

Palestinian Refugee Youth: Reproduction of Collective Memory of the Nakba

Bassam Yousef Ibrahim Banat¹, Francisco Entrena-Durán² & Jawad Dayyeh³

¹ Department of Applied Sociology, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem- Abu Dies, Palestine

² Department of Sociology, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

³ Social Sciences PhD. Program (Peace & Conflict Research Line), University of Granada, Granada, Spain

Correspondence: Bassam Yousef Ibrahim Banat, Department of Applied Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Al-Quds University, Main Campus, Jerusalem- Abu Dies, Palestine. Tel: 970-2252-2727. E-mail: bbanat@staff.alquds.edu or bassambanat@yahoo.com

Received: November 5, 2018

Accepted: November 16, 2018

Online Published: November 29, 2018

doi:10.5539/ass.v14n12p147

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v14n12p147>

Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine collective memory reproduction of the Nakba (the Catastrophe) among Palestinian refugee youth. The collective memory reproduction of the Nakba was evaluated using an index containing 27 items developed by the researchers, which was administered to three-hundred-and-seventy-four participants in refugee camps in the West Bank. The findings revealed that Palestinian refugee youth preserved a strong collective memory of the Nakba. The statistics revealed that gender, parents' educational level, exposure to violence perpetrated by the Israelis, and grade point average (GPA), were significant predictors of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba. Traumatic experiences are not being erased, as older refugees may die, but the youth will never forget. As these refugees continue to be deprived of the right to return to the territory where their ancestors had lived until they were violently expelled from the area, the collective memory reproduction of the Nakba grows stronger. The implications of the findings for practice are discussed in the study report.

Keywords: collective memory, Palestine, youth, refugees, Nakba, occupation

1. Introduction

The concept of collective memory is a fundamental position in the field of humanities and is addressed by both quantitative and qualitative studies. In the twenty-first century, it is almost impossible to read a text on the social sciences that does not include the term 'collective memory' - worldwide in general, but in terms of the Palestinian question in particular.

Up until 1948, Palestinians lived in peace on their land. But on 15 May 1948, the Zionist movement confirmed the formation of the "nascent state of Israel" and annexed 78% of Palestinian land. The immediate result was that Palestinians were displaced from twenty cities and about four hundred villages, with some seven-hundred-thousand Palestinians becoming homeless – equivalent to 66% of the inhabitants of Palestine. The disintegration of Palestinian society, in all respects, followed and a new phenomenon appeared in Palestinian society: Palestinian refugee camps. Seventy years later, more than seven million Palestinians are still living in exile, mostly in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, but also elsewhere in the world (Allan, 2005; Chatty & Hundt, 2005; Masalha, 2009; Banat, 2014a). In the human history, few crimes have been as brutal and perpetrated at the scale as that of the Zionists driving Palestinians out of their land in 1948 – a population-wide crime that would later become known as the Palestinian Nakba (the Palestinian Catastrophe).

According to Sanbar (2001), the contemporary history of the Palestinian people turns on a key date: 1948. That year, a country and its people disappeared from the map of the world. In 1948, the Palestinian people suffered a traumatic experience that cannot be erased from their collective memory.

According to Masalha (2009), collective memory plays an important role in nation-building processes and as a vehicle for victims of injustice and violence to articulate their experience of suffering. The concept of collective memory relates to the specific values, beliefs and traditions that unit people who share a common past (Le Goff et al., 1992). According to Kansteiner (2002), collective memory is an illustration of the past assembled in

collectively adopted narratives.

2. Background

Sociologically, society comprises several communities that (ideally) relate to one another in a systematic way and share steady and organized social relations. They share joint interests and goals that are ruled by a set of values, customs, traditions and norms that shape their behavior and relations with others, in order ensure the continued existence of that society. Each group is unique in terms of the interests of its members and certain behavioral norms that are based on their specific values. This distinguishes the members of one group from other collective groups and each group pressures its followers to abide by and perpetuate its norms, in order to strengthen the group entity (Othman, 1999).

Collective memory is a term that is used in sociology, which refers to the study of human societies. It refers to the knowledge and beliefs shared by all the members of a particular group, whether that group encompasses a few individuals, a nation, or the planetary population as a whole. Collective memory means that members of a group to share common goals, behaviours, and attitudes. It also encourages individuals with differing views to conform to the beliefs of the overall group. In short, it makes human society possible (Durkheim, 1893).

The literature on collective memory provides various definitions and related concepts. The French sociologist, Durkheim, used the term 'collective consciousness' in the 19th century, in his book on the division of labour in society. This concept of the collective consciousness suggests the crucial role that social aspects of human behavior has in the life of human beings. According to Durkheim (1893), collective consciousness is the combination of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes that function as a uniting force in society. A related concept is 'collective memory', which is a social group's identity that is built on narratives and traditions that are created to provide a people with a sense of community.

Durkheim (1912) claimed that societies need steadiness and connection with the past, in order to maintain social unity and solidarity, as collective thought requires that people physically join together to generate an experience that is shared by the group. Since the collective experience requires a physical gathering of the community, it was important for groups to invent methods of extending that unity if the group is somehow disbanded.

Maurice Halbwachs was the first sociologist to use the concept 'collective memory' and his work is considered the initial framework for the study of societal recollection. Halbwachs proposed that all individual memory is created within social structures and institutes and argued that individual private memory is predicated through a group context, with the groups comprising families, institutes and nation-states. Halbwachs further claimed that the only individual memories that are not built through the group framework are images from dreams (Halbwachs, 1952; Eyerman, 2002).

Halbwachs departs from the Durkheimian method by assuming an instrumental presentist method to collective memory. The presentist method suggests that social constructions of memory are influenced by the requirements of the present, and Halbwachs stated that collective memory is formed by present situations and current understanding. In other words, groups select diverse memories to clarify current issues and concerns. In order to clarify the present, the leaders of a group rebuild a past using rationalization to select which events are remembered and which are excluded, and they reorganise events to match the social narrative (Halbwachs, 1952).

Over the past twenty years, collective memory studies have been proliferated worldwide, and since the early 1990's, a number of social scientists started study Palestinian narratives. In all of these studies, Nakba plays a central role. A recent study done by Maas (2013) concluded that Palestinian refugees and their descendants still maintain the national Palestinian identity due to the sustained memory of Nakba and the conflict and flight into the Diaspora that occurred post-1948. Throughout the Diaspora, there is an understanding that Palestinians have suffered a violent process of uprooting the population and deterritorialising their land (Entrena-Durán, 2009, 2010). It is against this background that the continued life in exile and the dream of returning to the homeland remain present and real in the collective memory of Palestinians and serve to bind and strengthen their identity. It is against this background that the hardships suffered in the refugee camps and the collective memory of the territory they were forced to abandon act as two of the main elements of their collective identity, which is continuously reinforced by the difficulties they deal with on a daily basis.

Furthermore, the results of a study done by Fincham (2010) demonstrated that the Palestinian youth in Lebanon construct their identity through nationalist speeches on common history, kinship, culture and religion. The study done by Masalha (2009) found that: the year of the Nakba is a key date in the history of the Palestinian people; memory accounts of the painful events of 1948 are crucial to Palestinian history and the Palestinian society of

today; the Nakba remains at the heart of Palestinian national identity. Additionally, the study done by Saloul (2009) concluded that as Palestinians continue to be deprived of the right of return to their original homes in Palestine, the relevance of narratives about Nakba increases, as memories of Nakba strengthen the central position of the land in Palestinian discourses of identity.

Moreover, Witteborn (2007) found that Palestinian narrative speakers evidenced reliable themes such as living in a separated space, being a dislocated person, and struggling with collective punishment in their authorial roles. Meanwhile, the study done by Amro (2007) revealed that the first generation of Palestinians who experienced Nakba is distinguished by a huge storage of collective memory, compared to the next two generations. Additionally, Amro (2007) found that oral narration was the most important communication channel for sharing and transferring memory to other refugees. Contrarily, the study done by Allan (2005) suggested that cultural transmission relied less on oral performance and remembered practices from 1948 than on fragmented moments that make up the formal fabric of everyday life.

Therefore, the concept of collective memory is used to refer to social existence based on shared interests, goals and history; but its focus is on nationalism and culture, and it is a notion that is commonly seen in societies that have experienced or are experiencing conflict (Banat, 2014b). According to MacMillan (2009), history supplies much of the fuel for nationalism and it is used and distorted, in order to create a national identity. The memory of events or eras that are important to the people of a nation is a central aspect in the creation and reproduction of national identity.

Researchers have done extensive studies on collective memory among the first generation of Palestinian refugees, but empirical studies of this important concept among the youth is rare. The Palestinian people's experience under the on-going occupation continues to prove catastrophic for the people, seventy years after the Nakba, which is a crucial date in the history of Palestinians. But while the occupying Israelis are waiting for first generation of displaced and dispossessed Palestinians to die and for the younger generations to forget their people were robbed of their homeland, the Nakba remains a painful collective memory among Palestinians.

It is true that people come to share the same constructions of the past (Coman et al., 2009); however, for Palestinians, it is imperative to maintain the collective memory across the generations and in the minds of the youth. According to Gross (2002), collective memory is a particularly important source of nationhood and national identity, since it forms a link between generations, which, in turn, generates an image of temporal steadiness and legitimises the surviving socio-political narrative.

3. Aims and Scope

Researchers have given far less attention to collective memory reproduction among Palestinian youth than they have to the first generation of Nakba. Therefore, the objectives of this study were: to identify the unique methods of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba and the Palestinian issue; explore the collective memory reproduction indicators among the youth; identify the factors that affect collective memory reproduction; and clarify the demographic differences in collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth. This study addresses one of the fundamental issues relating to the Palestinian issue, namely: collective memory reproduction among Palestinians seventy years after the Nakba, as many Palestinian youth live their own Nakbas today, under the on-going occupation by Israel.

4. Hypothesis

Based on the reviewed literature, the set objectives, the questions and the variables of the study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

There are no statistically significant differences of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in the reproduction of collective memory of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth in terms of: gender; family birth rank; grade point average (GPA); religious observance; parents' level of education; family exposure to Israeli violence; region where the youth reside.

Delimiting variables for the scope of the study were based on participants' demographic characteristics, i.e. gender, family birth rank, GPA, religious observance, parents' level of education, family exposure to Israeli violence, and region. The dependent variable was the reproduction of collective memory of the Nakba index.

5. Methodology and Design

The current study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature, as both the questionnaire and interview methods will be used to explore the reproduction of collective memory of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth. These tools are appropriate for use in this research study, given the exploratory nature of the topic.

The target population is Palestinian refugee youth, both male and female between 15 and 19 years of age who

live in refugee camps in the West Bank (2017), regardless of their social status, legitimacy status, race, class or any other factor. The total population was 13977 youth: 7142 males and 6835 females. The breakdown in terms of region was as follows: 7073 north West Bank region; 3734 middle West Bank region; 3170 south of the West Bank (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Palestinian refugees are defined as people whose permanent living abode between June 1946 and May 1948 was Palestine, and who were uprooted from their homes in Palestine in 1948 or later thereafter or those who left the area for any reason (Kana'na, 2000; Banat, 2002; UNRWA, 2005).

The total sample comprised 374 Palestinian refugee youth between 15 and 19 years of age. The sample was selected using a stratified sampling method, based on gender and region. The sample size was calculated using the sample size calculator tool available at <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>. The margin of error was 0.05.

6. Instrumentation

Reproduction of the collective memory of the Nakba was evaluated using an index containing 27 items, which was developed by the researchers. A 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree) was used to measure the responses. A trained research team was used to request the participants in selected refugee camps in the West Bank to complete the questionnaire. The sampling survey instrument was used to obtain background information, such as gender, family birth rank, GPA, religious observance, parents' level of education, family exposure to Israeli violence, and region where the participant resides.

Validation of the instrument proceeded in two distinct stages. The initial stage involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators who provided comments on the data collection tool. The second stage involved a pilot study (N=70) to validate the survey using exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.60 (0.63 to 0.84), which implied that the items were suitable to measure each item of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth.

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Split-Half coefficients, in order to determine the reliability and consistency of the survey. The results of Cronbach's Alpha and the Split-Half coefficient for the survey instrument were 0.80 and 0.76, respectively, which indicates good reliability and consistency.

The total sample was 374 Palestinian refugee youth between 15 and 19 years of age. There were more male (51.1%) than female (48.9%) participants. The following additional demographic data was obtained on the participants:

- Just over half (54.8%) were of middle family birth rank.
- Just over half (54.3%) were deeply religious.
- GPA was between 68 and 98 points (M 78.15 SD 10.54).
- Their parents were well-educated: 52.4% of the fathers had a college or graduate degree, as did 45.2% of the mothers. The youth were living in refugee camps in the north of the West Bank; 26.7% lived in the middle region; the remaining 22.7% resided in the south.
- The majority (59.1%) of their families had been exposed to some form of violence by the Israelis.

7. Data Analysis

The questionnaire items were rated on a 1–5 Likert scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree). The highest score indicated a stronger level of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba. Descriptive statistics gauged the collective memory reproduction scores of the sampled population. The following statistical techniques were measured: Pearson correlation, T-test, One-way analysis of variance, Tukey test, Cronbach's Alpha, Split-Half Coefficient and Factor Analysis using SPSS.

8. Findings

The mean score of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth for the sample of 374 participants was high (M 4.21 SD 0.39). The study found that almost 84.2% of Palestinian refugee youth preserved a strong collective memory of the Nakba.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the indicators for the reproduction of Nakba collective memory ranked in a descending order, as follows: I feel sorry for what happened to Palestinians as a result of expulsion (M 4.76 SD 0.49), I know my ancestral home-town, from which my forefathers were uprooted (M 4.75 SD 0.64), I have nostalgic emotions about my forefather's original place of living that they were forced to leave (M 4.74 SD 0.66),

and I feel relaxed when my parents tell me about our ancestral home-town (M 4.66 SD 0.91).

Additionally, the youth indicated the following: They will never forget the Nakba, as long as they live (M 4.63 SD 0.77), they feel as if they live the Nakba every day (M 4.62 SD 0.73), they have inner thoughts that Nakba will occur again (M 4.58 SD 0.76), the right of return is sacred and has no cut-off date (M 4.56 SD 0.80), they feel proud to be a Palestinian refugee (M 4.53 SD 0.77), any direction doesn't spear toward destroyed Palestinian cities and towns is misleading and doubtful (M 4.52 SD 0.90), they would not hesitate to make sacrifices in order to return to their original town (M 4.51 SD 0.82), the camp is an indication of how the Palestinian people 'paid' (or suffered) after expulsion from their homes (M 4.48 SD 0.80), and it is the bridge of the right of return (M 4.46 SD 0.85).

Moreover, the Palestinian refugee youth preserved their collective memory of the Nakba in different ways; the most important of these were the following: Ensuring that the Palestinian issue remains of great importance (M 4.44 SD 0.94), defending the issue of this key date every time it is necessary (M 4.34 SD 1.17), participating in Nakba commemoration activities every year (M 4.32 SD 1.08), listening to the elders' stories about the cities and villages that were destroyed (M 4.18 SD 1.22), keeping a few souvenirs to remind them of their ancestral town - especially a set of keys (M 4.17 SD 1.06), watching TV programs on the Palestinian Nakba (M 4.15 SD 1.18), mentioning their ancestral home-town when they introduce themselves (M 4.11 SD 1.11), searching for pictures of their ancestral home-town in the different media (M 3.88 SD 0.98), and reading the history of their ancestral home-towns (M 3.69 SD 1.28).

The study investigated the demographic breakdown of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth, in order to determine if there were significant differences. The findings revealed that family birth rank, religious observance and region made no difference to the collection memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth. However, it was found that gender, parents' level of education, exposure to Israeli violence, and GPA are significant variables, as follows:

- Gender: the differences favored males (M 4.31 SD 0.32): T-test value was (5.120 P=0.000).
- Parents' educational level: the differences favored those with well-educated parents (M 4.42 SD 0.33): F-value was (19.210 P=0.000); and (M 4.39 SD 0.31): F-value was (13.573 P=0.000) for the fathers and the mothers, respectively.
- The differences found in exposure to Israeli violence favored families that have been exposed to Israeli violence (M 4.26 SD 0.34): T.test value was (2.885 P=0.004).

Finally, the findings also indicated that there are statistically significant positive correlations between GPA and collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian refugee youth: the R-coefficient was (0.368 P=0.000).

9. Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that Palestinian refugee youth have preserved a strong collective memory of the Nakba. Collective memory is founded on sharing values, norms, experiences, a common destiny and history – all aspects that are common to the Palestinian people following their traumatic experiences under the on-going Israeli occupation, even seventy years after the Nakba. These experiences are stored in the Palestinian collective memory and cannot be erased. In this connection, Maas (2013) contended that communities have a history and (in a critical sense) are defined by their past - one that is memorable.

Generally, Palestinian camps is a critical body in the social structure of the Palestinian society. The camps are a symbol of the urgent Palestinian concentrations through unavoidable Diaspora, which the Palestinian 1948 and post 1967 war were exposed to. Palestinian refugees constitute the largest single group of refugees around the globe, and worldwide, one in three refugees is a Palestinian, with an estimated seven million Palestinian refugees spread throughout the world. Many are in the 59 official camps, i.e.: 19 in the West Bank; 8 in Gaza Strip; 10 in Jordan; 10 in Syria; 12 in Lebanon. The remainder can be found throughout the Arab Diaspora, both in Arab countries (outside of the camps) and outside the traditional Arab world, including in the two Americas, Australia and many other countries (Banat, 2014a). All these camps are over-crowded, and there are no open or green spaces that can be used for recreational purposes or sporting activities. Camp residents live in very small houses that do not exceed 30 square meters, with each family living in two rooms. These Palestinian refugee housing conditions are among the worst in the world and the health of the refugees is generally poor (Budairi et al., 1990; Ugland, 2003; Fincham, 2010). Statistics published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2017) suggests the highest percentage of poverty and the toughest socio-economic conditions in refugee camps anywhere in the world, with: 47.5% of the refugee families are at risk of poverty, as a result of the high

unemployment rate; the fertility rate is high; family size is large; the dependency rate is high (Banat, 2014a).

It is against this backdrop, that the view of a male youth from Arroub camp said, “We are living in misery. We have nothing. It is very crowded; your window opens into your neighbour’s window. A street is one meter wide. As refugees, we need a solution that gives us our rights”.

Indeed, these camps bear witness to the catastrophic results of the homelessness caused by uprooting Palestinians from their homeland. Their ongoing daily suffering is seen at all levels: cultural, social, economic and political. They continue their wait for a political agreement that will put an end to their daily pain and suffering, which was promised to them by the international community, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 194 (III), which states: "Refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date" (UN, 1948).

We should not lose sight of the fact that refugees prepare the ground for collective memory reproduction among the youth of the Nakba in 1948, including narratives about massacres committed by the Israelis, and the places from which they were displaced and uprooted. While growing up, they heard their parents' narrative stories about houses that were left behind or land that was lost when the Zionist movement announced the formation of the State of Israel, which annexed 78% of Palestinian land. The children do not forget these memories when they grow into youth and Palestine is then deeply rooted in their hearts, like an olive tree. Stories about the earth being baptized with the pain of olives remain in the heart of the Palestinian youth, who cannot forget the image of a homeland that will forever stay in the people’s collective memory. When they left, Palestinian refugees took their history with them, lived on the borders of their country. There they taught their youth to be proud of their identity and their homeland - and the bitterness of being a refugee and the cruelty of confrontation.

In the last few decades, all around the world, it has been the youth who have ignited the liberation uprisings and assumed the role of leaders in the process. When delving deeper into the experiences of the youth, reveals that Palestinian people bring up their children to remain true to their culture, to develop a real sense of belonging to their original country and to believe its cause is just. This happens at all levels - in the family, at school and in the wider society – ensuring that there is no doubt or questioning about these matters.

This is how the culture of struggle was and is created in the collective memory of the refugee youth. The refugee camps witnessed the birth of the Palestinian resistance factions, and the struggle then began, as youthful refugees began their struggle against the occupiers, believing that resistance is the only way for their families to return to their homeland. Here, it is worth noting that the majority of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were refugees (Banat, 2010). This point is supported by an admonition to the Palestinian people that the refugee suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem included in his will, “We have to defend our blessed land against the occupiers with the last drop of blood in our veins. We will fight them until Jaffa, Haifa and Ashkelon return”. (Mahmoud Salem was martyred during the dual operation in Ashdod city on 14 March 2004.)

Commenting on this subject, a male youth from Balata refugee camp said, “I will never lose sight of our hope of returning to our own city - Jaffa. The Nakba has been echoing in our minds for seventy years, and the camp has been the biggest witness to that event. So far, we have found no Arab or international serious attempt to recover our rights; and we have found these regimes only talking about peace and surrender”.

Male refugee youth had a higher preserved collective memory of the Nakba than the females. This may be linked to the conservative customs and traditions in Palestinian society, in which male patriarchal dominance and their social upbringing is based on gender inequality. Patriarchal ideology is deeply rooted in Palestinian society, where the notions of father and brother are most important. According to these notions, male dominance supports the structure that keeps men in positions of power, authority and control (Barakat, 1993). The Palestinian culture seeks to direct males towards an affirmation of masculine qualities like manhood, chivalry, bravery, gallantry, daring and stamina.

The Palestinian culture also stresses directing females towards feminism, decency, decorum, virginity, love of children, home economics and stability (Banat, 2010). This, therefore, contributes to ensuring a higher collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among males than among females. Nonetheless, Palestinian females have also been subjected to Israeli crimes, to the disintegration of the economic and social structure, and to the uprooting of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. The archetypical female was the mother, the captive, the activist and the martyr and she also bears witness to the suffering of the Palestinian people and their tragedy. This has reinforced her collective memory and has motivated the younger generations to actively participate in the struggle against the occupiers. One female participant from Ayda refugee camp said, “As refugees, we are waiting for the day on which we can return to our home - Ajjur - even if we have to sacrifice ourselves to this end. What was taken by force can only be restored by force”.

The findings revealed that youth academic achievement (GPA) and their parents' level of education correlated positively with collective memory reproduction of the Nakba. Firjani (1998: 3) holds that the benefits of higher education in the development of under-developed societies is much higher than the anticipated economic calculations, given that higher education plays a significant role in the developing a higher level of human capital in society. Institutions of higher learning lay the foundation for the cognitive revolution of knowledge and sophisticated abilities - higher levels of human capital, which is the underlying requirement for progress in this century.

Education is highly valued among Palestinian refugees, but it also provides them with a fuller awareness of the Nakba and their more powerful enemy, which is perceived as both unjust and oppressive, which is retained in their collective memory. The refugees consider education an important mechanism by which to develop their potential, interact with others to advocate their just cause and defend it on international arena (Banat & Rimawi, 2014).

The study also revealed that family birth rank, religious observance, and region in which one lives does not denote any significant difference in the reproduction of the collective memory among Palestinian refugee youth. This implies that collective memory reproduction is not influenced by these variables and that it is more likely to be affected by factors other than family birth rank, religious observance and region.

Finally, the findings revealed that Palestinian refugee youth, whose families have been exposed to different forms of violence perpetrated by the Israelis, preserved a higher collective memory reproduction of the Nakba. There are very few Palestinian families that have not experienced pain due the violence they are subjected to daily by the Israelis. The Palestinian experience under the occupation remains one of the most tragic situations in world history, in terms of victims and violence, leaving a history and a memory of killing, injury, handicap, physical and psychological torture (due to house demolition), confiscation of land and water, arrests, raids, pursuit and other forms of terror and trauma levelled daily violence against the unarmed Palestinian people by the Israelis (Banat, 2010).

The Israeli occupation justifies the use of force and violence and cannot change this situation: the Kufr Qassim, Deir Yassin, Sabra and Shatella massacres are a few examples. The occupiers commit massacres regularly against the Palestinian people and about four million Palestinians have been exposed to collective punishment on a daily basis over the past seventy years. What Israel has done in Palestine has been a catastrophe for the Palestinians and many researchers struggle to find the words to describe the massacres. Said (2006) points out that the policy of occupation continues to persecute, suppress and maltreat the Palestinians, methods that greatly surpass what was done in South Africa during the Apartheid regime. Palestinians continue to face one of the most brutal occupations in history and this experience is being preserved in the collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among the youth.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nakba traumatic experience has become firmly embedded in the collective conscious of Palestinian refugee youth. Collective memory plays a key role in ensuring that the Palestinian issue is kept 'alive' among the refugee youth. Palestinian refugee youth have been able to preserve a strong collective conscious awareness of the issue. According to Durkheim (1893), the collective conscious is based on shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes that operate as a unifying force within society, as a social group's identity is constructed by narratives and traditions that are created to give its members a sense of community.

Palestinians now represent the largest group of refugees who have been overlooked since the Second World War. This situation persists in 2018 and it is clearly witnessed by the refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and in the Diaspora.

The Diaspora experience has had an unforgettable impact on the social structure of the Palestinian people, i.e.: displacement and humiliation, loss of land and source of income, cold and scarcity of food, the search for relatives, grief over martyrs, living in camps or in the open, charity being provided by others and being looked at with pity, and, above all, the loss of territory where social life can take root and people can build a collective memory and identity. This has entailed what can be considered the deterritorialization of Palestinian people from their traditional living space in the world.

All these consequences of their displacement and their traumatic experiences are un-erasable and they have left a wound that will never heal, but will, instead, be passed down from one generation to another - until 'the return' is achieved. While the aged refugees may die, the youth will never forget. As stated by Sayegh (1983), "We are Palestinians. We were Palestinians. We are still Palestinians. We will stay like this for ever. We will return to

Palestine sooner or later.” This determination means one thing: as the refugees continue to be denied the right of return, the collective memory reproduction of the Nakba continues to increase. This then, is the story of the Palestinians, the story of man, the land and the reproduction of the collective memory of the Nakba.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Given the concept of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba, it is of the utmost importance for the curriculum and different media outlets.
2. Further research is essential to expand the understanding of collective memory reproduction of the Nakba and its specific aspects among the Palestinian refugee youth within different methodological contexts.
3. A comparative study of the collective memory reproduction of the Nakba among Palestinian youth in the Diaspora is also recommended.

References

- Allan, D. (2005). Mythologizing Nakba: Narratives, collective identity and cultural practice among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. *The Journal of Oral History*, 33(1), 1-10.
- Amro, T. (2007). *Beit-Jibreen village in Palestinian collective memory* (Master's Thesis). Ramallah: Birzeit University.
- Banat, B. (2002). *Arroub camp following fifty-four years of the Nakba 1948-2002*. Jerusalem: International Christian Society (Arabic version).
- Banat, B. (2010). *Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin): Facts and figures* (PhD Dissertation). Granada: The University of Granada.
- Banat, B. (2014a). *Palestinian refugees: Facts and figures. Conference: The National Statistical Week*. Al-Quds University, main campus, Abu Dies, April 27-28.
- Banat, B. (2014b). Sense of community among Palestinians. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 3(4), 197-207. Retrieved from [http://www.ajssh.leena-luna.co.jp/AJSSHPDFs/Vol.3\(4\)/AJSSH2014\(3.4-19\).pdf](http://www.ajssh.leena-luna.co.jp/AJSSHPDFs/Vol.3(4)/AJSSH2014(3.4-19).pdf)
- Banat, B. (2015). Violence against Palestinian women. *Journal of Peace and Conflict (Revista de Paz y Conflictos), Institute of Peace and Conflict, The University of Granada*, 8(1), 135-149. Retrieved from <http://revistaseug.ugr.es/index.php/revpaz/article/view/2506/3190>
- Banat, B., & Rimawi, O. (2014). The impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement of Al-Quds University students. *International Humanities Studies*, 1(2), 12-39. Retrieved from http://ihs-humanities.com/journals/vol1_no2_july2014/2.pdf
- Barakat, H. (1993). *The Arab world: Society, culture, and state*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Budairi, M., Tamari, S., Sabella, B., & Zagha, A. (1990). *Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. Akaa: Dar Al-Aswar (Arabic version).
- Chatty, D., & Hundt, G. (2005). *Children of Palestine: Experiencing forced migration in the Middle East*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Coman, A., Brown, A., Koppel, J., & Hirst, W. (2009). Collective memory from a psychological perspective. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 22(1), 125-141. Retrieved from https://www.princeton.edu/~acomman/Publications_files/Coman%20et%20al.%20%282009%29-IJPCS.pdf
- Durkheim, E. (1893). *The division of labour in society*. Trans. W. D. Halls. New York: Free Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1912). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. by Karen Fields. New York: The Free Press.
- Entrena-Durán, F. (2009). Understanding social structure in the context of global uncertainties. *Critical Sociology*, 35(4), 521-540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920509103982>
- Entrena-Durán, F. (2010). Dinámicas de los territorios locales en las presentes circunstancias de la globalización. *Estudios sociológicos*, 28(84), 691-728 (Spanish version). Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25764524>
- Eyerman, R. (2002). *Cultural trauma: Slavery and the formation of African-American identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fincham, K. (2010). *Learning Palestine: The construction of Palestinian identities in south Lebanon* (PhD

- Dissertation). England: University of Sussex.
- Firjani, N. (1998). *Future vision for education in the Arab world*. Cairo: Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization.
- Gross, T. (2002). Anthropology of collective memory: Estonian national awakening revisited. *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(4), 342-354.
- Halbwachs, M. (1952). *On Collective Memory*. Ed. and trans. Lewis Oser. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.
- Kana'na, S. (2000). *Palestinian diaspora: Migration or displacement?* (2nd ed., Arabic version). Ramallah: The Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre (Shaml).
- Kansteiner, W. (2002). Finding meaning in memory: Methodological critique of collective memory studies. *History and Theory*, 41(2), 179-197. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/16bd/ee98714d0a66c48d7eae176ce9dd9b56c5de.pdf>
- Le Goff, J., Randall, S., & Claman, E. (1992). *History and memory*. Columbia University Press.
- Maas, W. (2013). *The survival of Palestinian national identity through commemoration. National and regional identities in an age of globalization*. Retrieved from <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu>
- MacMillan, M. (2009). History and nationalism. In *The uses and abuses of history. Profile books*.
- Masalha, N. (2009). 60 Years after the Nakba: Historical truth, collective memory and ethical obligations. *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, 3(1), 37-88. Retrieved from http://www.asafas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kias/1st_period/contents/pdf/kb3_1/06masalha.pdf
- Othman, I. (1999). *Introduction of sociology*. Amman: Dar Al-Shurouk (Arabic version).
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. (2017). *Population, housing and establishment census projections*. Ramallah.
- Said, E. (2006). *Culture and Resistance*. Translated by Alaadin Abu-Zeneh. Beirut: Dar Al-Aadab (Arabic version).
- Saloul, I. (2009). *Telling memories Nakba in Palestinian exilic narratives* (PhD Dissertation). Amsterdam: School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA).
- Sanbar, E. (2001). Out of place, out of time. *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 16(1), 87-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714004568>
- Sayegh, R. (1983). *The uprooting of Palestinian farmers to the revolution* (2nd ed., Arabic version). Translated by: Khaled Ayed. Beirut: Arab Institute for Research.
- Ugland, O. (2003). *Difficult past, uncertain future: Living conditions among Palestinian refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon*. Oslo: Fafo.
- United Nations Relief and Work Agency – UNRWA (2005). *Public Information Office, UNRWA Headquarters, Gaza: Palestine*. Retrieved from <http://www.UNRWA.Org>
- United Nations. (1948). *United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 (III)*. Geneva.
- Will of suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem. (2004).
- Witteborn, S. (2007). The expression of Palestinian identity in narratives about personal experiences: implications for the study of narrative, identity and social interaction. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 40(2-3), 145-170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351810701354581>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).