

Narrating Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Space, Civil Society and the Moral Economy of Refugees

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Abstract

This thesis moves beyond the narrative of an essentialized, homogeneous Palestinian identity and instead historicizes and teases out the complexities of Palestinian identities. This work explores how refugee camps in Lebanon function as homes and as sites of memory and identity, but also as sites of marginalization and places of control. By engaging with Palestinians living outside the camps, I argue that all of Lebanon serves simultaneously as a home and as a carceral space. This project also explores how civil society and socio-economic status affect perceptions of identities. These factors are discussed within the parameters of the Lebanese socio-political context and against the constraints of power enforced by the Lebanese state. Through using oral histories, I explore how the past affects the present and how individuals assert their identities and make sense of their present and future lives as they process grand narratives that have been passed through generations.

Keywords: refugee; Lebanon; identity; space; civil society; moral economy

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1. Introduction

Waiting for a taxi outside the Burj Barajneh refugee camp, I could not help but notice the contradictions surrounding me. In front of me were the highway, high-rises and signs to the Beirut International airport, while behind me stood the cramped camp, with its maze of electrical wires, narrow alleys, flags and resistance slogans sprayed on the wall. I was aware that most people in the passing cars probably did not even realize that this was a refugee camp. In fact, I mentioned the presence of the camp a few days earlier while on this same road with friends and everyone in the car was shocked to learn it was there. One was even surprised that it was not made of tents but looked like many of the poorer neighborhoods nearby. A cab finally stopped and as I entered the car, he looked at me quizzically. He then started asking me what I was doing there since he could tell from how I talked and what I was wearing that I was not Palestinian. I politely responded that I was conducting research and for the rest of the drive his rants alternated from complaints about the laziness of Palestinians, to the ineffectiveness of all researchers, organizations and politicians who claim to be helping the Palestinians but are instead advancing their own political interests.

These two encounters illustrate the relationship between the general Lebanese public and Palestinian refugees. Many Lebanese vacillate between ignorance, hostility and sympathy for the refugees, and without really knowing how to react to their presence, prefer to ignore it. Refugees have had to articulate their '*Palestinianess*' within and against this context of ignorance, hostility and marginalization. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is twofold. First, by focusing on the specifics of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, I argue that scholarship should move towards discussing multiple Palestinian identities instead of focusing on a single, comprehensive identity and should examine the specific circumstances of each refugee group in the diaspora. Second, this thesis will elaborate on a few of the specific factors that have affected the formation and evolution of Palestinian identities in Lebanon: space, the United Nations Relief Works Agency

(UNRWA), the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), local grassroots organizations, and the effects of socioeconomic conditions on identities. These factors will be discussed within the parameters of the socio-political context of the host country, Lebanon. Identities are not formed in a vacuum, and in the case of Lebanon, identities are formed within and against the constraints of power enforced by the Lebanese state. They are also the product of Lebanon's individual colonial and modern history and its relationship with Palestinian refugees and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Before the 1948 *Nakba*,¹ Palestinians were welcomed in Lebanon, seen as wealthy tourists and friendly neighbors. Young, elite Palestinians rented apartments in upscale districts of Beirut and studied at the American University. In 1946, they accounted for fifty percent of all tourists in Lebanon.² But in 1948 this image changed when 40,000 Palestinians fled to Lebanon. Why did this image change? To understand this, one must look at the specifics of Lebanon's complicated history as well as the role that Palestinian politics had in further complicating the Lebanese political sphere.

1.1. Historiography

This work builds upon and contributes to foundational historiography on Palestinian identity as well as on more recent research on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. According to Rashid Khalidi, "the shared trauma of 1948, which all still had to come to terms with, cemented and universalized a common identity as Palestinians."³ This idea of the *Nakba* as the key element of Palestinian identity is shared by other scholars such as Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod. In the introduction to their edited anthology dedicated to commemorating the 60th anniversary of the *Nakba*, they

¹ *Nakba* or the Catastrophe refers to the mass expulsion of Palestinians after Israel declared itself a state on May 15th 1948. I use the term *nakba* to refer to the catastrophe of 1948.

² Jihane Sfeir, "Palestinians in Lebanon: The Birth of the "Enemy Within," in *Manifestations of Identity, The Lived Reality of Palestinians in Lebanon*, edited by Muhmammad Ali Khalidi, 13-14 (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 2010).

³ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 194.

refer to this event as “a focal point for what may be called Palestinian,” and as “a key event in the Palestinian calendar, the baseline for histories and the sorting of generations.”⁴ While I do not dispute this view, I do believe it is also important to move beyond 1948. By limiting the consciousness of Palestinians to the *Nakba*, we ignore different facets of Palestinian identities formed before and after 1948. Throughout this thesis, I intend to complement as well as challenge other narratives of identity presented in the literature on the Arab-Israeli conflict by scholars such as Rashid Khalidi, Ted Swedenburg, Julie Peteet, and Susan Slyomovics.

Rashid Khalidi has contributed significantly to the scholarship on Palestinian identity, most notably in his monograph, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. Khalidi’s work is an excellent example of understanding a national political consciousness outside the confines of a nation state.⁵ However, Khalidi focuses on elite figures to draw conclusions about identity, which obscures other popular narratives of identities. In contrast, this work focuses on popular narratives, rather than on a political, elite-centered national identity. This paper will borrow from Khalidi, but will focus more on subaltern narratives. While this work explores the impact of the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s official nationalism, the larger aim is to study how refugees understand their situation and express their identities. This thesis will draw upon Khalidi’s argument of competing loyalties to show that refugee identities in Lebanon are complicated by loyalty to the camps, neighborhoods in Lebanon, the ancestral village, political parties and loyalty to Lebanese family and friends.

Khalidi’s efforts essentialize Palestinian identity. This is done first through his notion of “the construction of a modern national consciousness.” He does not question who is constructing this identity or whether this “constructed identity” is representative of the entire Palestinian population. Furthermore, Khalidi’s research neglects the varying experiences of Palestinians and the effects of elements such as space, place, gender

⁴ Ahmad H. Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba, Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 5.

⁵ Khalidi, 194.

and socio-economic status on identity. This thesis draws upon Khalidi's work, but whereas Khalidi is interested in tracing the genealogy of a Palestinian identity, this thesis aims to understand the different ways in which being Palestinian has manifested itself in Lebanon.

Scholars like Ted Swedenburg, Julie Peteet, Susan Slyomovics and Rochelle Davis present another aspect of Palestinian identity.⁶ By focusing on popular memory and illuminating disparities in historical accounts, they complicate and offer an alternative to nationalist historiographies like Khalidi's *Palestinian Identity*. As Peteet argues, they study the crafting of place and identity to provide an alternative to nationalist-centric historiography.

This thesis is heavily influenced by the works of those scholars. It follows Swedenburg's efforts to find an alternative to the 1936-1939 narrative promulgated by the Palestinian elite by speaking to the peasant fighters. Similar to Swedenburg, this work uses accounts from interviews with refugees to show the gaps and fissures in narratives that attempt to present a uniform Palestinian identity, such as those propagated by the PLO and the multitude of NGOs operating in the camps. Swedenburg looks neither for some "truths" nor to fill the gap or to write a history of the subaltern, but instead is interested in examining the histories and memories of individuals and understanding the constructed nature of their experiences and recollections.

Peteet's *Landscape of Hope and Despair* will influence this thesis in many ways, most notably in her focus on the refugee camp. While Slyomovics and Davis use the

⁶ Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of a revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair, Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory, Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

Palestinian village as the site to which memory is attached or the *lieu de mémoire*,⁷ Peteet considers the refugee camp as the place to which memory is attached and identities are produced. As I will do in this work, she examines how identities are produced within and against the discriminatory practices of the Lebanese state enforced within the context of a refugee camp.

While this paper is influenced by the works of scholars such as Peteet and Swedenburg, it addresses issues that depart from their research. Whereas Swedenburg's work relies solely on interviews with peasant fighters and their memories of the revolt, I seek to take this further by also trying to understand how memories of seminal events are transmitted to children and grandchildren. Building on Swedenburg's effort, I explore how grand narratives have different meanings when passed through generations as individuals process the materials to make sense of their own present and future lives. Additionally, this project goes beyond Peteet's analysis of space and place, including her discussion of the United Nations Relief Works Agency. While her insights are restricted to the refugee camp, this thesis explores differences in identities between camp and non-camp dwellers. By engaging with Palestinians living outside the camps and showing how they too are marginalized by their exclusion from Lebanese law, I apply my arguments to all of Lebanon as a space instead of limiting the focus to refugee camps.

My work, by moving away from the village and towards refugee camps, coincides with a more recent trend in the historiography on Palestinian refugees, which focuses specifically on the experiences of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This group of scholars, with books and articles published as recently as 2010, consists of scholars from different disciplines, including, but not limited to, Laleh Khalili, Rosemary Sayigh, Adam Ramadan, Jihane Sfeir, Are Knudsen, Sari Hanafi, Diana Allan and Muhammad

⁷ *Lieux de Mémoire* is a phrase coined by Pierre Nora in his discussions of French identity. See Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France, Les Lieux de Mémoire Volumes 1, 2 and 3*, trans. David Jordan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Ali Khalidi.⁸ They go beyond Peteet, Davis and Slyomovic's work by debating how the camps have evolved both as a physical structure and as a home to refugees, which in many instances, especially for younger generations, has replaced attachments to the ancestral village.

Knudsen and Hanafi are especially interested in the urbanization of the camps and in looking at how they are expanding into the Lebanese landscape. They do so by applying theories of urbanization, usually applied to cities, to refugee camps. Through their works, they shed light on issues previously ignored such as overcrowding in the camps, arrival of foreign workers, lack of public spaces and leisure spaces for children and young adults, governance in the camps, and fluidity between the camp and the neighboring cities. On the other hand, Rosemary Sayigh is interested in the implications of a refugee camp as a home, as a place where memory and relationships are produced. Laleh Khalili's research focus is also very Lebanon centered as she explores how Palestine and its history are commemorated inside refugee camps. She integrates the camps into Lebanese society by showing how groups like Hezbollah usurp the camp and appropriate its significance to propagate their own political agenda. The research of these academics reveals that Palestinians in Lebanon have specific issues that need to be addressed. Through focusing their research on the specificities in Lebanon, they have shown the need to depart from the study of a monolithic group of Palestinian refugees.

⁸ Are Knudsen, "Widening the Protection Gap: The 'politics of citizenship' for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948-2008," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no.1 (2009): 51, 73.; Sfeir, 13-35.; Laleh Khalili, "Commemorating battles and massacres in the Palestine refugee camps of Lebanon," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51, no.11 (2008); Laleh Khalili, "Grassroots Commemorations: Remembering the Land in the camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no.1 (2004); Rosemary Sayigh, "A House is not a home: permanent impermanence of habitat for Palestinian expulsees in Lebanon," *Journal of Holy Land Studies* 4, no. 1 (2005); Adam Ramadan, "In the Ruins of Nahr al-Barid: Understanding the meaning of the Camp," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no.1(2010), Diana, Allan, K., " The Politics of Witness: Remembering and Forgetting 1948 in Shatilla Camp" in *Nakba Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, edited by Ahmad H. Sai'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, 255 (New York: Columbia University Press, 200), 260-261. Muhammad Ali Khalidi, *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon 2001* (Beirut: Institute of Palestinian Studies, 2001).

While the scholars mentioned above are engaging with necessary and important issues, they are simultaneously casting a shadow over others. They, for instance, render the refugee camp the sole focus of study. By doing so, they neglect to expose the hardships experienced by refugees living outside the camps and how they craft a space for themselves in Lebanon without the support of a largely Palestinian population in the camps. Furthermore, each scholar tends to adopt one position, either arguing for the camp as a space for marginalization or as a productive space. Sayigh and Ramadan focus on the productive nature of the camp while Hanafi and Knudsen understand the camp as a tool to marginalize Palestinians. In my work, I hope to bring the two together, showing how the camps, as well as the rest of Lebanon, can simultaneously be a home and a confined space of control. I want to explore the tensions between these perspectives and see how identities are produced as a result of these pressures.

1.2. Methodology

This thesis uses theories of space as well as oral history methodology to understand Palestinian identities in Lebanon. This work aims to understand how space can simultaneously be a site of control and a space where meaningful relationships are produced. Instead of focusing solely on the refugee camps as *lieux de memoire*, I consider them as spaces in which meaning, memories and identities are produced and as political spaces used to marginalize Palestinians. The Lebanese state has used the refugee camp as a space to exclude Palestinians from the larger Lebanese context and to control their actions and movements. In a sense, the refugee camp acts as what Foucault calls a *carceral* space⁹. These spaces, according to Foucault, are designed to exert power on inhabitants through means of exclusion and surveillance and to control bodies by restricting movement and access to services.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997).

Many Palestinians do not live in refugee camps, yet their situation is not necessarily better. The exclusion they experience can be understood by combining Foucault's notions of power with Giorgio Agamben's "state of exception" or "the suspension of law in a given space when possible by the sovereign."¹⁰ Hence, even when Palestinians do not reside in the camp, the Lebanese government exerts power over them by excluding them from the jurisdiction of Lebanese law and by suspending and dictating citizenship rights. I argue that the concept of refugee camps and the creation of spaces of exception were not accidental but that exclusion and marginalization were part of the essence of these spaces. It is with that in mind that the Lebanese state has maintained the structure of the camps and has marginalized refugees through the legal system.

On the other hand, while sites in Lebanon are power-laden and are designed to control Palestinians, they have none the less become homes. Therefore, it is important to examine how relationships are produced as well as how they have evolved over the years. To show that, I will use Lefebvre's argument from *The Production of Space*,¹¹ that space is neither neutral nor pre-existing but is an ongoing product of relations. Hence, it is important to understand how refugees conceptualize themselves as a community and as individuals within these spaces. For Lefebvre, space is social and is the product of relationships between the actors functioning within it, in this case: the Palestinians, UNRWA, civil society and Lebanese and Palestinian political parties. The interviews I conducted illustrate how identities are not formed in a vacuum but within the context of power-laden sites.

The majority of scholars mentioned in this paper thus far are not from within the field of history, but come from anthropology, sociology and migration and diaspora studies. I believe that history can contribute much to this discussion, especially through the use of oral history. Oral historians have paved the way for looking at identity within history, especially scholars like Helena Pohlandt-McCormick in her work on the Soweto

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

¹¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991).

uprising in South Africa and Alistair Thompson with his study on Anzac memory and identity in Australia.¹² These scholars challenge the reader to consider fissures between dominant narratives and individual memories. They also incite discussion into how memories change over time, especially as individuals attempt to make sense of these memories in a way that gives meaning to their present and future lives. Oral history has also been pivotal to studying migrant identities in the diaspora and identities of historically marginalized groups, especially in terms of understanding how memory is transmitted and understood by different generations.¹³ In so doing, scholars have engaged with an aspect of oral history that urges them to promote social and political change by empowering marginalized groups to share their stories and counter hegemonic narratives.¹⁴

The implications of this work could potentially have a positive effect on the refugee community in Lebanon. However, I do not approach this thesis with the aim of empowering the community, but simply to humanize a community often depicted as victims. This work does not seek to uncover truths or find facts, but to make sense of personal experiences and memories. Since 1948, many competing authorities have spoken in the name of Palestinians in Lebanon, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization, political parties like Hezbollah and the United Nations Relief Works

¹² Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, *I Saw a Nightmare: Doing violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Alistair Thompson, "Anzac memories: putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia," in *Oral History* 18, no. 2 (1990):25-31.

¹³ See for example: Elizabeth F. Xavier Ferreira, "Oral History and the Social Identity of Brazil Women under Military Rule," *Oral History Review* 24, no. 2 (1997); Stephan F. Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, Third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our pasts: the social construction of oral history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ For some examples see: Joana Bornat, "Oral History as a Social Movement, Reminiscence and Older People," *Oral History* 17, no.2 (1989); R. Benmayor, "Testimony, Action Research, and Empowerment: Puerto Rican Women and Popular Education," and Sanjiv Kakar, "Leprosy in India: the intervention of oral history," in *The Oral History Reader* edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

Agency, but through oral history, agency can be restored to refugees as they and their experiences are brought to the forefront of academic endeavors.

My initial goal for this thesis was to confine interviews to camp-based refugees, but as is often the case in oral histories, the interviews and interviewees ultimately caused the focus of my project to change. As more and more Palestinians living outside the camps asked to speak with me after hearing about my work, the focus of my work shifted to include the wider Palestinian community and to look at all of Lebanon as a space of control. By doing so, I interviewed Palestinians from different demographics, ensuring that my work presents a diverse and more comprehensive view of Palestinians in Lebanon.

The relationship between narrator and interviewer is important in oral history as narrators will less likely conceal parts of a story if the conversation is occurring in a comfortable setting. Furthermore, it is less difficult to gain access to people if the interviewer is part of the community or is an insider. Swedenburg alludes to this fact when he discusses how, without the presence of his research partner Sonya, many Palestinians would have been wary to speak with him. I, like Swedenburg, had a Palestinian friend who accompanied me on many of my interviews. Mira, a dancer and teacher working without a contract or benefits, struggling to finish school and support herself, was my first interviewee. She was very interested in my project, especially as she had never lived in a refugee camp and wanted to better understand the divide between the camps and the rest of Lebanon. Having Mira join me in the camps did make my interviews more interesting as she was able to incite discussions with other Palestinians on sensitive issues such as the role of Yassir Arafat or the benefits of being a member of Fatah or Hamas in the camps. However, her presence did not make me more of an insider as she too was an outsider of sorts as she was not part of a camp community.

In her work with Japanese immigrants in the UK, Susan Burton discusses the ramifications of being an insider or an outsider to the group being interviewed.¹⁵ In my case, I was partially an insider because I am also from Lebanon, speak Arabic and have my own personal experiences with the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, being Lebanese did make me an outsider as I am part of the group that has marginalized and mistreated Palestinians. Before speaking with me, my narrators tried to evaluate my status as an insider or outsider. For instance, they asked about my religion and where I was from in Lebanon. In that case, being from the South of Lebanon made me an insider as the South has also been the victim of the Israeli aggression. While this partial insider status initially provided me with a greater depth of cooperation, I had to be cautious not to allow my own interpretations to dominate the interviews or to color my subsequent analysis of these discussions. Furthermore, my status did not necessarily provide better access to people's memories, especially as these memories may have been painful, sensitive and divisive.

Another issue that affects the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is the power relationship between the two parties. An uneven power relationship can affect the legitimacy of the work as narrators may feel compelled to answer in a particular way, or to speak only about certain aspects of their experiences. They may feel that their stories are unimportant or that they lack agency in this work. In order for the work to be a shared collaboration and to accomplish all the aims of oral history, a given work truly needs to be collaboration.¹⁶ In my interviews, by presenting myself as a student conducting research, I was able to shift the power balance towards the narrators. As I was the student, my narrators wanted to help me do well and were willing to speak with me candidly and openly. Despite efforts to ensure collaboration, I still had significant

¹⁵ Susan K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Japanese women in England," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁶ Joanna Bornat, "Reminiscence and Oral History: parallel universes or shared endeavor?" in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

power as I would decide which interviews to use as well as how to incorporate them into this work.¹⁷

Despite my somewhat insider status, I did not fully understand the nuances of the Palestinian dialect, gestures and non-verbal cues, which in oral history are all clues to oral ambiance, topic orientation and claims to authority.¹⁸ Without being able to reproduce those non-verbal signals, it is difficult to fully evaluate a speaker's remark.¹⁹ Many oral historians have debated this issue and have discussed the importance of embedding digital and visual elements into projects to ensure that these cues, which can tell us as much as words, are represented in the final product.²⁰ This was less of an issue when meeting with younger Palestinians or Palestinians who live or work outside the camps as they had developed some Lebanese mannerisms. For some narrators, particularly older refugees, speaking only the Palestinian dialect was a deliberate act that implied resistance to assimilating to Lebanese culture. However, for others it was easier to express themselves in this dialect. The dialect barrier implied that some meaning and nuance, especially in terms of fathoming some of the nostalgia associated with certain names, phrases or words, may have been lost, despite my best efforts to capture those sentiments.

My thesis is structured thematically and, other than introduction and conclusion, is divided into three chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of identity. The first

¹⁷ The notion of shared authority was first introduced by Michael Frisch. Michael Frisch *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990).

¹⁸ Tonkin, 40.

¹⁹ Tonkin, 40.

²⁰ Many readings informed my understanding of the challenges of oral history including: Lorraine Sitzia, "Telling Arthur's Story: Oral History Relationships and Shared Authority," *Oral History* 27, No.2 (1999): 58-67; Tracy E. K'Meye and A. Gleen Crothers, "If I See Some of This in Writing, I'm Going to Shoot You": Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics, and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian," *The Oral History Review* 34, no.1 (2007):71-93; Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes and Possibilities," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): 588-598; Charles Hardy III, "Authoring in Sound: Aural History, Radio and the Digital Revolution," in *Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge: London, 2003): 393-406.

chapter presents the historical background to establish the historical relationship between the Lebanese state and diaspora Palestinians since 1948 and to understand how history has colored the subsequent marginalization of refugees. The second chapter develops theories of space and place that will frame the remainder of the work. The third explores competing narratives and efforts of writing Palestinian history, recording memories and reviving culture amongst the many grassroots and international organizations operating inside the refugee camps. In the last chapter, I argue that understanding the term refugee as a socio-economic class as well as exploring the moral economy of refugees, expands our knowledge of why some refugees forsake the Palestinian cause while others become politically engaged. When read together, these chapters will show the complexity and liminality of refugee identities in Lebanon.

2. Historicizing Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

The arrival of Palestinians occurred at a time when Lebanon, only five years after gaining independence from France in 1943, was still struggling to define its own national identity. This chapter will divide the history of refugees in Lebanon into four phases, starting with the 1948 *Nakba* and will explore how each phase shaped and affected identity differently. The arrival of 40,000 predominantly Sunni Palestinians was seen as a threat to the nation's stability, especially given its precarious sectarian nature and the fragile relationship between Muslims and Maronite Christians. During the mandate period, the French showed preferential treatment toward Maronite Christians and this preference aggravated religious tensions among the two religious communities.¹ The national census of 1932 conducted by the mandate government found that 54% of the population was Christian. This census would shape part of the National Pact of 1943, which codified the division of power between Christians and Muslims.² Accordingly, the Christian Maronites were ensured a disproportionate share of political power, including the presidency. The power sharing formula was never adjusted to reflect the changing demographics in the country, nor has another census been conducted since 1932. The terms of the outdated census aggravated relationships between Muslims and Christians, as Muslims began demanding a larger share of power to reflect their increase in population.

¹ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privileges and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 70.

² Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 80.

2.1. Phase I: 1948 - 1968

In 1948, Palestinians were thrown into the Lebanese national struggle and became a contentious issue that affected how different Lebanese factions related to each other and viewed the incoming Palestinians. Many Lebanese worried that the influx of predominantly Sunni Palestinians might upset the delicate religious demographic and political balance. Lebanese Muslims were largely anti-Zionists and were against the establishment of a Jewish state. The Maronites on the other hand, were more sympathetic to the Jewish plight as their search for a homeland echoed the Maronite search for a home in Lebanon, given that both were a minority in a predominantly Muslim region. This rhetoric would, as the years went by, be used by the Maronites to legitimize their actions against Palestinians as they accused them of encroaching on the Maronite homeland and of being a threat to Maronite political prominence in Lebanon.³

From 1948 to 1968, or before the arrival of the PLO in Lebanon, being a refugee was characterized by helplessness, victimization and the shame of being a refugee or a *lajji*. The Lebanese government asserted control over all aspects of refugee life. In the 1950s and 1960s, freedom of movement, rights of expression, political, social and even sporting events were closely monitored, mainly by the Lebanese intelligence, the Deuxieme Bureau.⁴ Teachers hired by United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) were subject to security investigations by the intelligence office to ensure that no political activities occurred in schools administered by UNRWA.⁵

In 1959, the state created the Central Committee for Refugee Affairs to control the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. The committee was replaced with the Department of Palestinian Affairs, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior by order of decree 927 of the Lebanese government, issued by the office of then President Fuad Chehab.

³ Ibid.,

⁴ Abbas Shibliak, "Palestinians in Lebanon and the PLO," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no. 3 (1997):262.

⁵ Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (Boulder: West View Press, 1990), 25.

The department gave the state control over Palestinian personal affairs by administering key aspects of their lives such as registering and authorizing marriages, changing location and recording population changes through monitoring births and deaths.⁶ Furthermore, decree 3909 of 1960 created the Higher Authority for Palestinians Affairs which was responsible for overseeing political and economic concerns relating to Palestinians and the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, it did so without any participation or guidance from the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon, thus excluding them from the political process and rendering them passive subjects in their own history and political struggle.⁷

The Lebanese government also enacted legislation designed to perpetuate poor living conditions. The early refugee camps were makeshift living quarters with zinc roofs, because the Lebanese government forbade the entry of building materials into the camps. The government even monitored refugees' residence, with the edict of 1951 stating that a refugee's location had to be fixed.⁸ Abused by the Lebanese government, Palestinians were also not allowed to work. Since Palestinians in Lebanon were not afforded a legal definition in the Lebanese legislative framework, they were classified simply as foreigners. Consequently, the labor law of 1962 did not address the specific situation of Palestinians and the law of reciprocity applied to refugees. According to the law of reciprocity, foreigners could work in Lebanon if Lebanese were eligible to work in the foreigner's country.⁹ As a result, foreigners effectively enjoyed more rights in Lebanon than the Palestinians.

The Lebanese state did very little to aid the refugees as it had not and still has not ratified the 1954 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Accordingly, it cannot be reprimanded by the international community for not

⁶ Souheil Al Natour, "The Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no.3(1997): 361.

⁷ Ibid., 361

⁸ Sayigh, (1995), 26-27.

⁹ Ibid., 368.

fulfilling the conventions obligations.¹⁰ Thus, in the 1950s, refugees had little access to humanitarian services other than to those provided by The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA was established on November 19th, 1948, when the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 212. Prior to its establishment, relief work was provided by organizations like the International Committee for the Red Cross, League of Red Cross Societies and the American Friends Service Committee.¹¹ UNRWA became fully operational in 1950 with a mandate to provide emergency relief and shelter. It was also tasked with developing programs aimed at the social and economic integration of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Those programs were short lived as in 1950 they were dismantled by the Lebanese state in an effort to marginalize Palestinians and to prevent integration into the Lebanese society. Since then, UNRWA has provided little more than essential services such as primary health care, social services and education.¹² Initially, the lack of integration programs was supported by Palestinian refugees as they believed their situation would be temporary.¹³ However, in subsequent years, local organizations have filled that vacuum and begun establishing programs aimed at integrating refugees into the surrounding community.

As a result of its apolitical mandate and despite operating in a highly political context, UNRWA disassociated politics from humanitarian aid. Status as refugees, regardless of the stigma attached to it, was linked to the presence of UNRWA, especially as Lebanese law did not have special provisions or laws to help Palestinian refugees. UNRWA provided a voice on the international stage even if it depicted Palestinians as merely victims in need of humanitarian assistance. Palestinians, through laws designed to marginalize them, became intruders on Lebanese soil and the depoliticized “other.” UNRWA countered some of that marginalization by providing the space for the

¹⁰ Knudsen,(2009), 66.

¹¹ Yves Besson, “UNRWA and its role in Lebanon,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no.3 (1997):335.

¹² Riccardo Bocco, “UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees, A History within History,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no.2 (2009): 231, 232.

¹³ Jalal Al Hussein, “UNRWA and The Palestinian Nation Building Process,” *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 29, no. 2(2000): 52.

reproduction of a Palestinian national project and identity.¹⁴ Directly or indirectly, through schools and other services, it molded a new generation of Palestinians that scholars like Julie Peteet would come to refer to as *Jee! UNRWA* or the UNRWA generation.

The Lebanese state's discrimination against Palestinians did not target all Palestinians equally. Instead, it reflected Lebanon's political nature and troubled past. Christians and upper class, urban Palestinians were treated differently from Muslims, rural Palestinians. In fact, during 1950 and 1960, around 50,000 Palestinians, mostly Christians, were naturalized to increase the population of Christians.¹⁵ President Camille Chamoun (1952 - 1958), a Maronite Christian, favored naturalizing Christian Palestinians and Muslims who were connected to his political allies. The naturalization of Christian Palestinians benefited those Maronites who were seeking to make Lebanon a homeland for Christians in the Middle East.¹⁶

Under Lebanese law, citizenship is seen as a privilege and the president enjoys the prerogative over citizenship, thus the fact that the president was a Maronite Christian implies that granting citizenship was a politically motivated act.¹⁷ The Lebanese stance towards *tawteen* or naturalization would change after the civil war, but when discussing opposition to resettlement in Lebanon from both Lebanese and Palestinian perspectives, it is important to remember that during this phase, many Palestinians were naturalized and did not object to this on moral grounds. Similarly, some Lebanese politicians favored nationalization based on sectarian and political calculations. Since Lebanese Shia did not enjoy a strong presence within the Lebanese political system at that time, the minority of Shia Palestinians were at a disadvantage in this regard. This would change in

¹⁴ Bocco, 239.

¹⁵ Simone Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Opposition to Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon," *International Migration Review* 38, no.2 (2004): 478.

¹⁶ Daniele Meier, "Matrimonial Strategies and Identity Relations between Palestinian Refugees and Lebanese after the Lebanese Civil War," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 2 (2010):114.

¹⁷ Rima Maktabi, "State Formation and Citizenship in Lebanon," in *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications*, edited by Nils August Butenshon, Uri Davis and Manuel Hassasian (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000),172.

1996 when Hezbollah and Amal pressured the government to naturalize the Shia from seven villages on the Southern Lebanese-Palestinian border.

These seven villages were formerly part of French mandatory Lebanon and its inhabitants were considered Lebanese until they were transferred to the control of the British mandate in Palestine. As Lebanese Shia gained more power in the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war, they pressured the government to grant the Shia residents of those villages citizenship because they had been Lebanese citizens from 1920-1923.¹⁸ This was a politically-motivated move as the Shia wanted to tip the demographic balance in their favor. The Shia were victorious in 1994, when 2,700 individuals were granted Lebanese citizenship.¹⁹ However, this created tensions between Lebanese Maronites and Muslims and ultimately the Maronite Patriarch, Nasrallah Sfeir, applied enough pressure on the state to ensure the naturalization of the remaining Palestinian Christians.

Thus, in terms of political consideration, the poor Sunni and Shia who lacked political support suffered the most from discrimination. This not only created divides between the Lebanese and Palestinian communities but also rifts within the Palestinian community in Lebanon. The Lebanese political system created similar splits along class and religious lines among Palestinians, which was further exacerbated by the fact that urban and wealthy elites were settled in Lebanese cities while the rural and poorer Palestinians were confined to refugee camps.²⁰

2.2. Phase II : 1968 - 1982

The living and social conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon changed drastically with the arrival of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO

¹⁸ Asher Kaufman, "Between Palestine and Lebanon: Seven Shi'i Villages as a Case Study of Boundaries, Identities, and Conflict," *Middle East Journal* 6, no. 4(2005): 695-698.

¹⁹ Haddad, 478.

²⁰ Meier, 115.

was expelled from Jordan to Lebanon after the incidents of Black September, in which Palestinian militias began operating independently from King Husayn of Jordan's authority. This foreshadowed a clash that would later occur in Lebanon as well: the clash between the Palestinian armed militias, who sought to operate an independent base and the host country which, desired to maintain domestic authority and security. Tensions between Palestinian and Jordanian authorities culminated in September of 1970, when the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked four civilian airlines and threatened to kill the hostages should anyone interfere. In response, on September 15th, 1970 the Jordanian Army moved to restore order in what was known as Black September. The Army made no distinction between civilians and militia members and bombarded refugee camps in and around Amman. While Palestinian guerillas had already been active in Lebanon since the late 1960s, the events of Black September effectively transferred the PLO's base of operations from Jordan to Lebanon.²¹

As a way of regulating the presence of the PLO, the Lebanese leadership accepted an open, armed Palestinian presence as stipulated in the Cairo Agreement. In November 1969, the Lebanese delegation headed by army Commander General Emile al-Bustani and the PLO chairman Yassir Arafat met in Cairo to sign the agreement. The agreement was divided into two parts, the first relating to the Palestinian presence and the second to its commando activities. It granted the PLO control of the refugee camps and guaranteed the right to employment, movement and residence in Lebanon as well as the right to form municipal committees in the camps and to engage in armed struggle from its bases in the camps. The agreement also stipulated that Palestinians in Lebanon were permitted to participate in the revolution through armed struggle. As a result of this agreement, the armed resistance of the PLO effectively controlled the camps from 1968-1982. The PLO, with Yassir Arafat as its chairman, had more autonomy than any expatriate group and under the terms of the Cairo Agreement, Lebanese security forces were not permitted to enter and interfere in the camps.²² The PLO's legitimacy would

²¹ Ibid.

²² Brynen, Appendix. See the appendix of this thesis for the text of the 1969 Cairo Agreement.

only increase in 1974 when it was officially declared the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the seventh Arab League Summit in Rabat, Morocco.²³ This military control and autonomy over substantial parts of Lebanon led to the accusation that the PLO was running “a state within a state.” Such accusations provoked resentment from certain sectors of Lebanese, mainly the Christian Maronites, largely represented by the Phalange party.²⁴

The arrival of the PLO changed the landscape of the camps and improved the situation of refugees. The PLO instilled a sense of pride in being Palestinian through commemorating the history of Palestine and through rewriting the narrative of what it meant to be a refugee in exile. Most importantly, it united Palestinians across Lebanon and re-politicized the refugee community, mainly through militarization and the rise of the *fidayeen* (sing. *fidaii*), or fighting militia men. The PLO developed and administered civil and military institutions that provided welfare services and education. The new Palestinian Red Crescent Society created over twenty thousand jobs as did the Palestinian Martyr’s work association and various other PLO-run organizations. This was fortuitous because only 2,362 Palestinians received work permits in 1969 before the new PLO order.²⁵ The PLO also commissioned projects to improve quality of life, including digging wells, guaranteeing water and power and forcing the Lebanese authorities to accept the building of second and third stories to existing buildings which had previously been forbidden.

The PLO also engaged in an array of nationalist rituals such as festivals, street rallies, speeches and performances and produced revolutionary songs intended to revive the passion for revolution in hopeless refugees. For instance, public funerals for martyred *fedayeen* were deliberate tools intended to mobilize support for their cause not

²³ Text of the Seventh Arab League Summit: point 3. Full text in Arabic courtesy of the Arab League offices in Cairo and Washington D.C.

²⁴ Peteet, 6-7.

²⁵ Shibliak, 265, 268.

only from Palestinians but from Arabs as well.²⁶ As part of the effort to unite Palestinians and to revive a sense of nationalism, Arafat aimed to eliminate cleavages in society by shifting the focus from individual villages and experiences to instead commemorating abstract village life in Palestine.²⁷

The PLO liberated refugees from the constraints of the Lebanese government and transformed the landscape of the camps. By taking up arms, the *fidayyen* provided a degree of security against the actions of the Lebanese Security Forces (LSF). The camps were transformed into active national spaces as evidenced by the ubiquitous presence of the *fidayeen* and the plethora of resistance offices. Almost every family had a relationship with the movement, from being salaried party members to employees. Palestinians flags flew over the camps and surrounding checkpoints and there was a sense of pride in being Palestine. During this era, Palestinians did not refer to themselves as refugees, but as *militants*, *activists* and *revolutionaries*.²⁸

The presence of the PLO also changed Lebanese perceptions of Palestinians as the *fidayeen* enjoyed widespread support from many Lebanese sectors. In Beirut, students protested in support of the Palestinian movement while simultaneously expressing discontent with the prevalent social and political conditions in Lebanon. Indeed, the rise of *the fidayeen* also coincided with the protests of lower class Muslims as social change became linked to the Palestinian cause.²⁹ Hundreds of Southern Shia neglected by the Lebanese state felt more affinity for Palestinians and many joined the resistance movement.³⁰ The *fidayeen* became the pan-Arab heroes; a rallying point for progressive, Arab nationalists and Muslims. In short, as one of the Palestinians I interviewed said, “Those were the golden years of the PLO, we could walk down the streets feeling proud and people would cheer for us.”

²⁶ Brynen, 47.

²⁷ Khalili (2004), 8-10.

²⁸ Ibid., 142.

²⁹ Haddad, 473.

³⁰ Sfeir, 25.

The PLO's popularity among Muslims, leftists and students threatened the Christians and Christian resentment of the PLO only increased, leading to the brutal events of the civil war and to atrocities committed by Christians and Muslims, Lebanese and Palestinians. Tensions rose as Muslims and Maronites disagreed on how to respond to the refugee problem. The PLO's ability to mobilize not only Palestinians but also Lebanese to the streets threatened the political elite, for instance after the defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 war against Israel, 79% of Lebanese supported the *fidayeen*.³¹

As Lebanon plunged into civil war, ideological and religious rifts deepened as many Muslims and leftists allied with the Palestinians. Furthermore, the militarization of the refugees caused an arms race among Lebanese political parties, which resulted in the collapse of the Lebanese military. Antagonism between different sectors of Lebanese society crystalized and violence between Muslims (Palestinians and Lebanese) and Christians increased, culminating in the 1975 civil war.³² The war officially erupted when Palestinian militants fired on a church in the Christian area of Ein El Remmaneh, causing the Maronite Phalange to retaliate by ambushing a bus carrying Palestinians. Violence between Maronites and the Palestinian militias escalated between 1975 and 1976 and resulted in a string of massacres beginning with the Damour Massacre of 1976.³³ The Phalange retaliated with a massacre of the Palestinians in Karantina, a Muslim area controlled by the PLO. They also held the Tel El-Zaatar refugee camp under siege and with the help of other Christian groups, killed a large number of Palestinians militia members and civilians.³⁴ The Maronites justified their actions against Palestinians by claiming that they were doing to the Palestinians what the Palestinians were doing to the Lebanese and by framing the Palestinians as "strangers" and as the "other".

³¹ Brynen, 47.

³² Elizabeth Piccard, *Lebanon a Shattered Country*, revised edition, trans. Franklin Philip (New York and London: Holmes and Meir, 2002), 56.

³³ The Phalange, the main Maronite political party, had a militia base in the Christian city of Damour, which was attacked by Palestinians, killing hundreds of Christian Lebanese.

³⁴ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon*, (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002), 78,98.

The civil war tarnished the image of Palestinians. They were blamed for triggering the war. While the relationship between Palestinians and Lebanese deteriorated as the war raged on, the turning point was the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The actions of the PLO, like attacking Israel from Lebanese soil, angered those Lebanese who were already entangled in their own political problems and were not keen on a war with Israel. Muslims and Christians blamed the PLO for the Israeli invasion and Muslim groups distanced themselves from the Palestinian cause. During the time of the PLO, refugees enjoyed more rights than they would ever enjoy again. These privileges were soon revoked and more laws were enacted to again marginalize Palestinians.

2.3. Phase III: 1982 - 1990

In 1982, when the PLO was expelled from Lebanon as result of the Israeli invasion, Palestinian refugees no longer had protection from the extremist elements of the Lebanese Muslim or Christian political parties. The PLO office closed in that year and did not reopen until 2006.³⁵ In 1982, in response to the assassination of the Phalange's leader Bashir Gemayel, the Phalange responded by killing hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Chatilla camps.³⁶ As the war raged, the Shia, despite their previous rhetoric in support of the Palestinians, engaged in violent acts towards refugees. The Shias' collaboration with Syria during the civil war initially weakened them both militarily and politically, which led them to support the Palestinian movement. However, after the 1978 Israeli invasion of South Lebanon and the destruction that ensued, the chairman of the main militia Amal, Nabih Berri, spoke out against the PLO saying that its presence was a burden on Lebanon and that the PLO had exploited the

³⁵ Knudsen, 65.

³⁶ In 1982 President elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated and it was initially thought that Palestinian militia men had committed the act, so the Phalange, with assistance from the Israeli Defense Forces, sieged the Sabra and Chatilla camp. Thousands of Palestinian civilians were killed. It was later revealed that Habib Shartouni, a Lebanese member of the Syrian Nationalist party had assassinated Gemayel. See: Brynen, 179-182.

Shia for its own purpose. The Amal party grew stronger in the 1980s as did military tensions between them and the PLO. By 1985 the Palestinian militias had regained some power despite competition among rival factions. The armed militias were once again strong enough to repel attacks from the Maronite Phalange. Amal and the growing Shia community viewed this as a threat to their own positions and sought to annihilate Palestinian military strength in Lebanon.³⁷

Amal, supported by Syria and the Progressive Socialist Party, besieged the refugee camps in Beirut from 1984 to 1989 during the “War of the Camps.” This not only became a Lebanese versus Palestinian battle, but, as so often happened in Lebanese politics, it quickly turned sectarian as one of the last armed Sunni militias, the Nasserist Marabitoun and other smaller groups supported the Palestinians.³⁸ The purpose of the siege was to ensure the destruction of the camps and the dispersal of refugees so that they may never regain political power or autonomy in Lebanon.³⁹ The defeat of the Palestinians in this battle diminished Palestinian military strength and reinstated the pre-PLO marginalization.

In the aftermath of the 1982 “War of the Camps,” Palestinians once again became the “other.” Many were unable to leave during the three years siege of the camps. Food and medical supplies were scarce and Palestinians were reduced to being *laji’in* or refugees relying on UNRWA rations. They were disappearing from the Lebanese political scene at a time when they were most vulnerable to abuse⁴⁰ and the camps reverted from being spaces of active nationalism to spaces of defeat. For instance, building regulations were reinstated in 1982 and extra floors in houses were again forbidden.⁴¹ The Lebanese state reinstated legal discrimination against Palestinians, first and most importantly by abrogating the Cairo Agreement of 1969. On

³⁷ Ibid., 133-135.

³⁸ Ibid., 188.

³⁹ Peteet, 9; Brynen, 188.

⁴⁰ Sfeir, 27.

⁴¹ Meier, 118.

May 21st, 1987 the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies declared the agreement and all its measure and annexes null and void⁴². Thus, Palestinians were again subject to the labor laws that considered them regular foreigners; work permits were revoked and the law of reciprocity was again imposed.

After the civil war, the Lebanese state codified its intention never to naturalize or grant *tawteen* to the remaining refugees. This was first codified in the Taif agreement of 1989, which then became the preamble to the Lebanese constitution. Point nine of the preamble clearly states that there shall be no *tawteen*.⁴³ The Taif Agreement not only codified Lebanon's stance against Palestinians but also the division of power between the different Lebanese confessions. This explains the delicate nature of the sectarian balance in Lebanon and gives credence to the popular opinion among many Lebanese politicians that *tawteen* would upset this balance and cause Lebanon to regress into civil war.

In addition to the excuse of the confessional system and power sharing among Lebanese sects, Lebanon also rationalizes its firm stance against naturalization by stating that it would negate the Palestinian right to return and would ultimately be detrimental to the Palestinian cause. The state also maintains that Lebanon's economy and limited resources could not sustain the integration of the remaining refugees given that this would increase Lebanon's population by 25%. This would be a substantial increase especially since unemployment among Lebanese nearly 25%.⁴⁴

In the common narrative of Lebanese history, the Palestinians were considered both the cause of Lebanon's troubles and pawns in their own internal political struggles. Their identity as Palestinians was seen as negative and detrimental to Lebanese

⁴² Brynen, Appendix, 202.

⁴³ Lebanese Parliament, *Text of the Lebanese Constitution*, Arabic text, <http://www.lp.gov.lb/SecondaryAr.aspx?id=12>, Republic of Lebanon Ministry of Information, Text of the Lebanese Constitution, English, <http://www.ministryinfo.gov.lb/en/sub/Lebanon/LebaneseConstitution.aspx>

⁴⁴ Haddad, 471-472.

national ambitions. The departure of the PLO stripped refugees of a legitimate platform to represent their needs in Lebanon and this entrenched their political and social marginalization

2.4. Phase IV: 1991- present

The departure of the PLO and the end of the Lebanese civil war left behind a power vacuum and not a single entity has succeeded in uniting the Palestinians since then. The period from 1991 onward is riddled with an overabundance of competing narratives and elements of identities. The power void gave rise to radical Islamist groups and inter-camp divisions have grown stronger, with some camps loyal to Fatah and the PLO and others under the control of National Salvation Front, a group formed during the civil war which was originally loyal to Arafat but then moved away from the PLO.⁴⁵ The rise of civil society at the end of the civil war and relatively relaxed Lebanese laws governing civil society meant a proliferation of organizations, both local and international, trying to define what it means to be a Palestinian in exile. Furthermore, different elements of identities have become prominent due to phenomena such as the rise of Islamism in the camps and new interactions with Lebanese like intermarriages. These facets of identity have blurred the distinction between Lebanese and the “other” and compete with nationalist identities promulgated by the PLO.⁴⁶

However, some of the same anti-Palestinian sentiments persist among certain sectors of the Lebanese population and little progress has been made in the formal

⁴⁵ Jaber Suleiman, “Current Political, Organizational and Security Situation in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no.1 (1999): 68; Sari Hanafi, Jad Chaaban and Karin Seyfert, “Social Exclusion of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Reflections on the Mechanisms that Cement their Persistent Poverty,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 31, no.1 (2012): 39.

⁴⁶ For more information on intermarriages see: Daniele Meier (2010). For more on the rise of Islamism in refugee camps see: Are Knudsen, “Islamism in the Diaspora: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no.2 (2005):216-234 and Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

political sector. Discriminatory legislation has not been changed and some measures have even been added, especially in relation to labor laws. In 1993 and 1995 the professions forbidden to Palestinians increased to seventy-seven. In 2005, Minister of Labor and Agriculture signed a bill that lifted the ban on manual and clerical jobs but did not amend laws relating to high level professions. The prohibitive effects of these laws can be seen in the low number of work permits issued. For instance in 2006, 225 permits were renewed but none were issued. In 2007 only 28 new permits were issued and only 113 renewed. In 2008 only one new permit was issued and in 2009 only 32 were issued and 67 renewed. Furthermore, although the reciprocity law was amended to exclude Palestinians from the general labor reciprocity law, they are still barred from more than thirty syndicated professional fields that have their own regulations, including the Lebanese nationality and the reciprocity clause. These professions include, but are not limited to, doctors, pharmacists, travel agents, news editors, engineers and architects.⁴⁷

In addition to labor restrictions, in 2001, Palestinian refugees were forbidden from acquiring property in Lebanon and Presidential Decree 296 of March 2011 added the restriction that they cannot bequeath property already owned. In this amendment, it was clearly stated that individuals for whom acquiring land would facilitate *tawteen* are forbidden from owning or bequeathing property. This is considered a direct attack on refugees and as yet another measure designed to entrench their marginalization. Despite such restrictions, perceptions of Lebanese have also begun changing as Lebanese civil society groups are joining Palestinians in their protests for more rights in the country.⁴⁸ In addition to civil society, in 2005 the Lebanese government, under pressure from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, created the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee to serve as a platform for cooperation between Lebanese and Palestinian parties and to work with UNRWA to improve the

⁴⁷ Hanafi et al,43,45.

⁴⁸ "Activists call for Palestinians right to own real estate in Lebanon," *The Daily Star*, July 28, 2011. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2011/Jul-28/Activists-urge-end-to-law-banning-Palestinians-owning-real-estate-in-Lebanon.ashx#axzz1ldf24gd1>
This was also discussed during an interview with Shariff Bibi.

situation of refugees. While Lebanese law continues to marginalize refugees, the spread of civil society and the improved perception of Palestinians among many Lebanese have re-politicized refugees and refugee communities are presently more vocal about their national identities and about demanding better rights in Lebanon.

3. Space, Place and Identities in Lebanon

There are twelve refugee camps in Lebanon with 214,736 registered refugees. This number comprises 63% of the total number of registered refugees in Lebanon.¹ There are also 15 unregistered gatherings or unofficial settlements, mainly in the vicinity of the camps, which are partially managed by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). According to a survey conducted by the American University of Beirut and UNRWA in 2010, a quarter of the Palestinians live in Tyre, Sidon (Saida) and Beirut and one-fifth live in the North and the Beqaa regions.

The living conditions in refugee camps are generally poor but vary from camp to camp, some being worse than others depending on their location in Lebanon and on conditions such as overcrowding. The same survey conducted by AUB and UNRWA found that 40% of households have water leaking through their roofs or walls and that 8% of households live in shelters where the roof or walls are made from corrugated iron, wood or asbestos. Furthermore, since the Lebanese government places restrictions on building new houses, 8% of households reported living in overcrowded conditions.²

These living conditions are not the result of neglect. Refugee camps were never intended to be a space of nationalism, their purpose was to monitor, exclude, marginalize and silence the Palestinians. This exclusion was not confined to the camps, refugees who could afford to live or who chose to live outside the camps were also excluded from the social, political and economic fabric of Lebanon. This chapter

¹ www.unrwa.org

² Jad Chaaban, Hala Ghattas, Rima Habib, Sari Hanafi, Nadine Sahyoun, Nisreen Salt , Karin Seyfert , Nadia Naamani, " Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Report published by the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 2010), http://fafsweb.aub.edu.lb/aub-unrwa/files/AUB_UNRWA_report_final_draft.pdf

explores the first of the three factors affecting identity discussed in this thesis: space. Specifically, it examines the intersection between space as a means of exerting power and control and space as a home. This chapter will engage with theories of space proposed by Foucault, Nora, Lefebvre, and Agamben. To show the duality of space, the chapter will also engage with oral histories to understand how Palestinian refugees reconcile the tensions produced by the intersection of the carceral and the home.

3.1. Carceral Spaces and Refugee Camps

In this thesis, I theorize the space of a refugee camp from a Foucauldian understanding of power. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* outlines his concept of the panoptic and of the carceral space. In Foucault's concept of power, the subjugated are placed in an enclosed segmented space and fixed place, where movements are supervised and relations are controlled.³ While Foucault was theorizing a prison, I transfer his theories and apply them to the concept of a refugee camp. The carceral space exerts power on the inhabitants through means of exclusion, surveillance and control of bodies. Furthermore, it is not limited to the physical space but also encompasses forms of control that extend from space such as education, public assistance and medical care.⁴ As the next chapter will show, international and local organizations facilitate monitoring of refugees by maintaining their own population records and statistics.

The power associated with control over "the body" is important in understanding not only the refugee camp, but how the Lebanese state maintains control and supervises Palestinians. Foucault developed his idea of biopower, a way of managing populations and exerting control in the *History of Sexuality*.⁵ Biopower entails exercising power over

³ Foucault(1997), 196,198.

⁴ Ibid.,295,299.

⁵ Michele Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, An Introduction Volume 1*, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random house,1978).

the body and is intended for the subjugation and control of populations.⁶ According to Foucault, while sovereigns previously had power over death, power now asserts itself as the right over life. Biopower is thus productive and its main objective is to maintain the well-being of the population, based on the protection of life instead of the threat of death. However, in Lebanon the culture of depicting refugees as victims and the proliferation of relief programs have reduced the meaning of life to physical needs. Biopower inside and outside the camp is suspended in the strict Foucauldian sense and the concept of a population as a biological body does not hold the positive connotation of protection of life but of reducing life to physical needs.⁷

However, institutions created by the Lebanese state in the 1950s and 1960s, such as those detailed in chapter 1: the Central Committee for Refugee Affairs, Department of Affairs of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and the Higher Authority for Palestinians Affairs, represent instances of Foucault's biopower. These state bodies were and are responsible for administering the Palestinian refugee issue, monitoring refugees and for operating as a link between UNRWA and the Lebanese police services.⁸ The institutions brought Palestinians further under the control of the Lebanese government because monitoring and surveillance produce knowledge, which according to Foucault, is an instrument of power.⁹ By creating institutions to monitor Palestinians, the Lebanese government gained both power and knowledge. Furthermore, the departments were designed to monitor as well as control the movements and bodies of refugees but were not intended to provide relief or assistance.

Although those institutions were created in the 1950s and 1960s, movement is still restricted in some camps, mainly the Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi camps in the north of Lebanon and the Ein El Hillweh in the south. This is a remnant of the Cairo

⁶ Ibid.,140.

⁷ Simon Turner, *Politics of Innocence: Hutu Identity, conflict and camp life* (USA: Berghahan Books, 2010), 7-9

⁸ Meier, 120.

⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* ,296.

Agreement which gave full control of the camps to the Palestinian Liberation Organization and prohibited the Lebanese government from entering the camps. Although the agreement was abrogated, the Lebanese forces are still hesitant to enter and there appears to be a void in governance and security inside the camps.¹⁰ It is important to mention that the refugee camps in Beirut do not require refugees to present identifications, nor do they require visitors to obtain permits before entering camps. The camps in the North and South are considered to be more of a security threat to the Lebanese state because of their proximity to the Israeli border in the south and Syrian border in the north.

Checkpoints were a concern to interviewees living in those two camps. Aya, a first year math student at the Lebanese Arab University, lives in the Ein El Hillweh camp in Southern Lebanon.¹¹ Every day she makes a long commute from the south to central Beirut to attend classes. We sat in the courtyard of the university and for most of our conversation she only spoke positively about the camp, except for when we broached the topic of checkpoints, “As a Palestinian they treat you horribly at the checkpoint. Like we young girls can only get in if we show them our *hawija* or ID card. It is as if we are trying to get into Gaza. They ask for your ID even if the guard just saw you leave. Last time I swear I sat there for like half an hour just looking through my purse.”

She spoke more calmly than angrily and she even tried to justify the presence of the check points:

It’s just annoying. But sometimes you think of it and you realize they have a bit of a point. There are lots of problems in Ein El Hillweh, but it’s not only the Palestinians who cause them. I don’t know if you’ve heard of them, but some of them are part of Fatah el Islam, and some are Lebanese. There are some who make problems and sometimes there are bombs here and there and that’s why they can be strict. Like

¹⁰ Sari Hanafi, “Governing the Palestinian Refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria, The cases of Nahr el-Bared and Yarmouk camps,” in *Palestinian Refugees: identity, space and place in the Levant* edited by Are J. Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 36.

¹¹ Aya Hammadi, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

they are strict with taxi drivers, they are not allowed inside the camp without permits. They will just stop you at the checkpoint and you have to walk home.¹² Isn't this humiliating for us? Sometimes I just worry about making it to the camp and having to look through my purse every time. Last time, they checked a dead person being brought into the camp mosque. Even some of the taxi drivers tell me they feel bad for us and that this is humiliating. But once you get into the camps, you relax because you have made it home.

Aya's comments are interesting because they exemplify tensions between home and the carceral space. She is aware of being monitored and is aware of living in a space furnished with a visible expression of Lebanese power: a Lebanese soldier in uniform manning a checkpoint. At the same time, the camp is home and once she passes the checkpoint, she has made it home. In this instance, the camp embodies both a carceral space and a home, yet there is tension in this relationship and residents like Aya attempt to rationalize and justify the expressions of power of the sovereign within the space they call home. The presence of the checkpoint is itself an interesting contradiction because the Lebanese soldier is not technically permitted inside the camps. Even though the Cairo Agreement was abrogated in 1987, there still has not been any codified or regulated measure to define the role of the Lebanese security forces inside the camps.¹³

Not everyone was as understanding of the presence of checkpoints as Aya. Nawar, a member of the *Al Jabha El Dimocratiyya Li Tahrir Falesteen*, The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), viewed the checkpoint as yet another infringement on Palestinian rights.¹⁴ The interview was noticeably different from my conversation with Aya. We met at the DFLP office inside the Mar Elias refugee camp

¹² Ein El Hillweh is the largest camp in terms of both size and population and is surrounded by checkpoints on all corners, being forced out of the cab at a checkpoint involves a substantial walk to the final destination.

¹³ Hanafi (2011), 36. The first time that the Lebanese army entered the camps since 1969 was in 2007 during the conflict between the army and Fatah El Islam, a radical Islamist group with links to Al Qaeda. The decision to enter the camp was not taken lightly, and did not occur until later in the conflict. It created tensions between Lebanese groups, as groups such as Hezbollah believed the army should preserve the convention of not entering camps

¹⁴ Nawar Khatib, interviewed by author, Mar Elias Camp, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

and he addressed me formally, mostly as a representative of the DFLP and his comments lacked the spontaneity and emotions of Aya's narrative. The office was guarded by uniformed party members in camouflage which gave the impression of an army presence in the camp. While the camps are not as militarized or politicized as during the days of the PLO, the presence of the different political factions and the uniformed guards proved that camps are still politicized to a certain degree, are still spaces of political resistance and that diverging political ideologies are still shaping identities inside the camps.

Mira, my companion, joined me on this interview, which altered the dynamics of the conversation as Nawar avoided all political debates with Mira, a Palestinian who does not support the DFLP. He addressed his answers with generic comments about the liberation of Palestine, the right to return and was careful to remain in line with DFLP rhetoric. He only became emotional when the discussion turned to Lebanese checkpoints outside the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. The situation in Nahr el-Bared differs significantly from Ein El Hillweh because checkpoints were only placed after the 2007 armed conflict between the Lebanese army and Islamist group Fatah El Islam. Prior to 2007 and before the destruction of the camp, Nahr el-Bared was deeply integrated into the surrounding community and the barrier between camp and between Lebanese and Palestinian was rather fluid:

I am a son of the camps. This is my home, why do I need a permit to enter my home? If I lose my card I'll have to sleep on the roads because they won't let me in. It's just our camp, Nahr el-Bared, other camps are not like that. If someone wants to come visit you they need to get a *tashrih*, a permit. It is the security process, they ask why you are coming and whatever, but then they give it to you. Nahr el-Bared used to be the main artery of commerce in Trablous [Tripoli], all the people from around the camp would come here to buy stuff. But now all these new security measures and checkpoints are bothering people. I saw an old lady, around 50 or 57 years old and she had forgotten her card. They made her wait at the checkpoint until someone she knew passed by and went to her house to get it. What would an old lady like that do? If she doesn't live here she is clearly going to see a relative. Before the destruction in 2007 you did not feel like you were in the camp, it was so interconnected, everyone came here from the highways to shop in the camp. All Lebanese had dealings in the camps and there were many intermarriages. It's different now, they need a permit and people are scared to enter.

Nawar spoke with more cynicism than Aya and was less understanding of the checkpoints. This is most likely because he witnessed a time when the Nahr el-Bared camp was so interconnected to the surrounding Lebanese community. His comments show that there are clearly differences between how individuals experience the camp and that these experiences affect how Palestinians relate and understand the power forces acting upon them. His harsh tone and the manner in which his voice grew louder, showed that he resented these practices of control. As a member of a political party, he viewed these checkpoints as another exclusionary policy which also served to legitimize his political affiliation.

Yet, just like Aya, he considers the camp as more than a carceral space, it also represents his home. By claiming that he is a “son” of the camps, he reveals a lot about how he views himself. He is proud of being Palestinian and considers the oppression he faces as motivation for political action. He is outspoken about Palestinian rights and the right to return. Nawar, unlike Mira or Aya, does not work or study outside the camps, he lives in Nahr el-Bared and works in the Mar Elias camp. This suggests that he has internalized the exclusion and marginalization and prefers to only interact with other Palestinians in this space designed for them. Unlike Aya, he is not as interested in securing rights inside Lebanon, but uses the discrimination experienced in Lebanon to call for the right to return.

3.2. Spaces of Exception: Obstacles beyond the Camps

To complement the use of Foucault’s concept of power, this thesis also theorizes the treatment of refugees by the Lebanese state according to Italian philosopher Agamben’s theories of “spaces of exception” and “homo-sacer.” Agamben applies his theory to study the concentration camps in Auschwitz, yet I believe that many of the same principals can be applied to the governing of refugees in Lebanon. While the Lebanese government has clearly marked physical and legal carceral spaces for

Palestinians, Agamben argues that spaces in Lebanon, inside and outside the camps, are also characterized by the lack of authority by the sovereign, creating a non-political space that facilitates the biopolitical management of the homo-sacer.¹⁵

Agamben's "homo sacer," or the sacred man, is, in Roman law a man stripped of all rights of citizenship, including protection from the sovereign.¹⁶ Palestinians in Lebanon do not have rights of citizenship and do not enjoy protection from the sovereign. The Lebanese army is forbidden from entering the camps, which have also lacked viable internal protection mechanisms since the evacuation of the PLO. The camps have become legally suspended places in which matters of security and policing are unclear and where military intelligence has governed the spaces of exception.¹⁷ The camps are not the only spaces of exception. Since refugee presence in Lebanon is not legally defined or regulated and since there are no laws designed for refugees, those who reside outside the camps are also subject to the ramifications of the suspension of law. Applying the concepts of carceral space and of spaces of exception to refugees living within Lebanese communities is a relevant contribution to the historiography on Palestinian refugees and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Refugees residing in Lebanese communities who consider their neighborhoods as home are not immune to the discrimination and marginalization characteristic of the camps. They are also vulnerable to the lack of defined laws and regulations and may be arbitrarily arrested or harmed by the police. The relationship between the sovereign and home grows fluid when refugees interact with law enforcement. Home becomes unsafe and they are reminded of their existential insecurity. In a sense, these restrictions placed

¹⁵ Agamben (2005), 166-167.

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Il potere sovrano e la vita nuda*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen as *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, 1998), 8.

¹⁷ Hanafi(2011), 36.

upon them are intended to ensure that they do not truly belong, that they are “in” but not “of” the space they occupy.¹⁸

Abed is a 22 year-old Palestinian nursing student. He and I grew up in the same neighborhood in Beirut and this shared connection afforded me an insider status, created an understanding between the two of us and made the conversation flow easily. I understood his references to various places in the neighborhood and he did not need to clarify details. His father, the local butcher, was an institution in our neighborhood. We conducted our conversation on chairs outside his father’s shop. Although this was as much their home as mine, his story of an encounter with the police proved the complicated nature of home to refugees in Lebanon, “I live here, I was raised here, I love it here, but still I feel like everything is closed to me. The police always blame Palestinians. Whenever there is even a small problem, the police blame it on Palestinians without even checking. It’s always the fault of the Palestinians, we don’t have any backing.”¹⁹

Abed’s father contributed this anecdote about Abed’s encounter with the police:

He had a problem a year or so ago, he got into a fight with his neighbor. The neighbor started saying things like “I am going to shoot you, I am going to get you.” **Abed interjects:** I did not do anything. This is an incident that really gets to me. I told the cop that he was threatening me and that he said he wanted to shoot me. The first thing the cop asked me was, “Is he also Palestinian?” I told him, “No I’m the Palestinian.” The cop responded, “and he is the one that threatened you?” And he didn’t believe me. **Abed’s dad:** So what could we do? We had to let go of our rights, even though he had threatened him, just so we could leave the police station.²⁰

¹⁸ Sari Hanafi, “Palestinian Refugee Camps: Disciplinary Space and Territory of Exception,” *CARIM, Series Number 44* (San Domenico di Fiesole: Robert Schuman Centre for Advance Studies-European University Institute, 2008), 9.

¹⁹ Abed Laham, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, November 3, 2011.

²⁰ Abu Abed (Abed’s father), interviewed by author, Beirut, November 3, 2011.

Abed and his father recollected the story together, showing how the incident had deeply affected them both, how it altered their perceptions of the surrounding community and how they felt rejected by the place they called home.

Another characteristic of Agaben's space of exception is the negation of citizenship rights. Palestinians born in Lebanon and even those with Lebanese mothers are denied citizenship rights.²¹ According to Lebanese nationality law, citizenship is patrilineal; women cannot give the Lebanese nationality to their children. The government is currently discussing overturning that law, yet politicians have already begun asserting that Lebanese women married to Palestinian men still will not be able to transmit Lebanese citizenship to their children.²² The Lebanese state justifies such laws with the rhetoric of fear of *tawteen* or the naturalization of Palestinians in Lebanon. Denial of *tawteen* is one of the few things on which Lebanese politicians agree.²³ However, refugees are excluded from the discussion of *tawteen*. In this case, the individual refugee is invisible, and in line with Foucault's biopower, they are considered statistics, an entire population that needs to be resettled.

The law is more flexible for Palestinian women who marry Lebanese men as they may eventually obtain citizenship. According to the Lebanese Nationality Law of 1925 (the Nationality Law was amended in 1960, but this clause was not) a foreign woman marrying a Lebanese man may apply to receive her Lebanese citizenship after one year from the date of registration of the marriage in the Civil Status Office.²⁴ Yet citizenship is not easily achieved for Palestinian women marrying Lebanese men. In a conversation with Yasmine, a Palestinian woman in her late twenties, she revealed to me the

²¹ Sherifa Shafie, "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Forced Migration Online*, <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/palestinian-refugees-in-lebanon/fmo018.pdf>.

²² Mona Chemali Khalaf "Lebanon," case study in *Women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2010),252.

²³ Jad Chaaban et al., 7.

²⁴ *Decree on No 15 on Lebanese Nationality*, January 15,1925, Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44a24c6c4.pdf>

difficulties she faced in marrying her Lebanese husband and the restrictions placed upon her receiving citizenship:

For my *kateb el kitab*²⁵ we had to have an investigation. They started asking me why I wanted to marry him, if I wanted the passport or not, as if I was only marrying him for that. Now they changed the law, to get it I need to have a kid in the first year or two kids within the first three years or I just don't get the passport, now that's the law. They also asked, " Where did you meet him? Does he own land? Why do you want to marry him?" I told them I wanted to marry him for stability (Yasmine laughs). But it needs a lot of paper work, we had to pay a lot. His family didn't care, it's like a religion, it's not about being Palestinian, but being Sunni or Shia is what mattered most to our families.²⁶

Yasmine's comments provide insight into the Lebanese government's implementation of spaces of exception and biopower. What is also important is how strict she perceived Lebanese regulations. To ensure accuracy, I checked all the statements made by my narrators, because as Alessandro Portelli explains, oral histories, like all other historical sources, need to be checked for factuality.²⁷ I was not able to find any sources to corroborate her statement that acquiring Lebanese citizenship is contingent about her having a certain number of children. Her comments are nonetheless extremely relevant as they show how she perceives Lebanese laws as well as how she remembers the hardships associated with her marriage. Perceptions, such as Yasmine's sensitivity to the Nationality Law, are as important to understanding the situation of refugees in Lebanon as are facts and figures.

²⁵ Kateb El Kitab or signing of the book is the official marriage contract in Islam.

²⁶ Yasmine Shehabi, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 6, 2011.

²⁷ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991),68.

The Nationality Law includes many exceptions for Palestinians.²⁸ This implies that Palestinians in Lebanon cannot easily escape the mark of refugee. This, when combined with other restrictions placed upon them, causes many Palestinians to internalize being a refugee. They are reminded of this status whenever they want to work, travel or even go to school. However, Yasmine's comments show that the marginalization, in many cases, is limited to the legal sphere. Many Lebanese, such as her husband's family, do not see a problem or a stigma with marrying a Palestinian. Instead their views are framed by Lebanon's sectarian divisions and religious tensions. It was more important to their families that they were of the same religion and sect, in this case Sunni Muslim.

The carceral space and spaces of exception are also visible in employment law. In 1962, the Lebanese government classified Palestinian refugees as foreigners and Palestinians had to obtain work permits similar to other foreigners in Lebanon. During this time Palestinians were barred from employment in most professions and professionals such as doctors and pharmacists lost the right to practice outside the refugee camp. This meant that refugees were only able to work menial or seasonal work.²⁹ There are theories that propose that the intention behind such laws is to perpetuate poverty so that they will want to leave Lebanon. This resonates with the larger idea that absorbing the Palestinians will upset the demographic balance in Lebanon and it also reflects unresolved resentments and hostilities between some groups of Palestinians and Lebanese.

²⁸ Palestinians are also excluded from gaining residency in Lebanon based on "courtesy residencies." These are offered for example to an Arab or foreigner from a Lebanese mother if he does not work, the spouse of a Lebanese man if she does not work, an Arab or foreigner born in Lebanon if he or she is pursuing studies. Yet, there is a stipulation that Palestinians are excluded from this. Report by Frontiers, "*Women's Rights in Lebanon: Gender and Discrimination in terms of Nationality and Residency*", 2008
http://www.frontiersruwad.org/pdf/FR_Report_CEDAW_EN_2008.pdf

²⁹ Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, "Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 2 (2010): 145.

The end of the civil war led to even more restrictions on Palestinians. For instance, Palestinians were excluded from the General Amnesty Law that absolved Lebanese war criminals. Palestinian militiamen active during the war were held accountable and were targeted by Lebanese and Syrian forces.³⁰ Yet the restrictions were most evident in the post war limitations on labour. Finding work for Palestinians is another element that affects the relationship between refugees and Lebanese and that affects how they view their own self-worth and place in Lebanon. For some, like Abed, it increases feelings of marginalization and causes them to internalize the negative aspects of a Palestinian national identity. For Abed, not being able to find work as a nurse increased his resentment of Lebanon and made him feel that, despite having been born and raised in Beirut, he would never truly be accepted:

I want to work but they don't let me. The country is not ours; they prefer to give the jobs to their own people... I kind of accept the idea, but the problem is I don't have a nation, no, I don't have anything here, I don't even have a Lebanese ID. We don't have anything; we cannot even own our house. What rights can I ask for? I'll just apply, keep applying. I'll apply abroad, nursing is in demand abroad. I'd go anywhere, but other Arab countries, but not anywhere where I have to learn French, but you need them to accept me... I live here, I was raised here, I love it, even if I still feel sometimes like everything is closed to me.³¹

Abed's sense of frustration and loss of hope are palpable. He speaks of Lebanon almost as if the country had rejected him. This is a perfect example of the tug-of-war between Lebanon as a home and as a carceral space. If he were able to live a good life in Lebanon, the only place he has ever known, then he would not want to leave.

Abed has internalized the negative aspects of being Palestinian and has come to see himself as less than his Lebanese peers. To him, and other young refugees, the only solution is to leave Lebanon for a new place where being Palestinian does not hinder their chances of leading a regular life. For some refugees, like Hana, finding a job

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Interview with Abed, *ibid.*

was less difficult but not free of challenges and discrimination. Unlike Abed, she has not internalized the marginalization of refugees and finding a job has made her feel part of a larger community. Hana is in her mid-twenties, comes from a family of politically active Palestinians and is currently employed by the American University of Beirut.³² Having worked on the issue of Palestinians refugees in Lebanon both academically and professionally, she recounts her anecdotes with a tone that reflects awareness of the political realities, but without expressing despair or frustration. Instead, she now laughs at what she faced at her first job with a religious non-profit called World Vision, as well as at her struggle to gain employment at the American University in Beirut (AUB) and at the Lebanese American University (LAU):

World Vision was a shock. They got me a work permit and it was weird that they got it legally. Most Palestinians do it under the table because it is the only way to do it, either unemployed or under the table. They somehow got me a work permit and it was one out of 50 something legal work permits given but of course they had to register it as like social assistant because you can't work most professions so they registered me as a low ranking employee. I remember HR telling me that the only options were either assistant or cleaning lady.

Applying for positions at the two American universities proved more difficult:

I got a job offer at LAU at the Institute of Migration Studies and I did the interview and got the job, *khallas* tomorrow we send you the offer; that was at the political science department level. But the next day I got an email saying: we can't hire you because LAU does not sponsor Palestinian workers. This was the most telling situation and I had a big fight and accused them of racism but it didn't lead anywhere. The professors in charge were ashamed but they couldn't do anything. Here (at AUB) its hell. Hiring me took three or four months. They made a whole ordeal to hire me and to this day we have to go through three months of fighting and problems and convincing them to hire any Palestinians but it's done at least. To renew my contract it's the same, in other departments they won't hire Palestinians but because it's a Palestinian program for God's sake and because Sari is so vocal

³² Hana Sleiman, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 20, 2011.

about it, they don't dare say no because he'd make a scandal.³³ But it happens everywhere. This is one of the main reasons for the hopelessness that many Palestinians feel.

Hana's story shows that Palestinians have to struggle in these spaces of exception every day and that they are constantly reminded that they are foreigners in Lebanon, even if at the individual level they are accepted by Lebanese peers and colleagues. The restrictions against employment make it difficult for many Palestinians to engage in simple acts like buying a car. Buying a car was a theme that I encountered when speaking with many of my interviewees. Mona's story stood out because she is employed in a reputable company and on the surface seems to face fewer difficulties than other refugees. Yet something as simple as wanting to buy a car reminds her that legally she cannot escape this space of exception:

You are Palestinian so they don't accept you and you feel like you are less than others. It's happened to me, even though here [at her current position] they never made me feel different. I went and asked accounting for a paper showing I've been working here for two years so I could use it to get credit to buy a car. She told me, "I can't give it to you." I asked her why and she responded, "Because we can't disclose that you are not in social security and if they know, they will ruin everything." It's because I'm not registered in social security, which makes me illegal, this year they said they would declare that I was included in the Social Security, but I would have to pay an extra 60 thousand Lebanese Lira. I said its ok, I just want to feel like everyone else, that I have my rights and that I can get a document if I need it.³⁴

Lebanese law has only recently been amended to allow employed Palestinians access to social security. The amendment revoked the reciprocity condition and granted

³³ Sari refers to Sari Hanafi Associate Professor, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Program Research Director, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut

³⁴ Mona Ayoub, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 28, 2011.

registered Palestinians the right to benefit from the end of service provisions. However, Palestinians were excluded from the illness, maternity and family indemnities fund.³⁵

For some Palestinians, experiencing this marginalization and exclusion constantly reminds them that they are different and unwanted in Lebanon. For Nawar, the label of refugee has emphasized his political awareness and sense of being Palestinian but for others like Abed, this constant reminder of his “Palestinianess” has increased his resentment towards the label and its associated identities.

3.3. The Inversion of Space: Making the Carceral a Home

While the legal marginalization explained above depicts Lebanon and the camps as carceral spaces and spaces of exception, there is more to the story. Many refugees feel that the camps and that Lebanon are home and are places to which memory and history are attached.

In the traditional discourse and historiography on Palestinian identity, the ancestral village forms an integral part of Palestinian identity as it perpetuates the memory and history of Palestine. The Palestinian villages are considered *lieux de memoire* or the sites to which memory is attached.³⁶ Pierre Nora’s concept means that these villages are *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory, because they are no longer *milleux de memoire*, real “environments of memory.”³⁷ In another essay he also claims, “A *lieu de memoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any

³⁵ The National Social Security Fund, *Informational Memorandum no, 437* issued on May 23, 2011. Full memorandum in original Arabic retrieved from, Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee website: <http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/Rights/Areas-of-Work/Right-To-Work.aspx#>

³⁶ *Lieux de Memories*, phrase coined by Pierre Nora in his discussions on the formation of French identity. See Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France, Les Lieux de Memoire* Volumes 1,2 and 3, trans. David O. Jordan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 2006).

³⁷ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les lieux de memoire” *Representations* 26, (1998), 7.

community.”³⁸ Davis and Slyomovics specify this site as the village and demonstrate its importance by studying Palestinian village books and their role in perpetuating the memories of the village and contributing to the formation of identity.³⁹ For Slyomovics, the stone house is part of this memorial heritage and Abu Lughod and Sa’idi call this the “old family home”.⁴⁰

I argue that the refugee camps and the homes created in different spaces in Lebanon are part of the symbolic element of heritage of Palestinian communities. For instance, Diana Allan finds that most children do not know more than the name of the ancestral village or some generic facts about the place.⁴¹ Even more telling is Allan’s conclusion that the attachment to place and the “Palestianness” it implies are resonant of official contexts such as those propagated by the PLO during the 1960s and presently by the PLO in the Palestinian Territories, which have lost meaning among the younger generations in the camps.⁴²

At the Burj Barajneh camp, young girls attending a seminar intended to teach them professional skills such as hairdressing, corroborated Allen’s argument. I asked the girls about how they felt when they thought or heard about Palestine. They responded that Palestine seemed like a distant place and that they were more interested in the here and now of the camps.⁴³ Hence, for these urban camp dwellers the village was not a focal point of their identity as Palestinians.⁴⁴ While some inherited a sense of nostalgia

³⁸ Pierre Nora, “From *Lieux de Memoire* to realms of memory” (1996) XVII, http://faculty.smu.edu/bwheeler/Joan_of_Arc/OLR/03_PierreNora_LieuxdeMemoire.pdf

³⁹ Palestinian village books are volumes dedicated to remembering the lost villages. They include pictures, maps, descriptions, stories and interviews. There are different books dedicated to different villages.

⁴⁰ Sa’idi and Abu Lughod, 2.

⁴¹ Allan, 261.

⁴² Allan, 260.

⁴³ Each of the five girls I spoke with, formally and informally, in Burj Barejneh expressed this sentiment.

⁴⁴ Davis argues the contrary, 25.

for their homeland from their relatives, others did not.⁴⁵ Jana, one of the girls, expressed a sentiment that resonated with the remainder of the group, “We like it (Palestine) but there is not much *hanin* (nostalgia) for me. My dad tells me it is nice.”⁴⁶ Another participant, Walaa continued, “Yah, I like Palestine. Even our parents are not attached; I know I am from Acca but that’s about it.”⁴⁷ Indeed, it seems that these girls are tired of the duty to recall. While the statements made by Walaa and Jana give the impression of resigned acceptance, it is important to understand that, as Allan explains, it is difficult for the younger generation to absorb the narratives of the village or of the past as their own or to frame their national belonging according to such narratives.⁴⁸

Based on Allan’s findings and my own research, I also argue that the village does not resonate with these girls because their memories and family histories are attached to the camp and to Lebanon. For the elder generations, the camp was a space in which they could reconstitute the village. For instance, Peteet, in her research on refugee camps in Lebanon conducted between the 1970s and 1990s, found that refugee camps used to be organized according to villages. Furthermore, the village elder, the *mukhtar*’s role was transferred to the camps and he became the liaison between each village and UNRWA officials. They thus enhanced the past and reasserted a claim to the lands they had lost.⁴⁹ Laleh Khalili and Susan Slyomovics write that girls were named after villages and became the embodiment of those remembered places.⁵⁰ Lastly, older refugees still hold onto keys to their ancestral village homes. This theme was present amongst my older narrators and is a trope in much of the scholarship on the Palestinian diaspora. However, the younger ones did not touch upon it. Mona Kaddoura, a wealthy

⁴⁵ The concept of inheriting nostalgia is from Zuzanna Olszewska, “Hey, Afghani! Identity Contentions among Iranians and Afghan Refugees,” in *Dispossession and Displacement: Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Dawn Chatty and Bill Finalyson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 49.

⁴⁶ Jana, interviewed by author, Burj Barejneh Camp, Lebanon, October 19, 2011.

⁴⁷ Walaa Ossaili, interviewed by author, Burj Barejneh Camp, Lebanon, October 19, 2011.

⁴⁸ Diana K. Allan, “Mythologizing al-Nakba: Narratives, Collective Identity and Cultural Practice among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon,” *Oral History* 33, no.1(2005): 52.

⁴⁹ Peteet, 111-113.

⁵⁰ Khalili,(2004), 13.

Palestinian, fondly told me how she inherited from her grandmother not only the key but a small bag with sand straight from their village. She told me that she never allows anyone to touch it and nostalgically related how this represented not only her home, but everything her family had lost and sacrificed.⁵¹

The third and fourth generations do not recall those same tropes of the homeland. They do not remember 1948 but remember or are more aware of many of the tragedies that have affected them in Lebanon. It is not a conceptual space or a memory that shapes their identities; they build relationships within the physical space they occupy. Lefebvre's work addresses those sentiments in *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre argues that space is not neutral or pre-existing but is an ongoing product of spatial relations and inter-relations, constituted through interactions.⁵² Lefebvre sees space as social; it is the outcome of past and future actions. Thus space is not a thing but a set of relationships.⁵³ I argue that in these spaces in Lebanon, refugees produce meaning by constituting their identities as Palestinians, refugees and everything in between.

It is difficult to argue that Palestinians do not produce relations within the constraint of these spaces. Palestinians have been in Lebanon since 1948. They have built homes for their children. They have given birth in Lebanon, buried their loved ones and lived through historical events like the Nakba, Sabra and Chattila and the War of the Camps. Rosemary Sayigh argues that refugee camps in Lebanon are houses and not homes and she engages with how displaced Palestinians deal with the knowledge that their homes in Lebanon are not their real homes. She questions how they reconcile the necessities of doing chores that can only be carried out in a home like raising a family and keeping the space clean, knowing that they are living in a space which cannot be a home.⁵⁴ However, I argue that performing those chores turns a house into a home. Even though this home is plagued by insecurity and impermanence, it has become a safe place as many of the

⁵¹ Mona Kaddoura, interviewed by author, October 5, 2011.

⁵² Lefebvre, 9.

⁵³ Ibid.,83.

⁵⁴ Sayigh,2005.

interviews have shown. Palestinians in Lebanon have daily routines, visit with families and friends and plan their futures. They have watched their homes change from humanitarian spaces to war zones and from spaces of nationalism to simple homes.

The tension between the home and carceral space and how life is managed in a space designed to be temporary but becomes permanent, was another recurring theme amongst my narrators.⁵⁵ Although Aya feels humiliated by the checkpoints outside the Ein El Hillweh camp, she still feels like the camp is home and would not want to live elsewhere:

I do not feel comfortable living outside it. All my family is there and I am used to it. My sisters live abroad but I cannot imagine it. I'm used to it, all the girls just go down to the streets and have fun, we have a life there. I would not mind living outside it, sometimes I feel that I would like to live outside the camps after waiting at the checkpoint for half an hour. It is not wrong to want to leave it but I like it. It feels like Palestine in Lebanon, even when it is chaotic, it still feels like home for us Palestinians and we do not find that outside [the camp].⁵⁶

Similarly, Nawar talked about how the camp is the only home he has known, "I was born and raised in the camp. My roots are here, how can you leave your roots? If they leave (the camp) they (Palestinians) will not be able to live. The camp is for Palestinians. It is not like living in the rest of Lebanon. If I want to go live in any other camp, it will not be the same. You get used to your camp."⁵⁷ Rabih, a middle aged father living in the more integrated Mar Elias camp, reiterated the same sentiments, " I want to raise my children in Mar Elias, I was born here, yes I'd consider moving outside the camp but that has nothing to do with my belonging. I would still visit the camps and everything."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁶ Interview with Aya,ibid.

⁵⁷ Interview with Nawar, ibid.

⁵⁸ Rabih Al Moughrabi, interviewed by author. Mar Elias Camp, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

What is noticeable from these conversations is that the narrators not only identified with the community of camp dwellers in Lebanon but more specifically, they exhibited attachments to individual camps. Hence, Palestinian identities are strongly colored by regional specificity, be it to a camp, village or country and this challenges the idea of a coherent and unified Palestinian identity. Life stories experienced in the camps should be studied in much the same way as the Palestinian village. Scholars should continue to explore how refugee camps are not static but are similar to cities as they evolve and change alongside the histories of the people that inhabit them. Relationships shattered by the *Nakba* are reconstituted in the camps; the camps are embodied by the people that populate them. The desire to remain in the camps and raise subsequent generations of Palestinians shows that the camp is not just a house, but is indeed a home. It is the accumulation of their experiences and the relationships between people that constitute the space of the camp and produce meaning.⁵⁹

In this thesis, one of the objectives is to include refugees living outside the camps into discourses of identity and the Arab Israeli conflict. Scholars like Davis argue that camps are the “hallmark of Palestinian existence in the diaspora.”⁶⁰ However, this excludes a group of Palestinians from the narrative who chose not to live in camps, or who fled Palestine after 1948. For these Palestinians, the physical spaces they occupy in Lebanon also represent the duality or intersection between carceral and home. Furthermore, for these Palestinians the camp often represents a marker of the stigma of being a refugee and an obstacle that limits and confines identity to being a refugee. The urbanization of the camp has also contributed to making the space less Palestinian. Some camps have instead become a form of ghetto where migrant workers in Lebanon

⁵⁹ Ramadan, 51,52.

⁶⁰ Davis, 8.

come to live because it is cheap. In that sense, the camp has come to represent poverty and lack of a better life.⁶¹

Many refugees have crafted homes within the spaces of exceptions as was evident from conversations with city-dwelling narrators. Bilal owns and runs a coffee truck outside the Lebanese Arab University.⁶² Although his parents were raised in camps and although he spent a few years there as a child, he is determined to ensure that his children do not experience camp life and calls the area surrounding the university his home. Bilal has two children and his eldest works with him preparing coffee and making breakfast outside the gates of the university. I met Bilal at his truck and we conversed for nearly two hours while he worked. His tone suggested bitterness at being considered a Palestinian refugee and he confided that many of his friends did not even know he was Palestinian:

My parents lived in poverty in the camp until they worked hard and were able to get us out of it. I remember it being a life of poverty. It is not the life I have provided for my family here. Everything is different, life, work, the atmosphere. If my friends wanted to visit me, how could I tell them to come to a camp? The camp isn't what it used to be, it is not just a Palestinian community, it's very mixed.

Bilal worked hard to enroll his children in Lebanese schools and did not care about transmitting their history or about fostering an attachment to Palestine. He instead wanted to pursue a life that he did not deem possible in the camp, "Why would we go back? My son's life is here. My whole family is here, his friends, his mother. He speaks Lebanese not Palestinian. If I could get the Lebanese passport I would give it to my children. If they could get it I would support it, I want them to have their rights and be able to live here in their home."

⁶¹ Mohamed Kamel Dorai, "From Camp Dwellers to Urban Refugees? Urbanization and Marginalization of Refugee Camps in Lebanon," in *Manifestations of Identity: The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010), 84.

⁶² Bilal, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 28, 2011.

Salah has lived both inside and outside the camps and his story contradicts the idea that the camps are bastions of Palestinian identity in Lebanon.⁶³ In his story, the camp is neither inherently a Palestinian community nor the symbol of Palestine in exile that it was during the time of the PLO:

It was a different world, we were living in Rouche (a city in Beirut) and we got kicked out and they made a building for us in Shatilla. It was new to me; we had never felt that way. The camp was just different, it felt strange. I felt like a stranger in the camp even though we were all Palestinian. The dialect was different, even though we spoke Palestinian at home. Palestinians in the camp had a stronger accent. We didn't know anything. There were problems when we first arrived but eventually they accepted us.

For Salah it was not the camp that was home. It was living in Beirut with his friends and his community that made Lebanon home. Similarly, Abed, despite his negative experiences with the police and his desire to immigrate, spoke about Lebanon with the same nostalgia generally attributed to the ancestral village, "This is my home, I want to be here, but they don't want me here. Of course I want to stay; I grew up in this neighborhood. I know everyone, my family is here, and this is where I call home."⁶⁴

For some, the camp is the cornerstone of their lives in Lebanon, for others it was their neighborhood, but others like Mira find it difficult to belong in either space.⁶⁵ This confusion is reflected in her struggle to define herself as a person and as a Palestinian. Mira tries hard to be part of Beirut. She is an actress, a dancer and a dance teacher in a school in Beirut. She was raised in a Palestinian gathering in the South of Lebanon but now lives on her own. Despite this, she still feels rejected and cannot find where she belongs. Through our conversations it was apparent that she struggled to understand what it means to be a Palestinian, a refugee, what she wanted it to mean to her and to what extent she allowed it to define her identity. After she accompanied me to the camps, I asked her if she would have rather lived in a camp, she responded, "Like yeah,

⁶³ Salah Hamzeh, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, November 8, 2011.

⁶⁴ Interview with Abed, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Mira Siddawi, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

you feel like they all have a sense of belonging, those who are doing well and those who aren't doing as well. You don't feel they are that lost, at the end they all return to the camp, return to a place where everyone is like them and understands them." Mira searches for her identity in books and arts, especially existential literature and prefers to think of herself as an artist as opposed to a Palestinian. Her situation exemplifies that internal conflict that arises from being a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon.

These interviews show that there is no clear distinction between home and carceral space and that despite the romanticized view of the camps of the 1960s, they are not always considered as safe havens in an otherwise hostile Lebanon. From my interviews it became apparent that the camp did represent a home for some, but for others, the life they crafted outside the camp represented home. For some, the camp represented an obstacle and a submission to a forced or prescribed identity as refugees. Yet, even these distinctions are not rigid. For instance, while Bilal wants a better life in Lebanon and wishes he could grant his children the Lebanese passport, he still longs for Palestine. For Aya and Nawar, the camp signifies belonging to a collective sphere, to a Palestinian community and it is a symbol of security and protection.⁶⁶ Others believe that the camps embody the negative aspects of being Palestinian and are an expression of poverty and a reminder of a tragic past.

The purpose of this chapter was to illustrate the grey areas between home and carceral space, to examine the effects of space on identities and to include non-camp based refugees into the larger discourse on Palestinian identity. This chapter also intended to shift the focus from the ancestral village to the camp. In the context of exile, the relationship between place and identity is mutually constituted and operates within a field of power, both internal and external that shapes both space and identity.⁶⁷ Oral histories in this chapter have exposed discontinuities in narratives that attempt to posit a

⁶⁶ Bassen Serhan and Samia Tabari, "Palestinian Refugee Children and Caregivers in Lebanon," in *Children of Palestine: Experiencing Forced Migration in the Middle East*, edited by Dawn Chatty and Gillian Lewando Hundt (UK: Berghahn Books, 2015), 46.

⁶⁷ Peteet, 93.

cohesive narrative of Palestinian identity. Personal interactions with space, both physical and legal, have added new elements to refugee identities and this chapter has exposed some of the ways in which those interactions affect understandings of home and of the carceral space.

4. Competing Narratives: PLO, UNRWA and Grassroots Organizations

The previous chapter examined the impact of space on the formation of refugee narratives and identities in Lebanon. This chapter explores the role of institutions such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) and various grassroots organizations in shaping and constructing refugee identities, communities and national narratives. This section complements the arguments advanced so far because institutions simultaneously perpetuate the carceral space and oppose the power imposed upon inhabitants. For instance, civil society simultaneously works to empower refugees and to guarantee civil rights within the host country while reinvigorating the fight for the right of return. Lastly, these institutions, by monitoring and counting refugees, facilitate the task of the sovereign. However, they simultaneously empower refugees politically and socially. In so doing, they elevate refugees from the social strata imposed by the sovereign, that of passive individuals requiring only humanitarian assistance.

In the aftermath of the PLO, civil society appropriated the responsibility of actively preserving history, transmitting memory and reinvigorating Palestinian narratives. I use the term actively because organizations are selecting and focusing on certain elements of history which they view as integral to the narratives of refugees in Lebanon. In other words, civil society organizations are constructing certain versions of identity and nationalism. This chapter examines organizations that focus on memory and history as well as organizations involved with empowering refugees through skill acquisitions and professional training.

A central premise of this thesis is that identities are not static and that the actors attempting to propagate narratives of nationalism and identity are ever evolving. To that end, I will trace how the PLO, UNRWA and smaller civil society institutions have evolved, have shaped refugee identities and have defined the conditions of refugee life. This chapter will use oral histories to understand the effects of these organizations on

refugee communities, while simultaneously exploring their unintentionally exclusionary policies. This section of the thesis shows that the history of Palestinian national identity is a salient example of multiplicity of historical narratives. It is the outcome of many historical imaginations designed to counter the effects of negating “Palestinianism” by the Lebanese and Israeli states.¹

4.1. The PLO: An Official Nationalism

The arrival of the PLO changed the nature of refugees in Lebanon. For the first time since 1948 they were politically active and mobilized. The PLO leadership transformed the camps, if only for a short time, into incubators of social and political institutions, with the hopes that they could transplant these state infrastructures to Palestine once they returned.² The Cairo Agreement gave the PLO many privileges including the right to conduct militia activities in Lebanon and guaranteed rights such as the right to employment for refugees. Yet, there were no actual legal or institutional changes to cement these improvements. Instead, they were rescinded with the departure of the PLO.

The PLO’s nationalism was militaristic, based on armed struggle against the Israeli oppressor and glorification of *fidayeen*, armed militias. Given Israel’s policies of erasing Palestinian culture and attempts by the Lebanese government to marginalize all things Palestinian, the PLO needed to disseminate a nationalism that reflected homogeneity over pluralism, unity of the different camps and stability. This was important because as chapter three explained, refugees had ties to different villages and camps. Hence, the PLO narrative neglected cleavages in the Palestinian community and

¹ Robert Bowker, *Palestinian Refugees: Mythology, Identity and the Search for Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2003),218.

² Randa Farah, “Refugee Camps in the Palestinian and Sahrawi National Liberation Movements: A Comparative Perspective” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38, no.2 (2009): 77.

subsumed local identities that preceded the *Nakba* as well as any identification formed in exile.³

Before the arrival of the PLO, the erasure conducted by the Lebanese state focused on silencing and rendering refugees invisible. They marginalized them in refugee camps, reduced them to victims and even rendered them invisible in Lebanese institutions and legislation. While the official rhetoric was that of host and guest, the reality was that they were unwelcomed guests, especially those who were not naturalized in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, it was in the 1980s when processes of erasure similar to those described by Swedenburg in *Memories of a Revolt*, began occurring in Lebanon. Swedenburg shows how Palestinian history was erased and disfigured in the Citadel of Acre and he explores in detail the “judaization” of the city of Acre. He also uses the Yad Vashem museum and the efforts to uproot the olive tree, a symbol of Palestine, from the land to further his argument. Palestinian history was also erased in museums, where it was reduced to a meager encounter with Phoenicians and Romans that did not reflect an Arab, let alone Palestinian presence.⁴ The village books studied by Davis and Slyomovics and the PLO’s efforts to revive folklore, music and crafts were all attempts to counter this erasure.

Similar erasure measures were undertaken by Lebanese political groups starting in the 1980s. The erasure involved both the destruction of physical landmarks as well as the appropriation of Palestinian suffering and history. For instance, in 1983, the Phalange turned a cemetery in the Ein El Hillweh refugee camp into a soccer field. They hoped to replace the whole camp with a new highway but that never came to be. The Phalange nevertheless significantly reduced the size of the camp.⁵ Another aspect of invisibility is that there are no markers or landmarks to indicate or commemorate significant events in the history of Palestinians in Lebanon. There are no monuments in

³ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinian Camp Refugee Identifications: A new Look at the ‘Local’ and the ‘National’” in *Palestinian Refugees: Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, edited by Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge Studies on the Arab Israeli Conflict, 2011), 50.

⁴ Swedenburg, 36-78.

⁵ Khalili, 36, 38, 42.

Sabra and Chatilla, or the Tel El Zaatar camp, which was completely decimated by the Phalange. Additionally, the site of another massacre, the Qarantina refugee camp, does not exist anymore; it is now the site of a night club.⁶

Furthermore, Hezbollah silenced and erased the Palestinian past in Lebanon by appropriating all Palestinian symbols and suffering. In the 1985 “Letter to the oppressed” that launched the party; they denounced the actions of the Phalange and Israelis against the Palestinians and associated the Palestinian cause with the party’s own political struggle.⁷ Thus, by appropriating the suffering of the Palestinians, Hezbollah could legitimize its own actions against Israel and the Phalange to its constituency and supporters. After the expulsion of the PLO in 1982, Hezbollah appropriated the physical symbols of Palestinians in Lebanon to sustain the party’s rhetoric and to legitimize continued aggression against Israel. The party for instance maintained and still maintains the cemetery at Sabra and Chatilla which commemorates the massacre. Additionally, the camp and the surrounding areas are decorated with pictures of Hezbollah martyrs and leaders. Lastly, the party has also appropriated Palestinian symbols like Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock and has used them to defend Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon as the only resistance against Israel.⁸

The PLO in Lebanon, as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, had the task of countering both the systemic erasure practiced by the Israeli state and the silencing of Palestinian history invoked by the Lebanese government. By doing so, it undertook identity formation functions and provided the platform through which Palestinians could lay claim to a political identity and to previously-denied national rights.⁹ To that end, The PLO’s narratives emphasized the glory of armed struggle and

⁶ The architect Bernard Khoury designed the night club in a way that would provoke debate. The night club is invisible during the day to reflect the invisibility of the camp and the absence of commemorative markers. See, Khalili (2005)

⁷ Jacob Hoigilt, “Islamism, Pluralism and the Palestine Question: The Case of Hezbollah,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34, No.2, 125.

⁸ Khalili (2007), 285, 286.

⁹ Jamil M Hillal, “The PLO: Crisis in Legitimacy,” *Race and Class* 37, no.2 (1995):2.

martyrdom and emphasized the figure of the *fidaii*. I argue that the symbol of the *fidaii* is as central to the Palestinian discourse and to refugee identities in Lebanon as the trope of the *fallah* or peasant, which serves as the signifier of nationalism in the traditional historiography of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The *fidaii* should be understood in much the same way Swedenburg explains the peasant in his article, *The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier*.¹⁰

Swedenburg argues that the peasant is a central figure in the expressive culture and historiography of the West Bank; a symbol that constructs a sense of belonging to a Palestinian people and nation. He further argues that the symbol serves to unify dispersed Palestinians across class, sect, region and kingship. The *fallah's* representative power derives from its ability to overshadow internal differences, social antagonisms and cleavages.¹¹ Swedenburg continues to argue that the trope of the *fallah* should be understood in the relation to the historical trajectory of Palestinian nationalism in the face of Zionism, especially as the peasant, with its connotation of the land, served to counter Israel's physical seizure of the land.¹² The *fallah* was thus a collective effort to retrieve the confiscated land.

The PLO used the *fidaii* in much the same way and parallels can be drawn to the situation in Lebanon. The armed struggle was a central theme of the nationalist narrative during the 1970s and the *fidaii* served to counter the historical trajectory of nationalism in Lebanon which depicted refugees as depoliticized victims. The symbol of the *fidaii* served to counter the social and political marginalization imposed on Palestinians in Lebanon. It glossed over all boundaries and distinctions, not only amongst Palestinians but also amongst Palestinians and Lebanese.

The *fidaii* became central to the narrative of Palestinians in Lebanon as evidenced by its presence in the literature of the time. Most notable is the image of the

¹⁰ Ted Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," *Anthropological Quarterly* 63 no.1(1990):18-30.

¹¹ Swedenburg (2003), 27.

¹² *Ibid.*,24-25.

fidaii in Ghassan Kanafani's *Um Saed*.¹³ In this book, Um Saed's son joins the militias and in the novel, she as the narrator, uses the word *fidaii* to refer not only to her son but to the collective of fighters. Um Saed is filled with pride for her son the fighter, but complains that she has to feed her younger child because he is taking food away from the sons of Palestine. Each one of my narrators read this book during the formative periods of their adolescence and it was one of their first glimpses into a heroic past. The symbolism is important as it informs Palestinians about their past, about the positive connotations of Palestinian identity and provides the perception of a unified community.

The PLO impacted identity and appropriated the Palestinian past from 1964-1982 by confirming participation to the Palestinian community and administering affairs; It provided health, education and employment opportunities. The PLO used the existing UNRWA infrastructure and services to reproduce a specific Palestinian identity. Arafat and the PLO used UNRWA for their own purposes, for instance to influence educational policies and professional trainings.¹⁴ For example, the PLO organized after hour classes to complement UNRWA education. The classes were more politically oriented and were designed to dispel the image of dependency associated with being a refugee.¹⁵

The leadership also staged commemorations of Palestinian history that operated in much the same way as state functions. It appropriated all commemorations of Palestinian suffering inside and outside Lebanon to mobilize Palestinians. The PLO instituted festivals, street rallies, factional gatherings, speeches, theatrical performances and advertised and held memorials commemorating events like the Tel El Zaatar and the Qarantina massacres.¹⁶ By monopolizing the memory of those events, they became collective sites of memory, or *lieux de memoir*, aimed at collectivizing suffering and uniting Palestinians. This unified narrative, with armed struggle and the *fidaii* at its core, was also propagated through poetry, folklore and songs. Patriotic songs, many of which

¹³ Ghassan Kanafani, "Um Saed," (Beirut: Mouassast Al Abhath Al Arabiya, 1969).

¹⁴ Bocco, 239,240.

¹⁵ Al Hussein, 54.

¹⁶ Khalili (2004), 8.

were produced by large, state sponsored orchestras, inundated Palestinian radio stations in Lebanon like *Sawt al thawara*, voice of the revolution.¹⁷

The positive and negative effects of the legacy of PLO nationalism were very apparent in my conversation with Sharif.¹⁸ Sharif comes from a long line of politically active Palestinians. His father fought against the British and the Zionists in Palestine, his uncle was a militia *fidaii* and he remembers parts of the Lebanese civil war, the events of 1982 and the subsequent War of the Camps. His mother is Lebanese and his understanding of the past and of what it means to be a Palestinian is informed by his ties to Lebanon and by his family's political legacy. We met at a Costa Coffee and stories about nationalism and the PLO intersected with stories of his own family and childhood during that eventful period:

Of course, of course, it's changed a lot [the situation of Palestinians since 1982]. 82, we talk about it like it is nothing, but one day people will really realize its impact on Lebanon and Palestine. We slept and woke up the next day and the PLO was gone. The PLO was a social, political, economic pillar for the people, when it left, all that coverage left. We woke up to a barricade and oppression in all senses. All historical questions were once again raised: who are we, why are we here, what are the camps, where are we heading?

With the PLO, our identities changed from poor refugees and victims to *fidaii*. It changed our collective memory, our understanding of the collective and of Palestine. Differences between villagers and urban Palestinians were erased; being *fidaii* became our identity and walking around with the *baroude* (rifle), meant pride. My uncle told me that the Lebanese girls loved them, always stopping them on the road to speak with him. When I was young I would tell people I wanted to be a *fidaii* when I grew up. I now know better. He told me then he didn't understand all the attention, but in retrospect a *fidaii* was like an Arab superman. It wasn't an easy transition to wake up and not be a *fidaii* anymore. What did we accomplish during all this time? Nothing, and now we are asking similar questions.

¹⁷ Nicolas Puig, "Welcome to the Camps": The Emergence of Palestinian Rap in Lebanon, a New Social and Political Song," in *Manifestations of Identity: The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010):110.

¹⁸ Sharif Bibi, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 25, 2011. The excerpts in this section are from the same interview.

Similarly, Mira also explained the impact of the resistance on her identity. Mira understood the resistance in terms of how it affected her family personally. She remembers that period according to the impact and meaning it had on her father. To her, the demise of the PLO in Lebanon was analogous to watching the demise of her father, as he went from being an active member of the left wing of the resistance (the PFLP, The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) to being hopeless and depressed, “My dad was very depressed. He saw Beirut disappearing. He writes a lot, he was very involved, it hurt him, it was getting worse. Nothing was going the way it was supposed to be, the position of the Palestinians became worse. They used to like us, we used to have a cause, but then it just got worse.”¹⁹

From Mira’s recollections it is apparent that Palestinians in Lebanon compare their current situation to the image of the PLO in the 1960s and 1970s. They are trying to understand what has changed and why they are no longer “liked” or respected. Mira and Sharif did not recall any military victories or any specific battles or figures; they remembered the period as the first time since 1948 that they were not treated as “others”. Instead, they were treated like heroes. The *fidaii* became the cornerstone of refugee identity as it challenged the identity of the victim. Refugees young and old are struggling to regain the feelings of pride and respect associated with that phase of history. The only other time Sharif recalls feeling like he belonged in Lebanon was during the second *Intifada* (uprising). The fervor of the 70s returned and Palestinians were once again seen as heroes rather than victims:

When I first entered university there were problems, but during the (second) *intifada* it was different. Before the *intifada* you can’t even imagine, we weren’t allowed to speak as Palestinians. I’d walk on the road and I would have my head down. We were subject to Lebanese stereotypes. But during the *intifada*, we had restored the pride of the Arab, the old saying came back: Palestinians are the first line of defense for the Arab nations. Yah we would still have these conflicts with Lebanese like they would say things like who are you, you are just outsiders but during the *intifada* other Lebanese groups would silence them. Everyone was wearing a *Kufiya*, there were no problems,

¹⁹ Mira, October 6, 2011.

the cause united all Palestinians and Lebanese, but look now, there is no cause, little incidents here and there remind me that I'm different, and make me question my relationship to where I belong.

He recounted this story to emphasize the degree to which many Lebanese identified with Palestinians during the *intifada*, "My friend and I decided to go downtown and count how many people were wearing the Kufiya. We lost count, in the end it became easier to count those that weren't wearing. It's funny how the Lebanese respected us and wanted to be part of our struggle. Where has this support been during all our other struggles?"

Arafat and the *Kufiya* embodied Palestinian identity and resistance and it spoke not only to Palestinians but to many Arabs.²⁰ Sharif not only felt more proud of being a Palestinian during the *intifada*, but for the first time he was able to openly vocalize his sentiment. What is important in his narrative is how the past is affecting his identity presently. He remembers when the Palestinians were treated just like every other Lebanese and when they did not have to wonder about where they belonged.

The presence of the PLO in Lebanon provided Palestinians with a political identity that they had lost through the ordeal of the *Nakba* and resettlement in Lebanon. Although the narrative was hegemonic and excluded differences that may have added depth and nuance and although the narrative cast a shadow over some of the more militant and aggressive actions of the PLO, it managed to do what no other group has been able to accomplish since then: to unite Palestinians in Lebanon under a common idea of Palestinian nationalism. The departure of the PLO in 1982 left not only a power vacuum that made the Palestinians vulnerable to the actions of the Lebanese, but it also shattered the illusion of a unified Palestinian identity. The negative impact of the PLO on the Palestinian identities in Lebanon intensified during the Oslo accords when the PLO became a source of betrayal instead of pride.

²⁰ Nazim Al Ju'beh, "Palestinian Identity and Cultural Heritage," in *Temps et Espace en Palestine* edited by Roger Heacock (Beirut: Institut Francais du proche Orient, 2008),211.

In the late 1980's the PLO infrastructure crumbled. Hospitals, offices and social services were uprooted or destroyed.²¹ Refugees in Lebanon ceased to identify with the PLO or the larger Palestinian community it represented. Instead, post-Oslo Palestinian identifications centered on the personal, like a village of origin, family unit, specific camp, or party loyalties.²² The situation worsened with the Oslo Accords and the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP). The signing of the DOP for gains in Gaza was seen as an abandonment of the Palestinians in the diaspora. Support for PLO and Fatah weakened and divisions within the party began to form. With this weakened leadership, the Lebanese state no longer needed to consider the demands of the Palestinians.²³

The 'united' Palestinian community in the diaspora was destroyed and replaced with inter-camp divisions. According to Rosemary Sayigh, Oslo "wrecked the PLO as a unifying representative body, reinforcing separation between diasporic region, resistance and groups and classes."²⁴ Camps were divided in their loyalties and those in the South like Rashidiye, Burj El Shimali and Ein el Hillweh aligned with Fatah and PLO loyalists. On the other hand, camps in the North and in Beirut were under the control of the National Security Force, which was originally loyal to Arafat, but later split from Fatah.²⁵ The actions of the PLO were seen as a trade-off between refugees and land. Furthermore, the cornerstone of the Palestinian narrative since 1948 had been exile, yet by focusing on the Palestinian territories, the PLO uprooted a central theme in refugee national identity.²⁶

Mira spoke of this apparent abandonment by the PLO with resentment, contempt and anger in her voice as she expressed how she feels used by both Lebanese and Palestinian political parties despite her attempts to belong to both communities:

²¹ Brenen,181.

²² Laleh Khalili, (2004),7.

²³ Shiblak, 207, 271.

²⁴ Sayigh (2011),63.

²⁵ Suleiman(1999), 68.

²⁶ Are Hovdenak, "Trading Refugees for *Land* and *Symbols*: The Palestinian Negotiation Strategy in the Oslo Process," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no.1 (2009):34,37.

I like Hariri but I'm mixed up. I don't understand all these strikes and taxes and I don't like Hezbollah. Whether I like it or not I'm a part of Lebanese politics. I don't care what Mahmoud Abbas is doing, it doesn't affect me. I don't pay any attention to him. I've never felt that he was the president of a country called Palestine. The worst part is that we know we are a card they play. When they need us they put us on the table, when they don't, they remove us, and Mahmoud Abbas is doing the same. People need to stop and think, how can they defend us? They have an agenda, and whether I like it or not they've made me a part of it.²⁷

Indeed, since the departure of the PLO, but more specifically since the Oslo Accords, there has been a shift in the narrative and its focus has moved to the occupied Palestinian territories. The focus is now on the struggle against the Israeli occupation.²⁸ With this change of direction, it becomes necessary to refocus on refugees and to reintegrate them into the narrative to avoid double marginalization: marginalization in Lebanon and in the discourse and history of Palestinians.

4.2. Palestinian Refugees and UNRWA: A Lasting Courtship

The relationship between Palestinians and the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) is complicated. UNRWA has become entrenched in their communities and, despite its problems, it serves an important function: a witness to their refugee status. Refugees are a unique category in terms of international aid because they are excluded from the Convention on the Status of Refugees as the convention cannot be applied to persons receiving protection or assistance from other United Nations agencies.²⁹ Therefore, their status as Palestinian refugees, at least in the legal language of the UN and the international community, is derived directly from their relationship with UNRWA.

²⁷ Mira, October 26, 2011.

²⁸ Bowker, 26.

²⁹ Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi, *Identity, Space and Place in the Levant* eds. (Oxon: Routledge Studies on the Arab Israeli Conflict, 2011), 2.

In the past sixty years the organization has grown and it now administers schools, medical facilities, career development centers, social centers, food rations and ration cards.³⁰ Perhaps even more important than all the services it provides, UNRWA has since its inception been the sole international or local political organization, other than the PLO, advocating for better rights and conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon. Thus, with a mandate that is purely humanitarian, UNRWA has long been the voice for refugees in the international arena. In the same manner, the refugee cause is heavily linked to UNRWA's presence in Lebanon. Despite allegations of corruption and ties to the West, many older Palestinians emphasized the need for its presence, especially in a post-Oslo political climate. Um Said, an elderly Palestinian whose employment consists of performing odd jobs, including cleaning at some of the organizations inside the camps, did not agree with any of the negative statements made about UNRWA and she was quick to defend it from allegations of corruption:

UNRWA is our only witness. Without UNRWA what is going to prove that I am Palestinian? My identity comes from UNRWA and there are too many political divisions. We are divided in Lebanon on Lebanese politics and on Palestinian politics. And in a way UNRWA is an umbrella for Palestinians. When you see UNRWA you don't say Fatah or Hamas. But everyone who is Palestinian is part of UNRWA, and everything we do, give birth or die is witnessed and registered by UNRWA.³¹

Um Said has witnessed UNRWA efforts to serve refugees. She recalls how there used to be only communal bathrooms in far sections of the camps and how the houses were made of zinc. But as time passed UNRWA improved the infrastructure of the camp and its relief efforts helped many survive. Younger Palestinians or Palestinians active in civil society were more critical of UNRWA and were more likely to associate it with corruption and political divisions inside the camps. Yassir, the founder of the NGO *Howiyya (Identity)*, has taught at the UNRWA schools and feels that it has succumbed to the same corruption as political parties:

³⁰ Farah, 81.

³¹ Um Said, interviewed by author, Burj Barajneh Camp, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

The problem with UNRWA is the corruption, financial and political corruption. It is almost like a mafia, no exaggerations and it has two levels of employment: local and expat. And they spend money on those expat hires and then when we ask for services they tell us they don't have money. It's not merit based, there are quotas. Now the Palestinian who is not part of some political factions cannot get positions.³²

Yassir even hinted that financial support from UNRWA was politically motivated. He told a story about how his sick aunt only received limited financial support for her surgery. Yet, when a friend of his affiliated with political factions took the same papers to UNRWA, he received the maximum amount that UNRWA provides per case.³³

UNRWA's relationship with refugees is complicated because of its own relationship Lebanon and with international funders. Despite being founded on humanitarian principals, it has unintentionally assumed governance like roles. Borrowing Sari Hanafi's term, "phantom sovereign," we can understand UNRWA not only as a humanitarian organization but also as a sovereign in the camps in so much as it has taken on responsibilities that Foucault associates with the power of the sovereign, mainly those relating to biopower.³⁴ While a sovereign state determines access to citizenship, the rights and privileges accorded to it and administers the population, UNRWA does the same, both in cooperation with the Lebanese state and independently. For instance, in the 1950s and even into the 1970s in some camps, UNRWA was forced by the Lebanese state to use only zinc roofs for houses in the camps instead of concrete. This was enacted to create the image of impermanence since concrete was seen as permanent.³⁵

UNRWA also conducts population surveys intended to identify key problems, but these surveys actually assist the state. It also maintains records of all refugees, their movements, marriage, births and death. Even Um Saed in her interview above said that

³² Yassir Kaddoura, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 6, 2011.

³³ He refused to disclose whether they were affiliated with Fatah or Hamas.

³⁴ Sari Hanafi (2011),14.

³⁵ Ibid.,15.

UNRWA records everything from births to death. Hence, UNRWA facilitates the management of the carceral space and space of exemption for the Lebanese state by administering refugees. In addition to facilitating the power of the sovereign, the Lebanese state, UNRWA has the right over life by administering everyday life. It determines the distribution of rations and provides medical services and employment opportunities.³⁶

UNRWA directly affects identity by legally constructing a definition of who is a refugee.³⁷ According to its definition, only those who fled the 1948 *Nakba* and their descendants are considered refugees and can register to receive its services. Palestinians who left Palestine in 1948 but did not register with UNRWA are not eligible to receive its services, even in the face of worsening conditions for Palestinians in Lebanon. Palestinians fleeing the 1967 war, as well as refugees who came to Lebanon in the 1970s to fight with the PLO, are also excluded from UNRWA's definition of refugees.³⁸ Only refugees that are in possession of UNRWA identification cards are eligible for its services. Hence, surveillance by the phantom sovereign, UNRWA, also benefits those with identity cards as they can lay claim to certain rights and services. While these services come with the label of "refugee," many covet that status as a way of ensuring survival and easier access to important services.³⁹ The registration card has become a political symbol, the only official document proving their refugee status.⁴⁰

By defining what it means to be a refugee, UNRWA has also contributed to divisions in Palestinian societies and has excluded certain groups from being part of a defined "refugee community." After the disbandment of the PLO infrastructure, these

³⁶ Farah, 81.

³⁷ Elia Zureik, "Constructing Palestine Through Surveillance Practices," *British Journal for Middle East Studies* 28, no. 2 (2001): 229.

³⁸ *UNRWA definition of a refugee*, www.unrwa.org.

³⁹ Zureik, 224.

⁴⁰ Jalal Al Hussein and Riccardo, "Dynamics of humanitarian aid, local and regional politics: Palestinians refugees as a case study," *Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, edited by Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge Studies on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 2011), 132.

Palestinians (refugees after 1948) were left in Lebanon without papers and could not gain access to services provided to registered refugees. Even though Um Said said, “When you see UNRWA, you don’t say Fatah or Hamas, but everyone who is Palestinian is part of UNRWA,” the truth is that despite its services, UNRWA has created divisions within the refugee community.

Um Said’s statement is an example of a narrative that excludes cleavages. Swedenburg in his research found that peasant fighters glossed over cleavages in their memories of the 1936-1939 revolt. They for instance did not recall inter-Palestinian fighting and denied claims that any of the rebels were thieves. For Um Said, it is important to feel that she is not different from other refugees and that she is really part of a community that is victimized but never at fault.

Administratively being a refugee is thus a marker of identity provided by UNRWA. Belonging to the UNRWA definition of refugee became even more important as refugees felt excluded from the community represented by the post-Oslo PLO. The invisibility of the camps throughout the peace process solidified the camps as UNRWA’s responsibility.⁴¹ However, this is a double-edged sword. Since UNRWA is a humanitarian organization, it can only advocate for refugees on humanitarian grounds. Thereby, the discourse of victimization is dominant and has shifted the discussion from rights to welfare and has obscured the responsibility and agency of the refugees.⁴² The label of refugee in the discourse of victimization has become an empty signifier that erases their day-to-day struggle and dictates how others view them, which affects how

⁴¹ Wadie Said, “The Obligation of Host Countries under International Law: The Case of Lebanon,” in *Palestinian Refugees, The Right of Return* edited by Naseer Aruri (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 154. Hanafi (2008), 9.

⁴² Sari Hanafi, “Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon: Laboratories of Indocile Identity Formation,” in *Manifestations of Identity: The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010), 54.

they view themselves. Through this discourse, it is almost as if refugees are performing their struggle for a sympathetic audience and not living according to their own agency.⁴³

In addition to the administrative definition of identity, UNRWA programs have also had a significant impact on refugees. Perhaps UNRWA's most controversial service is education. While UNRWA has given students like Aya the opportunity to reach university, many students blame it for their decision to abandon post-secondary education. The conditions of UNRWA schools have evolved and changed with political currents. The most controversial issue pertains to the teaching of Palestinian history, or more specifically, the lack of a history curriculum.

In the 1960s and 1970s, UNRWA schools inadvertently sparked renewed nationalism among a younger generation. The ulterior motive behind education was to create Palestinians more amenable to assimilation. Yet, it inadvertently prepared a new generation of educated youth, attracted to secular, militant, nationalist activists, to also become members of PLO activities in the camps. Education through UNRWA gave Palestinians the perception of possibilities despite the constraints of the camps. This endowed a new generation with individual choice, while the secularism of the education paved the way for a new version of Palestinian nationalism in the camps.⁴⁴ Thus, UNRWA schools helped shape a generation of secular Palestinians, whose values would differ from their parents, while also inadvertently bolstering Palestinian nationalism at the expense of subtle assimilation into Lebanese society.

However, this has not been the case since the departure of the PLO. For many Palestinians the UNRWA schools after 1982 were rife with problems and many who tried teaching there did not last very long. Some parents even chose to live outside camps to avoid sending their children to UNRWA schools. More recently, students do not consider the UNRWA schools as useful and this has led to an increased drop-out rate.

⁴³ Laleh Khalili, "The Politics of Control, Invisibility and the Spectacle," in *Manifestations of Identity: The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010), 140.

⁴⁴ Peteet, 86-88.

Furthermore, in Lebanon, the quality of education for refugees has not improved in thirty years and 60% of young adults have not completed basic primary education and the camps are plagued with lower youth literacy and higher grade repetition.⁴⁵

There are numerous reasons for the decline in the quality of education since the 1980s. UNRWA is underfunded and cannot afford to spend more on improving education. Schools are overcrowded, as are the camps, and teachers are underpaid, under motivated and transient. Schools are overcrowded because UNRWA is the only source of free education for refugees. Furthermore, students cannot easily attend schools outside the camps. This is because law 686 of 1998 stipulates free and compulsory primary education only for Lebanese students and not for all students in Lebanese territories. Lebanese students are also given priority over Palestinian students in non-UNRWA schools.⁴⁶ For these reasons, 95% of refugees attend UNRWA schools. For many refugees, their precarious legal status and increased marginalization makes them reluctant to invest in education.

Sara is another girl I met at the Burj Burjaneh camp that has quit school and is learning to be a hair dresser by attending professional development seminars through the Women Programs Association.⁴⁷ Like most of the other young girls in the program, she dressed in trendy clothes, makeup and accessories and did not look like a poor, helpless refugee depicted in traditional historiography or in UNRWA brochures. When I asked her why she decided to leave school, she answered casually, as if it were not a serious matter, “There is nothing there, we don’t like school, there aren’t any good teachers and none of them even have any degrees.”

⁴⁵ John Hanseen-Bauer and Laurie Blome Jacobsen, “Living in provisional normality: the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in the host countries of the Middle East,” in *Palestinian Refugees, Challenges or Repatriation and Development*, edited by Rex Brynen and Roula El-Rifai (New York and Ottawa: IB Tauris and the International Development Research Centre, 2007), 39.

⁴⁶ Berhnhard Hillenkamp, “Briefing Note: The Challenges of Palestinian Education,” *Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee*, <http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/getattachment/a567436b-58a7-4ba7-9e10>

⁴⁷ Sara, interviewed by author, Burj Barajneh Camp, Lebanon, October 19, 2011.

From the sound in her voice and the silent acquiescence from her colleagues, it was clear that they felt rejected by the organization designed to support them. The girls felt that if the teacher's did not want to be there, then neither did they. Her comments were supported by teachers who had worked at UNRWA. Yassir, before founding the NGO *Howiyya*, spent three years teaching at the UNRWA schools. After two years, he became disillusioned and decided that he could not work there any longer:

It was my first teaching experience and because I had never gone to UNRWA schools, since I attended Lebanese schools, I had no idea what to expect. So from the first day it was an extreme shock, I felt that there was no way I could teach. So I went back to school and studied teaching, and I did my practicum at the American Community School [an elite private school]. So in the morning I would teach at UNRWA and then I would go to ACS and it was an extreme contradiction, from the way the bell rings to how the students enter class. After 2 years I felt that I could no longer work there, it was impossible to teach there, everything was getting worse day by the day. The first year I taught there I was optimistic and wanted to make a difference. So in the first year when a child broke his leg I would go after class to help him, or I would go play soccer with the students.

There are some cases of students that are very smart or parents that really want to teach their kids, but they have to go into such an atmosphere and they don't continue. After three years I felt I could not continue and had to leave even before securing a new job. The conditions are horrible. When I was teaching, there were 44 teachers in the Burj Barajneh Camp but none had received their degree past 1982, so it was only old teachers. Education is getting worse, you see students that can't read or write.⁴⁸

Yasmine also spent two years working as a teacher there and her experiences were similar to Yassir's:

We, the newer generation (of teachers) were more idealistic and cared more, but the older teachers, they did not really care. For them, those who want to learn can learn, those who don't want to, don't. I left because I couldn't handle it. It really varies from camp to camp, the Burj Barejneh camp had better education, but in Mar Elias it was worse, I had to reteach the ABCS to 6th graders. I would ask the parents to come so we could discuss the child and his dad would beat

⁴⁸ Interview with Yassir, *ibid.*,

him in front of everyone and they would go home. Some parents never really cared about education. The kids are confused, you tell them that studying is important, and he answers: my mom wants me to work after school, not study. But you tell him studying is more important and he doesn't know what to do: Do I study or do I leave?⁴⁹

UNRWA also directly affects the formation of Palestinian identities and the transmission of a certain narrative by not incorporating Palestinian history into its curriculum. This is an important issue that further expresses UNRWA's links to the sovereign as all UNRWA schools use the host country's curriculum.⁵⁰ The logic behind this is that by following the host country curriculum, UNRWA students will be able to pass the host country's official exams and have equal access to the post-secondary institutions. However, this also means that students are subjected to the host country's history at the expense of their own. Therefore, children do not learn about their history and instead form identities based on information acquired through television or hearsay. This is detrimental as it prevents children from learning about their past in a way that can counter the negative identities associated with being a refugee. While many of my narrators such as Salah, Walaa and Aya said that their grandparents were instrumental in teaching them about Palestine, they said it was mostly in the form of anecdotes and memories. Yassir expressed his outrage in our meeting and linked the issues to corruption in the Lebanese branch of the organization, "UNRWA teaches the Lebanese curriculum and their excuse for not teaching history is that they are following the Lebanese curriculum but this makes no sense, it was taught in the early 70s and in other UNRWA schools in the Middle East they don't care as much, so why do we? Why do we have to be different?"

In the 1970s, at the risk of losing their jobs, teachers countered curriculum restrictions by secretly incorporating Palestinian history and geography lessons into their lessons. Since the 1990s, civil society groups have attacked UNRWA's educational

⁴⁹ Interview with Yasmine, ibid.

⁵⁰ UNRWA, "Educational Resources," <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=250>

shortcomings and have tried to rectify those issues. The lack of history courses has strengthened the argument that UNRWA does not serve the refugee's best interests, but serves the Lebanese government and its funders. Moataz Dajani, director of the NGO Al-Jana complained that UNRWA refused to use educational materials and resources compiled by his organization:

UNRWA refuses to use this pack in schools, why? There is something called Peace Studies, but they don't have a history course. But Palestinian history is not seen as important; they wanted to include a class on the holocaust but not the Palestinian holocaust. Ask them! I don't know! It's because the donors are those who force the agenda, be they Americans, Canadians or Australians so UNRWA is trying to squelch our history.⁵¹

Such complaints are not only made on the basis of education, in fact many of UNRWA's programs are believed to be dictated by funders and by the Lebanese government. For instance, UNRWA has attempted to implement projects to integrate refugees into the host society by making them self-sufficient. It implemented programs to give refugees employment opportunities like small scale public works including building terraces and road construction. It also attempted to help refugees lead a normal life by integrating them into the urban social fabric through sporting events, public lectures, youth and women centers and leisure events such as film projections.⁵² However, lack of funding and hostility from the host country has hindered such programs by insisting that UNRWA focus solely on relief efforts.

From these interviews it is clear that UNRWA's agenda is questioned and criticized. Unlike Um Said, the younger generations and the more educated refugees are critical of the negative impact the organization has on identity formation. They also blame a large portion of the despair felt by youth on the inadequate UNRWA education. Here again there is a duality between the positive and the negative roles played by UNRWA and by using these stories we can better see how the struggle is understood by

⁵¹ Moataz Dajani, interviewed by author, Al-Jana offices, Beirut, Lebanon, October 5, 2011.

⁵² Jalal Al Hussein, "UNRWA and the Refugees: A difficult but Lasting Marriage," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no.1 (2010):9, 11.

different Palestinians. While corruption and favoritism are acknowledged, everyone agreed that removing UNRWA would be detrimental as it would increase the financial burden on refugees. Yassir even worried about what would happen to UNRWA if Palestinians were admitted as a permanent member of the United Nations, fearing that, without UNRWA, refugees would be completely forgotten.

4.3. Palestinians and Local organizations: Civil Society and the Construction of Identities

UNRWA has been a constant fixture of the Palestinian experience in Lebanon since it became operational in 1950. While it provides necessary services, its mandate prevents it from engaging with more political issues such as identity and memory. The PLO filled that void during its years in Lebanon and to some extent it continued to be the political compass of Palestinians in exile until the Oslo Accords. The political void was not left vacant for very long and in the 1990s Lebanon experienced what Sharif referred to as “the invasion of the NGOs.” The non-governmental organizations (NGO) did not seek to compete with UNRWA, instead they sought to provide services they deemed lacking: empowerment, politicization and the protection and transmission of memory.

There were very few grassroots movements before 1982. But in aftermath of the civil war, local initiatives departed from the abstract home propagated by the PLO and raised local elements that official narratives tried to erase.⁵³ These new narratives of identity were intended to challenge the marginalization of Palestinians in Lebanon and to compliment larger narratives of Palestinian history and identity. The Palestinian leadership moved from exile to Occupied Palestine after Oslo and Palestinians in Lebanon were left without any political representation. Civil society felt the pressure of

⁵³ Khalili (2004),7.

the oppressive official narratives and sought to fill the void by promoting programs aimed at reconstructing more democratic and inclusive narratives of Palestinian identity.⁵⁴

While Palestinian non-profits are engaged with questions of identity and history, they also struggle with their own institutional legal and social identity as Palestinians in Lebanon are not granted the right to form autonomous associations.⁵⁵ This obstacle is overcome by creating general assemblies formed of Lebanese, while Palestinian activists effectively control the executive bodies.⁵⁶ The ambiguous legal and political identity of the non-profits is yet another aspect that blurs the meaning of being Palestinian in Lebanon and simultaneously excludes and entangles Palestinians in Lebanese society.

For this thesis I met with representatives of four non-profits serving the refugee community: Al-Jana- Arab Resource Centre for the Popular Arts, AIDUN-Lebanon group, Women Program Association (WPA) and Howiyya. I will use this next section to provide some background on these four organizations before exploring how they are actively shaping Palestinian identities in Lebanon.

Al-Jana is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1990. It was established with the intent of improving refugee standards of living through promoting active learning and creative expression among Palestinian refugees. Al-Jana works to preserve Palestinian memory, culture and folklore and uses the resources it produces for active learning. It also encourages youth to express their concerns and learn about their past by producing movies, films and oral history projects. Aidoun is a collective of independent scholars and activists who educate Palestinians about the right to return. Aidoun is more politically engaged than Al-Jana as it is part of the boycott Israel international campaign (BDS) and is part of a Lebanese campaign to improve the rights of refugees in Lebanon.

⁵⁴ Knudsen and Hanafi (2011).

⁵⁵ Jaber Suleiman, "Palestinians in Lebanon and the role of Non-Governmental Organizations," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no.3 (1997):401.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Howiyya is interested in matters of identity and preserving the past similar to Al-Jana. Howiyya considers itself a national project to protect the roots of all Palestinian families. It hopes to create family trees representing every family that left Palestine. The staff members visit families in refugee camps and collect oral histories and testimonies and then try to verify the information. The information is then posted to their website and any individual can make additions to the trees. In so doing, Howiyya engages the wider Palestinian community in its effort to record history. The Women Program Association (WPA) differs from the three other organizations because it is less interested in preserving the past or in disseminating history. It was founded in Burj Barajneh in 1992 with the support of UNRWA. The association focuses on strengthening the role of women and raising awareness about social, legal and health matters. WPA tries to improve the economic conditions of female refugees by teaching them skills like hair dressing. In 2008, the organization was officially registered as a non-profit in Lebanon. It now has nine centers in different refugee camps.

These four organizations represent examples of how civil society is working to strengthen the refugee community in Lebanon, especially through empowering newer generation of refugees. Moataz Dajjani's (Al-Jana) account of a project aimed at teaching the history of 1948 shows how a misguided knowledge of history affects young refugees. Organizations like Al-Jana believe that the fact the children are learning less from their parents is detrimental, especially since they view the past as the means to preserve the threatened Palestinian identity.⁵⁷ Al-Jana, in cooperation with other organizations, prepared for six months, gathering a substantial amount of oral histories and pictures from 1948. They then took a group of children to a nearby forest to conduct an exercise designed to engage the children with the events of 1948:

When we got to the forest I told the children I was Moataz Dajani from Jerusalem and asked, "Where are you from?" They started telling me

⁵⁷ Rima Afif and Maya Shareef, "How do Palestinian Youth in the Diaspora Self Identify: The Case of Burj-EI Barajneh Refugee Camp," in *Manifestations of Identity: The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees, in Lebanon*, edited by Muhammad Ali Khalidi (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2010), 36.

names of villages and I said, "Aren't those in the north of Palestine?" They said yes, I asked them, "So what are you doing here?" They said "There was a war." I asked them what happened in the war, the kids were around ten years old, one said, "The Israelis threw an atomic bomb on us." They all agreed with him. I asked, "Didn't the people fight?" They stood up proudly and said, "Of course we fought! We fought with rocks!" Every time we do this scenario, the children make up stories, this means that memory is not reaching these children. The TV is playing a bigger role in the minds of these children, so for them 1948 is Hiroshima added to the intifada. The whole time they were making up answers for what happened to the people, how they lived and how they arrived in Lebanon.⁵⁸

Al-Jana's primary focus is to use history to strengthen Palestinian identity in Lebanon. However, it is concerned with avoiding a top-down approach and its main goal is to provide youth with the tools to critically engage with their history and to provide the space for creative expression. Mr. Dajani emphasized that the organization was not deciding the questions to explore, but that in all the projects, be they oral history projects, film making or photography, the children were given the freedom to explore the topics of their choice. From the activities, it was apparent that the children were searching for answers to understand their situation in Lebanon. While some were concerned with understanding the history of 1948, others were more concerned with the events of the civil war and with the events of 1982, but at heart they were posing the same questions:

Most of them were concerned with life issues, what the playgrounds are like, graffiti in the camps, celebrations in the camps and they even worked on a sensitive idea that we hadn't even thought of. They worked on the issues of elders in the camps left behind because their grandchildren immigrate and then send for their parents but leave their grandparents behind. They interviewed war veterans; idle youth, asked about the wars in Lebanon. Mohammad for instance wanted to know how his friends died at the end of the War of the Camps, so he started asking his parents about the War of the Camps and asking them about how they defended the camps. In the same year we took questions about 1948 from the third generations, the questions were very smart and incriminatory; like they found out they still had relatives in 1948 Palestinian, so they started asking their parents,

⁵⁸ Interview with Moataz Dajjani, *ibid.*

Why did you leave? Why did you sell the land?" It is like they are looking for someone to blame for being a refugee.

From these oral accounts we can interpret that newer generations of Palestinians are not content with their inherited history and identity. They are struggling to understand their past in a way that makes sense to them. They are looking for answers to why their identity is stigmatized and marginalized. They need these answers and a proper understanding of the past to shape their own positive identities as individuals and as Palestinians.

Palestinian non-profits are using past accomplishments to frame present experiences. In the process, they serve as agents for a socially constructed history that redefines that past in ways that can have utility for the present.⁵⁹ Al-Jana is very interested in preserving the past and in creating resources to compensate for the lack of a history curriculum in UNRWA schools:

We collected questions in an oral history campaign and we turned them into a printed collection with a DVD and audio CD, and this resource is an active learning pack. It has 20 testimonies that the official history has not answered, like the selling of lands. For example, we have a testimony from a land broker who used to sell Palestinian land to Israeli soldiers. Each narrative is verbatim and in Palestinian dialect and then there are activities for further research and to encourage children to express themselves in different means. We really wanted to keep everything in Palestinian dialect. We also have testimonies from an Arab Jew, testimonies about the role of women in 1948, and testimonies of children from 1948, like how they remember trivial things like going to back to school one day, or a soldier killing his dog. We recorded a lot of folklore songs, and in it we see that they are asking why their country has forsaken them.

Howiyya is also interested in preserving Palestinian history. Howiyya's main initiative is to create family trees that trace their origins back to the first member that left Palestine in 1948. Yasir Kaddoura, one of the founders explains:

⁵⁹ Barry Schwartz, Yael Zerubavel, Bernice M. Barnett, George Steiner, "The Recovery of Masada: A Study in Collective Memory," *The Sociological Quarterly* 27, no.2 (1986):150.

Our goal is to extend history and memory to more than what the individual remembers; we want to record every story, how life was there. We record it verbatim so that the second and third and fourth generations will still remember the same stories and then we would have strengthened collective memory. It's different than me telling the story or him hearing the stories or reading them. It's more active than just hearing it from their fathers. We are trying to find pictures of everyone that left Palestine so we can make arguments armed with the number of people that left, collecting everything about them. We want to be able to draw connections between the older generations and the newer generations and to bring Palestinians together.⁶⁰

The work of these organizations and the accounts of Moataz and Yassir show that the notion of a collective Palestinian identity in Lebanon is in trouble and that newer generations are moving away from the collective and are trying to forge their own paths. Organizations like Al-Jana and Howiyya are seeking to revitalize collective memory and to reengage a disenfranchised population with their history in hopes of preserving Palestinian identity.

Howiyya and Al-Jana are concerned with providing sources that youth can use to develop their identities. Their role is important and Jaber Suleiman from Aidoun accounts to that:

UNRWA doesn't teach them anything, there is no history in the Lebanese curriculum that they use, just a small section on Sykes Picot. So how are children supposed to learn about their identity and the sources of their identity? The home and organizations are important, and organizations are working on that. TV and internet are sources that affect how they feel as Palestinian. They have a negative understanding of their identity, how they understand their identity is through marginalization: I am not this I am not that, so they will ask, who am I?

Al-Jana and Howiyya are trying to counter the marginality imposed on refugees and the negative identity associated with being a refugee. Aidoun and Women Programs Association are examples of organizations that are not only focusing on issues of identity. Aidoun is working in cooperation with many Lebanese and foreign organizations

⁶⁰ Kaddoura, *ibid.*

as well as politicians to secure the right to work and the right to own property. Also, its youth oriented projects are centered on mobilizing refugees to care about their community, such as motivating them to become part of the decision-making process in the camps, to keep the camps clean and to volunteer with organizations. Through these projects, Aidoun hopes to foster a sense of belonging among young refugees. Mariam Shaar from the Women Program Association believes that her work is challenging the notion of refugees as victims, “It’s this country that is turning them into a victim, and then they turn around and ask why they are living in these conditions. We need to give them tools to develop their future.”⁶¹

The non-profits in the camps also affect Palestinian identity by attempting to remove social boundaries between Lebanese and Palestinian and by eliminating the notion of the other. Mariam Shaar, for instance, tries to accomplish this by accepting Lebanese interns studying social work and by taking refugees participating in its programs on trips outside the camps. The oral histories show that these attempts to integrate are new and Mariam explained that this is important because growing up she felt isolated from the Lebanese community, but now with internet and TV refugees are more aware of their marginalization. They are also more eager to escape the harsh conditions in the camps by participating in Lebanese society. She told me a story of four Lebanese interns assigned to the camps and while she tried to sound casual, it was clear that the incident had upset her:

We received four interns and it was a problem because they were assigned to the camps but did not want to enter. They said it was because their parents didn’t let them enter the camps and I wasn’t going to push it, at the end they needed it more than us, this is great practical experience for them. After two weeks they realized their whole image was wrong. A bad image is something we deal with all the time.

Working outside the camps, Al-Jana is able to decrease “othering” by opening its door to Lebanese. Moataz explained that Al-Jana’s mission was to work with all

⁶¹ Mariam Shaar, interviewed by author, Burj Barajneh Camp, Lebanon, October 19, 2011.

marginalized communities and not just with Palestinians. There are many marginalized and poor Lebanese using their services and working with Palestinians on projects such as recording rap songs. Every two years, Al-Jana organizes a movie festival showcasing movies created by marginalized youth around the world called, "Youth on the Margin Create their World." By participating in these activities, young Palestinians begin to realize that they are not different from many Lebanese; it encourages them to integrate into the community and to stop internalizing the identity of a victim.

While on paper it appears that these organizations are successful, they also face many challenges. Oral accounts given by the directors of these groups and by the recipients of their services are important to understand the true impact civil society on identity. Despite their eagerness and their belief in their work, Moataz and Yassir still question the result of their efforts and are unsettled by the attitude of young refugees. In response to my query as to whether the children maintained this curiosity after participating in the activities of the organizations, they seemed doubtful. Moataz elaborated on his experience with the children as they got older:

When they get older they become more cynical and sarcastic and they are more concerned with social affairs like how they can immigrate. What hope? They have no money, no scholarships, all the money goes to the Abou Mazen and Fatah crowd, and they start thinking why should we study, there is no motivation to study, so they drop out of school early and try to find work. They work one days yes, ten no. They spend it on *argile* [hookah] and drugs. It's very, very tough. We work with these kids and unless their parents are aware and willing to invest, they might just end up like the apathetic youth we see now.

The biggest problem we see with parents is that they changed all their perceptions of the cause after Oslo. After Oslo, people lost hope and started asking, what's the point? So when we were working on our project, people first wondered about the point behind this type of work. After Oslo they felt that all their sacrifices went to create a nation in Palestine at their expense and they won't be able to go back, so their reaction was something like why force the burden of a failed

cause without hope on the coming generations, why not leave them to assimilate, leave them to live,⁶²

In my conversation with Yassir Kaddoura, I asked him if adolescent Palestinians were engaging with the memories and stories he had collected and if such work had a lasting impact on their identities:

They feel helpless, they won't even volunteer. It is impossible to encourage them to volunteer, like we tell them we want to do this or that project and we need your effort or some money and they start complaining. They say well this is only going to benefit this and that person. All these pressures are making them feel like they have no hope and that there is no solution. In the end, the youth are forming the idea that they need to leave.

These organizations are also unintentionally creating more of a divide between Palestinians inside the camps and those outside. Very few of the Palestinians I spoke with from outside the camps even knew that organizations like Al-Jana existed, nor had they seen any advertisements for their activities. By concentrating their efforts inside the camps, it means that Palestinians outside the camps are not benefiting from these efforts to influence critically thinking about Palestinian identity and history. In my meetings with Bilal I mentioned Al-Jana because his son was the same age as the other refugees participating in the organization's activities and because it is a five minute walk from his work outside the Arab university. But, it turns out he was not aware of it. His first instinct was to ask: Who are they affiliated with, Hamas? Fatah?⁶³ When his initial defensive reactions subdued, he started asking me about their activities and how his son could join. He then hesitated and said that he did not want his son involved in such groups as they had to be connected to someone and he wanted his children to be part of Lebanese society. His response shows the difficulty of choice for refugees in Lebanon. Although he thought he had made the best decision for his family, he could not help but

⁶² Dajjani, *ibid.*

⁶³ Interview with Bilal, *ibid.*

wonder if perhaps his children would benefit more from being part of the Palestinian community found in camps.

This chapter has explored the multiple and ever changing actors trying to influence Palestinian identities in Lebanon. UNRWA, the PLO and the multitude of organizations disseminate different interpretations of what it means to be Palestinian and compete against each other to decide which history needs to be preserved and how it should be preserved. Their efforts are intended to counter the political void, the stigma attached to being a refugee in Lebanon and the marginalization that the Palestinians in Lebanon experience. Furthermore, the organizations are struggling to propagate a common identity, because as Jaber Suleiman emphasized in our meeting, there are multiple identities in Lebanon, informed by individual experiences and circumstances. Thus, although Palestinians living outside the camps may suffer less from financial problems, they are still excluded from the benefits associated with the label of being a refugee, such as access to UNRWA health and education services.⁶⁴

My narrators agreed that, since Oslo, refugees in exile have been sidelined and that local organizations are growing in importance as international organizations are more interested in the conditions of occupied Palestine. The experiences of refugees in exile have been ignored and refugees outside occupied Palestine have not had a voice in the political process.⁶⁵ It is important for historians to focus on refugees in exile and on how they use history to shape their present circumstances because without doing so, we cannot form a complete understanding of the refugee experience in Lebanon.

⁶⁴ Hanssen-Bauer and Blome Jacobsen, 33.

⁶⁵ Farah,25.

5. The Moral Economy of Refugees

The previous chapters have examined how space, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the United Nations Relief Works Organization (UNRWA) and local organizations have contributed to multiple narratives of what it means to be a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon. In so doing, the chapters have deconstructed the monolithic concept of a refugee and have exposed cleavages in the narrative of a collective Palestinian identity, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the narrative of refugees in Lebanon. This chapter explores another cleavage that dispels the myth of a monolithic, static Palestinian identity; it examines differences in socio-economic status and explores how the moral economy of refugees affects identity. In this chapter, I borrow E.P Thompson's notion of moral economy as "a real historical factor, consisting of the complex set of attitudes and norms present within this historically articulated social group" of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.¹ In his article, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," E.P Thompson shows that the actions of a group cannot be explained solely as a reaction to difficult economic conditions. Instead, scholars need to examine how the core values and belief of a community also affect behaviour.

In this chapter, I argue that the term refugee has taken on connotations of class, with camp-based refugees more affected by the connotations of poverty associated with the term. For some, enduring poverty and sense of sacrifice strengthens their national pride and their commitment to the Palestinian political struggle. For others, it causes them to resent their past and their identity. Furthermore, I contend that differences in

¹ E.P Thomson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, no. 50 (1971), 125.

socio-economic status affect how refugees relate to the past and whether they continue to fight for the cause.

5.1. Tensions in Identities: Camp Dwellers and Urban Refugees:

As the historical background of this thesis explained, not all refugees settled in camps upon their arrival in Lebanon. Despite that, unless they were naturalized, they are nonetheless refugees, either registered with United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) or with the Lebanese state. Discrimination against Palestinians along class lines emerged as early as 1948. From the outset, the distinction was predicated on the urban/rural divide. More than half of the refugees who sought shelter in the camps were rural Palestinians. On the other hand, the urban, middle class Palestinians were partially integrated into towns and centres.² The urban/rural and class barriers also intersected with sectarian differences and with Lebanese politics. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Christian Palestinians, around twenty-percent of refugees, were given special attention, and most, if not all, were naturalized between 1950 and 1960 because of Lebanese demographic and political considerations.

In 1948, the camps were a collection of makeshift tents; it was not until UNRWA truly began its work in the early 1950s that residents experienced a higher quality of life. Even then, camp dwellers experienced oppression, harsh living conditions and crowded spaces. The urban middle class and those with family or business connections among middle and upper class Lebanese had a different experience. Many businessmen and qualified professionals were quickly integrated into Lebanon's middle class and were able to settle into lives similar to those they had in Palestine before the *Nakba*.³

² Shiblak, 262.

³ Shiblak, 263.

The official narrative disseminated by the PLO did not acknowledge these cleavages. It underwrote the existence and reproduction of class structures in exile and by basing the resistance in the camps, the PLO also masked the real dominance of the urban middle class over camp-based refugees.⁴ As a result of such narratives, many camp dwellers refused to acknowledge the differences between them and their city-based counterparts. For instance, Um Said said there were no differences between her and Palestinians who lived outside the camp, that they were all the same and had to suffer the same loss and experience the same sacrifice. Aya said the only difference was that camp refugees were less wealthy but she still felt that they were all the same.⁵ Furthermore, not a single narrator broached the subject of the naturalization of the Christian and Shiite Palestinians. Those who hinted at the subject blamed the Lebanese government for showing favoritism towards those groups and did not assign any blame to fellow Palestinians. Yet, this chapter exposes those cleavages and shows that socio-economic status was and still is a divisive factor within the refugee community.

The socio-economic divide is also reflected in education. There is a clear class difference between refugees in the camps who rely on the schools UNRWA schools and those who study in Lebanese schools. Yasmine, for instance, makes the assumption based on her years as an UNRWA teacher that parents inside the camps do not care about education. She thinks that they do not believe that an education will advance their children's future as they are forbidden from entering most professions. Instead, Yasmine believes that they are more concerned with helping their children find employment from an early age. In a manner that emphasized the perceived class distinctions, she proceeded to praise how her father valued education, and said that without a country and without anyone's protection, all they had was education. Many other parents I spoke with took pride in being able to afford tuition at Lebanese schools, like Bilal or like Abed's father, the neighborhood butcher. Yet, Rosemary Sayigh argues that despite glossing

⁴ Sayigh (2008), 248.

⁵ Interview with Aya, *ibid.*
Interview with Um Said, *ibid.*

over grievances, camp-based refugees are aware of the gap between themselves and those that have prospered in Lebanon, the Gulf and Jordan.⁶

This class consciousness that makes camp-based refugees aware of their relative poverty complicates the concept of a refugee identity. Perhaps as a defense against the negative identities associated with being poor, camp-based refugees have adopted the narrative that reliance on UNRWA is the true embodiment of a Palestinian refugee. Many refugees cling to UNRWA as a symbol of pride, asserting that as camp-based refugees they have not forsaken the cause and that they are more Palestinian than wealthier refugees who prospered outside the camps and outside of Lebanon. To some extent, this class divide has manifested in a competition of who is more Palestinian, with camp-based refugees striving to claim the title.

This notion of a competition to prove “Palestinianess” and loyalty to the cause seems to have had a stronger effect on non-camp based narrators. At varying points in their lives, these narrators felt that they had to apologize for their relatively better living conditions and that they have had to constantly defend their “Palestinianess.” Hana related how she resented this struggle to be more Palestinian or to be an authentic Palestinian. She has personally reached the point where she has stopped trying to prove that she is Palestinian to others. When I broached the subject with her, it was as if her previous struggle of having to define her identity as a Palestinian resurfaced and she sounded exasperated as we continued our conversation:

Sometimes I feel judged. It is as if the “degree of Palestinianess” is the degree of harshness you live in. Living in camp is more Palestinian. I decided against this a long time ago. Ok, fine, I lived in a camp for a bit, my parents did and I have family that still does, but why do we have to measure it? You are as Palestinian as you feel, yeah there are degrees, but you decide it, that’s not for others to decide. Being in your zone, the camp, does it represent Palestine? I don’t know, I don’t know if I feel that there is that moral value of a camp as a place of

⁶ Rosemary Sayigh, “From Peasant to Revolutionaries, A Quarter Century ,” in *Temps et Espace en Palestine*, edited by Roger Heacock (Beirut: Institut Francais du Proche Orient, 2008), 240, 250.

refuge and a piece of Palestine outside Palestine. As a narrative, maybe if you take away camp you take away the cause, but I don't know if I buy into those narratives.⁷

This was an issue that clearly bothered Hana because she has been active in the Palestinian cause since she was a child and in her current position she implements projects to improve living conditions and governance mechanisms in camps. This creates a hierarchy amongst refugees as camp refugees are aware that wealthier Palestinians like Hana view their life in the camp as a humanitarian problem that needs to be resolved. Such a hierarchy is also perpetuated by UNRWA as the majority of its local staff members are Palestinians.⁸ By hiring mostly Palestinians it has blurred the lines between refugee and aid workers and has to some extent altered social demographics in the camp. Refugees employed by UNRWA are better off than almost any other employed, camp-based refugees. While this is positive in that it has improved the lives of many Palestinians, it has complicated the image of the refugee dependent on UNRWA rations, by creating a situation in which some refugees administer UNRWA services to less fortunate counterparts.

Yasmine's view on this subject deviated from Hana's and she seemed to believe that refugees who suffered had more of a claim to the cause. She takes this a step further by implying that Palestinians who did not leave Palestine in 1948 had more of a claim to the land. She also spoke about distinctions within her family. She recognizes that while her grandparents had to leave Palestine in 1948, she and her siblings have decided to pursue a comfortable life instead of being activists. Yasmine, contradicting some of the statements she made earlier, believes that they have forsaken Palestine and as such do not have the right of return:

We were born abroad and lived abroad, what would we do if we went back? They stayed and they are fighting for their land. They deserve it, not us. Here abroad we are just trying to live. I love it and it means a

⁷ Interview with Hana, *ibid.*

⁸ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Julian Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of the Homeland* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 39.

lot to me, but it's not my land, someone has built a house on my grandma's land, so who am I to tell him to leave when he stayed and fought?⁹

Yasmine's response shows the nuances in identity that many other Palestinians experience and shows that matters of belonging are never black and white but are different shades of grey. While making the point that Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Israel have more claims to the land and perhaps more of a right to call themselves Palestinian, she was also trying to prove that she has never forsaken the cause. She constantly stressed that she is active in supporting Palestinian rights in Lebanon, that she previously took part in many protests and that even though she is trying to acquire the Lebanese nationality, she is still passionately Palestinian at heart.

Some refugees outside Lebanon also consider the camp a bastion of nationalism and the embodiment of the Palestinian cause. For instance, I met a Palestinian refugee from Syria who believed that the poor living conditions of the camp and the sacrifice entailed in living there were clear embodiments of their struggle and that living in such conditions was the only way to sustain the Palestinian cause. I met Imad at the headquarters of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in the Mar Elias camp during my meeting with Nawar. Imad told me that he was Palestinian from Syria and when I asked him what he was doing in Lebanon he answered proudly and without hesitation:

I am here to fight for the cause. In Syria everything is provided for us, people have forgotten the true meaning of the cause and what it means to be Palestinian. But in Lebanon and in the refugee camps, the cause lives on as people continue to struggle and sacrifice for Palestine. I want to become a lawyer and defend Palestinian rights. Right now Lebanon is the place where the struggle for a Palestinian nation continues.¹⁰

⁹ Yasmine, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Imad, interviewed by author, DFLP offices, Mar Elias Camp, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

Imad believed that the camps were still the only political platform for refugees and he believed that those more fortunate refugees outside the camps had forsaken the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, Hana would disagree with him: to Hana and to many others, these distinctions do not imply that one is more Palestinian than the other. Instead, Palestinians, like other refugees, have had their identities challenged and have had to accommodate the dramatic changes experienced through their history. Camp-based refugees are not simply reacting to economic stimuli by detaching from or attaching themselves to the larger Palestinian struggle. E.P Thompson argues that individuals in the crowd are informed by the belief that they are defending traditional rights and customs and that they are supported by a wider consensus.¹¹ Similarly, refugees in camps are informed by the narratives promulgated by the PLO and by values transmitted from other refugees in addition to reacting to their economic environment.

However, in the case of Lebanon the differences between camp and urban dwellers are not as easily demarcated as the above analysis might suggest. Some of the camps have become part of the cities that surround them, do not have checkpoints and are economically connected to the neighboring areas through markets and shops.¹² For instance, the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp was a haven for commerce and trade in the north.¹³ This only changed in 2007 when fighting inside the refugee camp between the Islamist group Fatah el-Islam and the Lebanese army led to checkpoints and increased security measures.

The Mar Elias camp for instance can be characterized as a suburb of Beirut as it is a dense urban area with tall buildings and its economy is interconnected with neighborhoods in its vicinity. Furthermore, the urban/camp distinction is blurred because even though camp dwellers are marginalized, the residents are still part of the urban

¹¹ Thompson, 78.

¹² Mohamed Kamel Dorai, "Palestinian Refugees in camps in Lebanon: Migration, Mobility and the Urbanization Process," in *Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, edited by Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge Studies on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 2011),67.

¹³ Ramadan, 154.

settings that host them when they leave to work, to school or to shop and socialize.¹⁴ This integration into the fabric of society weakens the claim that camps are the sole bastions of Palestinian nationalism in exile. For that reason, a large sector of the camp and urban dwellers in Lebanon share converging perspectives regarding matters of identity.

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war and the beginning of wars in Iraq and Sudan, the camps in Beirut have become homes to non-Palestinian refugees and migrant workers. This is another important aspect of the refugee camp that challenges the image of camps as the sanctuary of Palestinians, while also reinforcing the class stigma associated with being a refugee. While this phenomenon has mostly only occurred in camps in Beirut because of their proximity to urban centers and employment opportunities, it nevertheless emphasizes that the term 'refugee' can also be indicative of a certain labor or migrant class, exacerbating rifts between the Palestinian communities in Lebanon. The integration of non-Palestinian refugees and migrant workers into the camps as well as how this has affected the character of the camps has not been studied by many scholars. Mohammad Kamel Dorai is one of the few scholars to have studied this situation in depth and I base my arguments in this section on his research.

According to Dorai, the camps in Beirut since 1990 have become a hub for illegal immigrants, low income migrant workers, asylum seekers, unrecognized refugees and domestic workers. Some settle there permanently but others are in transit until they can secure resettlement in Europe or North America. These non-Palestinian residents come from a variety of different backgrounds including Armenians, Kurds, Syrians, Sudanese and Iraqis. This group also includes domestic workers, in Lebanon both legally and illegally, from Egypt, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.¹⁵

¹⁴ Dorai, 69, 70, 74.

¹⁵ Dorai, 78, 68. Dorai, (2010), 84.

These groups are attracted to the camps for numerous reasons. The camps in Beirut, more specifically Mar Elias, are heavily connected to urban areas that require day laborers. The Mar Elias camp is very close to the Beirut transportation hub, with cheap access to the South, the North and the West. This means that by living there, they are mobile enough to pursue employment opportunities in and outside Beirut. Furthermore, police do not enter the camps, so it is less likely that illegal immigrants will be discovered. Rent is also cheaper and camps are bustling with economic activities such as grocery stores and restaurants that attract migrant workers as well as Lebanese families from surrounding neighborhoods.¹⁶

Some of my narrators alluded to this “pollution” of the refugee camps by migrant workers.¹⁷ Mahmoud lives in the Mar Elias camp and I asked him if he thought that the camps still embodied the Palestinian community in Lebanon, he responded, “In a way, but not much. Maybe some camps, but here in Beirut we do not feel it. We come and go inside and outside the camp. Some of us move out because we find a better home but also many workers, the Syrians, the Kurds, the Iraqis, they all want to live here because it is cheaper.”¹⁸

Bilal broached the subject on his own while we were standing by his coffee truck. He was using the infiltration of foreigners into the camps to convince himself that he has made the right choice by living and working outside the camps, “I hear from my friends that life in the camp is not good. It is not just a Palestinian community, the myth of that is gone: Indian, Bangladeshi, Syrian, everyone lives there. Me, as a Palestinian, I’d rather live alone to provide for my family.”¹⁹

Although Bilal lives outside the camps, he is not much wealthier than many camp-based refugees. Yet, he does not share the same ideological views regarding the

¹⁶ Dorai, (2010), 74.

¹⁷ This sentiment was expressed by at least 3 of non-camp resident narrators and 2 of the camp based narrators.

¹⁸ Mahmoud Zariff, interviewed by author, Mar Elias Camp, Lebanon, November 2, 2011.

¹⁹ Interview with Bilal, *ibid*.

camps as refugees that actually reside in them. This implies that economic considerations are not the only factors affecting identities as refugees. While the socio-economic contexts in which refugees operate is essential to understanding cleavages among narratives of identities, the remainder of this chapter will examine how shared norms and values among the different communities shapes their perception of identity, of their past and of their current situation in Lebanon.

5.2. Social Class and Ideology: To Preserve or to Forsake the Cause

The Palestinian narrative of the 1960s depicts Palestinians fighting for the cause and adhering strongly to both the principle of the right to return and the desire to return. Whether a refugee decides to fight for the cause or to reject the political aspects of “Palestinianism” depends on the experiences of the individual and on the ability of the community to mobilize its constituents in the name of a common cause. This chapter finds that Palestinians are more likely to identify with, internalize and actively engage with the Palestinian nationalist cause if they are economically stable, if they strongly identify with the group consciousness of being Palestinian, or if there is a history of political and social activism in their family. The same logic, I argue, can explain why the local organizations discussed in the previous chapter chose to focus on memory and history or relief and empowerment.

The Al-Jana and Howiyya are organizations interested in preserving Palestinian memory and history and in educating youths about their past. Both organizations hope to turn young refugee into active participants in the preservation of Palestinian memories. The directors of the two organizations are well educated and are economically stable and secure. They both studied abroad, have second nationalities and come from families who have traditionally been politically active. Their similar educational background and experiences abroad have given them a perspective on identity, nationalism and on the situation of refugees in Lebanon that is not as present among poorer, camp-based refugees. Furthermore, as a result of their somewhat shared experiences they have developed norms and values such as the importance of preserving the past and

transmitting it to younger generations that differ from the values of some camp-based refugees.

The Women Programs Association on the other hand focuses exclusively on economic and social empowerment. Its core program is designed to provide professional skills to idle girls. More specifically, it teaches them how to be hairdressers and beauticians, two professions that will likely employ the girls even if they cannot acquire work permits. Their programs also focus on teaching parents about important issues such as parenting and nutrition. These courses are intended to empower refugees so that they can build a better future in Lebanon. The mothers and young adults who participate in these programs are not as interested in political matters or in passing memories onto their children.

In the two parenting sessions I attended at the Women Programs Association, the mothers were concerned with matters such as managing tight spaces in the home and the lack of privacy, the best ways to discipline children, how to deal with teenagers and how to manage stress. They even viewed their situation with some humor as many mothers were more interested in asking the foreign nutritionist how they could lose weight. Mariam Shaar, the founder and director, is a product of the Burj Barjaneh refugee camp and of the UNRWA schools. Her parents were raised in the camps and her earliest memories are of life in the camp. Reflecting on her own experiences, she believes that it is more important to empower refugees to be productive members of society. To her, it is this form of empowerment that will eradicate despair and poverty, strengthen the Palestinian community in Lebanon and counter the negative identities associated with being Palestinian.

E.P Thompson disputes theories that attribute the actions of the mob including protests as a direct response to economic stimuli such as a rise in food prices. He instead endeavors to understand their behavior, actions and motivations. With regards to Palestinian refugees, some research has found that prolonged socio-economic

deprivation, neglect and political oppression do not foster organized resistance, but instead facilitate quitting school, promote instances of abuse and create an atmosphere of pessimism and despair.²⁰ To understand why this climate is not fostering organized resistance, I use E.P Thompson's approach and examine refugee attitudes beyond simple reactions to economic stimuli and instead take into account the culture and values created as a result of prolonged exposure to camp life.

In Lebanon, statistics on education show that education prospects have barely improved over the years. Sixty percent of young adults in the camps have not completed their basic education, the level of youth illiteracy is high and fifty percent of households in the camps do not have a single member who has completed basic education.²¹ Camp residents in Lebanon, in the Occupied Territories or in Jordan, are worse off economically and have poorer health and lower educational levels.²² I argue that this breeds despair and contributes to political apathy among youth. Rami, a high school dropout from the Burj Barajneh refugee camp spends his day with other young adults in the streets of the camps, playing cards and trying to find work.²³ His stories reflect this sense of hopelessness:

Like most men in the camps I stay up late, play cards and smoke argileh (hookah). There are also a lot of drugs. It is just boredom, there is no space to even walk in the camps, we do not have sports team or any opportunities and there is nothing to fill up our time. The number of guys holding onto the cause is less. Most are just trying to escape just to get some rights, just to work a bit. Most of them think about leaving.

²⁰ Maya Rosenfeld, *Confronting the Occupation: Work, Education, and Political Activism of Palestinian Families in a Refugee Camp* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 6.

²¹ Hanssen-Bauer, Blome Jacobsen, 39.

²² Hassan Abou libeh, "Statistical Data on Palestinian Refugees: What we know and what we don't," in *Palestinian Refugees, Challenges of Repatriation and Development*, edited by Rex Brynen and Roula El Rifai (London and New York: IB Tauris and Co Ltd and the International Development Research Centre, 2007), 21. Hanssen-Bauer and Blome Jacobsen, 31.

²³ Rami, interviewed by author, Burj Barajneh Camp, October 29, 2011.

Rami's feelings are not unique. When I asked Walaa from Burj Barajneh if she would return to Palestine should the right be granted, she responded almost as if she were apologizing for not providing the "expected" response.²⁴ Her answer was more straightforward than Rami's and expressed the level of rejection she has come to identify with being Palestinian, her situation in Lebanon and with the idea of the right to return, "What would we go back to do? If we get some rights here why would we want to go back to do this all over again, to go back to being dragged around and made to beg again?"

Rami and Walaa share similar views determined by similar family histories and experiences in the same camp, Burj Barajneh. They have both rejected the appropriation of definitions of identities imposed on them while in the process of constructing their identities.²⁵ They do not want to be the refugee, carrying on the fight of their grandparents and parents, but want to be free of that burden and are more concerned with assimilating in Lebanese society and with their day to day lives.

Ahmed, Bilal's son, works with his father selling coffee and breakfast outside the Arab University and has never lived in a refugee camp.²⁶ Yet, despite living outside the camps and being of a relatively higher socio-economic status than Rami and Walaa, he did not mention affinity for Palestinian, his native village or a yearning to return. His concerns about Palestinian and Lebanon are based on considerations like work opportunities. Even the fact that his mother is Lebanese did not seem to illicit nationalist sentiments or an affinity for Lebanon. Instead, his opinions were similar to those of camp residents like Walaa and Rami, "Most of the guys here would say we wouldn't go back and if they tell you they will go back, they are lying. If we get the chance to leave we will say yes, as long as there is a better job but as long as I'm here and happy I'll stay. I'm used to it, this is home. We are living. Everything is good."

²⁴ Walaa, *ibid.*

²⁵ Maria Holt, "A world of movement, Memory and reality for Palestinian women in the camps of Lebanon," in *Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, edited by Are Knudsen and Sari Hanafi (Oxon: Routledge Studies on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 2011), 185.

²⁶ Ahmed, interviewed by author, Beirut, Lebanon, October 28, 2011.

When speaking with Ahmed, he was very matter of fact in his responses and he did not want to discuss anything that had to do with Palestine or the realities of his situation. He constantly reaffirmed that everything was good and that he was happy. I believe this implies that Ahmed, similar to many others, is trying to forget about his past, to shed that burden and to live a life free of constantly worrying about political or nationalist ties to Palestine. Similarities between Ahmed, Walaa and Rami's response also show that while economic status affects their negative views about prospects for the future and makes them see the negative connotations of being a refugee, these views are also determined by the legal and social barriers imposed by the Lebanese state.

Legal and social barriers imposed by the Lebanese state affect camp and non-camp based refugees equally, regardless of socio-economic status. Recognizing the effects of these barriers adds nuance to the argument that economic considerations explain all behaviour and instead provides insight into the moral economy of refugees. Recognizing nuances is important because Palestinians in Lebanon are not a homogeneous collective group. Some camp based refugees have not internalized this despair. Instead, they have taken advantage of the few opportunities offered to them to strengthen their commitment to their homeland and to live a meaningful life in Lebanon. Mahmoud is a twenty-two year old business student at the Lebanese International University.²⁷ In addition to attending school, he works installing electric and telephone lines inside the camps. Mahmoud was proud of being a refugee and did not see it as a limitation. He represents the liminal Palestinian, drifting comfortably between the camp and the outside, rejecting the image of a victimized refugee. Mahmoud said that he earns more than enough money to attend university and to go out on the weekends. In our conversation, he stressed that he does not see a contradiction between the right to return and working to secure more rights for a fulfilling life in Lebanon:

Do I want to go back? Of course I want to go back. I may go and not know anything but in the end it's my land, it's where my roots are. We are not refugees, I want to do well and have a family. When I'm in the

²⁷ Mahmoud, *ibid.*

camp, I'm keeping my identity, I'm a refugee, I'm a Palestinian. It's part of my identity. If we leave the camps, no one knows I'm Palestinian. I don't just sit in the camp because I like the camp; it means I'm keeping the cause and I want to go back.

When I mentioned to Mahmoud that I had spoken with others his age who had abandoned the Palestinian cause and felt like they had no future, he responded, "They are lazy. There are opportunities to work. If you just sit and do nothing, then nothing will come. Those who want to find work will. I will try and get a job with my degree but if I don't find something, then I will find something else to do."

Mahmoud's circumstances and life experiences are different than Walaa's or Rami's. The Burj Barajneh camp is more crowded and further away from the center of Beirut. Mahmoud's Mar Elias camp is very integrated into the fabric of Beirut and is diluted with migrant workers, rendering the camp more of a Beirut ghetto. Its economic development and commercial activities rely on customers living outside the camp. Its central location makes it easy for dwellers and outsiders to move freely in and out of its confines.²⁸ Furthermore, Mahmoud had finished his high school education and was in the process of completing his post-secondary studies. This makes him more similar to Sharif, Mira and Hana who have not spent significant amounts of time in a refugee camp than to Walaa and Rami from Burj Barajneh.

Mahmoud was also politically active and did not shy away from expressing his allegiance to Fatah, "I'm with Fatah, of course I'm with Fatah: being part of the party doesn't mean I just sit in the office and do their work, its gives me something to belong to. I can serve Fatah and Palestine." His political inclinations show that some camp-based refugees like Mahmoud and Nawar do not resent politics and politicians. Maya Rosenfeld, in her research in the Dheisheh camp in the West Bank, finds that there is a direct correlation between the process of education and politicization and that the increase of education in later generations of refugees has allowed them to be more

²⁸ Dorai, (2010), 82-83

active politically and to join parties and organizations.²⁹ This is a factor that has made Mahmoud more politically aware and affected his decision to be part of the Fatah faction in the Mar Elias camp.

5.3. The Search to Belong: Social Inclusion and Identities

Rosenfeld's argument that there is direct correlation between increased education and politicization is one factor that explains why some camp-based refugees are heavily involved in politics. It for instance helps explain Mahmoud's affinity for politics but does not explain why Nawar, who has only completed his basic education, is a proud member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Instead, this can be explained by understanding an individual's desire to belong a group or to an ideology, especially if they are they are conscious of their relative deprivation and position in society vis-a vis the dominant groups.³⁰ This theory explains why Nawar commutes every morning from his camp in the North of Lebanon to the Mar Elias camp in Beirut for work at the party's office.³¹

Nawar barely leaves the camps, he lives and works in them and is deeply resentful of the humiliation he feels when stopped at checkpoints. However, while these experiences have made refugees like Rami and Walaa more apathetic towards politics, they have strengthened his desire to belong to a social group. As part of that group, he feels they can change the deprived conditions of the camps that arise from social and political barriers impose by the Lebanese state.³² His commitment to Palestine and to the right to return has hardened in the face of injustice, despite his poverty and lack of formal education:

²⁹ Rosenfeld, 57-58.

³⁰ H. Miller, Patricia Gurin, and Okasana Malanchuck, "Group Consciousness and Political Participations," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3(1981): 47, 48.

³¹ Nawar, *ibid.*

³² Miller, Gurin, and Malanchuck, 50.

People are wasting their time with education; we are forbidden from everything. I am demanding our human rights, from the right to work to the right to own property. If I have a house I cannot bequeath it to my son. Our attachment to the camps is very good for many reasons: the camps give us a reason to demand the right to return. When we live in the camps; we reject any attempts at *tawteen* (naturalization in Lebanon), against resettlement in a third country. We are demanding human rights to live properly until we accomplish our goals: return, self-determination and an independent state based on the 1967 borders.

Nawar, despite living in conditions similar to Rami and Walaa, has different opinions about the Palestinian cause. Rami and Walaa do not feel any particular attachment to a political or religious group. They feel like they do not belong anywhere or to anything, which has colored their perceptions. This shows that it is not possible to make generalizations about Palestinians, to assume that all camp-based refugees have abandoned Palestine, or that the refugee camp has preserved nationalism.

Although quite politically active, Mira, Sharif, Hana and Yasmine are more critical of their attachment to Palestine and of the right to return. They do not blindly believe in the cause, but instead use critical thinking acquired through good education, work experience and a history of family activism. Mira, Sharif and Hana come from families with a history of political activism. Mira's father was part of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Sharif's father fought the British and Zionists in Palestine and his uncle, Dr. Ghanem Bibi is the co-founder of the Arab Resource Collective project and is a fixture of the activist collective in Lebanon. Lastly, Hana father's Jaber Suleiman is an independent scholar and the founder of the Aidoun-Lebanon branch. Furthermore, all their fathers have lived in Palestine. They differentiate between the right to return as a human right and the actual act or process of returning. Mira, through her journey of self-discovery and through her struggle to belong to both Lebanon and Palestine, has realized that for her it is not the physical land of Palestine that matters, but the idea of Palestine and what it represents to her:

I've never felt that Palestine is an illusion, but I know that going back is an illusion. Belonging to it is not belonging to a place but belonging to an idea. I feel the same way when I hear about the people dying in Palestine as I do when I hear about people in Africa dying. There are those who left the camps and fought to enter Beirut and there are the ones who are stuck in the camps. The political parties in the camps are all making people believe *Aidoun, Aidoun*, we will return, and the

newer generations need that. They are trying to belong to a group, like it's going to be ok. So when Fatah has a demonstration, you see everyone is carrying the flag, and they are really living it. But it is all an illusion. It is an excuse to be lazy and to not do anything and to be able to say it doesn't matter what we do here because we are going to back.³³

On the other hand, Sharif believes that returning to Palestine is a duty. Sharif is half-Lebanese and is heavily involved in both Lebanese and Palestinian civil society in Lebanon. He is very politically aware and has close connections to his family's history and legacy in Palestine and this affects his perspective on the right to return:

I see a future and I see a return, I feel an inner peace like it will happen, I don't know how and I don't know why, I can't explain it but I feel like I will see it, that we will see it. It is a right, those who want can go back, and those who don't want, don't have to. It's not just about going back to a place of belonging, it's about rebuilding it, and it will need everyone to build it. And if they don't go back to rebuild, it will be a crime. I feel that if we have that hope, we will rebuild Palestine.

The right to return is an important tenant of the Palestinian cause and is a fixture in the discourses of the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian identity. Yet, not all Palestinians understand this in the same way or identify with it to the same degree. This can partially be explained by how different refugees understand the notion of "justice." This notion of justice influences and motivates refugees to participate in politics, to take pride in being a refugee or a Palestinian and to preserve the Palestinian struggle. Regardless of social or economic status, Nawar, Mahmoud and Sharif strongly believe that justice will culminate with gaining political and civil rights in Lebanon and with the right to return for refugees. As shown above, this notion of justice is a socially constructed historical factor informed by a family tradition of activism and the desire to belong to a group. When combined, family legacies and notions of justice form the fabric of the moral economy for Palestinians like Hana, Mira and Sharif.

³³ Mira, October 26, 2011.

This thesis also argues that the relationship between Palestinians and Lebanese on the individual level is another factor that affects identities among Palestinians in Lebanon. Understanding how Palestinians in Lebanon relate to their Lebanese neighbors is important as it is part of understanding the larger history of Palestinians in Lebanon. During the golden years of the PLO, Palestinians felt pride in their identity, there was a sense of community and a desire to identify with the cause and with Palestinian nationalism. During that time, a large sector of the Lebanese population supported the Palestinians and treated them with respect and admiration. Since the departure of the PLO, the relationship between Palestinians and Lebanese has been tenuous, especially as many Palestinians still do not feel accepted by the Lebanese with whom they interact. This is important to explore, because this hostility increases the feeling of being marginalized and can affect identity either by internalizing that negativity and rejecting a Palestinian identity, or by reinforcing nationalist tendencies.

Moataz Dajani describes the negative impact of weak relationships with Lebanese as a “ghettoized psyche.” The camp becomes the only place where they feel safe. As a result, refugees do not interact with Lebanese society. Sara, studying to be a hair dresser instead of completing school, has internalized this mentality and has come to associate the outside of the camp with the humiliation she has to face as a Palestinian:

I do not understand why we're treated differently. Why are we different, why aren't we like them? We are stuck here in the camp and everywhere we go we get asked for *hawiya*, identification. Why don't the Lebanese need to show their IDs? I don't like going out because I don't want to that to happen. My sister, brother and her husband went to the South and were stopped and embarrassed at the checkpoint, they only let them through because her husband is Lebanese and he vouched for them or else they would have needed need *tosrih* (permit). It's all about permits. Politicians treat us differently but most Lebanese do not, they can't even tell most of the time, but there is this kind of snobbery, they think they are better than us.³⁴

³⁴ Sara, *ibid*,

Sara feelings are a product of extreme discrimination against Palestinians in Lebanon. She has reacted negatively to this discrimination and has decided to deal with it by further excluding herself from the surrounding society and marginalizing herself further. In contrast, Bilal has made a living from interacting with Lebanese selling coffee to students outside the Arab University. Yet, despite living outside the camps and meeting with Lebanese, he still has not told many of his friends that he is Palestinian because he is trying to assimilate and trying to move beyond the perceived obstacles of his identity. This does not imply that he is ashamed of his identity. When I asked him if he would want to return to Palestine he said that he would do anything to go back even if it were just for a day.

Not all Palestinians avoid interactions with Lebanese. Aya and Mahmoud both attend university and, despite feeling more at ease with Palestinians, are very comfortable with Lebanese. For instance, Mahmoud emphasized how at ease he felt with Lebanese peers, "I feel normal when I go to university, I don't feel any difference. Obviously there is some racism but usually nothing. *Ilhamdillah*, thank God, I don't feel that." Sharif's story is interesting because his life is completely integrated with Lebanese society. His mother is Lebanese, he attended the Lebanese American University, yet he is still conscious of how different he is:

What is a "Palestinian" in Lebanon? Lebanon, as a country, from its history to its tradition, has these guidelines that they [The Lebanese] are working on. Since the 1920s till now, you can basically see the guidelines. One of these guidelines is the "othering" and even Lebanese amongst each other have the other, so with the Palestinians it's even more complicated. We are not foreign, but we are the other, we are Palestinian. There is a kind of intermixing but we are still the other and that gives you the sense of the other.³⁵

He then shared this story:

In 2006, during the July War, we were working hard in the South and in Beirut, helping people, bringing food, and were all working together,

³⁵ Sharif, *ibid.*

and we all assimilated together, Lebanese, Palestinians, Jordanians, foreigners. There was no difference, no one realized the difference. We made it to *Sannaye*³⁶ and while I was organizing activities for the kids, one of the moms asked me where I was from. In a polite manner, I said I live in Beirut, she said, "No, where are you really from." I told her I was Palestinian. She gazed for a second and said you don't look it." But I was more aware then, so I laughed and asked her what she meant.

So I realized that the Lebanese stereotype of Palestinians hadn't changed. I asked her to elaborate on the stereotype, she said: curly hair, dark skin, ragged clothes, crass and aggressive. I became even more enlightened and realized that whatever we do, we will still be excluded. But after this incident I wanted to learn more about how the Lebanese understood Palestinians. I went back into history and learnt that in the 60s in the golden age of Lebanon, the economy was built on Palestinians, doesn't this mean anything? Shouldn't this enter the discourse of Lebanese history? In work I feel discriminated against, I am a graphic designer and my market is limited. Even as a freelance, no one will give me contracts, many people won't hire me if they know I'm Palestinian, and if they find out I am Palestinian after hiring me once, then they won't hire me again.

Shari's story shows that despite trying to integrate into Lebanese society, many refugees still feel marginalized because of their encounters with some Lebanese. While such encounters have not deterred Sharif from participating in Lebanese society, others like Sara prefer to avoid encounters that remind them of the discrimination they experience in Lebanon. Refugees have different stories about interacting with Lebanese and they have had to reconcile these varying life experiences to construct individual identities; however these differences create a heterogeneous society with a plethora of independent yet intersecting identities.³⁷

Rosemary Sayigh argues that taking a post-*Nakba* identity for granted has inhibited scholars from asking questions about how Palestinian identity was constructed,

³⁶ During the July war, families from the South fled to Beirut and the Sannaye Garden became a makeshift gathering for those families and the hub for volunteers and relief efforts.

³⁷ Laura Hamblin and Hala al Sarraf, "Narrative as Identity: Perspectives from an Iraqi refugees oral history project," in *Dispossession and Displacement: Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Dawn Chatty and Bill Finalysson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 216.

how it was diffused through the diaspora and how it was subjectively adopted, evaded or modified by different classes or regions. She continues to suggest that scholars should explore the differences in “Palestinianism” between different social strata in the camps and between urban and camp dwellers.³⁸ This chapter expanded on Sayigh’s proposition and showed that reactions to economic stimuli were not sufficient to explain the behavior of refugees. By applying E.P Thompson’s theory of moral economy, this chapter showed how differences in social strata, family histories and values, as well as the desire to belong to a group, affect identities and perceptions of Palestine. Furthermore, this chapter argued that in processing their narratives and trying to make sense of their individual histories, refugees experience a tension between an internalized negative and victimized identity and between an identity rooted in a heroic struggle that forms part of their collective memory, especially as they remember the golden days of the PLO in Lebanon.³⁹

The oral histories collected show that identity is fluid and multifaceted. These life stories challenge and complement grand narratives of Palestinian identity that center on the themes of loss, dispossession, existential insecurity, despair, occupation, and subjugation.⁴⁰ While some Palestinians feel despair and resent their situation, others are moving past those terms and away from perceptions imposed by monolithic narratives of identity. By highlighting the various experiences of Palestinians in Lebanon, scholars can better understand the cleavages between public and private memories and between private memories and the collective historical myth of the Palestinian community in Lebanon. Using oral histories also allows scholars to uncover how refugees compose memories of the past to serve their present. In so doing, scholars can develop a deeper understanding of the refugee experience in Lebanon.

³⁸ Sayigh (2008), 240, 250.

³⁹ Holt, 181.

⁴⁰ Philip L. Hammack, *Narrative and the Politics of Identity: The Cultural Psychology of Israeli and Palestinian Youth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111,160.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I argued that Palestinian refugee identities in Lebanon should be studied separately from the larger narrative of Palestinian collective identity. The narratives, tropes, memories and cultural symbols that permeate the daily lives of refugees in Lebanon intersect with those of Palestinians elsewhere, but are still distinct to their circumstances. While the *Nakba* is an important part of Palestinian history and identity, it should be seen more as the starting point for the plurality of Palestinian experiences.¹ To move beyond the insular scope of the narrative of the *Nakba*, this thesis sought to historicize Palestinian identities in Lebanon. By tracing how the situation of refugees has changed alongside evolving political and social conditions, this project showed that identities are affected by historical circumstances. Approaching this matter from a historical standpoint is essential because it shows that seemingly static and natural phenomena, like identities, are indeed cultural and subject to change.²

Important moments in history, like the arrival and departure of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Lebanese civil war, have profoundly impacted refugees' perceptions of self. Historical moments have shaped refugee identities and how they understand their present conditions and how they envision their future lives, be it in Lebanon or elsewhere. In addition to evolving with changing historical circumstances, refugee identities and communities were shaped by and within the constraints of power imposed on them by the Lebanese state. The actions of the state were not haphazard but were politically, socially and legally calculated measures. These

¹ Ahmad Sa'di "Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity," *Israel Studies*, 7 no.2 (2002):185.

² Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, translated by, Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

measures were also informed by the complicated history between Lebanese and Palestinians, by Lebanon's internal struggles and by its colonial relationship with France. To make sense of this, it is important to thoroughly comprehend how events in history as well as the remaining tensions have affected later interactions between the Lebanese state and refugees.

Interactions between the host state and refugees did not occur in a vacuum but in a power laden space pregnant with meaning for both the Lebanese state and for refugee communities. This space, be it the refugee camp specifically, or Lebanon as a whole, can be theorized using Foucault's concept of carceral space, Lefebvre's notion of space as productive and Agamben's definition of spaces of exception. The way in which space is used and how space affects identities cannot be explained without exploring how these different yet complimentary theories function simultaneously within a given site.

Scholars interested in this subject have tended to either view the camps as sites of marginalization or as productive spaces. For instance, Sari Hanafi and Are Knudsen study the camp as spaces of control but Rosemary Sayigh and Diana Allan are more interested in exploring the camp as a productive space. This thesis makes an important contribution to historiography outlined in the introduction by focusing more on the tensions and interplay between the different theories and by applying these theories to the whole of Lebanon instead of merely to the confines of the camps.

I use Foucault's carceral space to explain the intentions behind the camps from the perspective of the Lebanese state. The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) first implemented the camps as humanitarian spaces, where immediate relief and services could be provided to refugees. Yet, the Lebanese state, through laws designed to monitor and control, added a dimension of control to the humanitarian aspect. The first laws were meant to prevent making the space permanent and forbade refugees from bringing construction materials into the camps to ensure that concrete roofs did not replace zinc make-shift roofs. Surveillance and control are integral components of Foucault's carceral space and by instituting mechanisms designed to monitor, the Lebanese state enacted this aspect of Foucault's theory. By showing how the Deuxieme Bureau intelligence office monitored Palestinians and how the Department

of Palestinian Affairs administered the lives of refugees by recording address and population changes,³ I argue that the camps were intended to control the population and to marginalize them from society, rendering refugees “in” but “not of” the space they occupy.⁴

How can the camp also be a home, especially given the extreme measures taken by the Lebanese state to ensure that it remain a temporary residence and a site of control? To explain this, I use Lefebvre’s arguments from *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre’s work tells us that space is productive and that it is a social product; a social reproduction of relationships. I apply this theory not to counter Foucault’s control of space and body but to compliment it, to understand how and why refugees see the camp as more than a site of power imposed by the state and to explore social relations created after more than sixty years of life in the camps. Yet, the relationship between space as a site of control and as a product of social relations is tense. Refugees experience their daily lives within and against this struggle and it is within this struggle that they produce varying identities.

Refugee camps have been the subject of study in a lot of the historiography on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This thesis contributes to that discussion by showing the interplay between home and the carceral. However, I was also interested in exploring identities and experiences among non-camp residents. To understand how spaces of control extend beyond the confines of a camp, I theorize the whole of Lebanon as a “space of exception.” A space of exception, as defined by Agamben, is a place in which the laws of the sovereign are suspended. Refugees residing in Lebanese neighborhoods experience the suspension of law on a daily basis. They are forbidden from working numerous professions, from owning or bequeathing property and from benefiting from any rights associated with citizenship. As the personal narratives in this work showed, a simple act such as buying a car is a hardship for most refugees and reminds them of their lack of legal rights. The Lebanese state, through laws and edicts, has legislated the

³ Shiblak, 262,361.

⁴ Hanafi (2008),9.

marginalization of refugees and by doing so, it has turned their home into a space of exception. Furthermore, this codified discrimination transformed the individual refugee into “homo sacer” or a man stripped of all rights of citizenship, including protection from the sovereign.⁵

Thus, by using three different theories, this thesis explored how refugees experience space, how this contributes to their identities as refugees and how they conceptualize their present and future lives. The oral histories that formed the basis of this analysis showed that it is impossible to make broad generalizations about how refugees experience space, but instead what is home to some represents an obstacle to others as it is a reminder of the legal, political and social limitations imposed on them by the label of refugee.

In this thesis I was also concerned with how grand narratives are passed through generations. I wanted to determine whether refugees had internalized the narratives of identity and nationalism propagated by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and to see how narratives have evolved since the arrival and departure of the PLO. By exploring narratives and how they have affected identities, we as historians can go beyond fact and dates to try to explore the meaning behind pivotal historical moments because how history is understood is as revealing as the historical moment itself.⁶

Through conversations with my narrators, I found that the identity associated with the term refugee during the 1960s and 1970s was a positive identity that countered the humiliation, deprivation and marginalization previously associated with refugees after the 1948 *Nakba*. The narrative disseminated by the PLO emphasized unity and glossed over cleavages to present the image of a unified community. It was a militaristic form of nationalism that glorified the armed resistance movement represented by the *fidaii* or armed militia man. This sentiment was expressed by many of my narrators, including

⁵ Agamben,(1998), 8.

⁶ Schwartz, Zerubavel,et all,150.

Sharif, who explained that the trope of the *fidaii* and its accompanying narrative re-instilled pride in the refugee community and in the word refugee.

While the nation building process of the PLO repoliticized the label of refugee, it is difficult for newer generations to embrace it. I argue that the PLO narrative was more widely embraced by refugees in the 1960s because many of them had experienced Palestine and remembered their villages and because the camps were structured in a way that echoed village life. However, third and fourth generations of refugees do not have any recollection of Palestine and as Walaa said, she remembers the name of her ancestral village but it does not make her or her friends feel any *hanin* or nostalgia. Furthermore, many younger refugees have moved away from the image of the *fidaii* and heroic PLO narratives because they resent being expected to miss something they did not experience losing.⁷

In addition to political actors like the PLO, the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) has affected refugee identities since it became operational in 1950. Refugees and scholars have mixed views about the impact of UNRWA on identities. The main critique of UNRWA is that, because of its humanitarian nature, it depoliticizes refugees and renders them victims in need of humanitarian assistance. Individuals like Yassir also blamed UNRWA for being dependant on Western donors and for not teaching Palestinian history in its schools. For others, like Um Said, UNRWA is the only mechanism that serves as a witness to their plight. Without UNRWA, refugees would be invisible in the international arena. UNRWA also directly affects identities because only it can legally bestow the identity of refugee on individuals and with that recognition comes access to services like educations, health care and other social programs.

To complicate the narratives of identities, post-PLO Lebanon is abundant with local organizations propagating their own narratives of history and identity. These NGOs like Al-Jana and Howiyya are taking active roles educating young refugees about their history and creating activities to engage them with their past. Other organizations like the

⁷ Allan (2005), 52.

Women Programs Association are rewriting the narratives of identities by trying to empower youth through economic and social integration into Lebanese society. In so doing, these organizations hope to counter the negative connotations associated with being a refugee and to reduce the marginalization experienced by refugees in Lebanon.

Lastly, this thesis argued that the moral economy of refugees, as well as their socio-economic status, affects the extent to which individuals adhere to or dissociate from identities related to being a refugee. It is simplistic to understand the actions and values of refugees as being based solely on economic factors. Instead, I tried to explore the motivations and values that explain why some refugees below the poverty line were still very much politically engaged while others were only concerned with surviving or with immigrating to a third country. In other words, I was more interested with the moral economy of refugees. I found that, for some, the strong desire to belong to a group or community drove them to join political parties. For others it was the political and moral values inherited from politically engaged relatives that fueled their zeal despite conditions of poverty. But for some, these values were not enough, so they rejected the activism and politically charged definitions associated with being a Palestinian refugee and allowed economic conditions to dictate their actions and value system.

This thesis, by using oral history, moved away from a homogenous discussion of the Palestinian community to focus on individual refugee experiences and to show that refugees were actively rejecting the appropriation of definitions imposed on them in the process of constructing their independent identities.⁸ Oral histories are necessary for a discussion on identities because they provide immensely important materials to the study of refugees. Furthermore, incorporating personal narratives, especially as historians, helps to bridge the divide between history as a hegemonic narrative and popular memory as the tool for marginalized communities.⁹

⁸ Holt, 185.

⁹ Randa Farah, "The Significance of Oral Narratives and Life-Stories," *Al-Jana, The Harvest, File on Palestinian Popular Memory* (2002): 23.

My work examined three factors that have affected how refugees in Lebanon remember their past, view their present and envision their future. This thesis explored the impact of space and the effects of narratives propagated by the PLO, UNRWA and local organizations on identity. This project also studied how the moral economy of refugees affected the construction of identities. I found that refugees in Lebanon form distinct groups whose identities should be studied separately from the larger Palestinian community and that identities are not static but instead evolve as they are informed by specific historical moments and by relationships with the host country. Finally, it is impossible to make generalizations; each individual's experiences are different and, in addition to the factors listed above, are shaped by their individual camp, age and gender.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

The Cairo Agreement, 1969

On Monday, 3rd November 1969, the Lebanese delegation headed by Army Commander General Emile al-Bustani, and the Palestine Liberation Organization delegation, headed by Mr. Yasir 'Arafat, chairman of the organization, met in Cairo in the presence of the United Arab Republic Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmud Riyad, and the War Minister, General Muhammad Fawzi.

In consonance with the bonds of brotherhood and common destiny, relations between Lebanon and the Palestinian revolution must always be conducted on the bases of confidence, frankness, and positive cooperation for the benefit of Lebanon and the Palestinian revolution and within the framework of Lebanon's sovereignty and security. The two delegations agreed on the following principles and measures:

The Palestinian Presence

It was agreed to reorganize the Palestinian presence in Lebanon on the following bases:

1. The right to work, residence, and movement for Palestinians currently residing in Lebanon;
2. The formation of local committees composed of Palestinians in the camps to care for the interests of Palestinians residing in these camps in cooperation with the local Lebanese authorities within the framework of Lebanese sovereignty;
3. The establishment of posts of the Palestinian Armed Struggle [PASC] inside the camps for the purpose of cooperation with the local committees to ensure good relations with the Lebanese authorities. These posts shall undertake the task of regulating and determining the presence of arms in the camps within the framework of Lebanese security and the interests of the Palestinian revolution;
4. Palestinians resident in Lebanon are to be permitted to participate in the Palestinian revolution through the Armed Struggle and in accordance with the principles of the sovereignty and security of Lebanon.

Commando Activity

It was agreed to facilitate commando activity by means of:

1. Facilitating the passage of commandos and specifying points of passage and

reconnaissance in the border areas;

2. Safeguarding the road to the 'Arqub region;
3. The Armed Struggle shall undertake to control the conduct of all the members of its organizations and [to ensure] their non-interference in Lebanese affairs;
4. Establishing a joint command control of the Armed Struggle and the Lebanese Army;
5. Ending the propaganda campaigns by both sides;
6. Conducting a census of Armed Struggle personnel in Lebanon by their command.
7. Appointing Armed Struggle representatives at Lebanese Army headquarters to participate in the resolution of all emergency matters;
8. Studying the distribution of all suitable points of concentration in border areas which will be agreed with the Lebanese Army command;
9. Regulating the entry, exit, and circulation of Armed Struggle personnel;
10. Removal of the Jiyrun base.
11. The Lebanese Army shall facilitate the operation of medical, evacuation, and supply centers for commando activity;
12. Releasing detained personnel and confiscated arms;
13. It is understood that the Lebanese authorities, both civil and military, shall continue to exercise all their prerogatives and responsibilities in all areas of Lebanon in all circumstances;
14. The two delegations affirm that the Palestinian armed struggle is in the interest of Lebanon as well as in that of the Palestinian revolution and all Arabs;
15. This agreement shall remain Top Secret and for the eyes of the commands only.

Head of Lebanese delegation

Emile Bustani

Head of Palestinian delegation

Yasir Arafat

Resolution adopted by the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, 21 May 1987

1. Abrogation of the law issued by the Chamber of Deputies on 14 June 1983, authorizing the Government to ratify the agreement signed by the Government of the Lebanese Republic and the Government of the State of Israel on 17 May 1983.

2. The agreement signed on 3 November 1969 between the head of the Lebanese delegation General Emile Bustani and the Chairman of the PLO and which is known as the "Cairo Agreement" is hereby null and void as if it had never existed. Further, all annexes and measures related to the Cairo Agreement are hereby null and void as if they had never existed.
3. This law will become effective upon its publication in the Official Gazette.

Appendix B.

The Lebanese Constitution: Fundamental Provisions Preamble

One. Lebanon is a sovereign, free, and independent country. It is a final homeland for all its citizens. It is unified in its territory, people, and institutions within the boundaries defined in this constitution and recognized internationally.

Two. Lebanon is Arab in its identity and in its association. It is a founding and active member of the League of Arab States and abides by its pacts and covenants. Lebanon is also a founding and active member of the United Nations Organization and abides by its covenants and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government shall embody these principles in all fields and areas without exception.

Three. Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic based on respect for public liberties, especially the freedom of opinion and belief, and respect for social justice and equality of rights and duties among all citizens without discrimination.

Four. The people are the source of authority and sovereignty; they shall exercise these powers through the constitutional institutions.

Five. The political system is established on the principle of separation, balance, and cooperation amongst the various branches of Government.

Six. The economic system is free and ensures private initiative and the right to private property.

Seven. The even development among regions on the educational, social, and economic levels shall be a basic pillar of the unity of the state and the stability of the system.

Eight. The abolition of political confessionalism is a basic national goal and shall be achieved according to a gradual plan.

Nine. Lebanese territory is one for all Lebanese. Every Lebanese has the right to live in any part of it and to enjoy the sovereignty of law wherever he resides. There is no segregation of the people on the basis of any type of belonging, and no fragmentation, partition, or colonization.

Ten. There is no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the 'pact of communal coexistence'.

This Constitutional Law shall be published in the Official Gazette.