived loss of traditional values in modern times. Additionally, she connects communal food memories to her emotions, associating them with a sense of comforting togetherness, which she feels she lacks in the present. This led her to form a "prospective memory,"⁶³⁰ in which she projects herself into the future, imagining a life where she can bond with her family by preparing and sharing meals.

In Rafal's account, we can also see her relationship with the wider community within the Palestinian Diaspora, spread out against a landscape of past and future Eid and associated meal preparations. Once again, her experiences are contextualized, both in their retention and recall, based on a more familiar, socially dictated discourse of community and respect developed over decades. This happens at the same time as the current Eid is remembered and contrasted to past Eids and meals, which were seen as more idealistic and personal. This suggests the ease at which community was centered and prioritized during former times,

⁶³⁰ David Sutton, "A Tale of Easter Ovens: Food and Collective Memory," *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 157–80, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40972056>.

before expulsion from Palestine, in which all kinds of relations within the family are imagined as having been preferable and more wholesome than the anomie and dislocation that characterizes modern socialization and family units in the diaspora.

Two interesting features of Rafal's stories should be noted. First, there is a multigenerational temporal blurring taking place; she is looking back to her family's past when imagining her future. Thus, when speaking about her mother's cooking, she says, "She learned all the Eid stuff, like stuffed dates, from my grandmother. They became very natural to her now. I feel like there's stuff that I never paid attention to, like stuff on cooking with my mom. I would like to be able to remember more next time." The past, present, and future temporalities of the family are synthesized within the context of the kitchen. Second, she also consistently refers to the disintegration of the community, which reinforces the nostalgia for a lost past, despite never living to see the community she describes. This suggests, by insisting on a past not lived directly, but experienced through the narratives of others, that a fetishizing of the past is preferable to the realities of the present. Regardless, it recognizes the extent to which the kitchen is a key site for reconnecting the with past and imagining the future. In other words, the kitchen represents good flavors and good relationships, which may have been better before the expulsion, but which Palestinians like Rafal and her family could reclaim through their present and future actions.

While conducting this research, I came across multiple instances where diasporic Palestinians faced similar circumstances to those of Rafal and her family. In response to the scattered trajectories of family members upon migration, many felt the physical distance between themselves and those they love. The trauma that motivated their dispersal only exasperated that sense of distance. To compensate for their estrangement, they sought practices that, upon performing them, allowed them to maintain a sense of connection to a time when they felt at home and when they belonged to a community. This yearning oftentimes manifested in the kitchen and around the dinner table. As previously stated, this is not uncommon for migrants, for whom food may take on special meaning. In a study on Sudanese asylum seekers in Tel Aviv, the ability to enjoy a plate of kiswa bread and okra allowed individuals "temporary relief from constant engagement with

unfamiliarity.”⁶³¹ Similarly, for some Palestinian families, communal meals, set over Palestinian food, took on this special significance. Because certain foods enjoyed in Palestine were also accessible in the diaspora, because most recipes were shared orally and therefore retrievable from memory, and because shared meals were how Palestinians traditionally fostered communities in the past, they were able and motivated to carry on with certain cooking and eating rituals in the diaspora that they also practiced when living in Palestine. However, because it was still impossible to reproduce the communities, certain ingredients, and cooking tools that they had in their villages, they made use of their environments in ways that served them and allowed them to recreate the experiences to their best extent.

I observed two social responses that emerged from this experience, both of which sought to bridge the gap. First, was the increased value placed upon family meals, especially those enjoyed during overseas reunions. What was previously regarded as mundane became novel and especially meaningful. On a social level, these meals provided opportunities to rekindle connections between distanced family members or established new connections between those who never met. On a mnemonic level, they acted as sites of memorial exchange, where older family members imparted their memories and family stories to younger generations. Second, Diasporic Palestinians employed prospective memory to create shared meals in the diaspora that resembled communal eating experiences in Palestine. Using Palestinian recipes, they hosted meals in their new communities and invited their neighbors to join; in this way, they used resources and practices pulled from memory to forge connections and survive in unfamiliar and socially dependent settings.

In recent decades, large, communal meals practiced during overseas family reunions became a primary and highly valuable site of social and mnemonic exchange. Because family members tend to live far away from each other and remain separated for long periods, the time spent with family members became

⁶³¹ Galia Sabar and Rachel Posner, “Remembering the Past and Constructing the Future over a Communal Plate: Restaurants Established by African Asylum Seekers in Tel Aviv,” *Food, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (June 2013): 207, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413x13589681351692>.

even more valuable than what was once considered when living together in Palestine. What were once readily available resources, family time, narrative exchange, and wisdom impartation became rare commodities. As such, family members looked to make the most of their time with each other and put forth enormous amounts of effort to accommodate, feed, and bond with overseas visitors. Hosts served elaborate meals, almost as elaborate as those served on Eid or Ramadan, which take nearly the day to prepare and cook. A common dish found at these dinners will be *makloubah*. During his interview, Taylor shared his experiences with *makloubah*, which he ate at a family reunion in Jordan:

When I was seventeen, one of my dad's brothers, his older brother, was exiled from Palestine. He went to college in Jordan during the time of the '66/'67 War. I can't remember exactly how that worked, but, essentially, because he was out of the country, he was exiled. He literally cannot enter Palestine at all, even though he was born and raised there. It's crazy.

Because of that, my dad's side of the family wanted to have a family reunion. The oldest brother lives in Saudi Arabia, but nobody was going to go to Saudi Arabia, so found a middle ground by meeting in Jordan. My dad has an uncle who lives there. We all went to Amman, Jordan when I was seventeen for about two weeks. While I was there, every time we went to somebody's house, they made *makloubah*. I had that, for dinner, for two weeks straight. I tell you; I was so burnt out when I got back.

My mom didn't go, it was just me, my dad, and the older brother. When I got back, the first thing my mom made for dinner was *makloubah* and I threw up. I didn't even eat it. I just threw up at the sight. So, I'm good for life. It ruined it for me [laughs], which is sad because I really liked it. But it was one of those things that you have on special occasions. Of course, our being in Jordan was a special occasion. We saw relatives that, at least for my brother and I, we had never met before. We were also feeding large groups of people and *makloubah* is relatively inexpensive for feeding large groups. It's a great idea, but when you're having it every day for two weeks, it's like good God. Give me some Saltine crackers and call it a day.

Taylor's story provides an example of how diasporic Palestinians use cuisine and social meals to connect the past to the present. In his story, he describes how part of his family's reunion in Jordan centered around the preparation and consumption of *makloubah*. The fact that it is a time-consuming dish, thereby designating its

preparation for special occasions, demonstrates its cultural significance and involvement in larger, Palestinian cultural traditions. This dish not only became a reference point for him to connect with his family members, under their shared identity as Palestinians but also a way to foster his connection with his Palestinian heritage by participating in what he regards as traditional food practices, an understanding shaped by the cultural memory of consuming this dish in the past. As such, it became a tangible site for memory for him. The repeated consumption of the dish also demonstrates how his family uses food to foster a sense of community and togetherness with each other.

At the same time, Taylor's story provides an account of how his embodied memories of eating makloubah influence his relationship with the dish. In this case, Taylor relies on his sense of taste to link himself with this meal and its associated food memories. He recalls constantly consuming makloubah while visiting family. The repetition of eating this dish over a period of two weeks impacted his memory of the experience, giving him the feeling of sensory overload, which negatively impacted his embodied memory. The negative association with makloubah upon return home highlights the embodied and emotional aspects of his food-centered memories. The smell and taste of makloubah, according to Taylor, now elicits a strong and emotional reaction of nausea, which he connects to his memories of overconsumption while in Jordan. As a result, he now distances himself from the overwhelming experience of overindulgence and any resultant sickness. Additionally, Taylor's story demonstrates that not all food memories need to be associated with nostalgia and memories of positivities. It has been argued that bad cooking, or negative food experiences, are at times more memorable than positive experiences of good cooking.⁶³² Taylor's experience with makloubah is reminiscent of those we face during childhood, when the food we disliked as children, but were all the same compelled or requested to consume by our parents or teachers, can persist in our memories as lifelong unpleasant embodied experiences.⁶³³ It goes to

⁶³² Jon Holtzman, "Remembering Bad Cooks: Sensuality, Memory, Personhood," *The Senses and Society* 5, no. 2 (July 2010): 235–43, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174589210x12668381452881>.

⁶³³ W Robert Batsell et al., "You Will Eat All of That!": A Retrospective Analysis of Forced Consumption Episodes," *Appetite* 38, no. 3 (June 2002): 211–19, <https://doi.org/10.1006/appe.2001.0482>.

say that the food we eat, both commemoratively and daily, plays a central role in memory work.

Overall, Taylor's story reflects the role of food and meals in his family, particularly as they experience life in the diaspora. Regardless of location, these individuals seek to maintain the cultural practices and traditions that they once enjoyed when they lived closer to one another and celebrate each opportunity to do so. It also brings to attention the impact of political and social circumstances on the individual and family, as well as how they navigate these challenges in order to maintain their connection with each other, their shared pasts, and their heritage. At the same time, it demonstrates how embodied memories shape this connection, allowing Taylor's family to reconstruct cultural traditions through the meal's associated sensory experiences. However, in this case, the repetition of the dish did not reinforce a positive association in Taylor's mind; rather, it led to sensory overload. Fortunately, his experience does not subtract from his positive association with his identity as a Palestinian. It does highlight, though, that not all food memories, especially those found among members of a diaspora, need to be associated with nostalgia. In fact, the inclusion of negative embodied food memories invites further analysis and exploration in this area.

Mobilizing Memories of Past Meals to Forge New Communities

Circling back to our discussion on social responses to displacement, the second reaction by diasporic families observed among the narratives of those interviewed includes the regular planning and hosting of communal meals in host communities. From these stories, it is apparent that certain families made a great effort to reenact social meals when first moving between countries, even when many family members were not present to attend. Instead, they invited their new neighbors to their homes and offered them cuisine modeled after the meals they enjoyed back in Palestine. They were able to do so by mobilizing and utilizing resources readily available to or known by them, such as their hospitality and cuisine. In doing so, their homes became communal hubs for not just the family, but for anyone

interested in taking a seat at the table. These families did not, and some still do not, cook just any food either; they cook the recipes they learned in Palestine, an act that highlights their ethnic identities, distinguishing themselves as Arab or Palestinian. At the same time, by feeding their neighbors, they forged their place amongst others, demonstrating their desire to both belong to their new communities and reignite the values and experiences they previously enjoyed in the old. By sharing their food, they share the parts of themselves that are steeped in memory, and yet, simultaneously, they produce new memories that inform their peers' positive associations with them.

Pierre Nora's notion of *lieux de memoire* can be used to understand how and why diasporic Palestinian families use food memories to recreate past social structures in new and unfamiliar places. Communal meals act not only as a site of memory but are also created *by* memory.⁶³⁴ In a study conducted by Sen, immigrants situated themselves in new places through food and memory, concluding that immigrant home-building and re-building are tied to the polytemporality of food memories.⁶³⁵ As found in his work, the Palestinian families discussed here construct places through their remembrance of the past (their geographical and physical places of origin, as well as food from such places), and adapt to the present (their new homes and respective cultures found within their host countries), and the hybridization of the two to develop a sense of belonging that can be carried forward into the future.

A key assumption here is that these families strategically sought to achieve goals contextualized by their experiences in the diaspora.⁶³⁶ To do so, they worked with the resources available to them. While it is possible that the re-enactment of communal meals in the diaspora may simply have been emotional responses to their social conditions as immigrants, in that it was an effort to seek comfort and

⁶³⁴ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, no. 26 (1989): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>.

⁶³⁵ Arijit Sen, "Food, Place, and Memory: Bangladeshi Fish Stores on Devon Avenue, Chicago," *Food and Foodways* 24, no. 1-2 (April 2, 2016): 67–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.2016.1145026>.

⁶³⁶ Much of this approach is inspired by the findings of John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (May 1977): 1212–41, <https://doi.org/10.1086/226464>.

continuity in unfamiliar circumstances, it is also apparent that families created and invited strangers to these meals to better acclimate themselves and survive within their respective communities. In fact, certain families learned to capitalize from these events, transforming Palestinian cuisine into a source of livelihood for themselves. To do this, they relied upon their memories of traditional Palestinian meals, using this resource to plan the meals, upon which their success depended, in the diaspora. Using the skills and knowledge necessary to plan, prepare, and host events in their communities, they created meals that drew in members of their community. At the same time, community members provided them with the resources needed, either in social or monetary support, to continue these meals.

Continuing with Taylor's stories, we can see how his family used memories of past meals to construct new meals upon leaving Palestine. After migrating to the United States, Taylor's family settled in North Florida. Given the normalized ingroup bias against people of color that historically occurred within the United States, and particularly within areas where the culture descends from the Antebellum South, it is interesting to report that Taylor expressed, on behalf of his family, no instances of difficulty in acclimating to rural Florida society. In fact, he feels his family became valuable members of their community. They did this, he told me, by sharing Palestinian meals with their neighbors:

My grandfather loved to host people. He would fill up on the joy and laughter in the room. He was the center of the American family, so to speak, living here. They had this huge house in Florida. That's where my mom grew up. Every weekend was like Thanksgiving dinner. There were hundreds of people there. Half of them, I wouldn't even know how they are. There was always food. There were always kids running around. There was more than enough room for everyone. He always kept his door open, always, to anybody who wanted to be there.

I think that's where I get that from, because, I'm the same way. I mean, he couldn't have two nickels to rub together, and he'd make you a feast. He was always that kind of man.

For Taylor's family, his grandfather's natural inclination to create an atmosphere of warmth, generosity, and community, combined with his grandmother's culinary expertise, became valuable resources that allowed them to forge social connections in their new communities. As such, it became common for the family

to host weekly dinners and invite those they knew from the neighborhood. Taylor describes his grandfather as the center of the American family, despite originating from Palestine. He attributes this to his grandfather's personality, which enabled him to comfortably host many people. However, his grandfather's friendly demeanor fits into a wider pattern of Palestinian social customs. A prominent ideology maintained by diasporic Palestinians is the importance of generosity and abundance when serving others. Many interviewed agree with this claim, expressing that they value hospitality and making guests feel welcome, a trait they learned by observing their families or other Palestinians. This trait, they told me, is an integral part of Palestinian identity and culture. For example, Mary expressed how she feels immediately cared for upon entering a Palestinian home, often meeting extended family members as well. "There is Palestinian hospitality," she said, "I am fed as soon as I walk through the door, and I'm fed well. You do see the family, and, occasionally, their parents will come as well." Similarly, Ahmed shared how Palestinians in Hebron welcomed him. Even strangers on the street, if they knew his family name, invited him inside for a meal, showing a level of generosity that left a lasting impression: "You'll meet someone, and, if they like you, you'll be invited to their house. But they won't ask you to come to their house, they'll tell you you're having dinner with them...They want you to come to their house." In Taylor's case, his grandfather's stories of hosting others and providing them with a "feast," even when he himself did not have much, reflects the significance of Palestinian hospitality when creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

In the 1980s, Shahed's family moved to the suburbs of Minnesota. Her family, all originally from Palestine, dispersed across the Middle East after 1948. Over time, two of her father's brothers migrated to Minnesota to study, and one of her mother's brothers also moved there. Eventually, her father's parents moved as well, looking to escape the hardships that followed Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. "We're all very related, all very Palestinian, all the same stories," she told me, highlighting their close relationships and histories. Thus, they traveled to Minnesota together, where her uncle eventually established a restaurant. Around the same time, Shahed's father completed his studies, worked for a short period in Jordan, and married her mother. Upon becoming pregnant with her older

sister, her parents decided to relocate to Minnesota, reconnecting with their family and exploring their new options in the United States. Eventually, her father joined her uncle in running the restaurant. He now serves as its CEO.

Shahed was brought up in the place where her parents settled down. She was raised in a small, suburban town, as a part of a middle-class household. “Where I grew up,” she told me, “It’s a thirty-minute drive from the city. It’s mainly a suburban life and you live in your little communities. I lived on a golf course and knew my neighbors for a little bit.” She grew up surrounded by her Palestinian family, who placed a great deal of their attention on their collectively owned and run restaurant. Consequentially, the restaurant played a central role in her upbringing. “I think a huge part as to why I stay so connected to Palestine is because of this restaurant,” she said, “It’s the place where anyone from all walks of life can come along and enjoy some food.” The family serves Middle Eastern cuisine, a reflection of their cultural heritage as Palestinians:

The food is very Middle Eastern-driven, but kind of adapted to the United States. The only reason why I say adapted is because it’s not exactly as we find it in the Middle East. You work with what you’ve got. It’s not the same quality of food I would say, but most of the food is made well.

On the website, they claim to offer “a truly authentic taste of the Mediterranean/Middle East region of the world,” with food that is “seasoned and cooked old-world style.”⁶³⁷ Indeed, Shahed’s father places a great deal of emphasis on the quality of each recipe, working closely with his mother, or Shahed’s grandmother, to develop dishes that represent the cuisines she learned while living in Jordan and Palestine. “A lot of her cooking has been brought into our kitchen and the restaurant,” Shahed told me, “That’s how we produce our food, like spices, seasonings, methods of cooking – a lot of that is from her.” Together, they established a restaurant, a grocery store, and a bakery all rolled into one. The family creates their own loaves of Lebanese bread, pita bread, and pocket bread, with the addition of Iraqi bread. As for their menu, they filled it with Middle Eastern favorites like shawarma, gyros, and homemade hummus, alongside other dishes

⁶³⁷ Website excluded to protect the identities of the individual interviewed and her family.

such as *babaganoosh*, grape leaves, small samosas, and spinach pies. Yet, as Shahed claims, her family's culinary practices were not untouched by their experiences as migrants. The flavors, ingredients, and techniques used to prepare the restaurant's dishes undoubtedly transformed to better suit the tastes and availability of ingredients in the United States. Doing so is a hallmark experience for diasporic families and their food cultures, during which they hybridize traditional recipes to accommodate new ingredients and tastes.⁶³⁸ In this way, the restaurant becomes a mirror of Shahed's identity as a diasporic Palestinian, a reflection of her roots deeply intertwined with tradition, but not without the influence of the resources and demands that have arisen from new circumstances. In this restaurant, the past meets the present, resulting in a unique fusion that represents both Shahed's and her family's journey since leaving Palestine.

As seen in the case of Taylor's family, the restaurant owned by Shahed's family became an avenue for them to forge their place in their new communities. At the same time, it became a source of livelihood, upon which they rely for income. Her family found themselves striving to accomplish goals that were informed by their unique experience in the diaspora, purported towards rebuilding communities and creating promising lives for the family, and they made use of the resources they had at their disposal to achieve just that. In this case, they relied upon the grandmother's knowledge of Palestinian cuisine and constructed a brand from her expertise. In doing so, they turned her memories into a source of reliable income. Additionally, by utilizing her skills and knowledge to host events and create a menu that draws in outside guests, they receive the community's social and economic endorsement. This, in turn, allows them to continue to reproduce the grandmother's meals, thereby continuing the need for and application of her memories.

In this way, the restaurant does not function solely as a resource that enables the family to build social and economic capital. It is also a site for memory, and in this family's kitchen, memory takes shape in two forms. First, as discussed previously, the restaurant's success and, by extension, the success of the family, depends

⁶³⁸ Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael A. Di, *Edible Identities : Food as Cultural Heritage* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2016).

upon the grandmother's memory of Palestinian and Middle Eastern cuisine. "We have a chef, and we'll teach him exactly how we want him to make it," explained Shahed. Usually, though, they could seek the culinary services of their grandmother, who lived "right across the street." If a customer asked for stuffed grape leaves, for example, they look to her to prepare them. Second, the restaurant's origin is rooted in a story of family values, substantiated by familial anecdotes. The website boasts "hard work, family, tradition, and Islam," with the family's dream beginning "over 100 years ago," with their grandfather, who "brought to the dream the time-tested recipe of making pita bread." It tells of the father's migration history, leaving from Kuwait to the United States, and highlights the values of hard work and community, which he inherited from his own parents: "His father worked three jobs, and his mother was working for the first time in her life to support their oldest son's education. Even so, it was no free ride for [him], who, like many of us, flipped burgers to help put himself through school." The website goes on to say that the family's success lies in two individuals. "Baba," is the "personality of the business," bringing a "special ingredient" to the meals. "Mama," on the other hand, "is the "backbone of the business," cooking dishes that are "acclaimed for their flavor and authenticity."

Through these details, the family shares their origins, imbued with remembrances that persist in forming their very essence as much as they justify their connection to the restaurant. The stories are shared to connect the family's present successes to past efforts, seasoned with the flavors of hard work and familial support. Beyond merely narrating their past and present, they share who they are, as a family and an institution, aspiring to continue in the embodiment of their culture and ethos through the meals they share with others. Shahed echoes this belief through her own testimony, as seen in her statement, "I feel the history of any family is really important in understanding who you are." She notes that this knowledge is particularly important for her generation and those that follow because they risk forgetting the cultural and historical memory that distinguishes them as Palestinians. "I want to pass it down throughout the next generations to come, just so they remember, 'this is who you are, no matter what happens in life. Don't forget your roots.'" From this statement alone, we can see her relationship with her family

and identity spread out against a wider landscape of past and present narratives. In Shahed's mind, the past, present, and future blur together, allowing her to delve into her family's history to uncover the essence of her identity. At the heart of these processes is the family kitchen, where the temporalities of the family converge.

Conclusion

Embodied food memories represent a complex form of memory that is deeply tied to our sensory experiences, incorporating not only taste and aroma, but also the physical sensations that arise during eating, such as the texture, temperature, and feeling of food. These sensory experiences become integrated with our bodily experiences and are recalled through bodily sensations, producing a deeply rich form of memory that can be triggered by different cues in the environment. They are intimately connected with personal and familial narratives, cultural and social identities, and emotional contexts, making them a potent means of shaping our understanding of the world in which we live. Through shared meals and positive emotional environments, embodied memories can be created and later re-activated, promoting nostalgia and a sense of longing. Food can also serve as a point of production for culturally specific memories that inform our social identities. Given the integral role of embodied food memories in our lives, it seems fitting to explore the methods through which humans preserve and transmit the knowledge and experiences that they embody.

Like an embodied memory, the practice of cuisine is a multifaceted and layered experience comprising an intricate set of food-related rituals imbued with symbolic meaning that informs social identity. These rituals serve to connect individuals with their cultural heritage, while simultaneously allowing them to express their own unique identities. Over time, cuisines have evolved and transformed, shaped by migration and the fusion of different ingredients, techniques, and expressions of heritage, memory, and social identity. Shared meals are a crucial component of social life, linking family members together through a shared understanding of consumption practices and imbuing them with mnemonic and social meanings. The performance of these rituals can be both formal and improvisational, with both formality and mundanity playing important roles in shaping the meaning and

identity of cuisine. It is through these shared practices that individuals are able to create and maintain a sense of continuity and belonging within their communities.

In the testimonies of Palestinians living in the diaspora, the significance of everyday cooking practices in evoking memories and shaping identities is particularly pronounced. Palestinian cuisine relies heavily on simple meals composed of basic ingredients readily available at local markets, with recipes that can be easily replicated outside the Middle East. However, the act of preparing these dishes is not solely driven by culinary requirements, but also by a deep-seated desire to connect with social memories associated with them. The kitchen and dinner table are revered as spaces to connect with social memories associated with them. The kitchen and dinner table are revered spaces that facilitate the intergenerational transmission of cherished family recipes, as well as personal, family, and collective histories. Through the habitual preparation and consumption of these meals, Palestinian families can perpetuate a sense of social identity and cultural continuity even as they navigate the challenges of life in the diaspora. In the accounts of Mohammed and Walid, we witness the intricate entanglements of memory, relationships, and identity that underlie seemingly mundane activities such as preparing a morning meal, rolling grape leaves, buying bread, or savoring a cup of coffee. These acts may appear banal, but they reveal the complex and intimate ways in which these three elements shape and are shaped by human experience. The everyday nature of these tasks only serves to emphasize the profound impact of memory, relationships, and identity on the fabrics of daily life.

On the other hand, the use of written recipes in Palestinian cooking poses intriguing questions about the effects of textualization on culinary memories. Although written recipes facilitate precise replication, they may stifle the improvisational and imaginative aspects of cooking and reify recipes as discrete units of information. The trend towards increasingly exact standards in written recipes places greater emphasis on precision, measurement, and calculation. Yet, recording ingredients and techniques in pieces form establishes a foundation for experimentation and refinement, leading to the development of regional cuisines. The availability of cookbooks and the ability to read and write are indispensable to

the complexity and diversity of regional cuisines. Given that Palestinian cookbooks occupy an ambiguous position in this ongoing debate, this research sought to fill that void. Although written recipes play a crucial role in the transmission of culinary knowledge, they cannot facilitate the same depth of storytelling and connection as the oral transmission and lived practice of intergenerational recipes. In comparing two cookbooks, *Palestine on a Plate* and *Falastin*, we can see how each author presents Palestinian cuisine through their own lens of identity and narrative. While Kalla's book focuses on her family's identity, with recipes that seek to recreate the comfort of home and are imbued with emotional meaning, Tamimi and Wigley's *Falastin* explore the nuances of regional flavors across Palestine. However, both books convey memory in a limited and static way that lacks the dynamic and improvisational qualities of stories told in the moment, or questions answered on demand.

Lastly, the diasporic Palestinian community has developed a rich and complex relationship with food and communal meals, which serves as a means of bridging their past with their present and providing solace in the face of feelings of estrangement from their homeland. In the case of Shahed, familial recollections are facilitated by nostalgia as a coping mechanism, serving to alleviate the despondency stemming from their present-day experiences of isolation and dislocation. The act of communal reminiscing allows for a counterpoint to the disappointment of familial dispersal and reinforces a sense of connection that may otherwise be lost. Through shared meals, they are able to reconnect with their cultural roots and establish a sense of continuity in the midst of uncertain situations. By recreating familiar experiences, such as communal meals, they are better able to cope with the major political, social, or economic shifts that have uprooted them from their homes. Food occupies a central place in this process, acting as a tangible site for memory and a counter to fragmented lives. In the case of Taylor's family, cuisine and collective repasts offer a mode of articulating their sense of self and commemorating their culture safely in a new environment, while simultaneously forging bonds with others. Rafal's family's use of their family recipes served a dual purpose of not only ensuring their economic survival but also establishing their position in their community. Across contexts, the memories of

shared meals and different flavors intertwine seamlessly to create nostalgic, social, and sensorial memories that help create a sense of home away from home. By sharing these experiences, diasporic Palestinians can sustain a connection with their past and their homeland and establish a sense of belonging and community in the present.

Overall, we can discern that the memories we hold of food are rich and intricate, blending sensory experiences with the bodily sensations they evoke. They bring together narratives that are personal and familial, along with cultural and social identities, and emotional contexts. Indeed, cuisine is a layered and multifaceted experience that connects individuals with their cultural heritage and allows them to express their unique identities. The Palestinian diaspora, as represented through the cases above, has turned to food as a means of bridging the space between the past and present, finding solace amidst the longing they feel away from their homeland. The transmission of recipes across generations through oral tradition and lived practice helps sustain social identity and cultural continuity, and the use of written recipes enables accurate replication, resulting in the development of regional cuisines. Food and shared meals hold a significant place in preserving and transmitting the knowledge and experiences that humans embody, providing a means of coping with the significant political, social, or economic shifts that force them to leave their homes.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the major aims of this thesis was to explore how Palestinian youth are negotiating not only the elaborate and silent storytelling regarding their family's histories, but also how they juxtapose lived vs. inherited memories and their associated meanings, and how these experiences factor into their identities as Palestinians. Through this, I sought to gain a better understanding of the legacy of intergenerational memory and how it is contextualized within everyday familial narratives – whether that be remembered, forgotten, or transformed. This research was inspired by Hirsch's concept of *postmemory*: the memory of a generation who grew up surrounded by narratives of trauma, not of those lived firsthand, but of

which occurred prior to their birth. My fieldwork, conducted with Palestinians located in Lebanon, Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Palestine/Israel between 2019 and 2022, involved twenty-seven oral history interviews with the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors. This material was further enriched and contextualized through an array of academic literature, cookbooks, and embroidery motifs. Ultimately, my findings reveal a complex conundrum faced by young, diasporic Palestinians: a group struggling to reconcile the demands of the present with their obligations to the past; who are making sense of a history that is wholly clung to within the family, but oftentimes forgotten, or unknown, outside the home; and who are looking to transcend the traditions of a legacy that no longer serves them.

Their experiences stem beyond just that of Palestine; they signify a generation in transition, reworking the nostalgic gaze set upon a diasporic homeland by their ancestors in a way that rings true to their identities in exile. With this in mind, I want to integrate my findings within trauma vs. hope; authenticity vs. obligation; and ritualistic commemoration in the everyday. Collectively, these themes allow me to draw upon the overlapping themes and observations emerging from my exploration of storytelling (chapter one), sumud (chapter two), cooking (chapter three), and embroidery (chapter four). At the same time, they also offer alternatives for new avenues through which we may conceptualize memory and identity.

Agents of Authenticity

Throughout this research, we have observed a negotiation among interviewees regarding their definition of being authentically Palestinian. To be considered "authentically" Palestinian encompasses various meanings, influenced by the lived experiences of each individual. The participants in this study perceive themselves as deviating from the stereotypical Palestinian narrative. They possess a keen awareness of the factors that differentiate them from both previous generations and contemporary Palestinians residing in Palestine. Unlike those who directly suffer from the realities of occupation, which they perceive as an integral part of an "authentic" Palestinian experience, they have not personally experienced forced

displacement from their homes. For many interviewees, their connection to Palestine is solely through their heritage and familial ties, often hindered by displacement or denied entry at Palestinian borders. Consequently, this group lives in a state of confusion about their Palestinian identities, constantly questioning the authenticity of their lives. Resolving this insecurity is a fundamental motivation for this generation.

For some, resolving this conflict involves preserving Palestinian memory in light of those who they feel do not acknowledge their interpretation of history. This process is complex and nuanced, shaping how Palestinian youth forge new identities and experiences in the diaspora while grappling with the forces of remembering and forgetting. Many of them construct a narrative rooted in historical trauma, investing considerable effort in researching and engaging in dialogues to uncover and substantiate these truths. Through this understanding, diasporic Palestinians gain the ability to identify with fellow Palestinians and bestow upon one another a sense of identity. In this way, they locate themselves within this narrative, recalling significant dates that impacted their families in manners similar to other "authentic" Palestinian families. They are fully aware that those who remain in Palestine are equally Palestinian. They devote significant attention to the narrative of resistance that shapes Palestinian collective memory, aligning their self-expression with this narrative, although the extent to which this occurs remains a matter of debate. These narratives shape their definition of the archetypical or what they consider the "authentic" Palestinian experience.

However, while narrating this history, it becomes evident that adherence to traumatic paradigms of Palestinian memory and the accompanying sense of familial obligation, in some cases, risks overshadowing the lives and desires of subsequent generations. I encouraged participants to elaborate on their interpretations of their family histories in relation to their perception of what they sometimes refer to as the more "authentic" Palestinian narrative. Despite being a socially constructed archetype against which diasporic Palestinians measure themselves, this narrative holds weight. These discussions involved exploring their

processes of identification, notions of authenticity, and discussions surrounding othering, belonging, and exclusion.

Those interviewed expressed feelings of diminishment and distress as they struggle to align their own experiences with those of Palestinians from the past or those who remain within the Occupied Territories. They experience a form of survivor's guilt, bearing the burden of guilt and perceiving themselves as inauthentic for not having endured the inherent "Palestinian" suffering that other members of their community have faced. While they can recount a familial narrative that mirrors the overarching Palestinian experience, their connection is merely semantic; some admit to feeling disconnected from such stories. This feeling is further intensified when they encounter gaps in memory or stories, which diminishes an already incomplete picture. Living in the diaspora, removed from the daily and historical violence that has fostered Palestinian resilience (*sumud*), certain circumstances no longer resonate or feel applicable to them. Nevertheless, they persist in forging connections with these conventions, aware that they can never fully replicate them.

Simultaneously, those interviewed have a desire not only to live as authentic Palestinians but also to live authentically as themselves. They feel a moral obligation to remember and learn from past sufferings, as well as to make up for the suffering and sacrifices of previous generations during expulsion and life as refugees. However, this desire sometimes combines with a latent fear of never finding their own sense of authenticity and agency within a narrative so traumatic that its psychological effects reverberate across generations. Time and again, we encounter individuals who blur the boundaries of identity, loyalty, and politics within the Palestinian context. As previously stated, as an observer, I am struck by the persistent question that these individuals grapple with: To which end of the spectrum does their true affiliation belong — themselves, other identities, or Palestine?

These oscillations in alignment and priorities lead many to express feelings of confusion about where they truly find authenticity. They acknowledge that their

Palestinian identity sometimes feels "forced" in certain contexts, making it challenging for them to fully relate to the hardships endured by others, particularly those still emotionally tied to Palestine. This recurrent theme emerges frequently among the young Palestinians in this research, who argue that a fixation on a single, traditionally informed, and outdated identity fails to align with their immediate concerns and identifications. Their inability to connect with Palestine on a personal level weakens their attachment to their community's original cause.

Considering the politically precarious nature that underlies their identities, young Palestinians find themselves in a perpetual search to establish connections with their experiences — whether as Palestinians, the offspring of refugees, the children of immigrants, or individuals residing in societies that stigmatize their social identities. Undoubtedly, the experiences of this generation echo those of previous generations while also displaying differences. The new locations of Palestinians across the diaspora expose them to different cultures, prompting the emergence of hybridized identities that extend beyond their initial notions of Palestinian identity. Since everyday cultural production is their chosen form of expression, we witness them expressing their versions of authenticity through these mediums. Thus, we witness a growing informal debate on what is considered an authentic Palestinian dish or meal, what constitutes authentic tatreez, or what constitutes an appropriate way to practice sumud.

As we contemplate each person's commitment to their individual identities, their sense of belonging, and their quest for authenticity, we encounter another psychological trait that resonates with their peers. Embracing the notion that home resides within oneself, they construct a self-understanding firmly rooted in their present experiences. These experiences encompass the diverse environments through which they and their families have traversed over the passing decades. Within these contexts, their priorities revolve around carving out a space for themselves to live freely and flourish. This is the truth they seek to authenticate. Thus, authenticity, in these cases, does not entail an entrenched adherence to tradition. Rather, these individuals redefine notions of authenticity in a way that validates their experiences as an extension of each preceding experience.

Ultimately, the individuals in this work invest immense effort in honoring their families' and culture's heritage and memory while remaining open to new and evolving interpretations of what it means to be Palestinian in the diaspora.

Alternative Perspectives on Emotion and Memory

Throughout my research, I argue that these narratives demonstrate the ongoing nature of historical rupture, a concept relatively new in memory studies. While postmemory explores the transfer of memories across generations in the context of a historically traumatizing event,⁶³⁹ much of the current research on trauma views historical rupture as a one-time occurrence.⁶⁴⁰ Only recently has academia begun to address historically traumatic events as ongoing phenomena, unraveling the effects of postmemory that persistently haunt the present and future without being properly mourned or resolved.⁶⁴¹ Through the testimonies presented in this thesis, I aim to show that the 1948 al-Nakba is not a singular event but rather the catalyst for an ongoing chain of events and experiences that reverberate across generations.

The manner in which stories are told, specifically the level of detail, emotional expression, and personal reflection from the storyteller, significantly influences the relationship between the storyteller and the audience, as well as the audience's perception of their own narrative and sense of self. Building upon this, I examine how specific emotions influence the reception of inherited traumatic memories among the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors. I particularly focus on the themes of comfort, community, and resilience, contending that when these elements are present in family storytelling, they correlate with a higher level of narrative synthesis and a positive sense of self in the recipients of these inherited narratives.

⁶³⁹ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁶⁴⁰ Nora Parr, "No More 'Eloquent Silence': Narratives of Occupation, Civil War, and Intifada Write Everyday Violence and Challenge Trauma Theory," *Middle East - Topics & Arguments* 11 (November 13, 2018): 58–68, <https://doi.org/10.17192/meta.2018.11.7792>.

⁶⁴¹ Stephen Frosh, "Postmemory and Possession," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue Internationale de Sémiotique Juridique* 33, no. 2 (May 7, 2020): 515–28, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-020-09720-x>.

While it is evident that the descendants of al-Nakba survivors and refugees are often affected by postmemory and influenced by ancestral trauma, this is not always the case for young Palestinians. As mentioned earlier, many young Palestinians strive to distance themselves from adopting a victimhood mentality and instead reframe their family narratives around themes of survival, resilience, and pride. This approach allows them to contextualize their own narratives, particularly the meanings they derive from them, in a positive light that fosters a confident and favorable sense of self. Through these narratives, young Palestinians construct a positive sense of self rooted in a profound connection to generations of history and values. The interviews also shed light on the fact that many family members aim to impart positive life lessons, fostering experiences of pride, connectedness, and purpose. Affirming family memories intertwine with the postmemory of al-Nakba survivors' descendants, coexisting alongside other family memories. These narratives provide deep insights into the dynamics of intergenerational trauma transmission and the nurturing relationships that thrive within survivor families.

Furthermore, not all inherited memories solely focus on trauma. Throughout my work, I discovered instances of narratives and memorial transmissions that included memories of pride, community, and hope, even amidst overwhelming trauma and loss. These postmemories of older generations' history and trauma coexist alongside other positive family memories, aligning with Rigney's concept of "memories of positivities."⁶⁴² Within these contexts, postmemories of trauma do not overshadow more positive family memories, as observed in other cases, such as those identified by Hirsch in the Jewish Diaspora. This suggests, in agreement with the research published by Wolf, that the postmemory of parents' trauma does not automatically traumatize the children and grandchildren of survivors. Instead, the emotional significance of inherited memories correlates with the themes within the narrative and the method of transmission.

⁶⁴² Ann Rigney, "Remembering Hope: Transnational Activism beyond the Traumatic," *Memory Studies* 11, no. 3 (July 2018): 368–80, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018771869>.

This significance lies in the breaking of traditional boundaries within memory studies, which often focuses excessively on unpacking historical trauma. This is not to undermine the recognition, processing, and narration of these traumas; rather, it emphasizes that trauma and suffering represent only one aspect of the entirety of human experience. By expanding our understanding of the inheritance process to incorporate even the most nuanced emotions, we can overcome such binary thinking. This work aims to blur these boundaries and foster a clearer comprehension of the comprehensive process of inheritance.

The Mnemonics of the Everyday in the Family and Home

At the beginning of this work, I proposed that ritual serves as a pivotal arena where storytelling, food, embroidery, and even resistance converge with memory and identity. However, it is crucial not to overlook the significance of everyday contexts. In doing so, I seek to shift the perception of ritual from being purely symbolic and separate from daily life to a more practical perspective. In many instances, ritual and everyday memory and practices mutually reinforce each other, particularly in relation to one of the main themes I examined: identity and belonging. Specifically, I explore how third-generation diasporic Palestinians construct their identities and establish a sense of belonging in the present through the rituals of everyday actions, influenced by inherited social memories and knowledge.

I specifically sought out settings that occur on a daily basis. Considering that memory and identity inherently intersect with our experiences in various places, it is fitting to focus on settings where diasporic Palestinians spend a significant amount of time. Thus, I determined that the everyday contexts of the home best suited my purpose. This encompasses two temporal dimensions. First, I delve into the past, exploring the familial home during a child's upbringing. I examine different environments where a child may encounter Palestinian-related acts of mnemonic or cultural transmission across generations. Second, I investigate present-day everyday experiences, concentrating on how current actions and normalized behaviors are connected to past social experiences within the family home.

In this research, I examine discussions that address memory and identity as they materialize within the family and the familial home. I situate this discussion because the family is, or has been, typically the most significant source of experiences for the interviewees that expose them to inherited Palestinian memories. By doing so, I aim to build upon existing literature that analyzes the concept of home-building.⁶⁴³ My argument revolves around the notion that the links established between memory and identity on a daily level contribute to a better understanding of how one constructs a sense of home and belonging.

The settings I explore exist within everyday life and consist of actions, objects, and environments that are accessible and attainable for Palestinians in the diaspora. These practices can be maintained even in the absence of resources originating from Palestine, making them improvised and essential processes that preserve memories and cultures that would otherwise risk being forgotten.

As observed in this research, expressions of memory and identity can manifest in everyday occurrences within the home. There are connections between memory and identity that are experienced and triggered through ritualistic routines and chance events,⁶⁴⁴ such as familial anecdotes shared spontaneously or within settings like cooking or embroidery circles. Younger generations of diasporic Palestinians may recreate family recipes and proudly display traditional Palestinian tatreez on their clothing, both of which serve as means of expressing their identity. These forms of identity expression bridge our past with the present-day environment of everyday life and the home.⁶⁴⁵

Storytelling

⁶⁴³ Take, for example, Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 105–40, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105>; and Melissa Ley-Cervantes and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "At Home in Generic Places: Personalizing Strategies of the Mobile Rich," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 32, no. 1 (November 4, 2015): 63–76, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-015-9492-z>.

⁶⁴⁴ Rick Peterson, "Social Memory and Ritual Performance," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 13, no. 2 (June 2013): 266–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605312455768>.

⁶⁴⁵ Charishma Ratnam, "Creating Home: Intersections of Memory and Identity," *Geography Compass* 12, no. 4 (February 5, 2018): e12363, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12363>.

In Chapter One, I analyzed recounts of elaborate and silent storytelling in Palestinian families as told by the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors. In these narratives, I outlined various levels of elaborateness and silences, which manifested uniquely and to varying degrees, depending on the circumstances that shaped the storyteller, or, more specifically, the interviewee's perception of the storyteller. Across contexts, I've demonstrated that each interviewee's identity, sense of belonging, and sense of purpose relies on the relationships they shared with their parents and grandparents during their childhood and adolescence. The relationships they shared with these individuals could be fostered through narrative exchange, in which older generations connect with their offspring by sharing autobiographical narratives with them.

By analyzing the contexts in which interviewees remember moments of storytelling between themselves and their family members, I explore how these familial dynamics are remembered by the participants, and what they feel those memories mean to them in relation to their own identities and/or sense of purpose. In doing so, this research fills a gap in literature on intergenerational familial storytelling that addresses how offspring hear ancestral narratives and use them to make connections between their parents. We see this in the narrative of Raghad, for whom the only avenue to apprehending her own self, her familial roots, and the milieu in which they are situated resides within the realm of personal connections and narratives. No written records or external sources offer a historical account of her family's past. As she previously asserted, her very sense of self and her history as a Palestinian hinge upon the stories conveyed to her by those who surround her. Over time, her comprehension of her family, and consequentially her own being, underwent transformation, shaped by both the narratives relayed to her and her own observations and experiences. This transformative trajectory unfurled throughout her formative years, as she spent her childhood in the Old City, wherein she absorbed the stories heard during her youth. As she grew older, she found that she began to question and reassess these narratives, embarking on a journey of forging her own interpretations while scrutinizing the world in which she

participates. It is within this broader tapestry of experience that she situates herself, and labels herself as a Palestinian.

I also explored familial silences and their psychological effect on the self-perception and well-being of the offspring of survivors. Individuals selectively recall and emphasize certain aspects of their family history while forgetting others, reinforcing the process of forgetting itself. Some choose to omit details to protect their image or shield their children from emotional burden, while others remain silent due to an inability to communicate their pain. By focusing on Khalid's narrative, I explore how the omission of details about familial pasts may create a sense of uncertainty and shame around one's Palestinian identity. Khalid reflects upon the mixed narratives he received rejecting the path of his parents and seeking deeper connection with his heritage. He uses filmmaking as a means to explore and give shape to his family's fragmented identities and narratives, highlighting the complex interplay between memory, silences, identity, and storytelling within this family.

My intersectional approach, which incorporated gendered, economic, linguistic, and cultural perspectives, allowed me to develop a detailed understanding of how these intersections meet and influence an individual's psychology, thereby influencing the degree of elaborateness when sharing autobiographical memories with their descendants. Each factor influences an individual's experience with their environments, including the relationships they share with others, their family members included. As such, the relationships shared between parent and child or grandparent and child are contingent upon the past experiences of the parent, the psychological and social consequences of which the child observed and, as an adult, uses to contextualize their own experiences in the present.

The role of gender in shaping storytelling and its impact on storytellers and their audience is a subject of profound significance. This study seeks to challenge the prevailing assumptions regarding intergenerational narrative exchange, which often assign mothers the role of the most elaborate storytellers among parents. However, through this research, two cases have emerged where interviewees

described their mothers as less forthcoming in their storytelling, resulting in strained relationships that persisted from childhood into adulthood. To comprehend why these mothers became less inclined to connect with their children through storytelling, it is crucial to consider how their experiences were shaped by factors such as ethnicity, economic class, and linguistic abilities. Adopting an intersectional approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the underlying reasons behind their particular modes of communication.

In both instances, the mothers of the interviewees were women who grew up in the United States as descendants of Arab migrants. While they were exposed to Palestinian culture within their families, their upbringing clashed with their intrinsic aspirations, which were influenced by social norms prevalent beyond the confines of their homes. For instance, Taylor's mother, a Palestinian woman born into American society, defied the traditional Palestinian gender norms imposed by her own mother by dedicating herself to a career in law and politics. This thrust her into an environment shaped by social norms and behaviors dictated by men, who, as Fivush's research suggests, often exhibit a tendency to avoid vulnerability and elaboration when sharing stories and forging connections with others.⁶⁴⁶ Similar themes can be discerned in the experiences of Arabella's mother, who grew up in an immigrant family in the United States and adapted to the social customs associated with white, Christian, heterosexual, American men within her professional life.

These cases assume particular significance as they unveil the societal conditioning necessary to succeed within an environment shaped by the social norms of white, cisgender men in the United States. The experiences of these mothers, as conveyed through the narratives of their children, underscore a deficiency in the communicative skills essential for fostering a profound sense of connection with their offspring. This underscores the critical role played by intergenerational storytelling between parents or grandparents and their children in the cultivation of meaningful relationships within the familial context.

⁶⁴⁶ Jennifer G. Bohanek et al., "Family Narrative Interaction and Children's Sense of Self," *Family Process* 45, no. 1 (March 2006): 39–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2006.00079.x>.

This chapter also delves into the intricate role of language in the construction and narration of familial narratives. Drawing inspiration from Halbwach's exploration of language as a mechanism through which individuals situate their personal memories within a broader social framework,⁶⁴⁷ I undertake an analysis of how interviewees harness language to share their memories with others. Language assumes a significant position in the realm of communication among the family members under scrutiny in this chapter, as it molds their collective comprehension. The presence of a shared language, or at the very least, a familiarity with common terms and their meanings, facilitates the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions among family members, thereby enabling an effective means of expressing their thoughts and feelings to one another.

Within the scope of this chapter, we delve into Taylor's story, wherein the names of deceased relatives acquire an emotional resonance and evocative associations within his family. The act of sharing photographs and tales of those who have passed on serves as a conduit for reviving their memory, sustaining a profound bond with their legacies even after their physical departure. Taylor, as a transgender man, undergoes a process of name change that he finds to be in parallel with an experience that his great-grandmother once encountered. Both individuals had once possessed the same name, yet ultimately chose names that harmonized with the lives they aspired to lead. Through renouncing his former name, Taylor manages to extricate himself from the weight of familial expectations tied to his namesake while paradoxically embracing it, as he follows the footsteps of those who preceded him within his lineage.

This intricate interconnection engenders a profound sense of belonging and self-identification within the framework of the familial unit. Taylor's introspective contemplation of family names and narratives fortifies his conviction that they wield a definitive influence not only over the trajectory of his own life but also over the lives of those within his family who bear the names of their ancestors. Consequently, these narratives manifest themselves as integral constituents of his own identity, intricately interweaving his personal story into the overarching

⁶⁴⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992).

tapestry of his family's historical continuum—a narrative that predates his existence, yet continues to exert its influence upon him to this very day, thereby reaffirming his deeply ingrained beliefs.

As an alternative avenue of exploration, we also endeavor to investigate the ramifications of language barriers on family identity and relationships. In order to illuminate this phenomenon, we delve into the narrative of Arabella, an English speaker grappling with the challenge of connecting with her Arabic-speaking family members. This lack of comprehension engenders feelings of detachment and isolation, impeding her ability to forge a meaningful connection with her family and obstructing her comprehension of discussions and memories tied to Palestine. Arabella firmly believes that acquiring fluency in Arabic would not only bridge the vast chasm of communication that separates her from her mother but also strengthen the bonds between them. Similarly, Yousef grapples with uncertainties concerning his Palestinian heritage and cultural identity, with language playing a particularly significant role in this internal struggle. Despite conversing in English with his mother, Yousef discerns a palpable distinction between himself and those family members who fluently speak Arabic.

Language barriers bear a profound impact upon one's familial identity and relationships. In the absence of a shared language, feelings of disconnection and exclusion are amplified, leading to an acute sense of inadequacy and estrangement. Language assumes the mantle of a unifying force and a wellspring of identity within the collective context of a group. Thus, the absence of a shared language exacerbates the challenges associated with forging meaningful connections with family members and establishing a deep-rooted connection to one's cultural heritage.

The transference of intergenerational narratives bears resemblance to the interplay of economic class and gender. This study illuminates the process of mnemonic transference through storytelling across diverse contexts. However, it is the dynamics of class that shape the memories shared, the themes derived by the audience, and the ways in which descendants employ these narratives to forge their own identities.

On one hand, this research builds upon the existing knowledge concerning the memories and identities of the falaheen, the Palestinian peasant class, extensively explored within the field of Palestine studies.⁶⁴⁸ Yet, it is pertinent to include the perspectives of individuals descended from the falaheen class in our analysis, particularly as limited studies exist on intergenerational storytelling among the descendants who fled Palestine after the events of 1948. This research thus represents a comprehensive exploration of this generation, transcending their economic class. Moreover, since the aim is to comprehend the psychological and mnemonic foundations of diasporic Palestinian identity, it is imperative to incorporate the perspectives of all Palestinians from this generation, capturing the narratives influenced by multiple intersections.

Hence, the findings concerning mnemonic transference among the descendants of falaheen reveal the distinct experiences of exile encountered by the lower economic classes in Palestine. The narratives of loss resonate deeply in subsequent generations of these families, especially in relation to the loss of home, land, and community. Faisal's narratives epitomize themes of personal sacrifice intricately intertwined with economic hardships, as he links the struggles of previous generations to the loss inflicted by al-Nakba, engendering a strong sense of familial obligation. Ahmed's reflections on inheritance, familial narrative, and social responsibility expose a profound ethical struggle. He grapples with the psychological turmoil stemming from the weight of familial postmemory, wherein events preceding his birth loom large, shaping his sense of self. Ahmed's awareness of being bound by history renders him acutely conscious of the interplay between personal agency, the interconnectedness of familial bonds, and collective memory.

This sense of obligation often generates internal conflicts for individuals who receive and internalize these narratives. Many find themselves torn between

⁶⁴⁸ Take for example, Karl K. Barbir and Amy Singer, "Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem.," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (February 1997), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171345>; Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, "THE ORIGINS of the PROCESS of PROLETARIANIZATION and URBANIZATION of ARAB PEASANTS in PALESTINE" 220, no. 6 *City and Peas* (March 1, 1973): 470–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1973.tb40263.x>; James Reilly, "The Peasantry of Late Ottoman Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 4 (1981): 82–97, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2536390>.

fulfilling their own desires and aspirations and adhering to the wishes of previous generations. Owing to the ancestral trauma inherited, young Palestinians frequently experience guilt when seeking to pursue their own lives, fearing they may forsake the desires of their forebears. However, these sentiments also serve as motivation for younger generations to strive for progress beyond the struggles of their predecessors. This psychological response to postmemory, whereby personal autonomy is influenced by emotions surrounding events predating one's birth, is further amplified by the class-related challenges faced by the *falaheen* and their descendants in exile. Without grasping these struggles, we cannot fully comprehend the sense of obligation experienced by young Palestinians in the diaspora.

Conversely, this research also delves into the memories preserved and passed down to young Palestinians descending from the upper echelons of pre-1948 Palestinian society. This holds significance as the academic research landscape has been inundated with narratives of the Palestinian peasant class, while the experiences of the upper classes have received less attention. Within families of higher economic class, postmemory manifests in distinct ways, albeit still manifesting the presence of postmemory themes. This can be attributed to the nature of dispossession experienced by each class. The more palpable the loss, such as the loss of home, land, and livelihood, the more prominent the themes of trauma emerge in the postmemorial narrative. Lower economic classes, who encounter more tangible loss, exhibit trauma themes in the transference of intergenerational narratives. Conversely, among those interviewed from more affluent families, the sense of loss is less pronounced due to their economic, political, and social connections, facilitating a smoother transition out of Palestine into the diaspora, as compared to refugees in camps.

As a result, the narratives within families of higher economic classes center less on loss and dispossession and more on political engagement and familial legacy. Henry's case serves as an exemplar, growing up surrounded by narratives of his great-grandfather's political involvement, revered by his grandmother. When sharing these memories with Henry, she often drew parallels between him and her father, establishing a psychological connection. Similarly, Taylor feels linked to her

great-grandmother through their shared name, while Henry feels connected to his grandfather through the likeness emphasized by his grandmother. In Henry's case, he embraces a positive association with the narrative of his great-grandfather, aligning it with his sense of purpose. This inheritance does not distress Henry; instead, it contributes to a positive sense of self and offers solace during moments of identity conflict. However, regardless of the legacy left by these individuals and whether the themes are perceived as positive or negative by their descendants, the narratives leave an enduring impact on those who receive them.

“Echoes” of Sumud

In Chapter Two, I examine the concept of sumud, tracing its historical origins and development. In the aftermath of the al-Nakba in 1948, Palestinians confronted occupation, expulsion, and exile with an unwavering determination to preserve their connection to their ancestral land and uphold their indigenous identities. Out of these experiences, the notion of sumud emerged, embodying a spirit of perseverance in the face of adversity and occupation. It became a fundamental element of their collective identity, particularly in the decades following al-Nakba, significantly shaping the perspectives and actions of Palestinians and influencing their attitudes towards the past. Historically, sumud found expression in diverse forms, including land cultivation, cultural preservation, and artistic expression, all of which were regarded as acts of resistance.

Nonetheless, existing scholarly works primarily focus on the development of sumud among two generations – the survivors of the al-Nakba and their children – leaving a gap in our understanding of the contemporary manifestations of sumud in the diaspora and lacking a generational perspective. This chapter aims to bridge this gap by examining testimonies that shed light on the skepticism expressed by the grandchildren of al-Nakba survivors towards traditional forms of sumud. These individuals emphasize the significance of asserting their identities and historical continuity through their own interpretations and expressions of cultural resistance. I delve into the experiences of young Palestinians who exhibit hesitation in engaging with politically centered Palestinian activism, feeling disempowered, disillusioned,

and disconnected from a nationalistic cause. These narratives unveil the external pressures faced by Palestinians in both the Palestinian territories and the diaspora, which compel them to suppress aspects of their identities for self-preservation, thereby influencing their involvement in Palestinian discourse and activism.

Despite their sense of disempowerment or disillusionment in relation to the political dynamics surrounding their identities, this generation does not abstain entirely from resistance. Instead, they embrace alternative approaches and perspectives, adopting a form of psychological resistance that aligns with their immediate needs in the diaspora, where they perceive greater stakes, opportunities, and influence. While they may not explicitly label their actions as *sumud*, it is worth pondering whether their endeavors can still be considered as such. It appears that even without over recognition, this generation has tacitly inherited *sumud* from preceding generations. Hence, I employ the concept of *sumud* “echoes” to encapsulate this unique evolution in ideology. This study serves as an initial exploration of this phenomenon, prompting further investigation into how this ideology will continue to manifest.

However, it is important to note that understanding Palestinian history and rupture caused by al-Nakba does not automatically result in an emotional attachment to the land or a commitment to the fight for return. Based on the gathered interviews, the prevailing understanding of *sumud* among this generation revolves around active political engagement. This suggests that, despite the various definitions found in scholarly works, the embraced definition on the ground centers around political involvement. As this generation distances itself from that notion, it appears that they do not fully comprehend the diverse forms that *sumud* can assume, nor do they perceive themselves as integral to that process. Alternatively, if they do, they do not feel compelled to actively participate due to the challenges and costs involved. Consequently, they explore other forms of resistance that serve as sources of self-empowerment.

As a result, methods of resistance takes on a distinct form compared to previous generations, reflecting the hybridized identities of those who embody it. Their focus lies in persuading others of their authenticity as Palestinians and as member of the societies in which they were born. They prioritize the preservation of memory and seek acceptance and security in the diaspora as their primary responsibilities, rather than a physical return to Palestine, which they no longer consider feasible. By relinquishing their nostalgic yearning for return, they redirect their energy towards other identity-related concerns present in their surroundings. Feeling that the traditional notions of sumud are imposed upon them, they critically engage with the concept's utility in their lives and question how different identities matter to them at different stages of their lives. Each person interviewed here finds authenticity through the intimacy of personal experiences, rather than the outwardly demonstrative efforts practiced by earlier generations.

In conclusion, this chapter delves into the nuanced expressions third-generation Palestinian methods of resistance, which I argue “echo” those of sumud, to emerge in the diaspora. Understanding these dimensions of sumud vis a vis resistance allows us to explore how individuals and communities respond to prolonged oppression, providing a framework for comprehending the fluidity of the diasporic experience where the emotional and symbolic significance of identities is rooted in inherited trauma. Recognizing the role of memory and inherited trauma is essential in understanding the connection between individuals and their identities, not only as Palestinians but also as descendants of survivors. This integration of inherited trauma with everyday experiences establishes connections between the social and the individual, enriching our understanding of psychological resistance efforts in the Global North by presenting examples of resistance practiced by Palestinians born and/or residing in the United States and United Kingdom. It highlights the significance of indigenous understandings and forms of resistance and resilience, particularly those contextualized by diasporic experience, which my diverge from dominant Western conceptions of resistance.

Tatreez

The research conducted in this chapter explores the archival and mnemonic aspects of Palestinian tatreez, recognizing both the act of embroidery and the embroidered objects as sites of postmemory. The study also examines the emotional and social contexts that influence embroidery in the diaspora, highlighting how the evolving nature of diasporic tatreez reflects the increasing diversity of its creators. Drawing on Derrida's concept of archiving, the embroidered objects serve as archives of memory, documenting the lived experiences of their creators. These objects, particularly thobes adorned with tatreez, can be seen as postmemorial artifacts used by diasporic Palestinians to engage with their postmemory of al-Nakba. Additionally, as diasporic Palestinians develop hybridized social identities, they adapt tatreez practices to reflect their experiences in the diaspora and maintain a connection with their Palestinian heritage.

The examples presented in Ghnaim's *Tatreez & Tea* illustrate how tatreez functions as a medium through which creators preserve their thoughts for future audiences. Symbolic designs like "The Birds" and "The Missiles" demonstrate the historical use of embroidery as a language by Palestinian women and as a means of documenting and communicating postmemory in unique cases. Palestinian women used tatreez to communicate with others, and Ghnaim, a descendant of al-Nakba survivors, utilizes these thoughtful patterns to understand her family's life before and after expulsion. The "Gardens" dress not only reveals the personal connection between the embroiderer and their work but also exemplifies how multiple family members collaborate to create a familial narrative, reflecting the social influences on identity. *Tatreez & Tea* itself serves as a postmemorial work, where the Ghnaim women use autobiographical narratives and embroidery designs to reflect on their memories and relationship to the 1948 al-Nakba, sharing both negative and positive associations and showcasing the intergenerational transmission of familial trauma alongside positive meaning-making.

The involvement of artists like Ghnaim, Nasser, and Habib in the art of tatreez highlights the evolving practices of Palestinian embroidery within the diaspora. These artists provide new avenues for documenting the experiences of post-Nakba

generations, diasporic-born individuals, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Their creative endeavors exemplify the changing nature of tatreez and signify a shifting Palestinian identity among younger generations, including a fluidity of gender and gender roles, as seen in Palestinian men embracing this traditional matrilineal form of artistry.

While their work builds upon traditional Palestinian embroidery, it also represents the continuation of the evolutionary processes that have shaped tatreez over time. Village motifs have consistently changed as embroiderers encountered new tools, materials, people, and circumstances both within and outside the diaspora. Nassar and Ghnaim, through their designs and use of media, document their own experiences as diasporic Palestinians, similar to how native Palestinian women have historically documented their day-to-day experiences. The juxtaposition between designs, such as Nasser's combination of traditional and modern motifs or Ghnaim's embroidery on Western apparel, reflects the fragmented nature of Palestinian experiences and imagination and expresses diverse perspectives on Palestine, its culture, and representation.

The theoretical frameworks and examples discussed in this chapter challenge existing notions of Palestinian tatreez and call for a reconceptualization of both its traditional and modern forms. Drawing on Hirsch's argument, postmemorial works blur the boundaries between aesthetics and documentation, and the mnemonic power inherent in textiles and embroidery offers new opportunities for understanding documents, archives, their contents, and their creation. This research is the first to apply such an understanding to Palestinian contexts, highlighting the relevance of tatreez as a method of documentation for younger generations within the diaspora. These individuals seek a broader understanding of tatreez and challenge the notion of authentic Palestinian embroidery, forging connections with their heritage and embracing their unique diasporic identities. Rather than fixating on an idealized past, they strive to create new narratives independently.

Cooking

Chapter Four delves into the multifaceted nature of memory as it unfolds within cooking and eating contexts. By exploring the social dimensions of food-related practices, we gain insight into how diasporic Palestinians perceive themselves and their place in the world. Within the Palestinian diaspora, daily food preparation offers an opportunity to exhibit one's knowledge and connection to traditional culture. The exchange of intergenerational recipes enables individuals to recreate dishes, fostering a sense of connection to their family and culture, even amidst unfamiliar environments. Thus, this study centered around the everyday milieu of cooking, where memory takes shape, blurring the boundaries between ritual and the ordinary.

This chapter opens by delving into the role of embodied food memories in the development of cuisine and identity. The act of cooking and food practices emerges as central to the formation of Palestinian identity in the diaspora. The sensory experience of eating and preparing food evokes not only memories of one's own past, such as their childhood, but also of those stories which have been passed down through generations. Recipes are not fixed, but subject to the improvisation based on individual preferences, yet certain dishes become emblematic of Palestinian cuisine to those who prepare and consume them. Mohammed's narrative illustrates this process through his recipe for *al-hilad kondura*, which relies on the embodied memories of taste, smell, and texture. The knowledge imparted by his father, intertwined with storytelling in the kitchen, adds further mnemonic connection to the dish. Mohammed's story demonstrates the power of sensorial memory in creating and connecting with food, as well as how cooking techniques evolve over time, generating new embodied memories and reshaping his understanding of this dish.

The theme of simplicity emerges as a central thread, as diasporic cuisine finds its foundation in easily accessible and uncomplicated dishes. Examples include *bamya* and *al-hilad kondura*, which consist of ingredients readily available to diasporic Palestinians such as tomatoes, okra, eggs, olive oil, ground beef, and garlic. This low threshold for entry into Palestinian cuisine allows individuals to identify themselves as Palestinians through the food they consume. However, it is

essential to note that these ingredients are not exclusive to Palestinian cuisine but are found in various culinary traditions globally. This realization prompts the question of what specifically distinguishes these dishes as distinctly Palestinian.

Despite the array of ingredients and recipes presented, this research argues that it is not the particular ingredients that inherently define each dish as Palestinian. Instead, when these dishes are prepared, they are accompanied by memories of loved ones and shared with family members who originated in Palestine and have since migrated. The act of creating these communal meals extends beyond mere sustenance, becoming a way for families to connect with their cultural heritage and social memories while living outside of their familial homeland. Social meals, for this reason, hold significant meaning, facilitating the transmission of generations' worth of recipes, family histories, personal narratives, and collective experiences. Through the routine task of meal preparation and consumption, Palestinians in the diaspora foster a social identity shaped by these practices and preserve their associated stories. This generational exchange is essential for preserving and celebrating Palestinian cultural traditions, fostering a sense of belonging in an often-disorientating diasporic context.

These memories allow young Palestinians to forge and reinforce connections with food, identities, and their loved ones. Walid's stories of cooking and family exemplify this connection. His identity as a Palestinian is intertwined with the art of cooking and meal preparation, which he inherited through social experiences with his family. His grandfather's love for *ka'ek medasi*, for example, takes on a whole new level of significance when Walid discovers its symbolic representation of what was denied to him during his youth. It becomes a symbol of what was taken from his grandfather and what has been denied to both Walid and him throughout their lives in the diaspora. In a way, it represents postmemory associated not only with the trauma of al-Nakba, but also with poverty and feelings of social and economic exclusion during the British Mandate Period. Walid's act of bringing back *ka'ek* from Jerusalem, and later from the bakery in his neighborhood, becomes a way for him to connect with his family memory and reaffirm his Palestinian identity. Simultaneously, it honors his grandfather's memory and highlights the

intersectionalities of Palestinian memory and colonial history, reaching back to the Mandate Period before 1948.

As seen throughout Chapter Four, the kitchen has long been acknowledged as a space for intergenerational memorial and cultural transmission, enabling younger generations to connect with their familial and cultural histories. Despite the significance of written recipes in transmitting food knowledge, they do not always capture the same depth of embodied memory or storytelling as oral transmission and lived practice. Cookbooks, such as *Falastin* and *Palestine on a Plate*, present Palestinian cuisine through unique lenses of identity and narrative. While both acknowledge the cultural significance of each dish, they differ in their approaches. Kalla focuses on her family's identity, offering recipes that seek to recreate the comfort of home, supported by personal narratives that imbue them with emotional meaning. However, nuances of regional flavors across Palestine are not addressed, assuming readers already possess basic embodied knowledge of regional flavors and cooking techniques. On the other hand, Tamimi and Wigley's *Falastin* explore regional variations in depth, but at the expense of the intimacy and intergenerational inheritance of family traditions. Memory is conveyed in both books, yet in a limited and static manner that lacks the dynamic quality found in, for example, an older family member's recollections of different life episodes revolving around a specific dish or meal. Thus, the documentation of recipes raises questions about the consequences on a previously fluid and dynamic transmission process.

Lastly, the diasporic Palestinian community has developed a rich and complex relationship with food and communal meals, serving as a bridge between their past and present and providing solace in the face of estrangement from their homeland. In Shahed's case, familial recollections facilitated by nostalgia serve as a coping mechanism, alleviating despondency stemming from present-day experiences of isolation and dislocation. Communal reminiscing, in this instance, offers a counterpoint to the disappointment of familial dispersal, reinforcing a sense of connection that might otherwise be lost. At the same time, by recreating familiar experiences like communal meals, they better cope with significant political, social, and/or economic shifts that uprooted them from their homes. We see this in the

case of Taylor, whose family used cuisine and collective meals to articulate their sense of self and commemorate their culture safely in a new environment, while also forging bonds with others. Adding to this, Rafal's family's use of family recipes in their restaurant not only ensures economic survival but also establishes their position within the community. Across contexts, shared meals and the fusion of flavors create nostalgic, social, and sensory memories that foster a sense of home away from home.

In conclusion, the memories associated with food are intricate and complex, blending sensory experiences with evoked bodily sensations. They intertwine personal and familial narratives with cultural and social identities, imbued with emotional contexts. Cuisine represents a layered and multifaceted experience that allows individuals to connect with their cultural heritage and express their unique identities. The Palestinian diaspora, as depicted through the cases discussed, turns to food as a means of bridging the gap between the past and the present, finding solace amidst the longing felt for the communities developed in Palestine. The transmission of recipes across generations through oral tradition and lived practices sustains social identity, cultural continuity, and the development of regional cuisines. Food and shared meals hold a significant place in preserving and transmitting embodied food knowledge and experiences, providing a way to cope with the major political, social, or economic shifts that force people to leave their homes.

Contributions to Research

Palestine / Middle Eastern Studies

For close to a century, Palestinian diasporic communities have been united by a common goal: preserving their cultural traditions and identity. Despite being scattered around the world, their everyday lives have been shaped by their shared experiences and the desire to maintain their way of life. Rosemary Sayigh proved this with her research on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the 1970s, which

showed that embroidery styles, songs, folk sayings, unique dialects, and dishes of each village could still be recognized in refugee camps.⁶⁴⁹

However, over seven decades passed since the original rupture in and expulsion from Palestine in 1948. Even Sayigh's observation is over forty years old; can we regard it as longstanding, or has Palestinian identity and culture changed since, as is inevitable for anyone who migrates? If so, how do these changes occur? To answer this, a handful of scholars sought to track its evolution amongst latter generations in the diaspora, but the research still lacks variety regarding in-depth, qualitative analysis. Indeed, scholars have produced a significant amount of research on the Palestinian diaspora that has substantially improved our comprehension of the challenges experienced by exiled Palestinians. Nevertheless, the concept of fluidity within Palestinian identity has not been extensively explored in academic literature.⁶⁵⁰

This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the changes that occur over both space and time. It aims to assess Palestinian identity among newer generations living in the diaspora, namely, third-generation al-Nakba survivors, who are now just reaching adulthood. While the process of inheriting, contesting, negotiating, transmitting, and acting upon collective memories within a diaspora remains largely underexamined,⁶⁵¹ this research explores various ideologies and identity constructs within the Palestinian diaspora, specifically those developed in response to expulsion and migration.

Some of the constructs that emerged directly in the wake of al-Nakba, such as *sumud* and *ghurbah*, are still salient today, albeit in different forms than experienced by the original generation of exiles. *Sumud*, or "steadfastness," is a form of resilience in the face of suffering and oppression,⁶⁵² while *ghurbah*, encompasses estrangement, homesickness, loneliness, isolation, and lack of

⁶⁴⁹ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 42–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538283>.

⁶⁵⁰ Loddo, "Palestinian Perceptions of Home and Belonging in Britain."

⁶⁵¹ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "Transnational Childhood and Adolescence: Mobilizing Sahrawi Identity and Politics across Time and Space," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 5 (May 2013): 875–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.631557>.

⁶⁵² Rebecca Gould, "Sumud: The Palestinian Art of Existence," *World Policy Journal* 31, no. 3 (2014): 99–106, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0740277514552979>.

belonging.⁶⁵³ While these constructs still carry historical significance, their meanings have evolved over time, influenced by new experiences and community networks.

This research examines how young, diasporic Palestinians develop new, regionally, and temporally contextualized identities that simultaneously perpetuate and deviate from the traditional cultural and social norms of their upbringing. For example, this research analyzes changing gender and queer identities, imagined communities and hybridized identities constructed upon moving between localities, and other expressions of Palestinian culture and memory as they extend from the core ideologies that characterize the archetypical Palestinian social identity. Through this study, I hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex and evolving nature of Palestinian identity in the diaspora.

History / Memory Studies

In the field of sociology of commemoration, there is a lack of research on the mnemonics of everyday rituals and symbolic action, specifically on how these settings, processes, and/or objects are used to promote the sharing of narrative and ideology among ordinary people. This research aims to fill this gap by expanding upon the role of mnemonic devices and practices in the context of Palestinian cultural heritage.⁶⁵⁴

By investigating commemorative processes in informal settings, I hope to broaden the focus of historiography from the official to the localized, everyday manifestations of the social and cultural. Memory, testimony, and embodied practices are analyzed as the central sources of evidence and unofficial archives to document these narratives. In this way, this research explores how mnemonic artifacts and practices are consumed or utilized by ordinary people.

⁶⁵³ Edward Said, "Interiors," in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (New York: Vintage, 2000), 49–55.; Julie Peteet, "Transforming Trust: Dispossession and Empowerment among Palestinian Refugees," in *Mistrusting Refugees*, ed. E. Valentin Daniah and John C. Knudsen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 173; Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora* (Routledge, 2005), 20.

⁶⁵⁴ Brian Conway, "New Directions in the Sociology of Collective Memory and Commemoration," *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 7 (July 2, 2010): 442–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00300.x>.

This research analyzes various postmemorial works, such as embroidery, autobiographical and biographical novels, and cookbooks, all of which are used to narrate the familial history of their creators as well as memories of collective trauma.⁶⁵⁵ Through this analytical perspective, this research argues that these mnemonic devices connect individual memory to that of the collective and vice versa. In other words, individual memories are interwoven with collective memories and shape the ways in which people interact with their cultural heritage.

This research aims to “bring the individual back in” to the social studies of memory by outlining their personal relationships with and attitudes towards mnemonic processes and objects.⁶⁵⁶ This perspective sheds further light on the relationship between embodied experiences during narrative sharing, such as recall and reception, as well as demonstrations of agency, the emotional salience of storytelling, and the meanings derived from stories throughout such processes.

Another aim of this research is to contribute to one of the newest developments in memory studies, which examines inherited memories of positivities. In the Palestinian context, these memories are of resilience and community-building. This deviates from the traditional assumption in collective trauma that traumatic memory supersedes other memories, becoming an oppressive force in the psychology of the individual, family, or community.

Moreover, this research brings non-Western memories to the forefront. Much of present-day research originates from and discusses the mnemonic processes of the Anglo-American world.⁶⁵⁷ My research contributes to the burgeoning research that focuses on areas of the world that are less extensively studied, such as those

⁶⁵⁵ Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105–40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/223476>.

⁶⁵⁶ William Hirst and Gerald Echterhoff, “Creating Shared Memories in Conversation: Toward a Psychology of Collective Memory,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (March 2008): 183–216, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2008.0061>; Howard Schuman, Amy Corning, and Barry Schwartz, “Framing Variations and Collective Memory: ‘Honest Abe’ versus ‘the Great Emancipator,’” *Social Science History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 451–72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23361138>.

⁶⁵⁷ Conway, *New Directions in the Sociology of Collective memory and Commemorative*

conducted in the Asia⁶⁵⁸ and Latin America.⁶⁵⁹ This approach recognizes the importance of cultural diversity and subjectivity in understanding the ways in which mnemonic processes and objects function in different societies.

Additionally, this research sheds further light on the true subjectivity of historical narrative and its construction by questioning the distinction between knowledge and interpretation. It follows the argument that historiography constructs as much as it wishes to uncover the “truth” about a time in question.⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, this research explores how historical narratives are constructed through mnemonic devices and practices, which highlights the importance of recognizing the subjectivity of historical narratives.

In conclusion, this research expands upon the mnemonics of everyday rituals and symbolic action in Palestinian cultural heritage, and it sheds light on how mnemonic devices and practices are consumed or utilized by ordinary people. This research brings non-Western memories to the forefront and recognizes the importance of cultural diversity in understanding mnemonic processes and objects and different societies. By doing so, this research questions the distinction between knowledge and interpretation and highlights the subjectivity of historical narratives.

Social Psychology

Family narratives and traditions are not only unique to individual families but they are also embedded within larger cultural narratives. While there is theorization on the relationships between these constructs – take, for example, the ecological model of family narratives⁶⁶¹ – this remains as an area in which little empirical research exists. It is not common to document what is discussed around the dinner table, while watching the news, or in intimate settings with friends and family.

⁶⁵⁸ K. Tsutsui, “The Trajectory of Perpetrators’ Trauma: Mnemonic Politics around the Asia-Pacific War in Japan,” *Social Forces* 87, no. 3 (March 1, 2009): 1389–1422, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0175>.

⁶⁵⁹ Marjorie Agosín, *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love : The Arpillera Movement in Chile* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

⁶⁶⁰ Laura R. Novick, “Analogical Transfer, Problem Similarity, and Expertise.,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 14, no. 3 (1988): 510–20, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.14.3.510>; Georg G Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century* (Wesleyan University Press, 1997).

⁶⁶¹ Robyn Fivush and Natalie Merrill, “An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives,” *Memory Studies* 9, no. 3 (June 30, 2016): 305–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698016645264>.

Those studies that do exist, usually are done so in controlled settings, as seen in research of Fivush et al.,⁶⁶² which inevitably deviates from the relaxed and private security of the home. To fill this gap, this research documents the content of stories shared between family members: of their individual days with each other, of reminisced family pasts or mourned family sorrows, as well as stories of family members no longer present. Specifically, it gauges how those in the audience, in this case, the children and grandchildren of storytellers, incorporate such narratives into their own frameworks for developing personal identities.

Individuals often position their own narratives into those shaped by their families, communities, and cultures. However, there is little knowledge about the extent to which this happens.⁶⁶³ This research aims to shed light on this topic through the retrospective interpretation of autobiographical storytelling between interviewees and their parents or grandparents. Additionally, the study explores how collective traumatic memory acts as a foundation for social identity and the construction of imagined communities on a global scale.⁶⁶⁴ It also examines how its interpretations guide the actions of its members and influence social identities. This is important as it fits within the widespread interest in identity in recent social and sociological discourse.⁶⁶⁵

The study of collective memory and orality in diasporic groups demonstrates that collectives suffering from political or social instability feel a need to preserve and consolidate their cultural or collective identities. In these contexts, collective memory plays an active and vital role in constructing the identities and cultures of groups who experienced historical defeat. For instance, Miller and Miller conducted research on the collective memory of diasporic Armenians who fled Turkey between 1915 and 1918.⁶⁶⁶ They found that, across three generations of Armenians in the diaspora, their collective memory remained strong and vivid. This

⁶⁶² Robyn Fivush and Catherine A Haden, *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Psychology Press, 2013).

⁶⁶³ Fivush and Merrill, "An Ecological Systems Approach to Family Narratives."

⁶⁶⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁶⁶⁵ Olick and Robbins, *Social Memory Studies*.

⁶⁶⁶ Donald Earl Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors : An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley Univ. Of California Press, 1999).

was due to the active effort of Armenians to preserve this memory through storytelling and folklore by not interacting with other communities.

Through these perspectives, this research analyzes the Palestinian case. Many Palestinians witnessed historical rupture, instances of collective trauma that permanently shaped their memory, history, and identities. In response, the children and grandchildren of those who witnessed collective trauma took on the task of safeguarding their culture's collective memory and oral history. Documenting songs, folktales, traditional clothing, oral histories, and other forms of cultural preservation became an urgent task, one exacerbated by feelings of existential threat.

The idea of collective memory as a "moving picture"⁶⁶⁷ suggests that social identities and mnemonic processes change within a social group, particularly within the contexts of space and time. Paying attention to the everyday localities that shape experience and memory formation, this research aims to highlight the changing history of mnemonic practices within a particular social group, as well as how these changing practices bring new experiences to the forefront of memory construction. This approach addresses recent critiques in the social sciences that argue that basic categories of analysis in the social sciences remain ahistorical.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, JSTOR (Princeton University Press, 2004), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sgkg>, 2.

⁶⁶⁸ Terrence J. McDonald, *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University Of Michigan Press, 2005).

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