

Citizenship, Memory, Identity:
Life Histories of Palestinian Migrants to Canada

by

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My thesis is dedicated to the people who told me their life stories for this project

Table of Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	vi
<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>Abstract:</i>	viii
<i>List of Abbreviations Used</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<u>Chapter One: Introduction</u>	1
<i>Liberated</i>	1
<i>Memories of Migration</i>	1
<i>Historical Context</i>	2
<i>The Catastrophe</i>	4
Figure 1: <i>Palestinian Refugees Displaced from Urban and Rural Areas</i>	4
<i>Background to UNRWA</i>	5
<i>Palestinian Political Factions</i>	7
<i>Palestinians' Relationships to their Host States</i>	9
<i>Why Refugee Camps?</i>	11
Figure 2: <i>Palestinian Refugees</i>	11
<i>Interview Structure</i>	14
<i>Arguments</i>	15
<i>Research Participants and Migration Maps</i>	18
<i>Key Historical Events</i>	20
<i>Chapter Overview</i>	22
<u>Chapter Two: Narrating Palestinian Stories</u>	25
<i>The Commander</i>	26
Figure 3: <i>Rahman's migration map</i>	26
<i>Theoretical Frameworks</i>	28
<i>Individual and Collective Memory</i>	29
<i>Ibrahim</i>	31
<i>Postmemory and Nostalgia</i>	32
<i>Memory & Life History</i>	33
<i>Next Chapter</i>	34
<u>Chapter Three: Ways of Remembering</u>	35
<i>Oral Tradition and Collective Memory</i>	36

<i>Kamal</i>	38
Figure 4: Kamal’s migration map	38
<i>Nostalgia and Social Memory</i>	41
Figure 5: Naif’s migration map	41
<i>Personal and Political</i>	44
<i>Building a Collective Story</i>	46
<i>Conclusion</i>	48
<i>Next chapter</i>	48
<u>Chapter Four: The Refugee Camp in Life Stories</u>	50
<i>Myth, History and Collective Memory</i>	50
<i>Never Having Left</i>	51
Figure 6: Adam’s migration map	51
<i>Cultural Memory and Diaspora</i>	54
<i>Camp Borders</i>	55
<i>UNRWA</i>	57
<i>Conclusion</i>	62
<u>Chapter Five: Political Participation</u>	63
<i>Issam</i>	64
Figure 7: Issam’s migration map.....	64
<i>Kamal</i>	69
Figure 8: Jamil’s migration map	71
<i>Bakr</i>	73
Figure 9: Bakr’s migration map	73
<i>Adam</i>	74
<i>Amal</i>	75
Figure 10: Amal’s migration map	75
<i>Conclusion</i>	77
<u>Chapter Six: Memories of Leaving</u>	79
<i>Seeking Citizenship</i>	80
<i>Stories of Departure: Kamal</i>	83
<i>Bakr</i> :.....	86
<i>Rahman</i> :.....	86
<i>Amin</i>	88

Figure 11: Amin’s migration map	88
<i>Issam</i>	89
<i>Reflections on Emigration and Return</i>	93
<i>Conclusion</i>	98
<u>Chapter Seven: The Future</u>	99
<i>Where is Home?</i>	101
<i>Experiences of Return</i>	104
Figure 12: Fadlo’s migration map	104
<i>Conclusion</i>	105
<u>Chapter Eight: Conclusion</u>	108
<i>The Significance of Palestinian Social Memory</i>	110
<u>Reference List</u>	116

List of Tables

Table 1: Chart of Research Participants.....	20
Table 2: Key historical events in contemporary Palestinian history.....	22

List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Palestinian Refugees Displaced from Urban and Rural Areas</i>	4
Figure 2: <i>Palestinian Refugees</i>	11
Figure 3: Rahman’s migration map	26
Figure 4: Kamal’s migration map.....	38
Figure 5: Naif’s migration map.....	41
Figure 6: Adam’s migration map.....	51
Figure 7: Issam’s migration map	64
Figure 8: Jamil’s migration map.....	71
Figure 9: Bakr’s migration map.....	73
Figure 10: Amal’s migration map.....	75
Figure 11: Amin’s migration map.....	88
Figure 12: Fadlo’s migration map.....	104

Abstract:

My thesis describes the significance of refugee camp experiences on Palestinian migrants to Canada. I portray the ways in which political solidarity and individual aspirations relate through life history interviews with migrants that have left the Middle East. My interview data, based on ten qualitative interviews, suggests that migrants do not necessarily view migration from camps as a central point of tension with the national liberation movement. The people I spoke to do not consider themselves to have turned away from Palestine in any way by coming to Canada. Rather, on many levels, kin relations and social networks structured how participants saw their responsibility to national liberation. The choices migrants made for the benefit of themselves and their families were fundamentally related to their ideas of belonging to and having a responsibility to a collective. I argue that for the people I spoke to, migration was not an act but an ongoing and cyclical experience.

List of Abbreviations Used

DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

IDF: Israel Defense Forces

PLO: Palestine Liberation Organization

PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UN: United Nations

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

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Chapter One: Introduction

*“The Palestinian is very much a person in transit: Suitcase or bundle of possessions in hand, each family vacates territory left behind for others, even as new boundaries are traversed, new opportunities created, new realities set up.” (Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*)*

Liberated

I was in a busy coffee shop chain receiving a crash course in Lebanese history. Issam, a Palestinian raised in several refugee camps throughout Lebanon, was walking me through the liberation of the camps from Lebanese government control in 1969. He described the relief of liberation, where the Lebanese *mukhabarat* (intelligence) could no longer enter the camps and “people can do whatever they want.” Issam pauses. “Most importantly, the first thing every family did, Rebecca,” he says, “building a washroom in the houses.” I was surprised initially, but following Issam’s interview I heard a handful of childhood stories about waking up at the crack of dawn to hold a spot in line so that parents or grandparents wouldn’t have to wait to use the toilet. Several migrants spoke about washrooms at one point or another, so the significance of Issam’s anecdote isn’t lost on me.

Memories of Migration

From May to October of 2017, I conducted ten life history interviews with Palestinians who have lived in refugee camps in Jordan, Gaza, or Lebanon, and have since migrated to Canada. Some came as highly-educated professionals, who specifically underlined they did not want to immigrate claiming a refugee identity. Others had fought in court to claim their refugee status in Canada, which the 1951 U.N. Convention

Relating to the Status of Refugees guarantees to displaced persons in theory but which is trickier when applied to the particular case of Palestinians (Kagan, 2009; Macklin, 2007).

I sat down with each migrant for about one to three hours, and I asked them to tell me their life story, beginning with the reasons why they grew up in a refugee camp. I had two main areas of interest that I wanted to address by speaking with migrants: the first was how they remembered life in the camps and described their decision to leave, and the second related to how their decision to leave impacted their sense of belonging to the Palestinian collective. By conducting these interviews, I hoped to explore the relationship between individual and collective Palestinian social memory, and importantly how this relationship impacts migrants' feelings about home, belonging, and national identity over the course of their lives.

Historical Context

The following provides a brief overview of the key historical events, political groups, and institutions necessary to situate the reader within the history of the Palestinian diaspora. I begin with a brief discussion of the *Nakba*, or the events of 1948 which, although not the beginning of Palestinian emigration (Baeza, 2014; Schulz & Hammer, 2003), is a key turning point in Palestinian collective memory and a foundation for modern national consciousness (Khalidi, 1997; Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007; Said, 1999; Sayigh, 2007). Anthropologist Rosemary Sayigh (2007) argues that the *Nakba*, as a historical event, connects all Palestinian people to a specific point in time. It is one of, if not the most important events in Palestinian collective memory. In Palestinian history, the *Nakba* is a turning point: it is “the demarcation line between two qualitatively opposing periods... the focal point for what might be called Palestinian time” (Sa'di & Abu-

Lughod, 2007, p.3-5). For these reasons, the Nakba was the point at which I asked migrants to begin retelling the stories of their and their families' lives, leading to how they arrived to where they are today.

The Catastrophe

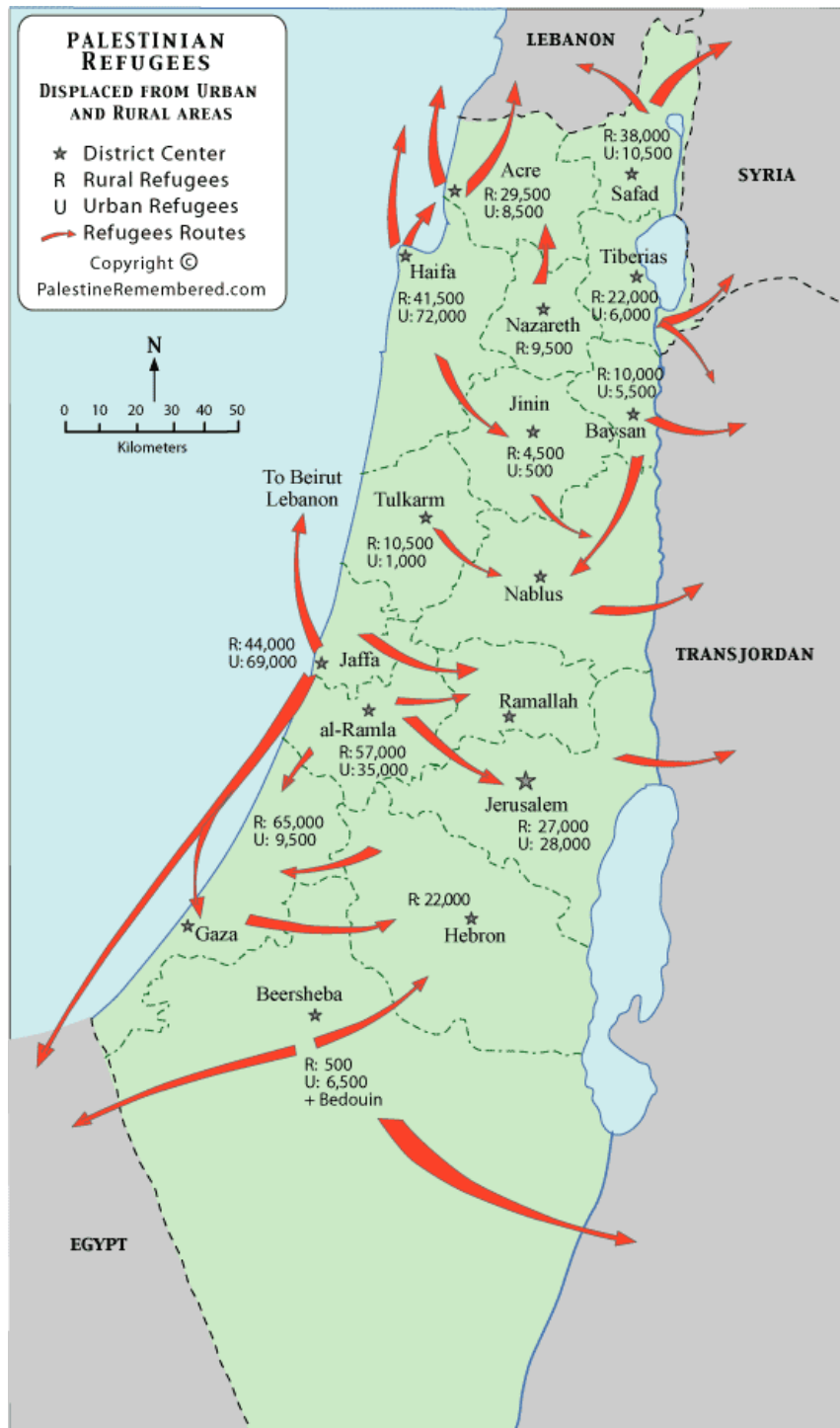


Figure 1: *Palestinian Refugees Displaced from Urban and Rural Areas* (Palestine Remembered, n.d.).

In the collection *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (2007) write that “the 1948 war that led to the creation of the State of Israel also resulted in the devastation of Palestinian society” (p.3). Between 400 000 and 700 000 people fled or were forcibly expelled from their homes after decades of conflict with the Zionist movement in Palestine (and by extension, British imperialism) culminating in the war of 1948 when Israel established its independence (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013; Masalha, 2012; Peteet, 2005; Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007, Sayigh, 1979). Approximately 160 000 people remained behind in what is today Israel, and were subject to military administration until 1966 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). In 1967, Israel occupied the land west of the Jordan river, which Jordan had seized in 1948, as well as the Gaza strip which was previously occupied by Egypt (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Palestinians recognize this event as the *Naksa*, which means “setback”. While Palestinians living within Israel’s 1948 borders are Israeli citizens today, those who live in the West Bank and Gaza are subject to ongoing military rule and expansion of Israeli settlements. Regarding those Palestinians who fled to neighboring countries in both 1948 and 1967, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, known as UNRWA, has taken responsibility for their protection while in exile. I discuss the significance of the events of 1948 on migrants’ memories further in chapter three.

Background to UNRWA

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the resulting mass displacement and exile which Palestinians call the Nakba, the United Nations founded the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees [UNRWA] (Peteet, 2005). UNRWA’s task was to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees until the UN could

reach a political solution with Israel under the Conciliation Commission for Palestine [UNCCP] (Feldman, 2007). At the time, Palestinian refugees held an especially precarious position relative to international refugee law (Farah, 2009). Palestinians did not fit the definition of a refugee according to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees because UN resolution 194 agreed on their right of return to Palestine rather than settlement in a new country (Kagan, 2009). Instead, UNRWA developed a working definition of a Palestine refugee to effectively distribute aid and determine eligible status for relief. The organization defined a Palestinian refugee as “a person whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the outbreak of the conflict and who, as a result of this conflict, has lost both his home and his means of livelihood” (Feldman, 2007, p.134).

With the UNCCP long defunct, UNRWA’s provision of aid has played a central role in defining Palestinian refugees as a distinct population category, providing as a state would for a population in exile (Farah, 2009). UNRWA’s definition of a Palestinian refugee has had a direct impact on its creation of an aid regime for Palestinians in exile and their treatment by host states. For instance, in Jordan, the majority of Palestinian refugees have citizenship, but retain their status as UNRWA refugees, making them “simultaneously citizens of a State and refugees who belong to a *stateless nation*” (Farah, 2009, p.396). Jordan recognizes Palestinians as citizens, but the UNRWA status reinforces Palestinian collective grouping within the state as refugees. Today, UNRWA camps operate in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. As of 2005, over half of the eight million Palestinians worldwide were registered refugees: UNRWA’s definition includes the descendants of those who lost their homes in 1948 (Peteet, 2005;

UNRWA, n.d.). About one third of those registered refugees live in one of 58 recognized refugee camps (UNRWA, n.d.). I explore migrants' relationships to humanitarian agencies such as UNRWA in chapter four.

Palestinian Political Factions

In the absence of a governing body, political parties have historically played a central role in service provision in Palestinian refugee camps in addition to humanitarian institutions such as UNRWA (Allan, 2005; Lischer, 2005; Peteet, 2005). Randa Farah (2009) contends that UNRWA was the first quasi-state institution for Palestinian refugees, until the rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1960s (also often referred to as *Fatah*, the faction which dominates the PLO). The PLO's presence provided a sense of national empowerment for displaced Palestinians (Farah, 2009). Living conditions in camps also improved with the arrival of the PLO: "Flush with petro dollars from the Gulf, the PLO was able to fund an ambitious program of development in the camps, securing the provision of services UNRWA had lacked the means and influence to implement" (Allan, 2014, p.107). The period oversaw a shift in public conversation surrounding UNRWA being a savior, such as 50s songs that lamented of only having "God and UNRWA's ration card", to popular songs in the 60s calling for the "burning of those same cards" (Farah, 2009, p.406). The PLO's arrival in refugee camps brought a range of services that as a relief organization, were beyond UNRWA's purpose and desire to fulfill. For instance, the General Union of Palestinian Women, founded under the PLO in 1965, offered "a range of services from literary classes to military training" (Shabaneh, 2010, p.235). The PLO's presence, alongside other political parties,

relieved tensions between UNRWA's apolitical mandate and refugees who saw relief in camps as part of a broader project to bring visibility to their national cause.

Absence of state intervention and UNRWA's inefficiency in providing services in camps has, especially (but not exclusively) in Lebanon, encouraged competition over resources between parties. From 1968 to 1982 in Lebanon, the Palestinian resistance movement had control over the camps (Peteet, 2005). They provided security as well as social services through "Popular Committees". Diana Allan's (2014) account of Palestinian refugees in Shatila camp, for example, situates the everyday struggle to access electricity relative to inter-faction competition for political control. She argues that strategies of political groups vying for control of electricity provision and camp security "represent an informal politics of survival that is bound up with structures of governance, both at the microlevel of camp neighborhoods and the macrolevel of the state" (p.220). Likewise, in Syria, Palestinian camps have community charities "run by political parties such as Hamas, Fatah, and Islamic Jihad" (Gabiam, 2012, 99). Even some kindergartens have ties to political groups such as the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Gabiam, 2012). In chapter five, we will meet people who were immensely shaped by participation in groups such as Fatah and the PFLP, and in some ways, cannot disentangle their own lives from the history of these parties. Contrary to what I assumed, loyalty to various political factions was not a family affair. According to a number of migrants, it was not strange to have one brother in Fatah, and another brother in the PFLP or the Islamist party Hamas.

Palestinians' Relationships to their Host States

While the wide reach of UNRWA and Palestinian political groups have created similar circumstances for refugees (Farah, 2009; Feldman, 2007; Feldman, 2015), it is important to keep in mind that Palestinians relate to their host states differently. While Jordan granted citizenship to its Palestinian refugees (although there are exceptions: Palestinians from Gaza living in Jordan cannot vote, receive treatment in public hospitals, or work in the public sector [Shabaneh, 2010]), Lebanon has adopted a very different approach towards its guests. Lebanon's delicate population balance between the main sects of Shi'a and Sunni Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Maronite Christian and Druze has created a historical fear of Sunni Muslim overthrow of traditionally Maronite-held political and economic power (Peteet, 2005). Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (predominantly Sunni Muslim) are not permitted to attend Lebanese schools and colleges other than those run by UNRWA (Shabaneh, 2010), although we will meet migrants in chapter four such as Adam, for whom this was not true. Additionally, the Lebanese government does not permit registration of Palestinian refugees that have relocated from secondary countries, preventing them from accessing relief services (Kagan, 2009).

The Lebanese government's treatment of Palestinian refugees also reflects their exploitation of Palestinian political goals. The government's apparent commitment to the Palestinian right of return permits them to shirk their responsibility to provide basic services in camps such as electricity (Allan, 2014). In Lebanon, debates about "civil and economic rights reiterate that the objective should not be settlement", which can paralyze even discussion of Palestinians' right to work (Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009, p.364).

Likewise, Diana Allan (2014) argues that “the institutional reluctance to develop camp infrastructure- on the part of both UNRWA and the state, is part of a policy of nonintegration intended to underscore their temporary and transitory nature” (p.103). The common reluctance to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees, both on the part of host states and by many refugees concerned with the visibility of their cause, underscores that the image of a Palestinian refugee is “confined to those who dwell in miserable camps” (Hanafi, 2008, as cited in Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009, p.364). Neglect on the part of the government also perpetuates the belief that camp communities such as Shatila are covert and dangerous (Allan, 2014). I will discuss the impact of host states’ attitudes on migrants further in chapter four.

This thesis does not attempt to make arguments based on migrants’ countries of former residence in the Middle East, although it is important to keep in mind to contextualize their experiences, as are variables of age, generation, and gender. For this reason, as well as the small sample size of the data I collected, the point of this thesis is not to make comparisons across experiences, but rather to take each specific life history as a way to understand the broader relationship between individual and collective memory, the importance of kinship and social community, and overarching Palestinian identity that has endured despite the fragmentation of their society (Said, 1999).

Why Refugee Camps?

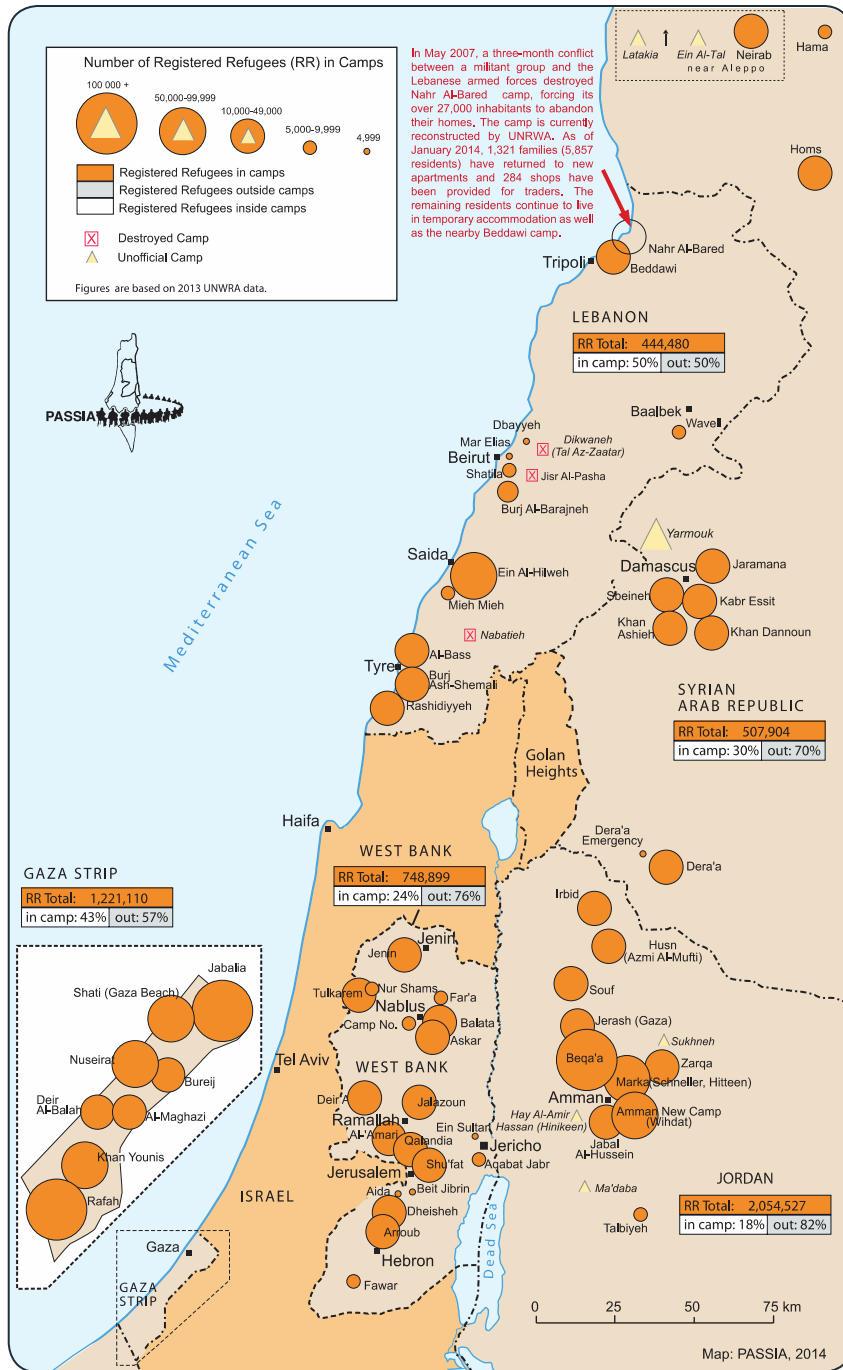


Figure 2: Palestinian Refugees (PASSIA, n.d.).

The way that the confined space of the camp organizes political life is a key factor in the debate over emigration amongst Palestinian camp communities (Allan, 2014; Farah, 2009; Gabiam, 2016; Pasquetti, 2011; Peteet, 2005). Since many refugees say that the camp is the predominant site of the struggle for liberation, people associate leaving the camp with abandoning their political cause. Diana Allan (2014) writes: “Since camps are the visible reminder of the Nakba and the cultural remainder of pre-1948 Palestine, the decision to stay or go is politically charged; both individually and collectively, it raises unsettling questions about identity, belonging, and the pursuit of historic claims” (p.172).

Allan’s (2014) ethnography of Shatila camp in Lebanon, *Refugees of the Revolution*, argues that we need to feature the personal perspectives of refugees in both academic and activist literature on the Palestinian political movement. She notes that, “both supporters and detractors of the right of return tend to cast refugee sentiments monolithically” (p.192), arguing that the lived experiences of refugees reveal more nuances than may be conveyed in publicly acceptable, national narratives. Allan (2014) draws attention to the faults in the Palestinian national movement for overlooking individuality of refugees while advocating for the right of return. She critiques this movement for idealizing and romanticizing the refugee struggle, rather than empathizing with refugees’ everyday needs. For instance, Allan (2014) explains how during a protest in Beirut organized by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a refugee shouted “‘shit to the right of return, we want to live’... she was swiftly rebuked and silenced by a DFLP

faction leader, but her brief blasphemy elicited a murmur of recognition and muted nods of assent from others present” (p.201). Allan argues that Palestine scholarship should prioritize the individual motivations and goals of Palestinian refugees relative to the collective goal of national liberation.

Allan (2014) also brings to light a generational disconnect between camp youth and their elders, where many young Palestinians in Shatila are “disillusioned by both camp politics and the collective political aspirations of their parents’ generation” (p.162). Intensifying poverty in Shatila camp has changed the ways that youth relate to national aspirations such as the right of return. Allan argues that emigration from camps symbolizes the disillusionment of younger generations, highlighting how within camp communities, “debates over emigration versus return pit two forms of futurity against one another: one rooted in a vision of nationalist yearning and endlessly deferred return; the other, in personal, familial types of futurity and future planning” (p.173). She argues that the desire to leave camps, especially among younger generations, reflects a broader existential question around future goals at the level of the family, the community, and the nation. The choice to leave or stay within the refugee camp reflects a deeper debate surrounding the future of what it means to be Palestinian.

Allan’s (2014) ethnography underscores that refugee camp residents have personal ambitions and a pragmatic outlook on life, just as most other people do. The way that refugees often characterize their existence in camps as a struggle for collective political recognition is an effect of how various interplaying factors marginalize the refugee camp and reinforce its distinct character (De Alwis, 2004; Feldman, 2015; Ramadan, 2013). Furthermore, the struggle to consolidate a single historical memory

among Palestinian political groups reflects the challenges of voicing their subaltern national narrative, the legitimacy of which the West suppresses and questions (Swedenburg, 1995).

The issues that Allan discusses helped me to formulate an idea for my own research project. If the issue of leaving camps was so politically significant for those who had chosen to do so, what was that experience like? How do people who had chosen to leave camps understand their choices and situate those choices relative to dominant narratives within the Palestinian national movements that appear to stigmatize emigration (Allan, 2014; Pasquetti, 2011). Having spent about eight months in the Middle East spread over three separate visits from age eighteen to twenty-one (mostly in Israel with some time in Jordan and a few visits to the West Bank), I had initially wanted to return and explore my questions about refugee identity and belonging on the ground in refugee camps in the West Bank. However, I found that being far away in Canada actually positioned me well to ask and explore this question that was pertinent and timely with respect to the themes and issues raised by Palestine scholars.

Interview Structure

My project consisted of ten single life history interviews, conducted either in Halifax or Toronto. Each interview lasted from 50 minutes to three hours. I conducted a total of ten interviews, nine in person (male) and one via video call (female). Participants ranged between their mid-twenties to their mid-seventies. Two grew up in Jordan, three in Gaza, and five were from Lebanon.

I began with a simple prompt, which was: “tell me how you came to live in a refugee camp?” which permitted the participant to elaborate on their past at their own

pace (Blee, 1998). Because I wanted to examine migrants' full life stories, I used this opening question to encourage them to elaborate on any stories from earlier generations in the family, especially ones that dealt with memories of Palestine or parents or grandparents who experienced exile from Palestine directly in 1948 or 1967.

I aimed to ensure that the life story followed through to the person's experience in Halifax and/or Toronto. However, because I allowed migrants to direct the interview process, their stories did not always follow a chronological order (High, 2014). I also often asked questions about key themes I wanted to discuss. The themes I addressed were 1) how the migrants related to their parents' or grandparents' experience of Palestine, 2) how they came to Canada, 3) what their aspirations were for doing so, 4) future aspirations and positions relative to collective political goals such as the right of return. I discuss the life history methods I used for my project further in chapter two.

Arguments

I began my research with the assumption that the choice to leave a camp community would have a significant impact on migrants' feelings about their commitment to the Palestinian collective. Specifically, I thought that emigration might hinder feelings of national belonging and attachment. However, the people I spoke to do not consider themselves to have turned away from Palestine in any way by coming to Canada. I thought that leaving the region for these migrants would signify an acceptance of the Palestinian fate of exile, but migrants do not see it this way. For the majority of migrants I spoke with, emigration from camps was overwhelmingly a non-issue with respect to their relationship to being Palestinian. Contrary to what I expected, the choices

migrants made for the benefit of themselves and their families were fundamentally related to their ideas of belonging to and having a responsibility to a collective.

Kinship and social networks were fundamental to how migrants saw their commitment to their national identity. Migrants did not feel their commitment to national liberation as an impersonal, patriotic duty, nor that the immediate needs of spouses and children pulled them away from those duties and across the Atlantic. Rather, family structured how migrants saw their responsibility to national liberation, whether that was the sacrifices and traumatic experiences of a parent, or how their camp neighborhood was still named after their family's village. Migrants communicated multiple ways through which political identity was personal, and vice versa. The fact that experiences of national struggle were themselves personal and familial both informed the various ways in which people chose to act on their politics (or chose not to act on them) and how they saw themselves within the fabric of their national existence.

These findings are relevant to migration literature more broadly because they raise important questions about the finality of migration decisions. The case of Palestinian migrants is especially poignant because their relationship to concepts such as "home" is less straightforward, nor is home such an easily-available place. My research also points out that for Palestinian migrants or refugees, there are multiple "homes" involved, namely the Palestinian homeland (much of what is today Israel) and the many "home-camps" spread across the Levant (Qasmiyeh, 2013). I argue throughout my thesis that for the people I spoke to, migration was not an act but an ongoing and cyclical experience. On a practical level, migrants had to travel between many places for stable employment as well as for their families. On a deeper and more personal level, migrants

demonstrated an attachment to multiple spaces and places: Canada, the refugee camp, the Palestinian communities in the Gulf countries where migrants lived and worked, and of course Palestine.

The above arguments speak in support for ongoing critiques of methodological nationalism, which equates culture and society with the nation state (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002; Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2003). Understanding how refugee identity remains with a person beyond their reception in a particular host country, which was true for most Palestinian migrants I spoke with, points toward a need for focusing on the complex links between “transnational communities instead of the nation and its immigrants” (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002, p.324). Likewise, Sari Hanafi (2005) argues in favour of understanding Palestinian migration through a transnational lens, meaning that systems of “multi-polar connectivity” can help explain the relationship between Palestinians and the many places they might call home (p.104). The relationship between Palestine and Palestinians’ current place of residence is not a straightforward one, but rather one of continuous transition (Hanafi, 2005; Schulz & Hammer, 2003). In line with my own arguments, Hanafi notes that obtaining citizenship is a strategy for guaranteeing rights rather than a marker of assimilation.

Finally, my arguments also provide an important contribution to Palestinian diaspora and refugee literature because the people I spoke with actually minimized the act of leaving camps in relation to their place in the collective Palestinian social imaginary. This contradicts significant ethnographic literature on Palestinian refugees, much of which contends that there is a tension between personal aspirations and collective political solidarity in camps, characterized by upholding the right of return to

Palestine and the stigmatization of *tawteen* [resettlement] (Allan, 2014; Farah, 2009; Gabiam, 2016; Pasquetti, 2011; Peteet, 2005).

Research Participants and Migration Maps

The chart on the following page (Table 1) provides an overview of key information about each migrant who participated in an interview. I have provided their approximate age, place of origin in Palestine, camp of origin, other places they lived before coming to Canada, as well as generation relative to exile. I have also placed maps of each participant's main places of migration over the course of their lives throughout my thesis.

Name	Approximate age at time of interview	Birth place	Name of place of origin in Palestine	Generation after 1948	Other countries of residence
Kamal	Early 50s	Jordan	<i>al-Dawayima</i>	2 nd	Saudi Arabia
Bakr	<i>Information not available</i>	Gaza	<i>Information not available</i>	2 nd	Egypt; Israel
Issam	Early 60s	Lebanon	<i>Suhmata</i>	2 nd	Jordan (youth); United Arab Emirates; Ghana; England
Naif	Early 60s	Lebanon	<i>Ras al-Ahmar</i>	2 nd	Jordan; Kuwait; Asia (business); United States
Fadlo	Early 60s	Lebanon	<i>al-Bassa</i>	2 nd	Syria; Cypress; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; United States
Rahman	Mid 70s	Gaza (pre-1948)	<i>Iraq Suwaydan</i>	1 st (experienced 1948)	Egypt; Syria; Kuwait
Adam	late 20s	Lebanon	<i>as-Zeeb</i>	3 rd	United Arab Emirates (youth)
Jamil	Late 30s	Gaza	<i>Information not available</i>	3 rd	Saudi Arabia (youth); Egypt
Amin	Early 50s	Lebanon	<i>Safari</i>	2 nd	Cuba; Egypt, Syria, Cypress,

					Germany (youth)
Amal	Early 50s	Jordan	<i>Lyd</i>	2nd	Canada

Table 1: Chart of Research Participants

Key Historical Events

The following table (Table 2) provides a brief overview of key historical events mentioned in my thesis:

Events Mentioned	Date	Description
Balfour Declaration	1917	Britain’s announcement of its support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine (Sa’di, 2007).
Nakba	1948	In 1948, between 400 000 and 700 000 Palestinians fled or were forcibly expelled from their homes after conflict with the Zionist settlement movement in Palestine (since the late 19 th century) culminated in the war of 1948 when the British mandatory period ended and the Israel established its independence (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013; Masalha, 2012; Peteet, 2005; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod, 2007, Sayigh, 1979).
Naksa	1967	In 1967, Israel occupied the land west of the Jordan river, which Jordan had seized in 1948, as well as the Gaza strip which was previously occupied by Egypt (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013). Palestinians recognize this event as the <i>Naksa</i> , which means “setback”.
Liberation of the Camps (Lebanon)	1969	In 1969, the Cairo accords permitted an armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon (Peteet, 2005). The Cairo Accords granted Palestinians the right to work, and to form ‘popular committees’ which controlled the camps. The Palestinian resistance controlled the camps from 1968 to 1982, providing security as well as social services (Peteet, 2005).

Events Mentioned	Date	Description
Opening of Gulf Market to Palestinian workers	1970s (height)	While oil production in the Gulf countries in the 1950s oversaw some Palestinian labour migration to the gulf countries (predominantly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar), there were three historical waves of Palestinian migration: after 1948, after 1967 (the largest wave), and after the civil war in Lebanon in 1976 (Rouleau, 1985). By the 1970s, 40% of “the available Palestinian labour force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was employed in neighboring Arab countries” (Hanieh, 2011).
Black September (Jordan)	1970	A ten-day campaign by the Jordanian Army, under the leadership of King Husayn, to rid Jordan of Palestinian guerilla organizations and their challenge to the King’s authority. The Jordanian army did not distinguish between civilians and armed guerillas, and killed over 3000 people (Cleveland & Bunton, 2013).
Lebanese Civil War	1975-1990	A period of civil war in Lebanon between right-wing Christian militias and the predominately Muslim Lebanese National Movement [LNM] (Peteet, 2005). Palestinians were involved in the war as allies of the LNM.
Land Day	March 30 th , 1976	Commemorates the killing of six Palestinians by Israeli forces over their protest of land expropriations (Activestills, 2017).
Sabra & Shatila Massacre (Lebanon)	1982	A massacre perpetrated against Palestinians in Sabra-Shatila camps by Israeli-supported Christian militias (Peteet, 2005).
Israeli Occupation of Southern Lebanon	1978; 1982-2000	Israel occupied the border area of southern Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, when Israel occupied southern Lebanon and entered Beirut (Peteet, 2005). Following negotiations, the PLO withdrew from Lebanon and moved its headquarters to Tunisia.

Events Mentioned	Date	Description
War of the Camps (Lebanon)	1984-1990	A series of conflicts between Palestinian camps in Beirut- particularly <i>Burj al-Barajneh</i> and <i>Shatila</i> - between Palestinians and the Syrian-supported Shi'a militia ' <i>Amal</i> ' (Peteeet, 2014).
2014 Gaza War (Operation Protective Edge)	2014	A 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza that killed 72 Israelis and 2104 Palestinians (BBC, 2014)

Table 2: Key historical events in contemporary Palestinian history

Chapter Overview

My thesis begins in chapter two with a discussion of the various meanings we can draw from the life story interview. I discuss how and why migrants chose to narrate the parts of their lives they did, and connect my discussion to a broader conversation within oral history theory and practice. I provide an overview of key theoretical debates that informed my approach to understanding the stories I heard, in particular the relationship between individual and collective narratives in life history.

I begin chapter three of my thesis by focusing on stories migrants told of Palestine, specifically focusing on how migrants came to live in a refugee camp. I explore the theme of nostalgia in these stories, and how migrants expressed desire for the homeland by channeling their parents' and grandparents' memories of Palestine, as well as their experiences of expulsion and loss. I also touch on the various ways in which migrants narrated these stories, and how these different approaches to narration convey their different meanings as well as migrants' intentions for telling them.

Chapter four looks at how, in addition to inter-generational storytelling, the space of the camp preserves Palestinian social memory. Primarily, this refers to memories migrants had of the physical space of the camp itself, humanitarian institutions such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and the political parties that played a significant role in migrants' early lives.

The various ways migrants approached the question of "political" involvement, and migrants' decisions to join a party or not, are explained in chapter five. In this chapter, I focus on how migrants expressed this decision in relation to their families, and highlight the significant role kinship plays in decision-making relative to political engagement.

Chapter six examines responses to my initial main research question: how and why migrants made their decisions to leave. I also note the needs of migrants' kin, particularly education and citizenship, as a primary motivating factor to immigrate to Canada.

The final chapter, seven, discusses migrants' reflections on leaving the Middle East, their hopes for their children, and thoughts on return to Palestine. I also touch on the experiences of a few participants who were able to "return" to Palestine, and show how migrants' relationship to their "home-camps" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013) demonstrates a commitment and sense of belonging to a plurality of spaces (Ben Ze'ev, 2005).

My conclusion touches on the significance of social memory for Palestinian people specifically, and how the unresolved question of Palestinian statehood makes remembering a particularly political project. I also touch on the limitations of my research and the oral history framework, specifically noting that there are many other

ways that connection to the homeland and home-camp occurs for Palestinians living abroad. Lastly, I argue the importance of recording Palestinian life stories as a way to amplify these narratives.

Chapter Two: Narrating Palestinian Stories

*“Before 1948, we were successful, we had many things, and then one day everything changed”
- Amin*

I conducted life history interviews with Palestinians who have lived in refugee camps in order to understand how individual lives relate to, are influenced by, or can come into tension with the political context and national identities within which they are situated. As migrants who had chosen to leave a refugee camp, a space which carries intense political significance for Palestinians, these refugees and their descendants are a relevant group to research how political and personal narratives relate to one another (Allan, 2014; Gabiam, 2016, Farah, 2009; Feldman, 2007; Pasquetti, 2011; Petet, 2005; Shabaneh, 2009). Personal accounts of historical traumas such as the Nakba help us process how people who have lived through these events remember and recount them, as well as understand and make meaning out of them in the present (Creet, 2011). These stories help us to communicate how individual people understand broader social and historical processes (DuBois, 2014). This chapter looks at the various ways that migrants narrated their life stories, and the different meanings we can draw from them. I situate migrants’ responses in relation to conversations within oral history theory to demonstrate the relationship between individual and collective memory in their interviews.

The Commander



Figure 3: Rahman's migration map

When Abdelrahman was a child, a young Egyptian deputy commander named Gamal Abdel Nasser knocked on the door of his family home in the village of *Iraq Suwaydan* in Gaza. The Egyptian army had been trying a few times now to use his house as a commanding base, as their family owned a second home. Rahman, as he likes to be called, says that his father had no problem with loaning his house to the Egyptian army while they fought the militias who later became the Israel Defense Forces [IDF]. What Rahman's father wanted in return however, was help with moving. The first two soldiers refused, saying "no, this is your problem." When the future president of Egypt arrived at their door however, he finally agreed to provide help: "Give him 20, 30 soldiers with two trucks to move his things," the young Nasser said. Later, when the revolution in Egypt occurred and Nasser rose to power, Rahman's father saw his photo in the newspaper. Rahman told me how, "my dad, he bring the newspaper with him, and he ask me, Rahman- you remember this guy? Now he is the ruler of Egypt."

I wanted to open with this particular story for a couple of reasons: the first being that Rahman's anecdote about meeting the future president of Egypt illustrates the dual nature of remembering: it is a personal as well as a social activity attached to specific cultural and symbolic meanings (Apfelbaum, 2010; Paxson, 2005; Portelli, 1998). In the moment that Rahman had an encounter with Nasser, he could not know that this commander would become anyone historically notable. He narrates that particular moment in time with the knowledge he gained later: he had met someone who would become worth mentioning.

People tell stories with particular historical moments in mind, "calling into play what the Popular Memory Group (1998) call the 'past-present relation'. Our view of the past is shaped by our prior history as well as our present circumstances. We understand and speak of the past in the context of other time periods" (DuBois, 2014, p.237). I would guess that Rahman made a point to tell me about his father's exchange with Nasser because Nasser was and is a "somebody". By associating himself and his family with an important historical figure, Rahman asserts his own place in history when the world often ignores or outright denies what Palestinians have lived through (Said, 2000).

When I sat down with Rahman to tell me about his life growing up as a refugee in Gaza and why he eventually made the choice to emigrate to Canada, I was not initially interested in brushes with political celebrities. Rahman told me lots of anecdotes that I wasn't sure where to place or what to make of, like how he fixed a ship better than his supervising Soviet engineer could while working in Egypt, or how he loaned a poor Sudanese fellow money at the airport so that he could make his way home- and found that the money made its way back to him, repaid in full. I wanted to know how

Palestinian migrants spoke about the Palestinian national movement, and retroactively made sense of their choice to leave the refugee camps they grew up in as helpful or harmful to the project of collective liberation. In short, I wanted to know how and why migrants came to leave their “home-camps” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). And yet, serendipitous encounters, tales of individual cunning and a knack for getting by were common themes in Rahman’s interview, and others as well.

What I learned from these stories, which oral historians such as Alessandro Portelli (1998; 2004) also reinforce, is that people narrate their lives with a point in mind. They “draw selectively from their lives and experiences to communicate that point” (DuBois, 2014, p.244). According to Ashplant (2004), the value of these anecdotes in life story narratives “rests not only... in the discrete facts which it may yield, but also in the interpretation of lived experience which it... necessarily embodies” (p.99). The strength of oral history narratives is they they tell us how people make meaning and sense out of their lives (Portelli, 1998). Oral narratives reveal something true about people’s lives insofar as the stories human beings tell are highly personal and often inaccurate. Perhaps the Egyptian general who knocked on the door wasn’t the young Nasser after all. Yet I doubt that uncovering whether it really was Nasser that day matters much in order to understand the story’s importance to Rahman.

Theoretical Frameworks

Because I wanted to know what life in camps was like and how migrants made the decision to leave *after* they were settled in Canada, a central question that framed my research was: how do people remember their lives in camps and describe the choices they made to leave these camps? Thus there were two central tracks that informed my research

questions: one regarding the structure of life story narratives and which events migrants choose to recount and why- and the other regarding migrants' feelings about their relationship to the national collective. The following section explores the theoretical background that frames the relationship between individual and collective memories, which was a central interest of mine in migrants' life stories.

Individual and Collective Memory

Thomas Lacroix and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) explain the ways in which individual and collective memories interrelate. They argue that “collective memories- understood as social constructs” play a key role in forming the political identities of displaced groups. These collective memories consolidate notions of identity and belonging to a specific political community in exile from the homeland. A shared past plays a central role in belonging to a given community of people (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013).

A common experience of historical events contributes to a sense of collective belonging, but mythology and morality also form these categories of identity- what Liisa Malkki (1995) defines as the “mythico-historical order” with respect to her ethnography of Hutu refugees in Tanzania (p.54). Hutu refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania situated their period of exile with “reference to a shared body of knowledge about their past” (p.53). The narratives the refugees told of their exile were “heavily moral stories whose purpose was to educate, explain, prescribe and proscribe” (p.54). The purpose of telling these stories was not simply to recount Hutu history, but to situate themselves as morally opposed to the Tutsi- who became “the embodiment of abstract moral qualities such as evil, laziness, beauty, danger” (p.54). The Hutu made use of history, myth and

morality to define themselves as other to the Tutsi and carve out their understanding of themselves and their world.

Anthropologists such as Malkki understand the concept of “myth” beyond the binary of truth or untruth. By arguing that the Hutu “mythologize” their history, Malkki does not mean that these stories were necessarily false. Rather, she uses the term “myth” to identify how people use stories to selectively order their ideas of themselves in political terms: “what made the refugees’ narrative mythical... was not its truth or falsity, but the fact that it was concerned with *order* in a fundamental, cosmological sense... it was concerned with the ordering and reordering of social and political categories, with the defining of self in distinction to other” (p.55).

Malkki’s concept of “mythico-history”, which means the sources groups draw upon to order and frame categories of political belonging, also relates to how memory and nationalism intertwine. With respect to memory and nationalism, Jonathan Boyarin (1994) contends that collective memory remains “inseparable from the stubborn idea of the nation as a ‘body’” (p.24), meaning that dominant national narratives shape representations of history and memory. Boyarin argues that because the modern nation state shapes collective political belonging, “historical memories are almost inevitably cast as claims of national identity” (p.15)

Another story Rahman told me also illustrates how the telling of individual life stories takes on a broader political framing. Rahman’s account illustrates the relationship between personal and political, individual and social memory in life stories. The following paragraph illustrates Rahman’s memory of an experience as a young child during the beginning of the conflict between Palestinians and the Zionist movement in

Palestine. For Rahman, the beginning of his people's catastrophe, and the concurrent rupture in the relationship between local Jews and Muslims in Palestine, was encapsulated by a sad misunderstanding over a cucumber plant:

Ibrahim

When Rahman was a child, his father had a best friend named Ibrahim in a nearby village called *Nuqba*. Ibrahim was Jewish, and the relationship between them and the people in Rahman's own village, *Iraq Suwaydan*, was solid. One day, there was a problem with the well in Rahman's village, so a few women went to *Nuqba*, the Jewish village, for water. Rahman accompanied his mother and aunt there:

They fill the jars, and [on] their way back... there was plants... a kind of cucumber... and I want to take one. I was a boy, and the man who was standing there- I think he was not meant to hit me, because that man is my father friend- Ibrahim, and... he hit me. And my aunt was so angry, and she took a stick from the ground and went and hit him... then the problems start...

Rahman understands this conflict with his father's friend as a sign of wider trouble in the region. To him, this story represents a personal experience of how the settlement of Jews from Europe impacted the relationship between Muslims and Jews in Palestine- even if the cucumber incident was unrelated entirely. For Rahman, Ibrahim's mistake is indicative of the broader rupture that Zionism brought to Rahman and his family.

Narratives are inherently selective. We choose to tell stories that are relevant or important and sideline those that are "deemed as inappropriate or potentially destabilising" (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). The memorializing of certain group narratives over others is also a political project, in which groups draw on specific collective memories in order to demand redress for historical wrongs (Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). For instance, nearly all migrants I spoke with mentioned their right of

return to Palestine repeatedly. They connected this right to their parents' or grandparents' expulsion from their homes and resulting loss of property. There was a consistent theme of justice in migrants' responses to my questions about future aspirations and their right of return to Palestine.

Paying attention to individual memories of political events also provides an important complement to national memory, as political groups often attempt to present a unified version of history in order to legitimate their cause, overlooking past inconsistencies and tensions. For instance, Ted Swedenburg (1995) highlights how in consolidating a national memory of unity during the 1936 Arab uprisings in British Mandate Palestine, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)'s account overlooks important class and gender distinctions and tensions in Palestinian society during that period.

Postmemory and Nostalgia

Another central research interest I had was in processes of inter-generational memory in migrants' life stories. I was therefore interested in the places of parents' and grandparents' experiences in the narratives of informants. Migrants expressed nostalgia for things they had not lived by recounting the stories their elders shared with them. Michalinos Zembylas (2014) uses the term *postmemory* to describe "memories that do not refer to or draw on a person's actual past experiences, but rather memories generated through the lens of a preceding generation marked by trauma" (p.8). Postmemories may appear to compose an individual's own memories, which is especially revealing of how the second generation- in my case the children of refugees from Palestine- relate to the traumatic experiences of their parents (Hirsch & Miller, 2015). Postmemory as a

conceptual tool apprehends how people can long for something they have not lived and known themselves, such as migrants' ancestral villages in Palestine.

Memory & Life History

I used life history interview methods to understand the relationship between political and personal experiences of Palestinian camp life and migrants' relationship to their Palestinian identities. In *Remembering Mass Violence*, Steven High and Edward Little (2014) argue for paying greater attention to individual accounts of collective historical traumas. They say that there is an overlap between the individual and the collective in personal memory, and that life history methods can effectively tease apart the ways in which they intertwine: "oral history constitutes a dialogue between autobiography and biography, between individual experience and societal transformation" (High, Little, & Duong, 2014, p.5). Life history interviews can uncover how survivors of traumatic events make sense of their own experiences, or the experiences of their parents or grandparents as first-hand victims of trauma.

The life story interview can reveal the ways in which the interview subject recollects and presents past events within their own life narrative. High (2014) writes, "frequently, survivors themselves are struggling to understand what happened and its significance in their own lives. Alessandro Portelli reminds us that memory is best understood as an 'active process' rather than simply as a 'passive depository of facts'" (p.37). Applying Portelli's theories to the Montreal Life Stories Project, High (2014) highlights that a key objective was not just to recollect the person's story, but also to "examine the life story as a whole, listening for the interviewees' relationships to their own stories: where they lingered and what they skipped over" (p.43). Life histories

provide insight into how people who experience violent conflict and displacement firsthand define themselves relative to their experiences. The life history interviewer looks beyond the experience of the interview subject to ask questions such as, “what words do *they* [witnesses to violence] use to define themselves? What words do *they* use to describe their own experiences? Whom do *they* identify with and against?” (High, 2014, p.20).

High (2014) also reminds the reader that the strength of oral history lies in its subjectivity. In the life story interview, “we try to see the past through the eyes of others, coming to an understanding of their personal truths” (p.39). The subjective nature of life story interviews allows for an exploration of the contradictions within memory, and how individual recollections of past events can differ from collective ones (DuBois, 2014; Swedenburg, 1995). Furthermore, privileging life stories creates space for marginalized narratives that have been forgotten or pushed aside by dominant memories of history (High, 2014). My project situates individual memories of Palestinian camps as the foundation for analyzing how personal and collective narratives overlap and influence one another (p.5).

Next Chapter

The next chapter explores themes within of migrants’ life stories more deeply. I focus on stories that migrants told about the Nakba- their description of their family’s expulsion from Palestine. I discuss migrants’ descriptions of these stories in order to show how nostalgia and inter-generational storytelling helps to form ties between individual and collective memory.

Chapter Three: Ways of Remembering

“I remember especially like recently, with the age of computers and internet and technology...like I remember my uncle, he’d pull out pictures that he’d found of our village on the computer, and he’d open them up, and he’d show them to my Grandma, and she’d point at it and shed be like ‘yes, that’s the mosque, you know, that’s where your dad used to pray, and that’s the beach, that’s where we used to wash our clothes’”
– Adam

“How did you come to live in a refugee camp?” was the question I used to prompt migrants to tell their life stories. I hoped interviewees would begin by recounting their families’ stories of exile, as I was particularly interested in how people remembered stories of generations before them. I wanted to know whether and how migrants could retell stories of leaving Palestine, which in the case of all migrants except Rahman, they did not experience directly. The displacement, forced expulsion, and in some cases massacres perpetrated against Palestinians by Zionist military groups such as the *Irgun*, *Palmach*, and *Haganah* in 1948 was central to the ways that migrants “[referenced] their memories across generations” (Habashi, 2013, p.425). During interviews, the Nakba served as the prominent historical event from which migrants made sense of the trajectories of their families’ lives- and I certainly shaped migrants’ responses by asking them about how they became refugees (DuBois, 2014). My questions purposely asked migrants to contextualize life events on a historical and political timeline (Habashi, 2013). The following chapter discusses migrants’ various approaches to narrating these stories. I explore the different ways that people remembered and retold stories that their elders passed on to them, and in what follows, I discuss instances of nostalgia in their narratives.

Michalinos Zembylas (2014) emphasizes how the predominant emotion associated with nostalgia in scholarly literature is a feeling of *loss*, where nostalgia signifies “looking back towards a place or time that no longer exists or or never existed... in which what is no longer present is valued as ‘better’” (p.8). According to critical memory literature, “the desire to return and restore one’s idealized past” falls within the category of “‘restorative’ nostalgia” (Boym, 2011, as cited in Zembylas, 2014, p.8). A different kind of nostalgia is known as “reflective” nostalgia, which signifies a desire to “dwell in longing and loss in productive and subversive ways” (Boym, 2011, as cited in Zembylas, 2014, p.8). Both concepts of restorative and reflective nostalgia underline how Palestinian migrants’ expressions of loss and desire to return to their homeland is both reflective of and looks towards a more just future. While not all migrants expressed the goal of a physical return to their villages in Palestine, their personal and collective struggles shaped the futures they sought for themselves and their families.

Migrants productively employed nostalgia when telling their stories as a way of connecting their histories to their future goals for a secure family life or a just solution for the Palestinian people more broadly. In this sense, instances of nostalgia underlined the connection between individual and social memory in life stories. Expressions of loss and wistfulness for experiences that migrants both lived and inherited from elders contributed to their understanding of themselves and their positioning with respect to their national identities.

Oral Tradition and Collective Memory

People narrate their lives in reference to broader historical experiences, which underscores the connection between personal and collective memory (Habashi, 2013;

Portelli, 1998). Relating to the Palestinian context, Janette Habashi (2013) writes that, “Palestinian society employs an oral tradition that propagates the collective experience among different generations in which the individual dimensions of each is apparent” (p.421). For Palestinian people, oral tradition “not only illustrates past events, it also provides the tools for grasping the present and traversing the future” (p.421).

Margaret Paxson’s (2005) concept of ‘social circles’ also illuminates how social activity within a particular community context preserves collective memory. Having shared memories serves to form bonds of belonging, and delineates rules of social inclusion or exclusion. Paxson notes that recollection occurs, “when and where we perform other social acts- in ritual, narrative, language and religious practice, and the details of social and economic organization” (Paxson, 2005, p.14). Likewise, Allan (2005), argues that “fragments that make up the idiomatic fabric of everyday life” are just as essential to these cultural transmissions over generations as the actual stories are. For example, listening to parents’ stories as a part of everyday home activities helps transmit memories over generations. Amal mentioned that because she spent a lot of time at home with her mother, she received stories about Palestine from her as opposed to her father. Kamal described how he received memories of Palestine from his parents. He noted how his parents shared stories about Palestine with him during times of togetherness when resources were scarce. The following section explores how Kamal’s parents transferred their own stories to him:

Kamal

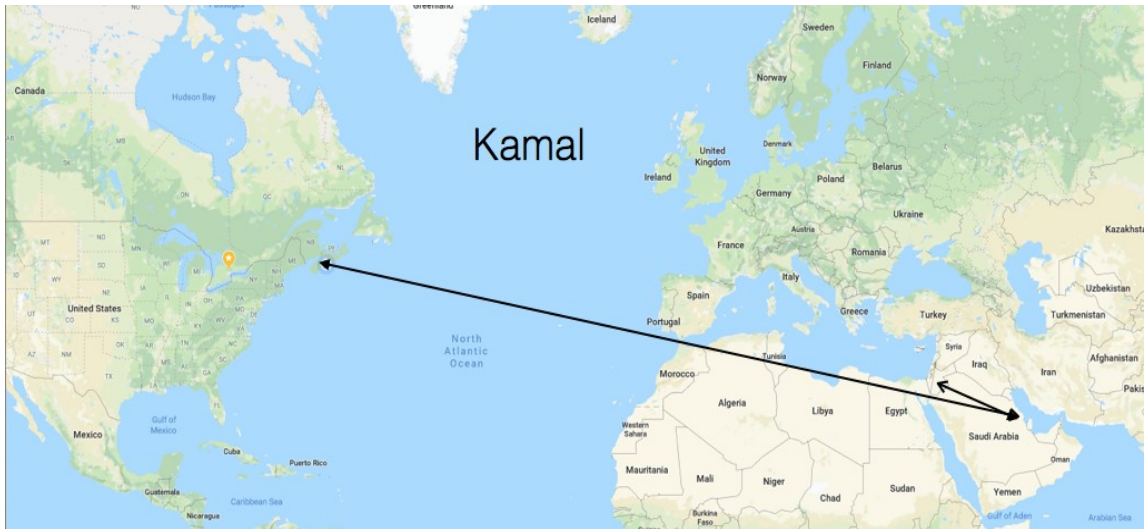


Figure 4: Kamal's migration map

Kamal opened our interview by explaining that he is from a village near Hebron called *al-Dawayima*. When his village was occupied in 1948, his family fled to Jericho, where they lived in a camp called *Ain as-Sultan* until 1955. Eventually, Kamal's family moved to a camp in Amman, which is where he was born. Kamal describes the massacre that occurred in al-Dawayima: "In 1948, the approach was terrifying people by killing anyone... in our village we lost about 700 people... Anyone who stayed in the village there, was killed." Kamal told a story about how his mother returned to al-Dawayima to save their family gold after they were forced to leave:

My mom told me that she left her gold in our house, in al-Dawayima, and they had no money. And she left the village with four kids. They were around in the mountains waiting for, you know, they thought that it's only for a few days, and they will return. And she said, she urged my dad to go and get the gold. Because they want to buy something for the family. But my dad said, you will lose me, and nobody will support you. So my mom decided to go, didn't tell my dad. She left from the mountain area next to the village and get into the house, she risked her life actually. And managed to get the gold actually. The gold means... at that time palestinian women use it to save it for the dark days let's say. She managed to get the money to get the gold out of the house. And I lost two cousins actually. They tried to do the same, and they were killed in the village.

I asked Kamal why his family moved from Ein as-Sultan near Jericho to *al-Wehdat* in Amman, where Kamal grew up. He attributed their move to the inhospitable climate in Jericho, and to the fact that his parents lost four of his siblings due to illness:

When my family moved from our village, al-Dawayima, I had two sisters and two brothers. And you know our village is like 1000 metres above sea level. So it was a bit cold and not hot. Now they moved 400 metres below the sea level. Jericho, you know it's the lowest point on earth, and it was very hot in summer, you know occupation took place in June. Our village was taken 28th of October 1948. During the summer my mom lost four kids actually, because of the heat, and because of the illness and no medical support in that refugee camp... So because of no medical coverage or support she lost the four kids and she was pushing my dad to move. She said this climate, this weather is not suitable for us. We are not used [to] such heat actually, which is 50s, in Jericho in the summer. My dad start... planning to move.

In 1955, Kamal's family moved to Madaba in Jordan, which had farmland available to rent. His family didn't manage there, but Kamal didn't know why. He specified his parents' need to support their children as the reason for moving again to Amman: "in the refugee camps they had some sort of support [from] the United Nations, and they will get some school and education for the kids," he explained.

I then asked Kamal to describe a typical day growing up in *al-Wehdat*. Kamal began by describing *al-Wehdat* camp more generally, and then spoke about his own personal experience. "Refugee camps in Jordan," he explains, were like "random houses" at the beginning: "people just picked that piece of land because it was empty... and after that the organizations... came to help to provide like permanent tents... and after that they started to create units," which is what *wehdat* means in English. Life in *al-Wehdat* was difficult: there was no sewage system, and no schools in the beginning- although this was before Kamal's time. He says he was lucky, because by the time he was born in 1965, UNRWA established their schools for refugees. Kamal described how his father's

life changed. Having been a farmer in Palestine, he ended up trading cattle after he was exiled to the West Bank: “He didn’t secure that much money for us as a family,” Kamal said. So UNRWA helped with the basics then, like sardines and vegetable oil- and your rations were based on the number of people per family. Kamal’s account accords with literature written on the conditions of Palestinian refugee camps in the early days of exile (Feldman, 2007; Peteet, 2005).

Kamal explained how one of the most frequent times storytelling took place was at night, especially in winter time when his family gathered around their kerosene stove for warmth: “At that time we don’t have internet or TVs, just stories about our hometown, how they fled... the stories of the village, even I can draw now a picture about my village, based on that story....” Kamal went on to describe how his village, al-Dawayima, had two parts to it: an upper and a lower side. There was a shrine to a man called Ali there:

Ali was a good man, lived in Palestine, so they made a shrine for him and they go there just [for] getting some blessings, from that holy place. So they keep talking about Palestine, and how wonderful their life was, going to their fields, having plenty of place[s] to circulate, and compare it to the situation in the refugee camps, they lost everything.

Kamal told me more about his village, and how people had lots of children in order to work on the farm. “We have like about 30 acres of olives in our village, so my dad and my cousins they have like... many people to work there, everyone was participating, harvesting the olives, and squeezing the oil out. We have like small factory there to serve the whole village.” Kamal’s retelling of the story jumps back again to the present situation in which his family was living: “so we moved all to a very small house, like 50 square metres with no services, with no supplies of water, no electricity, nothing.”

Finally, Kamal highlights the importance of why his parents told him and his eight siblings those stories: “they kept telling us about our village and comparing the situation now,” he says, “and urging us to keep that in our memory and to transfer this to the new generations, to keep in mind that we had a village, we had land and now the situation is temporary and one day we can go back to that village.”

Nostalgia and Social Memory



Figure 5: Naif’s migration map

Social experiences of storytelling, like Kamal’s, produce nostalgic emotions that “[connect] us to cultural traditions and life events that have larger significance and help alleviate feelings of trauma and bitterness” (Zembylas, 2014, p.9). Kamal’s stories of the extreme trauma of his parents were mediated by his own memories of receiving these stories- which are of course framed more fondly than the actual experiences he retells. I noticed a common sense of fondness surrounding memories of “getting by”, which was common across migrants’ home-camps. For instance, migrants often expressed sentimentality around sharing with others in times of scarcity. Naif described how as a child he would sell certain items to help his family make ends meet while sharing others.

Naif narrated memories of his childhood outsmarting tourists and selling overpriced packets of gum with humor: “I make some sweets at home, and go and sell it outside,” Naif told me. “And I go to the store, buy gum- one box of gum and I go and sell it [to] the tourists coming in Lebanon... each one ten cents, he give me twenty-five, I will keep the 15.” Naif’s stories also underscored the constant presence of family and the need for sharing; he spoke about going fishing as a child, and sharing his catch with his uncles, cousins, and neighbors.

Adam, who is a generation younger than Naif, particularly liked the stories about food: “maybe because it’s scarce, and it’s something that people try and find humour in, or find something to laugh about, even when you think about it it’s something sort of upsetting.” Adam spoke about of the stories that stands out to him where, during one of the wars when his parents were young, one of Adam’s uncles went to pick up the food rations. He went to pick up some bread, and a jar of what he assumed was cream cheese. Hungry, everyone ate the bread and “cheese”, but found the sandwiches absolutely revolting. “It wasn’t until later on,” Adam said, “that they understood that what they had eaten was mayonnaise, because they didn’t know what mayonnaise was, so they thought that it was cheese.”

Adam said he felt he missed the social solidarity of his parents and grandparents’ generation, which he feels is lost amongst his own generation. Adam described how older family members told him and his cousins stories about how basic life in the camps was. He said that “one of the nicest things, like one of the things that I actually missed the most, is how it would feel like its just one family, like the whole camp is one family.” Adam remembered that elders would tell him about waking up early to bake bread in the

morning with their neighbors: “they’d all like bring the flour, and they’d bake the bread together and then they’d distribute it amongst each other so that it’s equally distributed amongst the houses in the community.” Adam felt that the sense of necessity in previous generations was essential to create a sense of community. Because the camp population had grown so greatly, he felt that that feeling of connection was no longer there.

Nostalgic memories of difficult, even traumatic events can serve a positive function as “an evaluative standpoint from which one can make sense of one’s experience” (Zembylas, 2014, p.9). Issam, for example, described conflicting feelings about growing up in *Burj al-Barajne*. He explained how he hated the camp, because his living circumstances indicated the collective Palestinian defeat. At the same time, he was aware how daily restrictions held people together, and worried that future generations may not have the same sense of community. He expressed concern for future generations that they would not feel the same sense of collective solidarity that their grandparents had, since they would need to “integrate with the Canadian society”. Issam also phrased the restrictions the Lebanese government placed on Palestinians as “helpful” in a certain sense, since these daily limitations brought people together: “we were not allowed to hear certain radio programs... we were not allowed to move from one place to another within Lebanon without permission from the Lebanese intelligence, we are not allowed to work in certain [jobs]”. Although Issam’s actual experience of the draconian restrictions Lebanon placed on Palestinians was hardly pleasant, he understands the value of these experiences in shaping his own identity as well as Palestinian identity more broadly. By re-telling these stories of struggle, the community context that keeps these narratives alive and reinforces feelings of collective solidarity is evident (Habashi, 2013).

Personal and Political

Stories of family struggle and displacement served to reinforce a collective narrative, since this is an experience shared by so many- if nearly all Palestinians at some point in time or another (Allan, 2005; Habashi, 2013; Said, 2000; Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). When I asked my opening question that touched upon specific family history, migrants sometimes wanted to cut straight to the point of what being a Palestinian refugee meant to them. For instance, Bakr's opening response had a specific point to it:

It's not my choice to live in a refugee camp. As a Palestinian refugee and all of these refugees who are living in this world, and I am one of them, it's a result of the disaster. It was man made. My parents used to live in their homeland... and in their country Palestine. In their homes and on their land, and they were forced to leave their country, and another nation to come and live on their land. So they became refugees. I remember it when they were talking to us, they were expecting this refuge to be one week, two weeks, and then they will go back to their homeland. That's the fact of refugee according to international law, to leave during crisis and to return to their homes. During the disaster or the crisis in 1948; they were expecting one week, two weeks, one month, two months, until now, it's about 70 years and they are waiting, living in a refugee camp. The meaning of being a refugee, you are deprived of your human rights, of your dignity, of your humanity, that I don't want anyone on earth to face it.

When I asked Bakr to expand further, his response went from specifically about his family to the Palestinian and refugee situation more broadly. For example:

RL: Can I ask you to tell me a little bit more about where your parents came from?

Bakr: my parents came from a village... In the south of Palestine, in that time which is now occupied by Israel. They were very wealthy family with about 6000 dunams¹. And they have land, they have everything they want, with high reputation and dignity. Then, overnight they are refugees, another nation coming from every corner in the world that do not know or connected with the land is replacing the Palestinian nation. This was based on the unjust and illegal Balfour Declaration in 1917². To be a refugee waiting for humanitarian aids and struggling for survival and experience the misery of life can be experienced at the

¹ A dunam refers to a unit of land used in former parts of the Ottoman empire (including modern-day Israel). 6000 dunams is about six square kilometres

² See "Balfour Declaration" in Table 2

camp. It impacts our dignity, our humanity, our life, the hopes, and the plans. And the most painful, when I see the world is watching it. It makes the person to lose faith in humanity, because it's injustice and manmade.

While Bakr's response becomes a bit too general to fit into a traditional life history narrative (High, 2014), it speaks to how his experience has impacted him politically, but also how his position as a highly-educated and professional community member who frequently speaks about these issues shapes the narrative he shares (Portelli, 2004). Bakr's method of narrating reflects what Portelli (1998) calls "*history-telling*: a cousin of storytelling, but distinct from it because of its broader narrative range" (p.25). Portelli highlights how oral history invokes these connections "between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformation of society", which can make some sense out of highly general or politically pointed anecdotes in life stories. "Thus", as Portelli argues, "a personal change becomes a public statement" (p.32).

Zembylas (2014) highlights how nostalgia reflects "a sense of 'defiance' and 'resistance' to the possibility of forgetting... homeland" (p.11). Although Zembylas writes about Greek-Cypriot teachers and the nostalgia they expressed for their homes pre-Turkish partition, his ideas are applicable to the Palestinian context. He argues that "*defiant nostalgia* is characterized by a sense that Greek-Cypriots should defy any attempts by internal or external forces in Cyprus to make the people forget the 'occupied territories'" (p.11). Similarly, migrants expressed that the memories of the Nakba their parents and grandparents passed down to them served a broader political purpose, which was to not forget Palestine. They employed nostalgia in recounting the memories of their parents' lives in Palestine "to actively recall how life used to be before the loss of... homeland and to re-create aspects of the past in order to strengthen her children and

students' sense of cultural and historical continuity" (Zembylas, 2014, p.12). In doing so, migrants conveyed how these memories serve an important function as a kind of resistance to broader amnesia with respect to the Nakba in public knowledge. For instance, Amin remembered with pride how he told his own story to a Canadian schoolteacher while on holiday in the Caribbean. His story, which was also that of his people, led the teacher to promise she would tell her students about the history of the Palestinian people. Likewise, migrants pointed out how their children made presentations at school or public speeches about the Palestinian cause, and showed me videos or drawings they saved on their phones.

Building a Collective Story

One of the more memorable exchanges I witnessed during the interview process was between Rahman and Naif, who poked his head in curiously while I was interviewing Rahman and sat down to listen. Although Naif and Rahman had grown up in two completely different places, they were able to connect over similar experiences. Both of their fathers became barbers after their exile from Palestine, where they had previously worked in agriculture. When Rahman discussed what he and his brothers did to supplement his family income as a child, such as selling boiled lupini beans on the street, Naif jumped in to say that he sold the same thing in Lebanon. Below is an exchange between the two of them when I asked Rahman about the kinds of things he did outside of school:

RL: can you describe a little bit more about the things you were doing outside of school, before you went to university?

Rahman: yeah as I told you, out in the school, normally our work, most of the time it comes in the time of the vacation... normally most of the kids they try to find work to do... either inside the camp, or going to the... most of the agricultural people, they need workers, and they depend on the kids collecting the

fruits or some, because it is much cheaper than to have a man. This is mostly like that, you see. But during the year, normally we are busy with the school, you see. Naif: in weekend go to work in construction, take the stones upstairs, ten floor, eight floor...

Rahman: this is for the bigger kids, you see

Naif: eight years old, ten years old... working to help the family

Rahman: some people like, you see, trying to help people in shops you see, like a grocery, maybe he use one, two boys to help the buyers to give them things, or, old people buy a thing and he don't carry it, ok take these things to his house, it is you see.

RL: so you were always helping people

Rahman: yeah... or, some people you go and two older people they can't work, cleaning the house for them and sometimes they give you like five cents or ten cents, or sometimes a sandwich,

Naif: ten cents buy ice cream, or a pepsi, coke...

When I asked Rahman to describe life surrounding the mosque in Gaza, Naif was also able to relate to the lack of carpets on the floor:

Rahman: yeah yeah. We have in Nuseirat there were two mosques in general. One close to our house, and the other close to school, you see. There is no carpet... made from plants- *hasad*.

Naif: the plastic piece... you put the plastic one on the floor.

Rahman: something, just put it in the ground to pray on it... from kind of trees... even for water where you can, I think there was no tap or something. There is a tap at the corner, one tap, but they always use small jars... there is no loudspeakers or something. If there is the imam, he want to speak he have to raise his voice.

In the exchange between Naif and Rahman, a common story begins to unfold. Portelli (1998) points out that “what is spoken in a typical oral history interview has usually never been told *in that form* before”, meaning that people do not understand their lives as linear narratives until they are asked to explain their experiences “as a coherent and organized whole” (24). Portelli believes that the life story is a “synthetic product”, making disjointed personal experiences into history. Naif and Rahman, who share a Palestinian national identity in common but were raised in totally different geographies, thread a common story together through these shared experiences of camp life.

Conclusion

Writing about their research with Jewish immigrants from Arab states in Montreal, Cohen, Messika, and Fournier (2015) contend that “individual memory selects certain elements and participates in the building of a collective memory” (p.326). They argue that their research participants “attempted to construct memories with reference to a specific collective identity, which in turn, contributed to the construction of the identity of the new diaspora” (p.326). Likewise, stories told by parents and grandparents contributed to Palestinian migrants’ belief that they were also part of a larger story and identity. Telling these stories encouraged both *reflective* nostalgia that centered around mourning of family trauma and loss of homeland, but also *restorative* nostalgia that encouraged a commitment to a just solution (Zembylas, 2014). While migrants approached narrating these stories differently, this exercise in remembering underscores how nostalgia is an essential part of collective memory (Allan, 2005; Paxson, 2005). The ability to connect and share histories with one another, as Naif and Rahman’s stories demonstrate, facilitates a shared experience and a common narrative. It is also essential to acknowledge that the Nakba is not a just a past event but is ongoing (Allan, 2005; Habashi, 2013; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). Therefore, remembering life before, during, and after 1948, is also “about an attempt to take hold of, and give shape to an... uncertain future” for Palestinian people (Allan, 2005, p.55).

Next chapter

Interviews with Palestinian migrants demonstrated that personal memories are innately connected to collective memories, both through the passing down of oral stories that hinged on the events of 1948, but also of everyday life in the camps. It was not only

the inheritance of family stories that contributed to this collective memory, but also the ways in which daily life in the camps preserved and created a sense of nostalgia for places migrants had never seen with their own eyes. The following chapter further explores the way that the camps themselves contributed to migrants' relationship to the Palestinian collective.

Chapter Four: The Refugee Camp in Life Stories

“The Lebanese police, ‘darak’, [are] coming to the home or coming in the camp, and [are] very tough with the kids, with everyone... and if [they] see any water outside the home... [they] make [you a] ticket... the houses: not allowed to put concrete on top, always some metals, in the winter, in the rain, you can hear everything... and [if] the police see me with pyjama outside, he can beat me”

- Naif

The previous chapter explored the connections between individual and collective memories through instances of nostalgia in migrants’ life history interviews, and analyzed the approaches migrants took to structuring their narratives. I also underlined that these personal memories make up collective historical experiences, which are kept alive through the act of storytelling in a social context. This historical memory enables new generations to “realize the relationship between the past and present” (Habashi, 2013, p.427). The following chapter looks at how the camp itself, specifically its physical space, the institutions and traditions upheld within it, also played a fundamental role in forming migrants’ political and cultural relationship to Palestine.

Myth, History and Collective Memory

Lacroix & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) assert that belonging to a community hinges on a “collective understanding of a common past” (p.685). This “collective understanding” rests on “memory narratives [which] stand between forgetting and imagination.... As such, they are often reprocessed into a more or less coherent and ‘truthful’ story that legitimates a socially tailored image of the community” (p.685). For example, refugee ethnographers such as Malkki (1995), Peteet (2005) and Allan (2005) document the memorializing of exile and struggle for return and liberation within Hutu camps in Tanzania and Palestinian camps in Lebanon, respectively. This chapter

examines the ways in which the physical space of the camp, daily life and participation in institutions such as UNRWA, helped to consolidate collective historical memory in migrants' upbringings, and shape their positioning with respect to Palestinian identity and nationalism.

Never Having Left



Figure 6: Adam's migration map

Allan's (2014) ethnography of Shatila camp in Lebanon, *Refugees of the Revolution*, poses a question on the back cover that I completely misunderstood when I first read it. She asks the reader: "what would it mean for the generations born in exile to return to a place they never left?". Initially, when I read the question, its subtle double meaning was lost on me. I understood it to mean: "what would it mean for the generations born in exile to return to a place they never were in the first place"? Only when a Palestinian friend glanced at the back of the book, he read it differently. To him, the question Allan posed suggested that Palestinians living in exile had never truly left Palestine. It was a lovely concept, and left me quite startled at my own ability to overlook

what was obvious to someone else. I think that had Adam read the back of Allan's ethnography as well, he might have also read the question in a similar way. This is why:

For people like Adam, memories of Palestine are tangible, walkable, structural components of camp life. The connection he described feeling to his village of origin didn't come simply from hearing stories of his grandparents' homes. The fact that the structure of original Palestinian villages was very much alive and present within *Ain al-Hilweh* camp informed Adam's sense of knowing his village and his land in Palestine. While many participants painted pictures of the beauty of the villages they may or may not have seen, they also knew and felt those places in tangible ways. For example, many schools and streets in camps are named after Palestinian villages and towns, and have maps on the walls with their exact location and population size in historic Palestine (Peteet, 2005; Shabaneh, 2010). Adam felt the existence of Palestine in his everyday life in the camp. His own neighborhood, for example, consisted predominantly of descendants of his own ancestral village, *as-Zeeb*. He remembers taking family trips to Lebanon's southern border, which instilled a passion for Palestinian liberation at a young age. "I feel like I can't call Lebanon my home," Adam told me. "I'm not Lebanese, but the Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon is the closest thing that I can call home... like that's the closest thing that I have to my home, to my village, to Palestine." Adam said that back home, people still identify one another by their village of origin:

I'm from *Zeeb*, that's the village that I come from, and in the camp we sort of live next to each other, so all of our neighbors are also people from the same village, *Zeeb*. So this becomes the neighborhood of the *Zeeb* people. Inside the larger camp, this small area of a few houses is known as the *Zeeb* village. And so there's another area of the camp that we already know, I have friends from there... from *Tabaraya*, there's another area they're from *Manshiyye*, so I still identify as from *Zeeb*, like that specific village, in Lebanon. And when I have a friend I know that that's my friend who's from *Manshiyye*. Because he's from that village, I know

that he told me that, and he lives in that neighborhood within the camp. And so like even within the camp, we'd be like where are you going to? I'm going over to my friend's place, in like the so and so village neighborhood. So my mom would actually know where in the camp I am located by telling her what village my friends are from.

Adam also described how distinctive rituals and traditions from village to village are kept alive within families in Ain al-Hilweh. "We're third generation," Adam explained. "We still carry on that lineage... on many different levels from like food, the kind of food that we cook to the kind of language that we speak, to even some of our customs... Like there's different foods- they're usually the same foods that are cooked in different ways." Adam told me how his differing experiences of eating the same dish at friends' houses, *molokhia*, illustrated the ways in which village traditions stayed present. Some villages, he explained, kept the leaves intact while others ground them up finely. Some villages ate their *molokhia* with bread, others with rice. "So its this one meal that I've had at multiple different friends' places that is cooked in so many different ways and its exciting to see how that's carrying on amongst the generations." Adam also explained how wedding customs differed from village to village, like when the bride returns home one week after she gets married. In Adam's village, the bride's return is a big celebration; "another sort of wedding really". In other villages, that celebration looks different.

The way in which Adam's village customs stayed alive within Ain al-Hilweh also influenced his aspirations for return to Palestine. The existence of his village was real, and preserved in the daily ways that people cooked food, celebrated weddings and found their way back home: "I not only was told and felt the existence of Palestine" Adam said, "but I also felt the existence of my village when I say Palestine, I'm Palestinian, I'm from Zeeb, like that's where I'm from, like when I go back, that's where I wanna be, that's

where I wanna have property you know? That's where I wanna wake up and have my morning coffee, Zeeb."

Cultural Memory and Diaspora

Common across most experiences of migration and diaspora is the movement of nationalism and cultural identity beyond ties to a specific territory, and scholars note that homelands are interconnected with other places (Allan 2014; Coutin, 2016; Gabiam; 2016; Farah, 2009; Hall, 1990; Hirsch & Miller, 2015; Malkki, 1995; Peteet, 2005; Pasquetti, 2011; Shabaneh, 2010; Weingrod & Levy, 2005). For instance, Stuart Hall (1990) says that we can think about cultural identity and diaspora in two ways: the first in terms of stability and a fixed point of origin, and the second in terms of change and evolution outside that point of origin. Regarding the first conception, Hall writes: "our cultural identities reflect common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (p.223). Hall highlights that this is a powerful form of representation amongst marginalized peoples, such as Palestinians who share the memory of Palestine as a collective point of reference. However, Hall places a stronger emphasis on understanding diasporic memory in terms of change and transformation. In other words, to understand a point of origin, it is essential to look at what the point of origin has become in all its diverse ways. "These symbolic journeys," Hall argues, "are necessarily circular. This is the Africa we must return to- but 'by another route': what Africa has *become* in the new world" (p.232).

Regarding the development of Palestinian culture and nationalism, Peteet (2005) argues that "their identities are not affixed to *singular* places but are embedded in

trajectories of exile which have a single point of origin in Palestine” (p.27). While Palestinians define their national belonging in terms of Palestine as a fixed territorial entity, their self-conception has mostly developed outside of Palestine’s historical boundaries. While living in camps, Palestinian communities have even established associations for cultural gathering and organizing that are linked to families’ respective villages of origin (Pasquetti, 2011). Adam’s discussion of the various ways that *molokhia* is cooked from family to family, or how wedding customs differ in a similar manner, demonstrates the entanglement of culture, memory, and place. These small details contribute to Adam’s feeling of knowing the village of Zeeb specifically, wanting to have a home and his morning coffee there. Despite never having set foot in the village, he lives and feels that experience through other cultural means.

Camp Borders

A key debate amongst refugee scholars centres on the way in which camp space contributes to the development of political identity amongst refugee groups. For example, Malkki’s (1995) comparative ethnography of national identity between Hutu refugees living in Kigoma town and Mishamo camp, Tanzania, points to stark differences in political motivations depending on their living environment. In Mishamo, there were particular ethical codes that refugees expected one another to follow. For instance, entrepreneurial activity was a highly stigmatized practice: “The camp refugees recognized that wealth would likely root people in the here and now, making them forget that they were in exile, and thus properly rooted elsewhere” (Malkki, 1996, p.381). Profiting from a collective, national experience of displacement contradicted the dominant political narrative amongst Hutu refugees.

In contrast, refugees living in Kigoma town displayed much more individualistic survival strategies and described their experience of displacement in less collective ways. Malkki (1995) argues that this was largely due to the structural constraints of town life, where refugees were required to blend in to avoid discrimination and find work. Similarly, Sylvia Pasquetti (2011) underlines how the experience of collective political oppression in West Bank refugee camps, characterized by higher rates of military violence and arrests, leads to stronger political solidarity in camps than urban areas.

Host states exploit the idea that the camp is a transitional space, which permits their evasion of responsibility towards refugees and reinforces the precarious nature of camp life (Allan, 2014; Missewitz & Hanafi, 2009; Peteet, 2005). For instance, the Lebanese government has attempted to regulate the organization of Palestinian camps, and at the same time, promoted the separation of these spaces from Lebanese society. Allan (2014) argues that the Lebanese government's policies have "enabled the government to divest itself of responsibility for the wellbeing and security of Palestinians, while at the same time condemning camps as zones of deviance beyond its control" (p.104).

The Lebanese state underscores the temporary nature of Palestinian refugee camps, which results in a deadlock in improvement to refugees' living conditions (Allan, 2014; Missewitz & Hanafi, 2009). Palestinian communities such as Shatila camp do not even appear on state maps and are "absent from discourses of state welfare", but at the same time the state views them as "spaces that need to be contained" (Allan, 2014, p.104).

Adam remembered how he would go visit his Lebanese school friends' houses, but his Lebanese friends would never come over to his house in Ain al-Hilweh: "a lot of my Lebanese friends' parents would actually warn their children, not about me, but warn

their children not to go into the camp,” Adam said. “So if I wanted to have somebody over, that was not gonna happen, I never had any Lebanese friends over... as a child... I remember that that would bother me.”

The physical separation of Ain al-Hilweh camp from the city of *Saida* [Sidon], which Lebanese military checkpoints demarcate, informed Adam’s sense of otherness to the Lebanese. He remembered feeling inferior to his Lebanese neighbors, having to cross a military checkpoint every day to go to school. Adam expressed finding difficulty in making friends outside of school, citing the need to find an adult to take him into the city and back: “I’d need to find a way to come back to the camp, and my friends’ parents would always be willing to give me rides, but it would always be, ‘I’ll give you a ride to the checkpoint’. They won’t drive into the camp.” The near-impossibility of having his Lebanese schoolmates over made the societal separation between Palestinians and Lebanese very real for Adam at a young age.

UNRWA

Aid institutions are also essential in forming the experiences of refugees living as subjects of a long-term humanitarian intervention. Malkki (1995) argues that in Mishamo camp, Tanzania, humanitarian agencies were central to the formation of the “mythico-historical” order through which Hutu refugees saw their time in exile (p.153). As a “categorical actor” in the camp, aid agencies played a central role in consolidating the national and historical order that allowed the Hutu living in Mishamo to make sense of their collective displacement (Malkki, 1995, p.154). In a parallel way, UNRWA’s relief aid after 1948 provided Palestinian refugees with a governing structure that has brought a sense of political order and visibility to their seventy-year long diaspora (Allan, 2014;

Feldman, 2007; Farah, 2009; Gabiam, 2016; Pasquetti, 2011; Peteet, 2005). UNRWA's service provision for all Palestinian refugees in the Levant "provided a huge bureaucracy that functioned as a quasi-state, bringing the Palestinian refugees under one umbrella" (Shabaneh, 2010, p.215).

UNRWA, as a humanitarian institution, was a primary actor that consolidated migrants' identities as refugees; in doing so, the agency's services served to further distinguish Palestinian refugees from their host societies. Issam marked attending an UNRWA school as the point in which he understood that he was not like other people who lived near him, "because we have to dress a certain way. Our heads [have] to be shaved, to prevent any lice... and the other boys, the Lebanese boy... they don't have to go through this stuff." Realizing he was not like the Lebanese children, Issam remembered feeling mounting anger at a young age. These experiences made him begin to process the circumstances that made things this way.

Migrants expressed that UNRWA institutions were one of the main ways in which the space of the camp affirmed their identity as refugees. Jamil's response, in which he attributed his moment of 'becoming a refugee' to receiving an UNRWA card, resonates for this reason. The organization's extremely careful, almost militaristic, style of organizing refugee aid has had lasting effects on Palestinians' political and cultural self-conception. Julie Peteet (2005) summarizes the effect of humanitarian bureaucracy on Palestinians in the early days of their exile:

numbers played a prominent role in cultural expressions evocative of the Palestinian disaster. Mahmud Darwish's poem "write down I am an Arab, my card number is 50, 000", resonated profoundly with the experience of being reduced to a number and the subjectivity and practices it foretold. To UNRWA, refugee families resembled military units in their internal structure of authority and its

relation to UNRWA. Thus it is not surprising that the registered family was termed *nefar*, an Arabic term referring to units in the military (Peteet, 2005, p.72).

While UNRWA's mandate is to remain politically neutral, its service provision has played a central role in incubating Palestinian nationalism. Palestinian refugees view UNRWA's provision of aid, "not as charity, but as a right: a reflection of international responsibility for their conditions" (Feldman, 2007, p.144). Because of the political meaning that UNRWA's relief provision holds, refugees assign responsibilities to the organization that go well beyond its mandate to provide temporary relief (Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009). Anthropologist Nell Gabiam (2012) writes that "Palestinian refugees' conception of UNRWA's aid does not emanate directly from international human rights law, but, rather, is grounded in a larger sense of historical injustice" (p.101). UNRWA's ongoing service provision is evidence of the international community's failure to deliver on their right of return to Palestine. Many refugees feel that the organization has a responsibility to provide services until the UN reaches a solution regarding this right (Farah, 2010; Gabiam, 2012; Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009; Peteet, 2005). Even as refugees become self-sufficient, receiving aid remains an important symbol of their ongoing dispossession (Feldman, 2007).

Palestinian refugees have developed a unique and complex relationship to UNRWA as a UN institution. Despite the tensions that exist between Palestinian refugees and UNRWA's mandate to avoid engaging in advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian national cause, many people feel a sense of loyalty to the organization. This is largely due to the high prevalence of refugee staff (Gabiam, 2012; Gabiam, 2016). Refugee employees add a dimension of collective care and national character to the agency's service provision, obscuring "the boundary between benefactor and beneficiary" (Farah,

2009, p.391). The agency's cultural centers and schools, for instance, are important sites for the exchange of oral history and the preservation of collective memory. As noted, many schools and streets in camps are named after Palestinian villages and towns, and have maps on the walls with their exact location and population size in historic Palestine (Peteet, 2005; Shabaneh, 2010). The agency also runs summer camps and sports clubs, which have extended links between refugee communities. Over time, UNRWA-run cultural centres have developed associations to various political factions and newspapers, and act as informal headquarters for political parties (Shabaneh, 2010). Migrants described the way in which Palestinian nationalism surrounded UNRWA schools, and that attending them was, in a way, like a small version of Palestine within their host country.

Regarding the right of return to Palestine, Ghassan Shabaneh (2010) notes that "children are made to remember the information on a daily basis and asked about in their classes" (227). For instance, Amin described his experience being called on by his teachers to share the name of his village in Palestine, its location, and what it was known for. Kamal told me how he and his school friends each other by the names of their respective villages. "They called me Kamal Al-Dawaiyma," he said. Until now, even his friends don't refer to each other by their family names, but by the names of their villages in Palestine, "in order to keep the name of the village lived in our mind." Kamal spoke about how gathering with other refugee children and teachers in UNRWA schools helped to preserve and collectivize memories of Palestine. "Since we're all Palestinians," he said, "it's like we are living in our country again. Teachers used to tell us stories about Palestine, and to remember Palestine, not to forget Palestine." Kamal remembered how

everyone was participating in memories of their homeland through various memorial days, like the 5th of June. On that day, “which is the day of the war, the day that Palestine [was] occupied, we... just stopped studying.” Kamal remembers his teachers asking the class to talk about their villages, its location, and any stories they knew from their parents: “They urge us to go back to our parents, and tell us stories and return to school. So it was like good memories for us.” UNRWA schools were “a good side of the refugee camp,” Kamal explained. Kamal did very well in school, and he remembers that his teachers told him he had a bright future. He feels lucky as a Palestinian that the United Nations invested in education as much as they did.

UNRWA’s local staff have a complex position both as Palestinians that are part of a shared history with the refugees they serve, and as agency employees with less authority than their international counterparts (Farah, 2009). International employees of UNRWA are part of its executive branch, while local employees are responsible to implement policy on the ground and carry out daily jobs in the camps. Teachers in UNRWA schools, most of them Palestinian themselves, sometimes provide children with a more political education than the professional branch of the agency is comfortable with (Shabaneh, 2010). Peteet (2005) highlights that “it was not uncommon for UNRWA personnel to be members of resistance organizations. For example, UNRWA teachers, usually refugees, taught a Palestinian version of history not condoned by UNRWA or host governments” (p.52). Issam’s story about his father further illuminates this experience, which the next chapter explores in detail.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed ways in which the space of the refugee camp transmits collective memory and impacted migrants' ideas about belonging to a collective Palestinian identity. First, I showed how Palestine is "de-territorialized" in the refugee camp (Petee, 2005), preserved through neighborhoods that house families from the same village, and customs that link back to these places of origin. This contributed to Adam's feelings of knowing his ancestral village, and having real ties to a place that both is and is not in Palestine. Secondly, I looked at how the space of the camp itself impacted migrants' experiences, focusing particularly on Lebanon where the restrictions on Palestinians drive a very real wedge between Palestinians and Lebanese. Lastly, I explored UNRWA's lasting impact on Palestinians' self-conception, particularly because of its local teachers. The next chapter builds on this theme of political engagement. I look at the various ways that migrants expressed commitment to Palestinian liberation, and the diverse responses surrounding factional involvement. I focus particularly on kinship in this chapter, and how family experiences influenced migrants' decisions regarding political participation.

Chapter Five: Political Participation

*“When I was 10 years old, I was helping my dad. We did construction. But at the same time, I helped with the PLO. My dad had a big role in the camp. And for the PLO, being the representative of Palestine, there is a lot of responsibility, to help the Palestinian people. This organization works with the children and youth... I became an ambassador for Palestine, and at the same time for the Palestinian people. This was important because it was in the 80s or 90s when many countries in the world started recognizing Palestine and Palestinian causes. Before, they only thought of Palestinians as terrorists. They said it was a terrorist movement, but they didn't know the reality. I believe my mission is to change the opinion of people, that's what we tried to do as ambassadors
- Amin*

A question I always asked migrants was whether they remembered or took part in “political activities” in the camps they lived in. This question often landed awkwardly.

Kamal explained why quite nicely:

Politics is part of our blood, actually... You know, they always tell us... we have to return to Palestine one day, so how can we return to Palestine? By, you know, the means of resistance. Resistance means you know, the factions, the Palestinian factions that were resisting that were resisting the occupation.

Interestingly though, Kamal distinguished between a collective commitment to Palestinian liberation and nationhood, and involvement in a political faction specifically. To him, as for the majority of migrants I spoke with, the political nature of “being Palestinian” and being a party member were two very different things.

Migrants related to memories of political activity in very different ways, sometimes positively and sometimes very negatively. This variation has to do with the age gap among participants, and of course the specific political histories of migrants' home-camps in the Middle East. What I noticed however, was how much migrants' feelings about political commitment, and what form that should take, reflected personal experiences as well as those of their parents and family members. Migrants said that experiences of kin with respect to political involvement influenced their own decision

making on the topic. They referenced family experiences in the process of isolating the so-called “political” moments in their lives (Portelli, 2004). The following chapter focuses on several migrants’ life stories to illustrate the relationship between family and choices about political activity. I begin with a discussion of Issam and Kamal, who had completely different approaches to political commitment, yet both emphasized the experiences of their fathers in their interviews.

Issam



Figure 7: Issam’s migration map

Issam’s commitment to political organizing animated his entire life story, beginning with a description of who his father was and the impact he had on him. Before Issam’s father was an UNRWA teacher in Burj al-Barajne, he was an active union organizer in Palestine:

My father in Palestine used to work with the ministry of construction and then he quit and started working with the Palestinian union... His salary was one third of what he used to take from the ministry. And he became well known in the different regions of Palestine, due to his work and travel from union to union.

Issam's father was responsible for recruiting men to defend various villages. After his family fled to Lebanon, they moved from camp to camp. Issam remembered how his father worked with UNRWA for about seven years, but UNRWA "didn't like his political activities", since he formed many Palestinian unions in Lebanon and took part in forming a military organization working toward the liberation of Palestine. He told me that his father was also a teacher of a prominent Palestinian artist. When he noticed the student's knack for drawing, he introduced him to another prominent Palestinian news editor in Lebanon, who published his work.

"Your father was at the centre of all of that?" I asked Issam. "Yeah, he was," he replied, and suggested I go google him. This artist once said about his father: "our teacher was Mr. ... who taught us to raise the flag and recite the Palestinian anthem and he told us about our enemies, and our friends. And when he saw me drawing at the class he said okay, you draw, but only about Palestine. And that's [his] word, not mine." Issam describes how UNRWA fired his father, and how from 1950 until 1967 the Lebanese government detained him fifty-three times. "So that activities within our house made us aware and made us concerned and active."

I asked Issam if he thought his father made him more politically aware than the average Palestinian child growing up in the camp. He replied yes, "especially we are as a society are tribal," he said. "We follow our parents." I asked Issam how he thought his father's life affected him. Issam remembered feeling proud of his dad's activities as a child: "I used to get sympathy from my teachers because [of] my father... because he was in prison for national reasons." Some of Issam's childhood friends used to tell their own parents, "*why are you not in prison like Issam's dad? Do you not like Falastin*

[Palestine]?”. Issam explained that his dad’s activities made him aware, and he started to read and write about what was going on around him. “And I used to recite the Palestine oath every morning in school,” he added. “So that made me feel that I’m a leader.”

Describing his experience growing up, Issam had positive associations with growing up in such a politically charged environment. He told me about his teenage years there. Issam explained how growing up in Burj al-Barajneh, “every day you start knowing that your neighbor or this guy or that guy left the camp and went to Syria for training to join... the Palestinian fighters.” I asked Issam how old he was then. He said he was eleven, and wanted to go with the older men:

I wanted to join and I used to ask how do I join? How do I go to Syria? But it didn’t happen at that point. My father left his work and he joined... the Arab National Movement, [it] collapsed, and a new formation was founded, PFLP- Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. So he left his job and joined PFLP in Amman. And me and my brother we Amman to visit my father but because he doesn’t have time to stay with us, he used to send us to the bases.

When Issam was a child, his father spent a lot of time in Jordan with other leftist militant groups. Spending his summers at the military bases in Jordan, Issam was exposed to the struggle of the international Left for liberation against imperialism and colonialism:

In 1969 my first time I was 13 years old I used to stay with people who are 23 and 21 and 24 so we learned a lot from them about the struggle, the military issues, political issues because the PFLP used to educate its fighters in Marxism. And there I started reading Che, books, and know about the internationalist struggle in Nicaragua because many foreigners joined Palestinian organizations.

Issam recounted how his experiences in Jordan exposed him to the international leftist movement, “that we are not alone in this struggle... and we share many things... and our struggles are united against imperialism, against the United States. United States supports Israel, Israel displace the Palestinian people, United States supports Latin American dictators in Nicaragua.”

It was clear that Issam's fervour for activism affected the choices he made during his school years. He describes starting a football team, *fariq al Awda*, which literally means team of the return. He also tells me about his childhood exploits organizing demonstrations with his classmates. One important one he remembers, is when Habib Bourguiba³ came to Lebanon in 1966-67. When Bourguiba "suggested the Arabs should be realistic and accept the partition plan," all the students over fifteen went to demonstrate. Being younger, Issam and his friends were excluded. But he went from class to class anyways, telling other students they should take to the streets too, as "we are not small boys". Issam thought that this was the first time he initiated an action. He was ten years old.

As a teenager, Issam was in charge of organizing the PFLP student body in Beirut. He explained how both the student body of Fatah and the student body of the PFLP were vying for control of the General Union of Palestinian Students. Issam was in charge of organizing the elections for the PFLP, "distributing brochures... boys and girls looking good on the list so both sexes elect them." Issam remembers that it was April 1st 1973, when the PFLP defeated Fatah in Ain al-Hilweh and Burj al-Barajneh, two of the largest Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon:

RL: So you were running the show?

I: Yeah I was running the show. It's important because when Fatah was defeated at that election Arafat defeated all the people who are in charge of the student bodies in Fatah. And he was very angry. For him this was the new generation and Fatah should win.

RL: So when the PFLP won, how did you feel?

I: I feel that because, not totally true, but because of my efforts- maneuvers- the PFLP won and I was looked at by the leadership as someone who can organize and achieve.

³ the former leader of Tunisia (1956-1987)

Oral narratives are typically separated into time periods based on events in the interview subject's personal or family life, but also historical periods in which social and political change impacts private experiences (Lummis, 1998). Issam certainly spoke about his own life in relation to historical benchmarks in time, and situated memories of his own life in broader events of significance for Palestinians living in exile. Similarly, one of Amin's earliest memories was the death of Nasser: "I was 5 years old when Abdel Nasser died," he told me. "I remember everyone crying around me, it's a very vivid memory. I asked what happened, and my family told me he is the only president that was fighting to liberate Palestine."

When I asked Issam if helping win the student elections made him feel more hopeful about the situation for Palestine more broadly, he said it didn't: "You know, [one] of the big mistakes that we did in Lebanon," Issam explains, "that we spent too much time in factional conflict, competition without any vision." He remembers how in 1967 he felt the disappointment of the Palestinians at the defeat of Nasser and the Arab armies. Issam also felt that factional competition in Lebanon was a waste of energy. In contrast, however, the way Issam described political involvement was just what everyone was doing at the time. Here he describes the liberation of the camps: "In 1969 when Palestinian people in Lebanon revolted against [the] Lebanese government, and the refugee camps became liberated. And the Palestinian organizations controlled the camp and military camps started in every camp so people can get trained in the camp... so as a Palestinian of course I joined like all Palestinians."

The invocation of historical moments in life stories outlines different individual motivations and goals relative to collective experiences (Lummis, 1998). Issam grew up

during a time where most able-bodied Palestinian men signed up for military training, thus he wanted to make a political impact by joining a party; Kamal lived in different circumstances and outlined different personal goals, like excelling academically as the way to support his family. That drove a different set of choices and hence very different approaches to political involvement:

Kamal

Younger than Issam, Kamal also described how his older brother felt inspired by Nasser and joined groups like Fatah. However, his own youth was after Nasser's time. Events like Black September in Jordan cast a shadow over his generation's desire to join a military group. Kamal explained that when he was growing up in al-Wehdat, being involved in a faction was risky:

Politics was there. I didn't [get] involve[d] in any of them, because I thought it was very risky to be involved. You will be under the spot from the Jordanian government, from the Israelis who were [on] the borders, so if your name got in any of these activities actually, it's a lot of risk on your family. Like one thing I will tell you about, is Jordan will take your passport away from you. You will not be allowed to work in any government work, even to have a small shop, so you will end up, can't do any work, and you know like in Jordan there is no welfare, no coverage, you are by yourself. So our families, my dad kept telling me... stay away from politics. But you know, I have my opinions, we were talking, when we sit in the corners in the streets we were talking about Palestine, about the resistance, which is the right way to liberate Palestine... so politics were there, if you are not active in politics, its, you have your own opinion even you keep it for yourself, because of the restrictions, because of the pressure on you not to be part of it, and for myself because you know I saw the suffering of my dad, I decided my politics to be my family and to support them, so I want to keep my name clean... to be able to grant work.

Kamal said that he needed to be able to provide for his family, and joining a party would have endangered that goal. He described himself as "a student focused on academic issues, trying to excel in his study."

I asked Kamal what he had wanted for his future when he was younger. He said that his dream was always to become a scientist or get his PhD, “because I was the first in my class actually, and all the teachers planted this in my mind that you can be different, you have a bright future. So I was always thinking of being actually a pilot, or a doctor.” When Kamal applied to university, his average wasn’t quite high enough to be accepted to an engineering or medicine program, so he studied math until he received his master’s degree. He said that he was studious during his university years, and spent most of his time in the library:

Tuitions at that time was very expensive for my family. So I don’t want to repeat any, to fail in any course. Because it was really expensive. So I passed all my courses. You know for myself, my family, my nuclear family was always in my mind. I want to help my family, my dad. And graduating from the school as soon as possible was the only way to get a job and be able to help my dad raising our, my sisters and brothers. Because I have four sisters and brothers after me. And three of them they went to the university, and my dad must pay for their tuitions. So I was focusing on academic side of university life, let’s say.

“What did your parents want for you when you were growing up?” I asked Kamal:

My dad wanted me to finish my PhD actually,” he said. He was always urging me to keep studying. When I finished my bachelor’s degree he said don’t stop, even the economic situation wasn’t good for us, he said keep going. So I did my masters. And he was urging me to find a way to do my PhD... always pushing me to do my higher education.

Although he never had an interest in joining a political party, Kamal said that there were still ways he spoke about his history while working as a teacher in Saudi Arabia: “In Palestine we have the Land Day... which is 30th of March. So on that day... you know as a teacher I was talking with my Saudi students about why we celebrate that day, what happened, why Palestinians lost their land, ... but you know this is in [a] very narrow situation. It’s not allowed to talk about anything in Saudi Arabia.”

“How did you talk to your students about Palestine then?” I asked. Kamal replied that because he was teaching high school, he was only 24 years old at the time, and he had a friendlier relationship with his students:

So they said, you have master’s degree in math, why are you living here? Why don’t work in Jordan or leaving to somewhere else? You have good degree; the situation here is not good for you. So that you know, like was a prompt for me to start talking about the situation in Palestine.... So they look [at] us as holy people, coming from the holy land and they want to know more about Palestine, about the situation, so from time to time we stop teaching math and start talking about our stories and our situation.

Kamal and Issam’s responses outline how differences in personal and family motivations result in very different attitudes towards political engagement. However, some migrants, like Jamil, were confused by the question of political participation entirely. To them, “politics” was a given part of everyday life, and so the question was not an appropriate one. My exchange with Jamil demonstrates this contradiction, and further underscores how migrants’ thinking about political participation was related to family:

Jamil



Figure 8: Jamil’s migration map

RL: can you tell be about political activities that you remember in university?

J: in university, like political activities...?

RL: things about Palestine...

J: actually we lived in politics, like political environment everyday.

RL: tell me about that...

J: so we have many many many stories but I don't, I don't understand what you mean like... everyday we had a story we listen to a story... sometimes like for example, what I remember, my relative, he died by the Israeli- he was a soldier in the Palestinian Authority, and that time was, yeah he was shot by Israeli soldiers, and a relative, as a family we should get together, we go, we went to his home, we sat there for three, four days, receiving people who was like giving their feelings, yeah this is one of the actions and the activities happened.

While politics was part and parcel of migrants' daily lives in the camps through rallies they attended or education in UNRWA schools, family experiences stood out as a frame of reference for engagement with "political activity", when migrants avoided factional involvement themselves. They didn't necessarily see this political involvement as politics at all though. For example, another time Jamil spoke about politics, he referenced his uncles who were in Israeli prison:

my uncles, I have two uncles, actually three of them were prisoners in Israeli jail. They were arrested. One of them stayed a year and the second a year, and the third, I can't remember I think two and a half years. It was, when I was grade 7 or 8 at that period of time.

Jamil remembered feeling disappointed, having two uncles arrested at the same time, and another uncle in 2002. He talked about family celebrations when they were released from prison, sending letters and missing them.

While Jamil noted that politics was inseparable from daily life in Gaza, Bakr maintained that he and his own family weren't politicized, despite having multiple brothers in prison:

Bakr

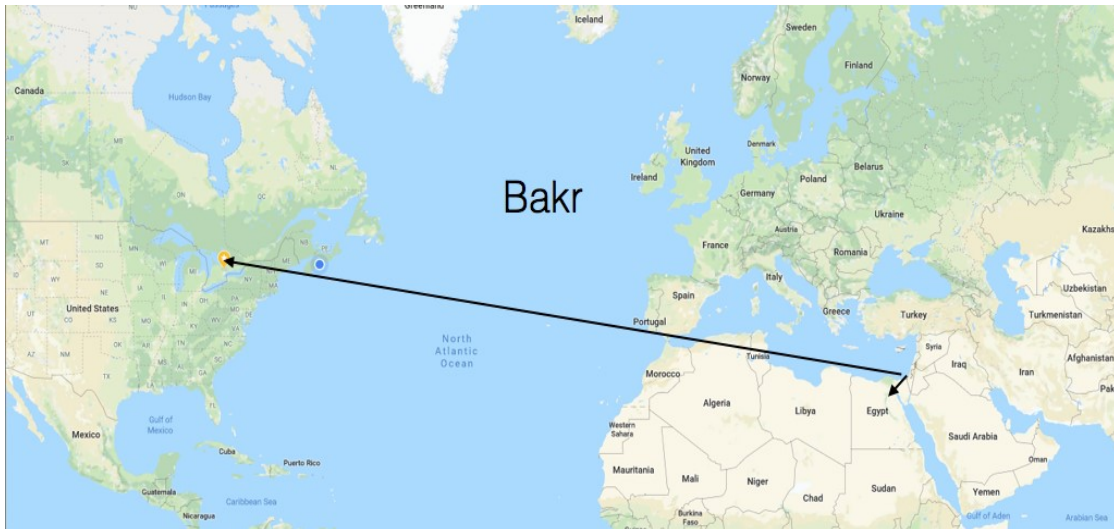


Figure 9: Bakr’s migration map

My own family and I weren’t politicized. I am Palestinian and loyal to the Palestinian cause. I have brothers, one was with Fatah. One was with Popular Front. They joined these factions, and they were imprisoned by the Israeli military forces. And one of my brothers who joined Fatah party and he was in Israeli prison in addition to three of my brothers were in prison, in the Israeli prison, and a brother who in 1982 joined PLO and Fatah in Lebanon and from that time till now he is missing. We don’t know if he is alive, in prison or killed.

In the above quotation, Bakr doesn’t associate loyalty to the Palestinian cause as being “politicized”, but rather an innate part of being Palestinian. Bakr differentiates between being Palestinian, which is inherently political, and loyalty to a specific faction. It seems that Kamal would also agree, as he had a brother involved in Fatah but maintained that politics is something that is “part of our blood”. Issam however, although he now sees factional competition as a waste of time, developed his own political identity by engaging with the international Left through the PFLP. He lost an uncle and had a father who was in prison multiple times, which also had a profound impact on how he viewed his own commitment to politics, as inseparable from his own existence and certainly “not a game”, as he told me.

Adam

Adam, while much younger than these men, also referenced his father's experience but had a very negative view of factional involvement. When I asked him about political events he remembered in Ain al-Hilweh, he explained that people now see "politics", as he understood the term, in a very negative light. However, Adam also spoke about how his mother used to tell him stories of his grandfather, who took care of orphans and widows as a member of the PLO. Adam said that his mother spoke very positively about her father, but both his parents were very "anti-politics" now. Adam talked about how his father felt it was his avoidance of politics altogether that allowed him to become successful. He said that his father avoided factional involvement because he wanted to keep his name clear in order to one day immigrate. He said his father would make comments such as "I would never have studied in America if I was..." Adam also described how during his father's time, he saw the impact of factional politics on many of his family members:

I think my father saw it in his age, my parents lived in a time where young individuals would get involved in political action, and they would end up militarized, and they would end up being involved in conflict, and there's a lot of them that would end up dying... so it's something that my father feared, that if I got involved in something that I would give away the rest of my life for that, which is very valid because if... I might have actually said you know, I'm not gonna go to university, I'm just gonna put all my effort in this organization right now... it's something that I've seen, and we've seen in many of my cousins, who became very political. They became militarized.

It was clear that the experiences of Adam's father had impacted Adam's own decisions as well. When Adam applied to university, his uncle, who was a Fatah member, encouraged him to join. Joining Fatah would have provided an Adam with an opportunity to go to school for free. Adam was interested, but when his father found out, he "made

sure it did not go through.” As a result, Adam ended up paying for school. Reflecting on the incident, Adam said that although he was already a Canadian citizen at that point and joining a party wouldn’t have the same consequences it might have had for his father, it may have been a smart decision: “in a way I’m kind of glad that I didn’t get politically involved because to be politically involved... I mean in a certain political party... I might have benefitted from [it] then, but it also sort of isolates me from the rest of Palestinian society, where I become individualized within this sort of one specific political group.” However, Adam also felt that political involvement in terms of Palestinian student groups, which he also avoided, would have been beneficial.

Amal



Figure 10: Amal’s migration map

Amal was one of the few people who spoke about experiences of violence in more specific terms. Most others spoke about making a conscious choice to avoid getting involved in factional politics, or explained that their lives were immersed in it enough as it was. Migrants who spoke positively about political engagement would typically speak

about rallies they remembered, or wanting to join older men in training- like Issam. Those who were never involved in factional parties, like Kamal, would speak about conversations with friends about liberating Palestine. Amal however, spoke to specific experiences that made her want to steer clear of it all. When I asked her about political activities, she reflected on traumatic experiences from her childhood in Jordan. She remembered being in a war as a young girl living in Camp Hussein, but couldn't remember which event/war it was and why. She was in a bunker underground, waiting for the shelling to finish. All her neighbors were piled on top of one another, and all they had to eat was canned food. Finally, when it was time to come out:

I remember I had two of my brothers right beside me, we were sitting outside my neighbor's house, which was a few metres away from the bunker. It was nice and sunny that day, and all of a sudden, my brother sitting beside me would faint onto me, he's only a year younger than me. I heard screams from my neighbor behind me and when I looked, I realized that the bullet went through my brother's shoulder before hitting my neighbor's head. That scared the heck out of me, and got me running like a mad young girl calling for my mom, and everybody around me saw that there was actually shooting and my brother was injured. Thank God it was the shoulder, and thank God he survived. We were able to take him to another bunker where they had medicine and people who can help, but even on the way there, I saw dead people on the streets and I saw wrecked cars and everything, and for me that left a very traumatic picture in my head even until today. All I remember is my brother needs to be ok, and all I cared about was taking him to the other bunker where there was you know, medicine and stuff like that.

Another moment that terrified Amal was during a military rally for the king. Around six or seven years old, she was watching a march again, not knowing again what the event was: "where the king is being paid tribute to... you know how like they're sitting on like a podium, and people were marching in front of it?" she told me. The young Amal got quite bored watching the procession, as most six year olds would be. She remembers:

As I was standing, I remember holding my mom's hand and I was like 'oh mommy, when is this gonna finish? I'm so bored.' And as I said these words somebody was behind me, that was not in like a uniform, but heard me and said to me, 'how dare you say that? Because this is an important tribute for the king, and you can't really say that'. Then they tried to pull me out and take me away from my mom, to teach me a lesson not to say that ever again and I got so scared, they want to take me away from my mom, almost traumatized to the point where I want nothing to do with politics and kept me never to want to speak again. I want never to talk about politics, people of authority, to the point where I ignored it, and I avoided it because of what that event left in my heart as a young girl.

Amal said how much it scared her that as a child, she could say something as innocent as "I'm bored, mommy let's go home", that she might be taken away from her family. She said that that experience made her want to do something she could have control over, whereas with politics she felt she had no control. She attributes going into her business career, in part because of those same feelings.

I asked Amal how she feels about politics now, with respect to Palestine. She replied that she still tries to avoid it, but what is happening to Palestinians over there still hurts her deeply on the inside, and she is keenly aware of the injustices: "It hurts my heart. If I think about it, it almost like paralyzes me." She mentioned her mother's trauma when she explained why she avoided politics now: in the same way it paralyzed her mother to reach the door of her house in Palestine she was forced out of, Amal said "I feel like... it's so big and overwhelming, and it just saddens my heart to see people suffer." She preferred to think it terms of the ways that she could do something, how she could help improve the economic situation as a businesswoman instead of the political way. For Amal, this helped her to avoid feeling hopeless.

Conclusion

The fact that all these different people, despite having varying philosophies on the right way to engage politically, made reference to their families when discussing their

relationship to politics is revealing. As Portelli (2004) highlights, by posing the question of what is “political”, I also shaped migrants’ interpretation of their life experiences. Asking migrants to explain their lives in reference to political events required them to think about these individual memories as associated with broader historical meaning and cultural significance. Their responses regarding what was properly political in their lives demonstrate that private memories and socio-historical context are intertwined (Popular Memory Group, 1998; Portelli, 2004). As this chapter illustrates, Jamil’s and Bakr’s assertion that politics was and is a part of the everyday, and importantly a part of family life, underscores the connection between private and social memories (Popular Memory Group, 1998; Portelli, 2004). They understood that experiences of writing letters to family members in prison, or attending PLO rallies, were related to one struggle and one experience. In a different interpretation of my question, Amal thought about her personal experiences that have shaped how she relates to politics today. The following chapter explores how migrants made the decision to leave their home-camps, and how they situated this choice relative to their relationship to the collective. In the same manner that I have outlined in this chapter, the next chapter argues that kin relations also played a central role in migrants’ decisions surrounding emigration.

Chapter Six: Memories of Leaving

“The office, the lady, she told me [to] tell me the story. I speak in my language, Arabic, and I tell where exactly when I [was] born until I came to Canada... The lady, I think she cry... and then she give me ok to stay in Canada... I got my work permit. I work in this country. I hassle, I work hard, because I don't know nobody... and it's not many Arab people, my English not that good... we have restaurant at the corner... I used to go everyday. Everyday hamburger, hamburger, hamburger. I die- I say, 'what's this country?' Everything hamburger”
- Fadlo

This chapter explores the various trajectories migrants undertook in order to leave their respective home-camps and immigrate to Canada. Beginning my research, I initially thought that the debate over emigration within camp communities would be more prevalent during my discussions with migrants (Allan, 2014; Pasquetti, 2011; Gabiam, 2016). While I did hear about instances of migrants justifying their choices to others who judged them for wanting to emigrate, it wasn't something they emphasized in particular. It did not seem that there was any apparent contradiction to Jamil, for example, between emigration and "leaving Palestine," as he said an Egyptian acquaintance once accused him of:

I remember that time when I had a talk with somebody, a guy from Egypt. He asked me, and he was angry: 'why did you leave Palestine? Why did you leave Gaza? You're not brave, you should stay there, you should fight Israel', and I said to him, I came here to study, I didn't come here to play or to [go] shopping, I came here to study and I will go back.

Rahman also told me about a similar comment from his comrades in the PLO, when they were living in Egypt and Rahman first thought of moving to Canada.

In the following section, I explore migrants' various reasons for wanting or needing emigrate from their home-camp. While leaving the camp was not an explicit goal that most migrants said they had, receiving an education or gaining socio-economic

mobility through employment certainly was. Each participant had their own unique ways to achieve that mobility, whether by going to university or by working their way up from entry-level jobs. Gaining this mobility required moving in and out of various places at different points in time. Therefore, the act of “leaving” for many migrants was not a single or linear one. Rather, it was a prolonged process of small migrations and returns. The near-impossibility of accessing secure citizenship in migrants’ home-camps and while working in the gulf, as well as for some, lack of support upon arrival to Canada, compounded migrants’ need to leave, come back, and leave again. Migrants overwhelmingly did not view leaving their home-camp as an obstruction to their commitment to the national collective. Rather, personal and familial ties to the home-camp (and by extension, homeland) underscored that a sense of belonging was more about community and social ties than about place specifically (Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013).

Seeking Citizenship

The precarious nature of Palestinian citizenship in the Middle East came up frequently during interviews. The structural limitations that lack of citizenship placed on migrants and their families were fundamental to the reasons that they wanted to emigrate. Some people, like Jamil, made that decision more slowly and carefully over years of planning, and others like Fadlo arrived as UN Convention refugees after atrocities like the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Lebanon. What migrants’ motivations underscore is that the act of migration was an ongoing condition rather than a single act. As Palestinian refugee and writer Yousif Qasmiyeh notes, “leaving a camp does not mean changing conditions- you are only changing geography, and yet these conditions continue to haunt

you” (Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p.139). The majority of migrants already had plenty of experience migrating from one country to another either for their education or for work. Migrants lived in multiple countries with the aim of finding employment, from Ghana to Syria and the Gulf states. Rahman, Bakr, and Jamil described their challenges whenever they visited Gaza from their university studies in Egypt. Bakr also remembered difficult trips crossing the Sinai Peninsula to return home for a visit.

Several migrants highlighted the practical constraints that lack of citizenship placed on themselves and their families, impacting their decision to seek status elsewhere. Precarity of status followed migrants from their home-camps to their respective countries of employment, and also continued here in Canada. For instance, Jamil wanted to emigrate in order to secure the basic rights that he was aware were denied to him as a Palestinian. He provided a detailed story from his childhood that elaborates on this theme:

Oh my God, you know what? I want to be free. Being a Palestinian, being not free... like I was travelling, like as I said when I was child I was, I lived in Saudi Arabia, my father [had a] business, small business in Egypt. And I can remember when I was a child, we were visiting the business in Egypt and it's [a] kind of farming, he has a big farm with many fruits and we were visiting this farm... every year or every two years or every three years... and then we'd go to Gaza....In order to get in Gaza we have to pass to go through Egypt. At that time, when we travel, even right now... we are treated not well. From the soldiers, even Egyptian soldiers on the borders, and the Israeli soldiers. So we go through Egyptian borders, then Israeli borders, it was hard travelling.

Then, Jamil expands his experience with Egyptian and Israeli soldiers to the Palestinian experience more broadly:

And even I heard from people who go to the West Bank through Jordan. Because they are Palestinian, they spend much time on the borders waiting for the permission. And the other nationalities they can go easily. But because we are Palestinian we have to wait. Why wait? I don't know. From these stories I decided after I [have] grown up, I have to have a nationality other than Palestinian. I need

a passport, [which] can make me move easily, go everywhere. And because at that time I heard many stories from Palestinians who lived in Arab countries, they don't have some rights in like owning houses or even studying...

Jamil connected the lack of rights for Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories and Arab states back to his own life. He said that when he grew up, he asked his parents why they left Saudi Arabia to go back to Gaza in the first place, when they had a good life there:

I asked my dad why we left Saudi Arabia?... We were ok there, we were fine. Why we left Saudi Arabia? He said one of the big reasons that we are not allowed to study at a university in Saudi Arabia, and it's [a] big problem... if we want to study at a university in Saudi Arabia or any other country we have to pay... We have to pay too much money, and it's not affordable for us. So my father decided to go to Gaza because I might have the chance to study in a cheap university, and that happened...I studied in Gaza, the fees for the university was affordable.

Citing his father's need to pay for his children's education, Jamil concluded the reasons why he desired a Canadian passport:

In short, I wanted the Canadian nationality, the Canadian passport because I want to be free. I want to live in peace. I want to have my human rights, my rights of a human, as a student, as a traveller, as everything. I need my rights. When I'm Palestinian... actually I can't access my rights when I'm a Palestinian. So this is the reason- [the] main reason why I decided to be a Canadian.

The opening of the Gulf market to migrant workers in the 1960s has been instrumental in shaping the trajectories of Palestinian migration (Allan, 2014; Hanieh, 2010, Rothenberg, 2000). Jamil's story above embodies one experience of this broader socio-economic dynamic in the Middle East. Most migrants I interviewed either worked in the Gulf or had parents who did, depending on their age. Kamal's discussion of working as a schoolteacher in Saudi Arabia provides another window into this experience:

Stories of Departure: Kamal

Three months after finishing his master's in 1990, Kamal went to Saudi Arabia: "There was a collapse in the JD" after he finished graduate school, he said. "When I graduated, the only window was the gulf region, because my salary will be if I work in Jordan... 100 JD [Jordanian Dollars] which will not buy me a TV."

Kamal had a good degree- a master's in pure math- so he managed to secure a teaching job in Saudi Arabia. I asked Kamal to describe what living there was like: "Living in Saudi Arabia, it means you work," he told me. Kamal described how the Saudi work permit differs from a work permit in Canada: "The work permission is only to work in your work place, it's not like work permit in Canada- you can work anywhere. [In Saudi] it's just... to work in that school."

Despite describing fond memories of living in Saudi Arabia, Kamal explained how the political restrictions on public life and expression in Saudi also felt very limiting. He said he remained in Saudi because he knew he had a responsibility to his family back in Jordan:

I know a lot. I read a lot. And my readings was always in history. I like history and philosophy. So there was a lot inside me that I couldn't communicate with people, because of the restrictions in Saudi Arabia. But you know I was, I had a family to support, especially my dad. And I have a sister and a brother in the university, so when I like returning to Jordan during summers I ask my dad, what about returning to Jordan, leaving Saudi Arabia and trying to find a job in Jordan? He said no, this is not the right decision, stay there. We need your income to help us survive. So they keep pushing me back to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is very hot. It's a desert, I don't like deserts. I like green, maybe this is why I moved to Canada actually. And Saudi is, if you compare it to Jordan It's like, they are so, their tradition actually, they are very good people, they are very nice but their way of living is, doesn't suit me actually. But we managed to live in a Palestinian neighborhood actually. Now we live in Palestinian neighborhood. We have you know, connections with Palestinians, with Syrians, with Lebanese. Arab community. We live as like, in a ghetto. We do not interact with Saudi families.

Even we have friends but we do not like go outside together. It's like living there, but not living.

Kamal sent remittances back to his family in Jordan from his arrival in 1990, until his mother passed away in 2011: "I have to do it, actually if I didn't do that my family won't survive. It's not like Canada: if you don't have income you go and get some support from the government. There you are on your own- either to be homeless or to work. Nothing will help you and you have to help your family". Kamal highlighted again and again that commitment to his family's financial wellbeing was the most important thing. He explained that sending money was their form of welfare: "If I know that my brother needs me, I will not hesitate. I will commit and I will send him money, support him."

In the above excerpt from Kamal's interview, he demonstrates that family ties constitute the relationship between himself and his home-camp, al-Wehdat. In an illuminating parallel, Yousif Qasmiyeh also describes how kinship maintains the relationship between himself and his camp of origin:

when my sister, who is based in Sweden, my brother, based in Canada, and I, direct our sights towards the camps from a distance, and when we return to our home-camp and the camps of our relatives, we do so primarily to maintain the pulse in our bond with our family and heritage, and, of course, *to assist our families materially*. Comfort in this respect is related to being able to belong- not to a fixed identity or a fixed place- but to an overarching community and its major concerns and unfulfilled hopes (Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p.139).

In the above quotation, Qasmiyeh emphasises how his connection to home-camp is not through place in a fixed sense, but in relation to the people within that particular place. Kamal situated his relationship to his home-camp in relation to the necessity of supporting his family financially. I also found it interesting that Kamal mentioned the

ways in which his own Palestinian community was replicated in Saudi Arabia. In this sense, Palestinian social networks in countries of work also consolidate a cultural relationship to Palestine that is evident in the camps (Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013).

Kamal related his primary motivation for moving to Canada to the uncertain status of his children's Jordanian citizenship. Both of Kamal's children were born in Saudi Arabia, but as is customary law for non-Saudi residents, neither possess citizenship there either (Zahra, 2013). He explained that after the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel, Jordanian citizenship of Palestinians living in the West Bank came into question:

Israel wasn't ready to give up West Bank to Jordan, so the solution was this is Palestine, and Jordan was the east side of the Jordan River... so Palestinians now, their citizenship came into question; it was in doubt, some of them they were stripped of their nationalities. Like people living in the West Bank, they are not Jordanian anymore. All of a sudden they lost their citizenship. [The] other side, like me who were living in Jordan since [the] 50s, were secure. I have Jordanian citizenship, it's not under question. The third part, which is the gray area is like [my wife's] family, who were having the right to live in West Bank, and having the right to live in Jordan. They have what they call the yellow card. Yellow card means you are Palestinian and Jordanian. So if you have that yellow card, you have to prove that you don't have income from the West Bank, you do not work for the Palestinian authorities, you are out of Palestine... if you do not manage to prove that, they will strip off your citizenship. That situation actually [made] me afraid that my kids will, it's like there is a hidden plan for stripping off our identity or citizenship. I don't want to put my kids in that situation.

In all life stories, children and family were a prominent factor in migrants' decisions to leave either the refugee camp or their country of work. Migration scholars note that prioritizing children's wellbeing and future opportunities is common to many migrants (Dobrowolsky, Bryan, & Gardiner-Barber, 2015). Kamal framed his decision for leaving his job in Saudi Arabia to move to Canada in terms of securing a stable life

for his children. He made it clear that his children's citizenship and their opportunity to have a good education was the primary goal of leaving Saudi Arabia. Likewise, After Bakr's wife passed away, he needed to be able to live and work in a place where he could be near to his children, where previously, he travelled inside Israel for work and returned on weekends:

Bakr:

It is important to note that for Bakr, his move to Canada was never part of a larger plan in the same way that Jamil framed his motivations for emigrating. Bakr moved "not to immigrate." He reinforced that home for him was still back in Gaza and in Palestine:

I didn't think of coming to Canada before. I thought of coming to Canada after my wife passed away. I have my life in Palestine. I don't face any challenge, why to leave my home? I used to work in Israel, and when my wife passed away, where I used to go to work on Sunday and to come back Thursday, and my wife is taking care of the children and is my partner and is the backbone of the family. We are working together my wife and me to take care of our family. So now my wife passed away, and who is going to take care of my children? I can't leave them alone. They need care; they need an eye on them. So I said to myself I can't continue my work in Israel... Also I cannot take my children with me. The Israelis will never allow them as they need permits and other needs. I started thinking to find a place where I can be with my children, a place to work and live. Not to immigrate, because my home is there in Gaza Strip in Palestine. Still my home is there; my land is there, in Gaza, and in (village).

Rahman:

Rahman's motivations for moving from Kuwait to Canada were also related to the need to secure citizenship for his children, despite having comfortable employment in the gulf. Rahman described his decision for moving, and underlined his children in particular:

We work in Kuwait, we have a lot of money, but for the future was not good... I look for my kids, not for me. You see, I am working, I have good salary, at the end I was a technical advisor in a company, the largest company in Kuwait after

the oil companies. But I am looking about where my kids will study after they finish high school. And as their passport is a document like [mine], many countries they refuse. At that time, [for] Palestinians... very very difficult to get in the Kuwaiti university, you see. Then I decided in my mind, and like for the future of the kids, I can send them to study outside... No problem. Money wise it was ok. But, they are not allowed to come back to Kuwait. The government issued a rule that [when] any guy reach 18 years old, his residence before that is on his parents. After that no, either he left the country, or find work and his residence in the country will be on the owner of the job where he is working. That means, after my son finished the high school, I sent him to Germany. But [I] can't bring him back to Kuwait.

Because of Kuwaiti law, Rahman said, his children wouldn't be able to return to Kuwait after the age of 18. As a resident of Kuwait with a work permit, Rahman's children were secure under his own work visa until they reached legal adulthood. After age 18, they needed to find work in Kuwait as their residency permit would fall on their employer (Rothenberg, 2000). If Rahman's children didn't find work, they could no longer stay in Kuwait.

The particular restraints on the lives of Palestinians in Lebanon also provided a strong motivation for those migrants to seek employment elsewhere. Palestinians that I met from Lebanon frequently repeated these frustrations to me. When one participant invited me to have dinner at his home, his wife told me about her brother who worked as a nurse back in Lebanon. She explained that his pay wasn't always guaranteed because he wasn't a Lebanese citizen. Likewise, Adam also told me of his Palestinian colleagues in Lebanese dentistry school who could not practice as licensed dentists in Lebanon, and would have to eventually open clinics in the camps if they wanted to work.

Amin



Figure 11: Amin's migration map

I found it interesting that a few migrants framed Lebanon's unfair treatment of Palestinian refugees as limiting their ability to benefit Palestine. Amin, one of the more politically active interviewees, was keenly aware of the irony of Lebanon's so-called support for the right of return. He remembered travelling to Iraq as a young teen with the PLO, and feeling anger towards Arab governments for their lack of support for Palestinians. Here, Amin describes the Palestinian situation in Lebanon:

A: We can put some blame on Arab governments. There is not full support for Palestinian people. For example, in some countries, such as Syria, Palestinians are treated like Syrians, it is good. But in Lebanon, where I lived, it is a different story. You can study, go to university, and graduate. But then you cannot work. Human rights didn't apply to us. We cannot work in what we studied, they left us for the construction jobs. We cannot support ourselves so we can go back to Palestine.

RL: it was that the Lebanese government wasn't helping you to return?

A: The government supported Palestinians returning to Palestine, they wanted us to return. As a refugee, a Palestinian refugee, we needed support. We needed real work and opportunities, not just finish an engineering degree and then go work in a grocery store or in construction. We needed good work for the men and women so they can support themselves and live in dignity, so we can go to Palestine. So

we can be a part of society. When we don't have rights, there are a lot of social problems, inside the camp. That is why you see many people leaving the refugee camp, to other countries. They are refugees in Lebanon, and other countries.

Amin made a connection between precarious employment in Lebanon and the push for people to leave the refugee camp. In his opinion, lack of reliable employment in Lebanon is at odds with goals for collective return to Palestine insofar as daily uncertainty of work pushes people away from their communities and as a result, the struggle for national liberation.

Issam

Issam's interview was unique in the sense that he expressed feeling strongly against leaving Lebanon in the first place- that leaving would be akin to abandoning his community and cause, despite those feelings changing eventually. In 1983, after the Sabra and Shatila massacre, his now ex-wife wanted to immigrate. He however, did not, and was relieved when Canada denied his application. I was curious as to why Issam felt relieved his application was denied: "I didn't want to go," he said. "After Sabra and Shatila I couldn't. I won't feel right to leave the people." He explained that he felt obligated to stay.

Issam's ex wife had uncles in Canada, however, and they sponsored them after their first attempt. "So I went for the interview but I wasn't happy... and when the officer asked me if you were part of the PLO I said yes, because my subconscious I thought this answer might let them deny me, but he didn't make any comment. All Palestinians are with the PLO." Eventually, by using a few personal connections -a topic which also came up in several stories- Issam's ex wife travelled to Cyprus with their son, and then stayed in England. The Lebanese authorities refused to renew Issam's passport, and somehow he

managed to get an Algerian one. Eventually, he made it to Canada, but went back to Lebanon soon after. He and his wife separated shortly after that. Issam explained that he wanted to visit Canada again to see his family, but his intention wasn't to immigrate: "I went to the Lebanese Canadian embassy, I told them I want to visit, I have my wife there and child, they told me... you have approval to immigrate. I told them I don't want to immigrate I want to visit... I came in 1985 and visited. I was happy to see my son after two years, and went back to Lebanon." After Issam returned, he experienced the War of the Camps from 1985-1986 in Burj al-Barajneh, which changed his feelings about leaving: "after the war ended I felt that's it for the Palestinian movement in Lebanon, and came back to Canada in 1986."

"Why did you feel like that was the end for the political movement?" I asked Issam. He then got technical about Lebanon's political history: "Because now, at the beginning our conflict was with the Lebanese authority. And still you have allies, the Lebanese Muslims... Once you start fighting with those allies... and my presence there will be staying in an office in a refugee camp." Previously, Issam expressed that leaving Lebanon for Canada would have been abandoning the causes and the people he had fought for his whole life. Now, the idea of staying appeared to suffocate those same goals. Issam no longer saw emigration as a means of escaping his commitments, since the political circumstances for Palestinians in Lebanon had changed. Rather, emigrating opened up a way to communicate his politics more effectively than he would have been able to back in Lebanon. The following explains how Issam went about doing just that:

Shortly after arriving to Canada, Issam helped to form a kind of Canadian friends of the PFLP, and worked full time with them. He travelled to university campuses, meeting professors and trade unionists who supported Palestinian rights:

We used to do activities, lectures talking to unions, churches, and I felt that my presence in Canada is more beneficial to the ... cause than staying in [a] refugee camp. At least in Canada you can talk to people about the cause. And influence to a certain extent some MPs- make Canadian society, media aware of the detail of the daily lives and hardships of the Palestinian people... so I felt that I'm doing something. My whole perspective changed...

Issam described how the Palestine activism he took on after moving to Canada was in some ways more effective than the factional politics he took part in with the PFLP in Lebanon. Reflecting on his life after coming to Canada, Issam felt that a big mistake the Palestinian national movement made in Lebanon was to waste time on fighting amongst each other. Issam spent much of his time in Canada advocating for the Palestinian cause with people from all facets of the Left, from university professors to trade unionists. He described learning more about the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty in Canada, and meeting pro-Palestinian Jews, which further informed the way that he thought about Palestine and its place in the overall struggle of the international Left.

Most migrants mentioned family as their primary motivation to emigrate. In Issam's case, I think the same logic applies, although not in the same, direct way in the sense that most other migrants expressed *wanting* to leave for the sake of their children. With respect to Issam's motivations, he initially did not want to leave Lebanon, but his family responsibilities eventually pulled him to Canada. In a way, Issam and Kamal, despite expressing such different motivations in life and ways of "being Palestinian", politically speaking, they both described how they accepted the consequences of their

goals as necessary sacrifices. The following section looks at migrants' reflections on having left their home-camps.

Reflections on Emigration and Return

When I asked Jamil how he thought of emigrating to Canada, he replied that "coming to Canada was my dream since I was in high school, since I was 16 years old... it was my goal. My life goal." Jamil reflected on the choices he made in life in terms of his desire to emigrate:

I did [my] master's to come to Canada ... I should be qualified to come to Canada to get the permission, or the approval. And to be approved I have to get like 67 points out of 100, and my study, they evaluate my studies, my degree, my work experience, if I am married or not, my age... when I finished my bachelor at that time I went through like test, it was online to check if I'm qualified or not. I wasn't qualified at that time, I knew that I have to have MBA, masters, I have to get married, to get more points... after I worked I got married because I need more points to be qualified. At the end, after I married, also my wife has degree, and that gives me more points to be approved. 2010 I applied and I was approved at that time, 2010 yeah. 2013... I got the visa to come to Canada.

I also asked Kamal if he wanted to leave the camp when he was growing up in al-Wehdat camp in Jordan. "Of course," he said. "One of my dreams was to have a car next to my house, because you know, in order to get anything to the house, the car will drop it like 500 metres away, because that was the end point for the cars. And then you have to hold it, to carry it, you know [to] the house." He remembered having to carry gas cylinders in order to cook, having to carry groceries and kerosene for heating. Kamal pointed out the limits of daily life in al-Wehdat, and said that everyone in the camp was fighting to leave. He even spoke about the success of his own family by the fact that all of his siblings except one sister had managed to do so.

Kamal also alluded to the importance of leaving the camp when he spoke about the value of education for Palestinian people, and equated survival with leaving the camp: "They were telling us that the only way to survive or to leave the refugee camp is... through education, and Palestinians I don't know, all of a sudden they believed in

education as the way to leave or the way to survive. Because the gulf region was open for educated people.”

Adam’s father, who also made a living working in the United Arab Emirates, managed to go to university in the United States before moving back to Lebanon, marrying and having children. They raised their children in Ain al-Hilweh for the first nine years of Adam’s life, then emigrated to Canada so their children could obtain citizenship. When Adam was a teenager, they moved back to Lebanon.

I was curious about how Adam felt about moving back to Lebanon again from Canada as teenager: “Oh, I hated it” Adam replied, “I was 16, and I hated the fact that I was not in control of my life.” Like most teenagers would be, Adam was not happy that his parents decided to uproot him and his siblings and move them back to Lebanon. Now however, he is very appreciative that his parents took them back:

I’m very thankful that my parents moved back to Lebanon for a few years, because what they had sought out actually happened: I actually felt more connected with my Palestinian identity in particular, because I remember like going into the camp I felt really frustrated why everything was the way it was, and I remember it as a child because I lived it, but I was kid, I didn’t really break things down... this was just the life that I knew, so coming back at a, like in my teens and living there... I was able to see things in a more mature way and sort of trying to understand it better as to why the situation is the way it is and actually feeling really strong passion to that place. So like when I tell you about my passions, when I was telling you about them earlier, like those feelings maybe weren’t there when I was a child, when I was 9 years old, but I guess moving here and then moving back, and sort of grounding myself was significant.

Earlier in our interview, Adam said he was aware of the significance of the fact that he lived in a refugee camp as a child, and how this inspired a passion for Palestinian rights in him. However, it also seems that it was his return to the camp that solidified those feelings, as well as his ability to clearly see injustice as a young adult. Adam told

another story of the camp he experienced after living there a second time. He remembered how one day:

School let us out early, and I went back in the camp and it was dead empty. There was nobody there. And the camp is always like very busy and there's people on the streets at all hours of the day and night. So I was kind of shocked and kind of a little bit on alert as to what's going on... so when I got back home, my aunts and grandma saw me coming and they were asking me how I got there, and I told them that I walked... they're like oh, you should not have done that... I guess there was some sort of military conflict earlier in the day, and everybody was taking caution, everybody was indoors. ... This is what we experienced everyday, like fear of instability... I guess seeing it again and living it again was actually very important.

Moving to Canada and coming back, Adam felt, made him see things differently than his cousins who had never left. Leaving made Adam see more clearly how being in a prolonged state of displacement, and lack of support from the Lebanese government had forced a kind of hopelessness on the people he knew there:

That's something that I see in a lot of my generation, and a lot of like my cousins and my close friends... which really bothers me, or you know, I see potential in a friend or in a cousin or in somebody I know, and they just sort of shrug it off and they're like well I'm just gonna stay here in the camp my whole life, my kids are gonna stay here in the camp my whole life, I'm third generation refugee, my children are gonna live the same thing, it's been like this for 69 years, nothing is gonna change, so that hopelessness has really affected people's way of thinking.

Adam felt that his experience coming to Canada made him feel more hopeful: "I have strong hope in Palestine, actually," he told me: "Coming to Canada, experiencing a lot of things that I've experienced here in Canada and even in Lebanon, like I know that the passion for truth or the passion for justice is present and it's really sad to see those friends that have sort of lost hope." Adam expressed feeling slightly guilty at the fact that he was a Canadian citizen. He said he felt that because he was a part of his family, that he "should be suffering with them." He was bothered by the fact that by having the chance to leave, he had opportunities and privileges where they did not.

When Kamal couldn't find a job in Canada, he made the decision to leave his family in Canada while he returned to work in the Middle East to support them:

When I was reading about Canada they said they need mathematicians, people in math. So I moved in 2008 and I came to understand that its not easy to get credentials, or to be certified. My experience was in teaching, but my degree was in science, so I came to know that I can't get my credentials in teaching, in education. Because I don't have bachelor's degree in education ... I can't settle in Canada.

Although Kamal had years of teaching experience, he didn't have a bachelor's degree in education, which was required to teach in Canada. For Kamal, this meant that "I have to leave my job, which means I have to work in like McDonalds or restaurants, with a master's degree in math."

Reflecting on his experience, Kamal asked himself: "Well, what was the purpose for immigrating to Canada? It was for the kids, so let them stay there. And I will keep working in Saudi Arabia, and in that situation I will secure their income." So he returned to Saudi Arabia again after attempting to move to Canada a second time, in 2010. "At that moment I have [a] clear understanding of the work market in Canada and I don't have any chance to work; I actually stayed here for 1 year, left my work in Saudi Arabia... I worked in the Islamic school... but the income wasn't enough, and it was [a] part time job...I ended up spending half of my savings in one year," Kamal explained:

So we sat together and decided what can we do? Even to push [my children and wife] to work in McDonalds in Tim Horton's... our decision was no, this is not the right thing. We moved to secure citizenship for the kids. We kept telling ourselves what were the goals of moving? So good education, good education means [the children] must stay in the school... pushing [my child] to work means he might lose his focus on school.

The way Kamal expressed his decision seemed that he situated his own personal sacrifices in terms of the goals he had when he and his wife made the decision to

emigrate. In terms of those goals, moving to Canada had been somewhat successful. He said:

Canada is like, it's a welcoming country but it's not welcoming in terms of work. And this is like, the headache for any father or any family. It's not easy to secure a job, especially if you have credentials, you were in a good job in your country. My income was good in Saudi Arabia- it wasn't immigrating because of financial issues, it was because of two things that I told you: citizenship and education.

Issam also framed the outcome of his own experience in Canada in a similar way; he understood the personal sacrifices he has made in terms of the benefits for his children and struggles of his elders. Take the way that he rationalized fighting a deportation order for decades, for example:

I always felt to be part of any group as long as I'm not committing violence, breaking the laws of any country, and after all I'm a Palestinian there is people in prison and people killed because [of] the cause, so moving from one place to another is not the end of, it's difficult, it's not easy, but being a committed person I have to accept the consequences of political activities. My uncle was killed in 1966, my father spent his life [in prison] and it's easier now than before... one of my sons is a teacher... and the second works with [a manufacturing company] ... so they can visit me if they want.

In a way, Issam expressed his goal of coming to Canada being fulfilled when he spoke about his children in the above quotation, as did Kamal. The fact that Issam's children had good jobs and held Canadian citizenship was a metric of success for him. Issam also situated the consequences of his political involvement in terms of what his father went through, and that being a Palestinian he needed to "accept the consequences". By also weaving his commitment to family throughout his life story, Kamal framed his own personal difficulties and disappointments in a similar manner.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the different ways that migrants came to Canada. I have argued that, contrary to my initial assumptions, migrants did not view leaving their home-camp as contradicting their commitment to Palestinian liberation. I have also shown that because of difficulties accessing stable work and citizenship, migration for the people I spoke to was not so much a single act as an ongoing condition (Gabiam & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017; Loddo, 2017). Migrants overwhelmingly situated their goals for leaving relative to the needs of their children, particularly citizenship and education. This demonstrates that family was a central motivating factor to migrate, as well as a way to measure the benefits of their decision. Migrants situated their commitment to the Palestinian collective relative to family struggles and sacrifices; therefore, the relationship to their Palestinian identity was less bound to place than social ties (Gabiam & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017; Loddo, 2017).

Chapter Seven: The Future

“I’m always hopeful. Being an immigrant, that means... you believe in your dreams. It’s a big decision, it’s not easy. So you have to be hopeful”
- Kamal

In the previous chapter, Amin’s explanation of how Lebanese restrictions on employment created a need for emigration and therefore derailed the goal of return to Palestine illuminated a compelling way in which pragmatic and more abstract future goals intertwined in life story interviews (Allan, 2014). Similarly, I think that Amin’s comment also speaks to the ways in which hope for Palestinians means receiving their rights as a collective and the righting of historical wrongs by Israel and other Arab states. At the same time, hope also refers to the kinds of pragmatic goals that aren’t unique to Palestinians. For example, in *Refugees of the Revolution* (2014), Allan’s informants in Shatila speak to the dual nature of hope as having the dimension of both return to Palestine but also the guarantee of the basic freedoms that Lebanon denies. A conversation that Allan has with a woman named Umm Hadi illuminates this point:

People used to be very hopeful. They’d say, “We’ll go back, maybe not today or tomorrow, but we will go back at some point.” Now, when I look back, I often wonder where that hope came from ... Our hope was not just to return; we hoped to get our rights as a people. We believed that one day the international community—or an Arab country—would give us this right (p. 158).

Framing this issue of rights and return similarly, Adam explained what he felt “hope” should mean in terms of the situation of his cousins who still live in Ain al-Hilweh:

I think hope, for now is not even going back to Palestine, that’s not hope. Like if Palestine was liberated today and they were to go back they would just be like, there’s nothing for them to start from, you know what I mean? Hope is to actually you know have the right to actually get a job in Lebanon... the basic human rights are nonexistent. The right to shelter and education. And healthcare... for 69 years we’ve been treated as refugees, because that’s what we are, but we’ve been treated as people who are in an area waiting, unable to go back, and we’re just helping them out whilst they stay temporarily. That’s what a refugee is, right? It’s

a temporary situation, and I guess they've lost hope in seeing, like how long is this temporary situation? They've created in their heads that this is permanent and we are refugees permanently, and I think the thing that I would love to see is... don't eliminate refugee status. On the contrary... that status is as I was saying earlier like being in the camps, that's the closest thing that I feel to home. There's so much Palestinian identity in the situation that we live in... like being treated like that almost gives us that connection to Palestine. I think more so than the Palestinian Jordanians who are Jordanian citizens. We have a stronger sort of connection with what we had, just because we're so separated from the rest of society. But I would love to see just some sort of different treatment in Lebanon itself... The number of university-educated students in the camp that are jobless, that's what hurts... they've done what they need to do... they've studied, they have a degree, and they can't do anything with it.

In the above passage, Adam speaks to the contradictory feelings that the camp brings up for him, and how his cousins' barriers to gaining socio-economic mobility in Ain al-Hilweh impact his thoughts on Palestinian liberation. For Adam, the camp represents his identification with a collective struggle and his desire to return to Palestine. Similarly, Amin was not romanticizing his childhood experiences when he spoke of growing up in Lebanon, but at the same time he expressed very eloquently that to him the camp is the "castle of the struggle." Amin told me:

For me, the camp will always be, until now, a symbol of our struggle. The camp is the witness [that] we are refugees, and the witness that our people will not accept living in other countries as less-than, because we want to return to Palestine. And after 70 years of suffering and pain, still we want to return to Palestine.

Adam didn't feel that life in the camp was a healthy or sustainable situation. He wanted to see his family members grow and be able to get out, and expressed guilt that he was not living there in solidarity with them. On the other hand, what the camp represented to Adam was as he said, the closest thing to home that he felt and knew. This final chapter explores how migrants discussed their kin when reflecting on their hopes and dreams- both on a personal level and with respect to collective Palestinian liberation.

Discussions of migrants' future goals relative to their relationship to homeland centered around family, illustrating how personal experiences and collective identity interrelate.

Where is Home?

When I asked Kamal about his hopes for his children, he expressed wanting a good education for them, and being able to settle in Canada permanently as family:

It was first my dream to move here, but I have my responsibilities towards my family, so... always my family. It's still there, God granted me my life, I will move. It's still my long run dream. But for the time being, I will focus on [kids] to finish their education. When they are done with their education then it won't be like highly demanding in terms of income, so I can manage to survive with what savings I have, so for the long run yes, I am planning to settle down in Canada.

Kamal also mentioned that he wanted his children to be mindful of where they come from:

Even they are third generation, and their kids they will be the fourth generation of let's say we have a story to tell and we have a case, [a] fair case that we must share with the people everywhere, and to keep it in mind. Of course I want them to be free actually also. I always tell them the most precious thing is freedom, is to express your mind without fear, is to be active member of your community, to respect others.

Kamal felt that Canada was a place which did grant these freedoms, and said that to that extent, immigrating was worth the headache: "I think we did the right step, moving, and for [the] kids to live in Canada means a lot of things, good education also."

The topic of freedom lead into our discussion on how Kamal felt about the right of return, and how his children should relate to their history. I asked Kamal if a Palestinian state were to be created, would he go back?

Well, this is a very big question because I never lived in Palestine, my family, because you know, its like, I see it as a duty rather than a place that I dream of living in. Of course I wish to visit and see my homeland but living there's like a big question, I consider Jordan as my homeland because all my memories are in Jordan. My family are in Jordan, but I still have some relative in Palestine, in West Bank, maybe visiting, you know because I moved to Canada and I know

how difficult [it is] to settle down in any country, it's not that you know, easy a decision to go. Maybe, I'm not sure.

I asked Kamal if he felt Jordan was home for him. "Of course," he said. "I was born and raised in Jordan and it's a home." But "home" is a technical term for Kamal:

I'm Palestinian. When I always like in the school when they have newcomers and new teachers coming to school, when we introduce ourselves, where are you from? I'm from Palestine. I do not say I'm from Jordan. But I am Jordanian. Like now [child] will say for example I'm Canadian. Yeah he's Canadian but he's still have Palestinian roots, Jordanian roots. Maybe he might say I'm Saudi because he lived there for maybe more than, I don't know. He has memories there, I'm not saying Saudi in terms of the nationality, this is part of of your memories.

Despite Kamal's ambivalence towards the subject of home, his ancestral village in Palestine is still sacred to him, and he still holds onto the papers that show that he still owns the land:

My granddad was the only one who has like university degree in our village. He graduated from Al-Azhar in Egypt and returned to our village, and he was like the scholar and the imam of the masjid. And he wrote books actually. He passed away in Jericho, in the refugee camp in Jericho, and in the base of that mountain... his grave is there. So I have the papers of my land still in our hands and the memories of the refugee camp, and the memories that my father and my mom told me about my village, and the pictures that I see now... you know really, the village is like Switzerland. It's very green, and very beautiful.

Kamal didn't think he would want to go back to Palestine to live there, but he wanted to right and the choice to do so:

I want to live in a free country, in a democratic country, in a way that I can express my mind. Palestine will be another Arab land, you will not be granted free speech, but you know... I want to have the right to go there to visit, to go there, to see my village, maybe to have to right to get my land back, but I might not decide to live there, who knows? I have to experience life there to see the situation, maybe if [you] ask that question to my dad, he won't hesitate and say, of course I will. But my mom died, passed away, crying, to have a glance, to see our village... But me, I didn't experience living there.

Jamil also felt similarly. During our interview I asked, "if Palestine were to be free, would you move back there to live?" He answered:

it's too early... I don't know. It depends on the situation at that time, because let's say Egypt is free, is life there good? Is the life there good or not? It's not good. Even Iraq, Iraq is free, is life there good? Yemen: free, life there is not good. Libya: free but life there is not good. So free with good life, beautiful, nice. But free without good life- still not good.

In contrast, Bakr's need to physically live in Palestine was itself an assertion that his rights were not yet recognized. While there is no stable political solution in the region, Bakr felt that he couldn't yet leave:

Once our identity and state [of] Palestine is recognized, settled, then I don't care. It doesn't matter. I can go any time and I am free to live in any part of the world. It's a matter of identity and recognition. But till now, as long as this conflict is not settled and there is a threat on our culture, our land, or our identity and our existence. Once it's settled in a just and peaceful way, I can live anywhere. Freedom is the most precious thing in the universe and because till now, we as Palestinians are deprived of our freedom and under the most protracted occupation. Now, If I want to go to Palestine how do I go? How do I go? I want to have our sovereignty in Palestine. To have our airport to have our identity, to have the recognition of the world, to see my passport as independent free Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem... Once I have it, I can stay here in Canada or any part of the world, I don't mind.

This doesn't mean however, that Bakr felt less Palestinian living elsewhere in the world. On the contrary, he repeated to me that his nationality lives within him, and is evident in everything he does and wherever he goes.

Adam wanted very badly to be able to visit Palestine and maybe contribute by working there for a while. He wanted to be able to live in his village and interact with Jewish Israelis who also live there. He expressed hope and curiosity about the life he could build and the ways in which he could contribute to building a more just society. He explained that his father felt differently however, and had no interest in returning to a place where he would have to interact with Israel as a colonized subject.

Migrants understood that the act of return and gaining equal rights with the Israelis (and for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon- the Lebanese) were intertwined with

one another. To illustrate this point, two participants, both independently of each other, used objects I had as metaphors for how they felt about return and its place in restoring dignity: “if someone steal your, I don’t know, small thing... even this pen,” Amin said as he looked around for an object that he could make a loose comparison to the case of Palestine with. “It’s dear, you love to return it to you, and maybe you fight in legal acts... to get this back.” Issam also used the chair I was sitting on as an almost-identical metaphor for the right of return to Palestine.

Experiences of Return



Figure 12: Fadlo’s migration map

A few migrants were able to “return” to their ancestral homes in Palestine/Israel, and described their experiences to me. Fadlo told me how he visits Palestine every year: “When I go to Palestine,” Fadlo said, “when I hit the airport, I go right away to my village. It’s nothing there. We have still a church there, and we have around 4-5 houses... my dad and his brother house is there.” He also told me about how he still cares for his aging father, who had a stroke a couple of years ago, “but I don’t put him in the senior home... I take care [of] my dad. I make him the food, I cook for him, I do everything for

him.” The reason why I think this is relevant to Fadlo’s experience of “return” is that he followed this sentence directly with, “I went to Palestine. I go every year. And the first time I went, I call my dad. He says, ‘go left, go right, stop here. This is our home.’” Fadlo recounted asking the Israelis who lived there currently to have a look around: “My dad [is] with me in the phone, I see he [is] crying... it’s very hard to go to see [your] house and to see your land... and you can’t do anything.” It seemed that while the act of returning to his village was important to Fadlo, it was even more important that he was able to do it for his dad. Naif also talked about how he went back to visit his village for his father, who told him where to stop and look around. In a similar manner, although Amal did not want to live in Palestine, she wanted very badly to take her mother back to see if she could stand visiting her house again.

Conclusion

For migrants, “return” in the broadest sense seemed to be both at once a physical act of moving to or visiting Palestine, acquiring rights through tangible material benefits, and in more abstract terms, a recognition of their cause and collective national existence. Allan (2014) argues that with respect to a “context where the international consensus continues to understand refugee aspirations in highly abstract terms, there is an urgent need to attend to the multiple registers through which refugees imagine and engage with their future” (p.159). While in the above quotation Allan is referring to the ways in which dreams and the practice of imagination surrounding dreams help to sustain hope for refugees in Shatila camp specifically, I think this statement accurately reflects how migrants characterized both wanting to “leave and return” at the same time, and held those objectives in the balance. Put plainly, it seemed that hope for migrants was a

delicate balance of taking steps towards meeting their material needs, while at the same time keeping the bigger picture of Palestine in mind. However, this does not mean that personal and collective goals are a kind of conscious balancing act and are fundamentally at odds with one another. This was the assumption that informed my initial research question, which I realized after speaking to migrants was a highly shortsighted one.

Maurice Halbwach's claim that "no human ever lives alone" (Apfelbaum, 2010) illuminates why my assumption that the personal and the collective were separate was incorrect. Writing on Halbwach's concept of collective memory, Erika Apfelbaum (2010) argues that "individual experiences are the result of an ongoing dynamic social process; they are inscribed in a given physical, sociohistorical environment, stored in memory and recollected through continuous interchanges with significant others or significant groups" (p.85). Her discussion of Halbwachs is significant because it illustrates the way in which migrants understood their belonging to the collective as formed through personal, familial ties and struggles (Creet, 2011; Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). Whether it was Adam's cousins who decided to build another floor on top of their family apartment in order to start a family in Ain al-Hilweh, or Fadlo, who put his aging father on the phone as he walked through his house, seemingly abstract concepts like "national liberation" actually carried fundamentally personal, familial and affective associations. Two quotations from Issam and Fadlo drive this point home. When I asked Issam why he was still driven to be so politically committed after all he had been through, he mentioned his father, and that it is his right to advocate for his cause:

For me, its not politics, it's a commitment- I'm not playing a game. It's not a hobby... I told you that my father was in prison for fifty-three times in Lebanon... we didn't give up.

Fadlo's final interview response also sums up quite nicely what I learned from these conversations about the ties between personal relationships and obligations to the collective amongst migrants:

Our kids finish university because we believe, we believe as Palestinian-Canadian, or Canadian- no we are Palestinian-Canadian, we believe... we bring lots of people to die for the country. Now I tell my kids, your dad, he did what he have to do, now it's your turn... first to finish university, to have diploma in your hand, and then to present your problem in English [so that] the people understand what you're, you came from where. You are Canadian, but your father is Palestinian, he live in camp. You have to [be] proud... A couple years ago I sent my son to Lebanon in the camp, to see how the people live, to know because when he's 12 years or 10 years he say 'Dad, I need Nike shoes'. Nike shoes is \$150-\$200... you know \$200 if I send it to the camp how many family can live? ... So I got him the ticket, I call my friend in the camp. He met him at the airport... he live with him in the camp for a month, then... when in the Christmas we put in the envelope \$100 for him or my friend he give him [my son] \$50 gift, he say dad you know something, I have \$200 dollar let's do it this way. \$100 for me, and \$100 let's send it to Lebanon so some family can live. You know, we try to get our kids the way, how we live and respect, you know but in the same time we respect this country, and I say always to everybody thank you Canada, to let us, to give us the paper, we have a family, our kids finish university, we love this country, but no way we can forget our country. No way we can forget our land.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

“People who had lived in Palestine for 60 or 70 years before being expelled from Palestine, when they die, the memories go with them. But we want the memories to live on, so we interview the elderly and tell stories. You can see me, I moved to Canada, I am a citizen and I am lucky, but I will never forget Palestine. I have to return.”

- Amin

I began my thesis in chapter two with a discussion of the reasons why people tell their stories the way they do; I situated the life histories of Palestinian migrants to Canada within a broader conversation about the relationship between individual and collective memory in life history literature.

Chapter three explored how nostalgia, especially surrounding inherited memories of Palestine from parents or grandparents, functioned as a way for migrants to situate their lives within an ongoing historical process. I discussed how the inter-generational transmission of memory amongst migrants facilitated an understanding of collective injustice and therefore solidified notions of collective belonging.

Chapter four looked at how the refugee camps themselves contributed to migrants’ affective relationship to Palestine. This occurred through the physical distinctions between camp and city, UNRWA schools and distribution centres, as well as the organization of camps by village of origin (Gabiam & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017; Petet, 2017). Although Palestinian refugee camps symbolize the lost homeland, they also serve as sites for building collective national identity: they are “an important part of the tradition that is central to a community of memory” (Zureik, 2003, p.156).

Social relationships are central to the formation of memory narratives (Keightley, 2010). Building on this point, chapter five focused on kinship as it relates to migrants’

choices to engage in “politics” and political activism. While migrants understood political engagement to mean very different things, namely that this is opposite to or goes hand in hand with joining a political party, they situated their thoughts on the topic relative to their family experiences. I did not gather enough data to argue for patterns based on generational differences and differences in camp/ country of origin relative to thoughts on political activism, although this of course had a significant impact. Rather, I focused on the fact that the mention of family during these discussions is significant because it speaks to the ways that the connection to the condition of the Palestinian collective occurs through common experiences of family imprisonment or multiple siblings involved in various parties, to name a few. These narratives demonstrate the ways that individual memory and collective experience weave together.

Chapter six examined how migrants’ memories of their “decision to leave” was related to the practical needs of acquiring citizenship and finding stable work. I also discussed how, for the most part, migrants did not see leaving the refugee camps as affecting their relationship to their national identity. This was contrary to what I expected beginning my research, and because of what I had read on the political significance of refugee camps for the Palestinian cause (Allan, 2014; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Gabiam, 2016; Pasquetti, 2011). Because scholarly literature supports the idea that Palestinian migration is less of an act rather than an ongoing lived condition, it makes sense that migrants did not feel that their belonging to the Palestinian collective hinged on living in a specific place. Rather, these feelings were related to migrants’ connections with a particular political and cultural community.

The final theme my thesis examined in chapter seven is how migrants reflected on their choices to come to Canada, their hopes for their children, and their thoughts on the collective right of return to Palestine. I discussed the connections that migrants made in these discussions to parents' experiences, and the ways they noted previous generations' struggles relative to their own. Self-sufficiency, pride in building a life from very little upon arrival to Canada, and measuring success through their children's access to educational or work opportunities were prevalent themes in conversation. I also touched on migrants' feelings about their home-camps relative to return to Palestine. The conflicting feelings about these camps that migrants expressed demonstrates an attachment to multiple spaces at once.

The Significance of Palestinian Social Memory

Because Palestinian suffering is ongoing, and because historical wrongs have not yet been righted, the concept of social memory may be more significant in the formation of Palestinian collective identity than for other groups of people. Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (2007) contend that "Palestinian memory is particularly poignant because it struggles with and against a still much-contested present" (p.3). Sa'di & Abu-Lughod argue that Palestinian social memory centres around collective catastrophes such as the Nakba, making claims about the past and linking these memories to present demands for remediation. Because the Nakba is ongoing, these memories play a central role in how Palestinians situate their choices in the present and hopes for the future. Migrants often expressed their choices, hopes and dreams relative to collective injustices that they and their families lived through.

It is important to also underline that the experiences migrants chose to share with me were selective. As I have highlighted in the introduction, the life story narrative is inherently shaped by selecting some memories and omitting others (DuBois, 2014; Portelli, 1998). Migrants brought certain stories to light and kept others private (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). Migrants I spoke to were also predominantly male (nine out of ten), which also of course impacted the kinds of stories I heard.

It is also not my intention to argue that a sense of cultural connection is based entirely on roots, either (Blachnicka-Ciacek, 2017; Hall, 1990). For instance, Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek (2017), in her research with second-generation Palestinians living in Poland, shows there are other ways that engagement with Palestine occurs other than through kinship and social ties: “rather than a sense of attachment based exclusively on a personal connection with ancestral ‘roots’... the second generation also develop a sense of long-distance post-nationalism that transforms their connection with Palestine into a more universal endeavour for justice and against the dispossession” (p.1). Blachnicka-Ciacek’s observations are relevant to the ways in which digital technology and current events (i.e. the 2014 Gaza war) can ignite or re-ignite a sense of national attachment. These “trigger” events may cause people to want to revisit their position relative to their sense of belonging to home. It may also be a combination of these things: Jamil, for example, told me at the end of our interview how he was currently raising money for someone he made contact with through Facebook whose home was destroyed in Israel’s Operation Protective Edge in 2014. In this sense, digital technology can facilitate social connections and by extension, a form of engagement with the homeland.

Furthermore, as a cultural outsider, I imagine migrants may have felt a need to present feelings of Palestinian unity and attachment, when it is possible they felt more ambivalent about some of these topics than they let on. Writing on Palestinians living in Athens, Elizabeth Mavroudi (2007) highlights that “the political need for unity has often meant that such ambivalence and feelings of disunity and detachment are seen as detrimental to the cause and may be difficult to articulate” (p.402). Especially in a context where it is extremely difficult for Palestinian refugees to visit their land in Israel-Palestine, Mavroudi suggests that people may feel detached at the same time they feel the need to promote a strong national identity. However, I did not hear from migrants that they felt “ambivalent” about their Palestinian identity; rather, they had many different ways of expressing political commitment and a sense of belonging to the nation, whatever that meant to them. I have also not defined “national liberation” in my thesis because I don’t think it means the same thing to two people. As Adam explained, his experiences coming to Canada have allowed him to develop a very different concept of Palestinian liberation than his cousins who never left Ain al-Hilweh have.

Scholars argue that it is a very Palestinian experience to be in an ongoing state of migration (Hammer, 2005; Loddo, 2017; Mason, 2007; Mavroudi, 2007; Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). They argue that while Palestinian national identity hinges on a connection to and memory of a specific place, belonging to the collective has more to do with similar experiences associated with statelessness than with an actual physical location (Hammer, 2005). As Amin said, “whatever citizenship I have, whether I have two or three or four, it doesn’t mean that I will forget Palestine, or forget my rights.”

Additionally, cultural relationships to Palestine occur through social experiences and family traditions, which are replicated outside the camp and in migrants' countries of settlement (Qasmiyeh & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013). Sa'di & Abu-Lughod (2007) invoke Halbwachs's concept of collective social memory to explain how Palestinians, just like other people, situate personal memories relative to social context. "The painful memories," Sa'di and Abu-Lughod argue, "are part of an active past that helps form Palestinian identity" (p.7). I have argued throughout my thesis that the sentiment of belonging to the national collective forms through personal and familial experiences-experiences both lived and inherited.

There is an intimate connection between national identity and collective memory. Allan (2007) argues that "what it means to be Palestinian may now be understood in terms of existential bonds of suffering than through a connection to the place itself" (p.266). She contends that memories of 1948, for example, are not just a past experience that Palestinians in Shatila camp possess as a historical object. These memories have a stronger connection to ongoing daily occurrences in Shatila than the expulsion from Palestine set in motion decades later. While Palestinian identity is by no means homogenous, film director Omar al-Qattan (2007) makes the point that "it is also impossible for any Palestinian to honestly pretend that the trauma of 1948, or of the subsequent dispossessions and forced exiles which have afflicted us continue to do so, are no longer central to our lives. Nothing makes much sense without those memories and that history" (p.204).

While there is no such thing as "Palestinian memory" in a unified sense, this thesis argues that a concept of collective memory is useful to understand how people

situate their lives in a national, historical context. Supporting this idea, Lena Jayussi's (2007) life history project with residents from the depopulated village of *Lifta* explains how the villagers' retellings signified a "shared collective fate" (p.113). Jayyusi (2007) points out that "each new tale is an echo within the echo, focusing and conjuring the collective predicament through the individual, and ramifying the significances and symbolic meanings of the individual experience through the collective" (p.110). Similarly, Naif & Rahman's exchange about their childhood exploits illustrates that exchanging similar versions of the same experience helps these tales take on a shared character.

Contemporary experiences also cause people to reflect on past ones. For example, Lila Abu-Lughod (2007) explains how the reality of Israeli occupation she witnessed when travelling in the West Bank ignited her interest in recording stories of the Nakba, particularly her father's. Past and present speak back to one another, therefore inherited memories also require a fair amount of active investment and in some cases, new creation on top of other's experiences (Hirsch, 1997; Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). As I discussed throughout my thesis, migrants often reflected on what their parents went through when working through their reasoning for making the choices that they did.

I believe that the strength of my research is that in a modest sense, it contributes to the project of the "empathetic listener acting as witness" to stories that most people do not hear about or choose not to pay attention to (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, p.12). Migrants were overwhelmingly willing to share their time with me, and I feel very grateful for that. When I interviewed Amin, for example, I asked him whether he would like me to use his real name. He was insistent that I did, and said it was important because his name

belonged to his country. His name is a part of his people's story, and he wanted it to be known. I hope that this project served to amplify these stories in a small way.

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