



Arab American University
Faculty of Graduate Studies

**The multilayered identity of Palestinians' in Jenin refugee camp: its
development and transformation since 1948**

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**This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Literature and Intercultural Communication**

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Thesis Approval

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by me and that the work contained herein is my own, except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment; the work presented is entirely my own.

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Dedication

I humbly dedicate this piece of work to the experiences we never expected, the family whose presence has brought me to this very moment, and the friends we found along the way.

Overall, to the martyrs in the Jenin refugee camp who selflessly sacrificed their lives in the noble pursuit of a liberated Palestine. Their sacrifice shall forever be etched in the annals of history, serving as a reminder for those who yearn for freedom.

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Abstract

In the context of displacement, understanding how refugees form and develop their identities is essential. In Palestinian refugee camps, these identities are influenced not only by their displacement but also by living under ongoing occupation. Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, for example, have become a powerful symbol of Palestinian resistance and displacement.

This study examines how Palestinian identity develops and is expressed within the Jenin refugee camp, taking into account its historical context and displacement. While most Palestinian refugees share a sense of tragic dispossession, Jenin refugee camp stands out because of the intensity of the occupation's actions and its symbolic role in resistance.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with residents of the Jenin refugee camp, the research explores how history, place, collective memory, and historical narratives influence this identity. These interviews emphasize the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians' individual and collective identities. The findings suggest that their identity is not only inherited or imposed but is also continuously shaped by lived experiences, rooted in a shared Palestinian sense of self.

Keywords: Palestine; Jenin refugee camp; Israeli Occupation; identity

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“The camp represents a symbol of the Palestinians’ suffering, catastrophe (Al-Nakba), and tragedy, just as their symbol of heroism, salvation, and resilience nearly over the past seven decades since our people witnessed the most significant ethnic cleansing and displacement in modern history.”
Haweel, 2022, p. 1

The ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine since the catastrophe (Al-Nakba) of 1948 has resulted in continuous suffering, including displacement, ethnic cleansing, and destruction. Consequently, many Palestinians from various parts of Palestine have been forced to leave their homes to make way for Israel's state-building efforts. “Not surprisingly, it is striking to note that for every individual who decides to flee during conflict, others choose to risk their lives by staying put” (Adhikari, 2011, p. 2). Some Palestinians left Palestine for other countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria as refugees, while others stayed in their original homes or were forced to live in refugee camps within Palestine.

In refugee camps, people initially lived in tents and refused to build permanent homes. However, after enduring long periods of hardship, they eventually accepted help from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to build camps for them (Giacaman & Johnson, 2002). Jenin refugee camp is one such camp. The camp, established in 1953, is located in Jenin in the West Bank of Palestine (Giacaman & Johnson, 2002). Unfortunately, residents of Jenin refugee camp face many challenges, including a lack of basic services and poverty (Giacaman & Johnson, 2002). Besides the tough living conditions, Israeli occupation forces continue to raid the camp regularly.

This research seeks to explore the lives of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, which has been heavily exposed to the Israeli occupation forces since 1948. It aims to clarify the impact of the Israeli occupation on identity. Little is known about the identities of the Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. This study attempts to examine how the presence and military actions of the Israeli occupation in Jenin affect the individual and collective identities of its residents. It also explores how factors such as history, place, collective memories, and historical narratives

influence the process of identity formation and development. Furthermore, the research considers key aspects of identity—such as age, gender, religion, education, and occupation—in understanding Palestinian identity in the Jenin refugee camp.

This research is inspired by my personal experience as someone living in the Jenin refugee camp. It examines the strong connection that residents feel toward their home. How do these individuals, who are forced to live in the camp, develop such a deep attachment? Furthermore, how does this attachment shape their individual and collective identities? Lastly, does this bond affect the broader Palestinian identity rooted in Palestine?

To understand individuals' identity development in the Jenin refugee camp, the researcher mainly examines the literature of scholars who have addressed topics related to the processes of individual and collective identity development for refugees under occupation. Previous studies offer a thorough understanding of identity, its formation, and its evolution throughout a person's life.

The review of such literature offers insight into how the identity of Palestinian refugees in the Jenin refugee camp develops. It is clear, as Mosselson (2006) suggests, that identity evolves in response to life events experienced by individuals. This thorough understanding of identity changes helps establish links between identity and the suffering of Palestinian refugees. Kiecolt (1994) also asserts that identity shifts and develops due to a significant life event. This development or change applies not only to individual identity but also to collective identity.

Social identity serves as the basis for individuals' self-evaluation (Tajfel, 1982). Its development depends on the social context of the group. Tajfel and Turner (1986) explain that social identity can fluctuate based on an individual's association with a specific group, especially in conflict situations. Therefore, the research on Palestinians and refugees' identities is reviewed to provide a comprehensive view of Palestinians in refugee camps and their identity. Additionally, the researcher examines the overall picture of the study.

While many studies have examined Palestinian identity development across different times, there is a clear gap in research specifically focusing on the Palestinian identity formation in the Jenin refugee camp under Israeli occupation. This study aims to address that gap by exploring how the Israeli occupation has influenced the identity of the refugees in Jenin since 1948, using interviews with residents.

According to Syed and McLean (2016), semi-structured interviews have been widely used to explore identity and its development. Therefore, the researcher chooses semi-structured interviews as the methodology. This approach examines factors influencing the development of Palestinian identity in the Jenin refugee camp, considering variables such as age, gender, religion, education, and work. To assess identity development based on these variables, the researcher conducts semi-structured interviews with a sample of 30 individuals categorized by age. It ensures equal representation of males and females, with a 50% split for each gender. The interviews cover significant periods in Palestinian history, including Al-Nakba 1948, Al-Naksa 1967, the first uprising (the first Intifada) 1987-1993, the second uprising (the second Intifada) 2000-2005, recent events, and other highly influential moments.

By analyzing data from interviews with residents of the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank of Palestine, this research primarily aims to examine the impact of the Israeli occupation on the identity development of these individuals. The results section of this research reveals how the Israeli occupation influences the Palestinian identity in Jenin refugee camp.

I believe that the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is shaped by the Israeli occupation, as it is a part of residents' daily lives. However, the occupation's effect on Palestinians in Jenin may differ depending on various factors. After thoroughly understanding how individuals define their identities in the Jenin refugee camp, I aim to provide a detailed analysis of the factors influencing both individual and collective Palestinian identities there. Additionally, I expect to conclude that resistance and education—two separate elements—significantly influence the identity of refugees, especially under occupation.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The formation and development of identity is a complex subject of study, especially in conflict zones where people are unsure about their sense of belonging (Katz, 2009). Refugee camps in Palestine are important for studying this complexity, as they have been under Israeli occupation since 1948. These camps also symbolize displaced communities trying to maintain their identity and fight for self-determination and liberation. I observed that people in Jenin refugee camp struggle to understand and express their identity. Much of the existing literature discusses Palestinian identity and its development, aiming to understand their struggles. In light of the lack of understanding of identity in Jenin, whose residents have been displaced and constantly under Israeli occupation, this study aims to explore specific factors that influence this identity. By

analyzing their stories, the study hopes to contribute to broader understandings of refugee identity in long-term situations of statelessness and occupation.

Jenin refugee camp, located in the West Bank in Palestine, is extremely significant as its residents suffer from ongoing displacement and have been heavily exposed to various Israeli occupation actions. Due to its history, ongoing occupation, and resistance, the Jenin refugee camp serves as an ideal place to examine how Israeli occupation has influenced the process of identity development among Palestinians in the camp. This research will investigate how history, environment, collective memory, and historical narratives, among other factors, shape how refugees' individual and collective identities are formed and evolve in the context of Jenin refugee camp under Israeli occupation. The findings will not only reflect the case of Jenin refugee camp's identity but also provide insights into the experiences of other refugee camps facing similar issues of identity formation and evolution.

1.2. Purpose of the study

This research examines the formation and development of Palestinian identity in the Jenin refugee camp since 1948 through various events caused by Israeli occupation. It provides insights into Palestine's history to help understand the context of their identity growth. The goal of the research is to offer a comprehensive understanding of the Israeli occupation and its effects on the development of Palestinian identity. It connects the development of identity to the experiences of the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, Palestine. Additionally, it reviews Palestine's history, considering how different generations have experienced different periods and narratives. This highlights the diversity of these identities. Furthermore, it explores whether they share a collective identity based on their similarities within the Jenin refugee camp.

This review examines previous literature on various aspects of identity. Although much research explores the concept of identity across different fields, this study aims to focus on the impact of the Israeli occupation on the development of Palestinians' identity in a refugee camp. Therefore, it offers a comprehensive understanding of identity, mainly emphasizing the identities of refugees and Palestinians.

Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on understanding the identities of refugees experiencing displacement and occupation in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. It uses semi-structured interviews to explore the relationship between identity and occupation across different generations. Additionally, the study examines how refugees' identities develop

concerning their original homes and their newly imposed ones. This aims to provide a clear context of the Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp and how this influences their identity development.

1.3. Theoretical framework

To understand the dynamics of identity and its formation and development, this research primarily relies on Third Space theory. This theory is applied to the context of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp living under Israeli occupation. Third Space theory views identity as a dynamic process rather than a fixed essence. It refers to the in-between space where identity intersects with the other; in this space, new and hybrid identities are created (Bhabha, 1994). The Third Space is especially relevant for Palestinians, as their identities are shaped by the presence of the other through displacement, occupation, loss, belonging, memory, and power, among other factors, influenced by both individual and collective experiences.

Furthermore, the researcher tends to use Rashied Khalidi's book, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, which will help in understanding the specific context of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp under occupation. This theoretical framework will guide the analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews with residents of the Jenin refugee camp, aiding in understanding the identity of the refugees who remain under occupation's control.

1.4. Research questions

The primary research question guiding this study is:

Primary question: How do the presence and actions of the Israeli occupation forces affect the identity of residents aged 18-70+ in the Jenin refugee camp, considering their history and location?

Sub-question 1: How do collective memories and historical narratives contribute to shaping the individual and collective identities of the residents of the Jenin refugee camp living under Israeli occupation?

Sub-question 2: How do age, gender, religion, education, and work influence the process of individual and collective identity formation and the development of residents in the Jenin refugee camp living under the Israeli occupation?

The main question aims to explore how the Israeli occupation since 1948 has influenced the development of both individual and collective identities of Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp. It examines the actions taken by the Israeli occupation against Palestine, especially in Jenin refugee

camp, throughout history. This also emphasizes how Palestine's history shapes the identities of Palestinians in Jenin camp. Understanding history, particularly in relation to Jenin, helps explain how each generation's experience under Israeli occupation has affected their identity. It also highlights the role of the Jenin refugee camp after the displacement of 1948. The camp's important influence on residents' identity development is also analyzed. Recognizing this connection is essential to understanding how displacement from original lands to Jenin has impacted refugee identities.

Sub-question 1 explores the role of collective memory and different historical narratives in shaping identity. This helps clarify both individual and group identities of the refugees in the Jenin refugee camp. It also shows how identity is affected by family, friends, and community.

Sub-question 2 explores specific aspects of identity such as age, gender, religion, education, and work. Examining these components is essential to understanding the individual identities of Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp under Israeli occupation; therefore, it reveals how each generation and individual experienced life differently.

This study focuses on the main issue of identity development and transformation among Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp since 1948, especially under the influence of the Israeli occupation. The research questions explore various aspects of identity, such as history, place, collective memory, historical narrative, and other specific factors that shape how refugees' individual and collective identities form and evolve within the context of the Jenin refugee camp under Israeli control.

1.5. Significance of the research

The identity of these refugees is very important in their lives. The environment in which someone lives affects how their identity forms and develops. In Palestine, the Israeli occupation influences how Palestinian identity is shaped and changed. Khalidi (1997) notes that the Palestinians' answer to the key question of identity, "Who are you?" is evolving. There are reasons for this change that should be explored. This highlights the ongoing impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian identity since 1948.

This research examines the transformation and development of Palestinian identity in the Jenin refugee camp due to events that have influenced it since the Nakba of 1948. These events include major historical moments such as the Nakba of 1948, the Naksa of 1967, the first Intifada (1987-1998), the second Intifada (2000-2005), and other personal experiences.

Jenin refugee camp is located in the West Bank, which has been more heavily affected by Israeli occupation actions than other regions in the West Bank. All residents of the Jenin refugee camp have been displaced from their homeland since 1948 and are continually exposed to ongoing violence, destruction, killing, and brutal attacks by Israeli occupation forces, shaping a unique identity for Palestinians in Jenin. Additionally, the study explores the diversity of Palestinian identity across different generations, examining how it has evolved alongside the Israeli occupation and how it aligns with the broader Palestinian national identity. Through interviews, participants' responses aim to address the research gap regarding the impact of Israeli occupation on both individual and collective identities of Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp.

1.6. Chapter outline

This study is divided into six chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. Chapter 1 begins with a brief background on Palestinian refugees in the Jenin refugee camp, highlighting the significance of their context under Israeli occupation in shaping their individual and collective identities since 1948. It also explains why this research is important by connecting it to previous literature and identifying the gap in the field. The chapter further presents the statement of the problem, the purpose, the theoretical framework, research questions, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature relevant to the research. It examines the literature related to the formation and development of individual and collective identities, identities among refugees, and Palestinian identity in the Middle East. The chapter also provides a historical overview of Palestine to help understand the context in which Palestinian identities, both individual and collective, are formed.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology used in this study. It offers detailed information about the sample population, data collection, and analysis process.

Chapter 4 addresses the main and secondary research questions, giving the reader a clear understanding of how the complex identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp has developed and changed since 1948.

Chapter 5 offers a discussion and interpretation of the findings, along with the conclusion and additional recommendations based on the results of this study.

Chapter 6 provides a detailed summary of the study's main findings, emphasizing the most important results that came out of the analysis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The individual and collective identities of Palestinians in Palestinian refugee camps, especially in the West Bank, have been influenced by the ongoing presence and actions of the Israeli occupation forces in the occupied Palestinian territories since 1948. The impact grew for those living in refugee camps after being displaced from their lands in 1948 because they are living in a place that is not their original homeland. The history of Palestine also shapes residents' personal and group identities in the Jenin refugee camp, as it is often formed through different stories and shared memories of individuals. These stories can differ based on each person's experience, which includes age, gender, religion, education, and occupation.

This literature review examines the concept of identity and how it develops. It focuses on the identity of Palestinians in refugee camps, especially Jenin refugee camp, which has been under Israeli occupation since 1948. Additionally, it examines Palestine's history to understand the context in which the Palestinian identity was shaped and evolved. The review also discusses the individual and collective identities of refugees, particularly Palestinians, living under Israeli occupation.

2.1. Identity

“Our identity is something we uniquely possess.”
Buckingham, 2008, p. 1

Identity is a concept that has been extensively explored in literature, closely related to the idea of the self. Self “is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways concerning other social categories or classifications” (Stets and Burke, 2000, p. 225). As Stets and Burke (2003), Cinoğlu and Arıkan (2012) explore the relationship between the process of identity formation and the self. Cinoğlu and Arıkan (2012) further elaborate on this relationship by suggesting that identity includes the self, its dynamic traits, and its connection to other aspects of identity. In light of this, the self serves as the foundational step in the process of identity formation (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012).

Since the self is the main component in creating identity, Cinoğlu & Arıkan (2012) clarify how individuals connect with one another in society through the self. Individuals primarily communicate by using their minds as the primary tool in this process (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012).

According to the authors, the interactions of the self within society lead to the formation of self-concept, where people recognize their self and its existence as a distinct entity separate from society. Based on this realization, self-concept (or identity) is formed and developed through their interpretations (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). Therefore, identity plays a crucial role in determining one's self-esteem, which involves evaluating, and potentially changing or maintaining, one's identity (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012).

Similarly, McCall and Simons (1978) believe that the process of identity formation begins with the self and is built through self-realization. Likewise, Stryker (1980) argues that identity is created by the self and goes further to suggest that each self has an associated identity. As a result, self and identity are two distinct entities (Stryker, 1980). However, when people interact, they use identity rather than self because their contact is based on their awareness of their role within society (Stryker, 1980).

Alongside the self, identity has a dynamic nature shaped by various factors and interpretations (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). Therefore, the way identity is defined varies among individuals. For some, identity is closely linked to their birthplace or nationality, while others base their identity on their religion or sexual orientation. Identity, which emerges in each person (Buckingham, 2008), is not fixed but rather an ongoing process continuously shaped by different contexts. Brubaker and Cooper (2000), in their article "Beyond Identity," describe identity as a constructed concept influenced by the functioning of the surrounding world and people's experiences.

According to Buckingham (2008), the definition of identity involves recognizing individuals by their unique differences while also finding common ground through shared similarities. In this context, Brown (2000) broadens the definition of identity to include society, where individuals align with groups based on their similarities and distinguish themselves by their differences.

Through interactions among individuals, which are part of the identity formation process, they develop their personal and collective identities, as well as perceptions of others' identities. Individuals build a collective identity by associating themselves with groups based on shared characteristics.

"Identity is developed by the individual, but it has to be recognized and confirmed by others." (Buckingham, 2008, p. 3). According to Phinney (2000), the process of identity development is not limited to individual identity but also includes collective identity. As individuals interact with society, they develop their personal identities and identify with groups within their environment,

sharing similarities and forming collective identities (Phinney, 2000). As Phinney (2000) and Tajfel (1982) emphasize, the ongoing development of identities, whether individual or collective, is a key aspect.

In his book “The Life Cycle Completed,” Erikson (1982) offers a detailed explanation of the development of identity. People go through eight stages of psychological growth during their lives (Erikson, 1982). The developmental stages Erikson (1982) outlines are infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age. The author highlights infancy, adolescence, and adulthood as the main stages in human development. These stages are connected to the concept of ego (self) and identity growth, especially during adolescence (Erikson, 1982). As mentioned earlier, the self is the starting point of human existence, from which individuals begin engaging with society and ultimately form their own identities (Erikson, 1982).

According to Erikson’s (1982) theory, adolescence is a stage of identity formation, during which the basic patterns of identity are established. The formation of basic identity is influenced by the identification that occurs in earlier stages leading up to adolescence, as well as how society identifies individuals (Erikson, 1982). While the adolescence stage is essential for identity formation, previous stages have a significant impact on the process, and later stages contribute to the development of identity (Erikson, 1982). Additionally, the context in which individuals live plays a key role in shaping their identity, whether positively or negatively (Erikson, 1982). The author emphasizes that identity is not static but rather a dynamic process influenced by the overall context of human life, interacting with society and other individuals.

Kiecolt (1994) illustrates Erikson’s (1982) theory of identity development by narrowing its focus. The author concentrates on individuals who experience a significant, life-changing event that influences their identity's development and transformation. Such events prompt individuals to rethink and reassess their identities (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). Building on Kiecolt's (1994) work, Cinoğlu and Arıkan (2012) explain that the process of evaluating and transforming one’s identity occurs in three ways: converting it into a new identity, altering the importance of the current identity, or changing both the importance and the ranking of that identity. As a result, identity evaluation and the context of individuals’ lives lead to what is known as multiple identities.

In their article, Stets and Burke (2003) explain the concept of multiple identities, which arise when individuals experience different contexts and conform to societal standards. As a result,

people interact with others with a distinct identity that can change depending on the situation; this can also apply to groups (Stets and Burke, 2003).

Similarly, in their article titled “Self, Identity and Identity Formation: From the Perspectives of Three Major Theories,” Cinoğlu and Arıkan (2012) examine the idea of multiple identities that people use in different situations. While people develop various identities through their interactions in different contexts, there is one primary identity that greatly influences their other identities (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). These identities form within the individual in relation to society because people need validation from a larger group, which is the society or the group they belong to (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012).

Identity is not made up of just one layer; instead, it consists of multiple overlapping layers of identities (Stets and Burke, 2000). People do not develop a single individual identity or a single collective identity but rather multiple individual and collective identities that reflect different parts of their lives. For example, a person's identity as a father is different from their identity as a lecturer. A collective identity within a larger group related to gender is different from a collective identity related to religion, as each is shaped by specific similarities. “The literature revealed that self tends to have more than one identity; however, we should not overlook the fact that most of the time it has one master identity that shapes or at least influences other identities that that particular individual occupies” (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012).

Failure to obtain approval from a larger group can lead to self-doubt in the individual, prompting them to question their own identity as a way to gain acceptance within society and the group (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). The lack of acceptance may limit the individual's interactions within society and the group, depending on the context, thereby restricting their identities and the process of their development (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). According to the authors, building on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, the sense of belonging to a group or society is essential for individuals. Those seeking acceptance and conformity eventually find themselves under the influence and control of society (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012).

2.2. Identity and conflict: Palestinian-Israeli conflict

It is believed that an entity experiences an identity crisis while trying to define and shape its own or its collective identity in this world. In other words, facing an identity crisis helps us better understand who we are and what challenges we face. Some view identity conflict as a sign of growth in both the individual and society, while others see it as a clash of competing values or

ideals. Cultural, religious, gender, and socioeconomic factors are thought to be significantly affected. Additionally, it is believed that gaining insight into identity conflict helps individuals understand themselves better, which in turn makes it easier for them to integrate into society. Collective identity disputes can impact the stability of society and social peace, which are known to occur in societies. Therefore, understanding identity conflict and actively seeking solutions are essential skills for members of society (Akkuş, 2019).

The ability to think critically is essential for resolving identity conflicts, as these conflicts are often complex and hard to define, and simple answers can be misleading. Improved social communication and interaction occur when people think more broadly. Personal characteristics and ideals that define an individual and distinguish him from others form his unique identity, which is one type of identity. An individual's sense of self is vital to developing healthy self-esteem. When people are at odds, their sense of self plays an important role. Society tends to be more accepting and supportive when a person has a clear and distinct identity. Proof of identity and the ability to make one's own decisions are additional benefits of a strong sense of self. When people feel pressured to choose between different collective identities, this is called identity conflict (Kelman, 1999).

Identity crises can occur when individuals struggle to reconcile their religious beliefs with their cultural or social identities. Internal conflicts caused by this disagreement can ultimately influence a person's life path. Recognizing and valuing each other's unique traits might help reduce identity conflicts. To live peacefully with others, people need to understand that we are all special in our own ways and that embracing our differences is the first step (Kelman, 2001).

2.3. Identity Among Refugees

“When a community experiences or fears murder, rape, kidnapping, destruction of their homes or looting, flight is a natural reaction.”

Olivier Bangerter, FMR 2011

“A refugee, we might say, is a person fleeing life-threatening conditions.” (Shacknove, 1985, p. 274). The strongest emotion refugees face is feeling like an outsider. Today, there are about four million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.” (Knudsen & Hanafi, 2010, p. 1). Refugees often feel confused about their lives and especially about their sense of place, unsure if they truly belong. Their confusion is not only internal but also extends to the world around them. Refugees are individuals displaced from their homelands and held in refugee camps (Turner, 1969). “The term

'camp' comes from the Latin term *campus*, meaning 'open field, level space' and was originally associated with open areas for military exercises, defined as a space set apart from other areas." (Turner, 1969, p. 141). Refugee camps are initially built as a temporary solution; however, they can sometimes become semi-permanent (Sheikh, 2006). In these camps, refugees often feel conflicted because they cannot decide whether to settle down or not (Turner, 1969).

This definition is similar to that found in Mosselsom's (2006) work, which shows that refugees are people who have been displaced because of conflicts, leaving them with no choice but to seek safety. The author describes the refugees' overall experience as a source of their pain. War greatly affects refugees' identity development because it causes trauma, change, and the need for adaptation (Mosselsom, 2006).

In Mosselsom's (2006) article "Roots & Routes: A Re-Imagining of Refugee Identity Constructions and the Implications for Schooling," the author explains that refugees' identity is a mix of their past, present, and future. They try to find a balance between their connection to their origins (roots) and their hopes for their new homes as part of their future (routes) (Mosselsom, 2006). Each person has their own way of handling the refugee experience, which ultimately shapes their individual identity (Mosselsom, 2006). Mosselsom (2006), in line with Erikson (1982), shows that adolescence is a key time for forming one's identity. During this stage, adolescents also face the challenging task of adapting to a refugee identity (Mosselsom, 2006).

The refugees' individual identity is shaped by their experiences and suffering, and their collective identity shares very similar experiences (Vigil & Abidi, 2018). Similarly, Beauregard, Papazian-Zohrabian, and Rousseau (2017), in their article "Making Sense of Collective Identity and Trauma through Drawing: The Case Study of a Palestinian Refugee Student," show that refugees have a wounded identity damaged by their experiences of displacement and violence. The authors confirm that not only is the individual identity of refugees affected by these events, but their collective identity is also impacted because they share the same trauma. Although the next generation of displacement did not witness what the first generation did, they inherited everything and passed it on to future generations (Beauregard et al., 2017). Despite these challenges, all refugees have experienced trauma that has influenced their identity development in one way or another (Wise, 2004).

It is important to note that since its founding, the State of Israel has been working to change the identity of its Arab minority from Palestinian Arab to Israeli Arab. In addressing the issue of

internal refugees, Israel has repeatedly and stubbornly tried to erase the “refugee identity” of these individuals, forcing them to abandon their demand to return home. A refugee's identity stems from the fact that someone is displaced—someone who was uprooted from their home and village. The Palestinian internal refugee is a Palestinian who was displaced during the 1948 war, remained within Israel’s borders, and was not allowed to return to their village or town (Murgia, 2021).

2.4. Historical Overview: Roots of Palestinian Identity

To provide context for the study, this section offers a brief overview of Palestinian history and identity, focusing on displacement, the refugee experience, and the development of camps like Jenin refugee camp. Its goal is to present a clear sequence of events to help the reader better understand the study's content.

Archaeological excavations show that humans have been present in Palestine since ancient times. Some believe that Palestinian identity has existed since the beginning of history and that civilization started in Palestine, where the first city, Jericho, was built. Human presence in Palestine dates back to the Lower Paleolithic period. The Canaanites were a Semitic people who had long settled in what is now Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. The origin of the word "Palestinians" can be traced to the indigenous peoples who lived along the southwestern coast of Palestine, from Gaza in the south to Jaffa in the north. Many of these peoples established important towns, including Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. In ancient Egyptian and Assyrian writings, the homeland of the Palestinians was referred to as "Palasto" or "Pelisto." This name is the same as the Greek word "Philistia," which later became Palestina (Palestine). Multiple waves of Palestinians migrated to Palestine over time. Eventually, the term "Philisti" came to mean "ancient Palestinian" in Western contexts (Ra'ad, 2019).

The conflict between the Palestinian and Jewish settlements, according to Nassar (1998), is where Palestinian identity first began to take shape. Because establishing agricultural colonies was the main goal of Jewish colonization, conflicts arose in the countryside rather than the cities. He further stated that, in response to the Zionist threat, many groups formed, with members identifying as Arab, Syrian, Islamic, or Christian.

Palestine has experienced a series of significant events throughout history, with one ongoing to this day. The Israeli occupation has gone through multiple stages, supported by various parties, to maintain control over Palestine. This section explores Palestinian history from 1948 to recent

events in 2023, with a particular focus on the Jenin refugee camp. By highlighting the history and suffering of Palestinians and refugees, this section aims to illustrate their enduring struggles, emphasizing key historical events to provide context. Additionally, it offers insights into how Palestinian history and the occupation have shaped their individual and collective identities since 1948.

“His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.”

The Balfour Declaration, 1917

The British Mandate's efforts to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine have continued since the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). These efforts are not only aimed at helping the Jewish people; they are also driven by British interests (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). After Jerusalem fell under British control, their attempts to create a homeland for Jews included encouraging Jewish migration to Palestine, taking Palestinian lands, and using pressure and suppression against Palestinians (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). In 1920, the British mandate was officially approved in Palestine (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). In 1922, the League of Nations recognized its framework, enabling the British mandate to carry out the Balfour Declaration (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013).

“Al-Nakba is an extended event which started before 1948, the impact never ended nor did the action once the truce was declared.”

Al-Araj, 2018, p. 17

In 1948, despite the resistance of Palestinians and Arabs against the expansion of the Zionist movement supported by the British mandate, the Nakba occurred, leading to the displacement of Palestinian people, ethnic cleansing, and destruction (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). As a result of the Nakba, the British Mandate in Palestine ended, and the state of Israel was declared (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). After Resolution 181 called for establishing both an Arab state and a Jewish state in Palestine, it sparked a war between Arab military forces with Palestinians and Zionists, who received support from the British mandate (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). The Arab military forces scored a significant victory in the early stages (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). However, both sides agreed to a four-week truce, giving the Zionists a chance to regroup by violating the truce terms (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). When the Arabs refused to extend the truce, the war resumed, resulting

in the defeat of Arab military forces, which led to a new truce and, eventually, a permanent ceasefire in 1949 (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013).

Al-Nakba left a wounded memory among Palestinians because of the events they witnessed during war, such as displacement, massacres, land seizures, and ethnic cleansing, among others (Al-Araj, 2018). As a result of these events, each Palestinian formed a memory of Al-Nakba, which over time merged to create a collective memory (Al-Araj, 2018).

“But it is not intellectually tenable to deny the fact that Zionism is a colonizing project and the State of Israel is a settlers’ state.”

Machover, 2012, p. 4

During Al-Naksa in 1967, the Israeli military occupation, which received support from the United States, began the war against three Arab countries—Egypt, Jordan, and Syria—as well as against the Palestinian resistance (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013). Al-Naksa resulted in the killing and displacement of more Palestinians from their homes (Bahlawan & Saleh, 2013).

“Between the violence and destruction, determination is generated.”

Al-Hadad, 2021, p. 55

The major event happened after Al-Naksa in 1967, and the first Uprising, known as the first Intifada, occurred from 1987-1993. Palestinians widely cooperated against Israeli military occupation and their ongoing actions since Al-Nakba (Al-Araj, 2018). The second Uprising, or second Intifada, took place from 2000-2005, with key events including the tragic killing of child Muhammad Aldora and the invasion of the Jenin refugee camp.

2.5. Formation of identity awareness among Palestinians

Palestinian national identity did not form suddenly but instead developed gradually over time, pausing at various moments for reflection and eventual clarification. Throughout history, the Palestinian people have faced numerous crises and tragedies, the most recent of which occurred in the twentieth century. These events significantly influenced the growth of their identity (Elbedour & Center, 1997). Historians differ on when Palestinian identity began to take shape; some say it was during the time of the Canaanites, while others believe it was in the early 1900s, when Zionism emerged and threatened the Palestinian community and their presence on their land. This was especially true after the Ottoman Empire collapsed following World War I, dividing Arab countries like Palestine and subjecting them to Western colonialism (i.e., after 1917) (Makkawi, 2004).

Attempts to erase the Palestinian presence were among the key reasons that strengthened the need to affirm identity, as identity fundamentally signifies existence and serves as the safeguard of the political, social, and cultural entity (Kimmerling, 2000). According to Sayegh (2009), in her research on “Impersonations of Identity in Palestinian Refugee Camps,” the idea of a unified Palestinian identity is viewed as a dominant concept among activists and researchers who use the term “identity” as if it represents something uniform, without considering the diversity of cultural and political contexts influencing Palestinians’ lives, along with their long history of displacement. She also argued that treating identity as if it were unified and homogeneous provides an illusion of true national unity, which in turn worsens the current crisis facing the national movement.

Accordingly, after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian leadership contributed to weakening the connection between the identity of the people and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Although the idea of a common national identity still has unifying power, it no longer plays a role in mobilizing people toward shared goals or a common struggle. In this context, popular national methods become important alternatives on the strategic level. It is worth noting that the focus here is on “camp refugees,” a segment of the Palestinian population considered marginalized and not officially represented.

2.6. The Formation of Palestinian Identity from Rashid Khalidi's "Palestinian Identity" Perspective

Rashid Khalidi (1997) examines the development of Palestinian identity within complex political and historical contexts in his book. His main goal is to counter the idea that Palestinian identity mainly emerged in response to Zionism. While he acknowledges that Zionism has significantly influenced Palestinian identity—as the primary “other” Palestinians have faced throughout the century—he emphasizes that Palestinians’ sense of belonging to Palestine existed before encountering Zionism.

According to Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian identity existed before the Palestinian people as a whole recognized it. This Palestinian self-concept developed around the early 1900s, when Palestinians began to see themselves as a distinct political group. Using Benedict Anderson's theory of “imagined communities,” which links the rise of media discourse to the start of self-awareness and other-awareness, Khalidi contends that while the diaspora provided Palestinians with a unique experience that distinguished them from other groups, it also temporarily slowed the political

development of Palestinian identity. However, the refugee period was crucial in shaping the early stages of Palestinian identity.

Khalidi argues that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and subsequent divisions, such as the British Mandate system, marked a critical turning point in Palestinian history and identity formation. The fight against Zionism and the British was connected to the creation of the State of Palestine. Despite everything, the Palestinians began to reshape their national identity, especially after the 1948 loss, the Nakba, and the displacement that followed. After 1967, the author claims, Palestinians regained some political power by overcoming their refugee status. According to Khalidi, Zionist narratives depict Palestinian identity as something new and temporary. Khalidi, referencing the work of Alexander Schulich and Baruch Kimmerling, states that the Sanjak of Jerusalem's historical importance as an administrative region shows that Palestinians had an evolving sense of self-identity before the Mandate. Major political crises, including the British Mandate and the two World Wars, helped Palestinians become more confident in their identity.

The Palestinians "started to imagine" (to use Anderson's term) a unified political community during these times. Although the national identity did not initially include all socioeconomic groups, it did so over time. Overall, according to Khalidi, Palestinian identity grew from a complex web of historical forces that interacted both locally and globally. Its development was influenced by Zionism, but it was not the only factor. As more Arab states formed their national identities in response to historical and institutional changes, Palestinian identity became part of this broader process.

2.7. Development of Palestinian Identity at home and in diaspora

Palestinians' identity has developed under Israeli occupation, which significantly influences their sense of self. After the Palestinian people dispersed due to Israeli occupation, they divided into three distinct groups based on location. These groups include Palestinian refugees displaced and living in camps across the Middle East, such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians residing in the occupied territories, and Palestinians abroad.

Each group has experienced occupation differently from the others, and each generation has witnessed a different number of events. As a result, both the group and the generation have played a crucial role in shaping the Palestinians' identity under occupation. For example, the refugee experience differs from that of Palestinians living in occupied Palestine. Furthermore, the

generation that experienced Al-Nakba witnessed all the subsequent events; however, not all generations experienced Al-Nakba, although all Palestinians suffered its consequences. This section aims to provide an overview of Palestinian identity within these three different groups, including its development and transformation in light of their experiences under Israeli occupation.

Before 1948, Palestinians rooted their identity in their country and its culture (Said, 1979). They viewed Palestine and all related aspects as central to their identity (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). After the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian identity took a different direction, but it was not lost (Said, 1979). "Al-Nakbah has become a constitutive element of Palestinian identity" (Sa'di, 2002, p. 176-177). The Nakba of 1948 is an event that unites Palestinians as the start of their suffering under Israeli occupation, shaping their collective memory and influencing their identity (Sa'di, 2002). "As Palestinian identity has evolved over time, its elements have varied, with some eventually disappearing and others newly emerging" (Khalidi, 1997, p. 19). According to Khalidi (1997), Palestinian identity continuously develops based on their context under Israeli control. Rather than being static, their identity adapts in response to the occupation (Khalidi, 1997).

However, Said (1994) argues that Palestinians' identity is shaped by the context of the Israeli occupation. Their identity is rooted in the traumatic event of Al-Nakba, which significantly influences their future after displacement (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). The displacement of Palestinians during Al-Nakba in 1948 and Al-Naksa in 1967 marks their loss against the Israeli occupation and forms their collective memory (Suleiman, 2016). The diaspora created by Palestinians has led to a diversity in their identities, shaped by their different lived experiences (Suleiman, 2016). Each group within Palestinian identity develops as they try to establish roots in new places (Suleiman, 2016).

"Home is carried home in one's bones" (Suleiman, 2016, p. 2). Although the Israeli occupation displaced Palestinians from their original lands, they managed to maintain their connection to those lands. They also built a sense of connection and attachment to their new homes, seeking to belong (Akesson, 2015). The changes in their lives influence their identity development (Akesson, 2015). Therefore, their feelings of losing their homes also contribute to their attachment to the new place and to their identity linked to that place (Akesson, 2015). Nonetheless, the identity of Palestinians remains rooted in Palestine through passing it on to future generations, as they are the living memory of Palestine (Suleiman, 2016).

Family plays a crucial role in individuals' lives, helping to raise them as Palestinians and preserve Palestinian identity (Suleiman, 2016). "The individual members and the family system "inherit, negotiate, shape, and rework" their own identity related to family" (Akesson, 2015, p. 3). The Palestinians' identity is seen as their legacy and heritage that must be passed on to future generations (Suleiman, 2016). The stories and narratives Palestinians tell about Palestine are vital for maintaining their identity and providing Palestinians with a way to define and understand themselves (Suleiman, 2016). "We imagine and narrate identity to ourselves" (Suleiman, 2016). Akesson (2015) emphasizes that family is important in shaping identity in Palestine through the stories, narratives, and even emotions related to their families' experiences under Israeli occupation. "I feel Palestinian because I was raised to be" (Suleiman, 2016, p. 22). Thus, daily life significantly influences Palestinian identity, fostering attachments across generations to their ancestral lands (Makdisi & Silverstein, 2006).

Palestinian identity encompasses two emotions: loss and hope (Suleiman, 2016). "As long as Palestine is occupied and the Palestinians are not free, I choose to be a Palestinian" (Suleiman, 2016, p. 68). Therefore, the resilience and resistance of Palestinians are integral to their identity (Said, 1994). However, the ways in which Palestinians express resilience and resistance vary based on their experiences under Israeli occupation. Aoude (2001) emphasizes the importance of the diaspora in shaping Palestinian identity, especially in passing it on to future generations.

Kimmerling and Migdal (2003), on the other hand, highlight the importance of active resistance against the Israeli occupation. Palestinian resistance and resilience aren't limited; they appear in various forms. Suliman (2016) explains that Palestinian identity is constantly on alert, making it harder to preserve. However, it can be maintained through clarification (Suliman, 2016). Older generations pass down their identity, emotions, experiences, displacement, and other elements related to Palestine to the younger generation as a way of clarifying identity (Suliman, 2016). This serves as a means to connect history to the present, ensuring the future of Palestine and Palestinian identity.

As Akesson (2015) clarifies, the Palestinian identity encompasses the history, present, and future of Palestine under the Israeli occupation. This demonstrates that being alive as a Palestinian under the challenges of the Israeli occupation is simply a form of resistance and resilience against it, whether inside or outside Palestine.

According to Sa'di (2002), Al-Nakba led to the emergence of two distinct categories: “the inside” (Palestinians living inside the occupied Palestine) and “the outside” (the refugees). For refugees, Al-Nakba symbolizes the loss of their homes, destroying their sense of belonging to a place and a culture (Sa'di, 2002). Describing Palestinian refugees' feelings about losing their homes and belongings, Darwish (1983) said: “My homeland is a suitcase.” Therefore, their identity is mostly shaped by the loss of their right to have a home because they were displaced from their homes due to Israeli occupation (Sa'di, 2002). In that sense, only their collective memory helped them cope with their alienation (Sa'di, 2002).

As for the Palestinians living within occupied Palestine, they struggle with “existential anxiety” (Sa'di, 2002). They are uncertain about their future and the fate of their displaced people, as some of them were displaced and became refugees during Al-Naksa in 1967 (Sa'di, 2002). Their identity is wounded because every aspect of their life remains uncertain (Suleiman, 2016). Furthermore, Israeli occupation has significantly impacted Palestinian culture, leaving them in a state of confusion (Sa'di, 2002). They lack the freedom to be recognized as Palestinians, which adds to their internal struggles (Suleiman, 2016). Therefore, their fight is not only against external forces of the Israeli occupation but also includes internal battles like their ongoing fear of displacement.

In his book “Out of Place,” Said (1999) describes the mixed emotions and multiple identities of Palestinians living outside their homeland. The author discusses the conflict between their original identity and the newly constructed one, which makes him feel out of place and unaccepted by others. Said (2003), in his book *Orientalism*, emphasizes the struggle Palestinians face with their identification. They struggle with how the world perceives Palestinians, which in turn influences how they perceive themselves (Said, 2003). Furthermore, they grapple with their hybrid identity because they have additional identities besides the Palestinian one (Suleiman, 2016). As Suleiman (2016) and Akesson (2015) discuss, the multiple identities of Palestinians outside Palestine influence the development of their Palestinian identity. Therefore, Palestinians outside Palestine tend to preserve and defend their identity as it is seen as their form of resistance against the occupation (Said, 2003). “The only identity I carry or that matters to me is being Palestinian” (Suleiman, 2016).

Like twenty impossibilities
in Lydda, Ramla and Galilee ...
here we shall remain.
Zayyad, n.d., para. 1

2.8. Jenin refugee camp

The Palestinian lives his entire life as a refugee—in his homeland, in exile, in travels, and in settlement. The feeling of being a refugee stays with him, and he must prove to the world that he is Palestinian and that Palestine is a real place. Jenin refugee camp was built in 1950 for the people displaced from their homelands in Palestine in 1948 and 1967, leading to resistance groups (Haweel, 2022). In 2002, the Israeli occupation military forces invaded Jenin refugee camp, causing a massacre, destruction, bombings, detentions, and blocking media and ambulances from entering, among other actions (Haweel, 2022). The resistance group in Jenin fought back against the Israeli forces and refused to be displaced again (Haweel, 2022). Inspired by these events, the resistance group reformed under the name “Katibat Jenin,” especially after the tragic killing of Shireen Abu Akleh by Israeli forces while she was covering an invasion in the camp.

In July 2023, Jenin refugee camp experienced another invasion as the Israeli occupation military forces entered the camp for 40 hours, causing destruction, death, and bombing. This event reminded the refugees of the invasion that occurred in 2002. Similarly, in December 2023, the Israeli occupation military forces invaded the camp again, resulting in deaths, destruction, and detentions over three days.

People in Palestine face daily hardships under Israeli occupation. This overview of Palestine does not offer a detailed history; rather, it highlights significant events to help understand the context in which Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp have lived under Israeli control from 1948 to 2023.

This chapter reviewed literature related to identity development, especially focusing on the identities of refugees and Palestinians. The literature acknowledged the distinct identity of Palestinians and refugees considering their situation under occupation. A thorough understanding of the identity development of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp requires examining Palestine's historical background. Therefore, this research explores the identity of Palestinian refugees in the Jenin refugee camp influenced by the Israeli occupation since 1948. Additionally, it emphasizes the main factors shaping identity within the context of occupation.

Despite extensive research on identity and its development, several gaps still exist in the literature. Most studies mainly focus on the psychological and social impacts on the process of identity development but do not examine the influence of occupation on the identity of those occupied. Furthermore, although the Israeli occupation has significantly affected the Jenin refugee camp, few studies have explored the identity of Palestinians there, especially within the context of the occupation. Finally, much of the existing literature on identity helps to understand how Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp develop their identity under Israeli occupation.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological framework used to examine Palestinian identity in the Jenin refugee camp since 1948. Because the study focuses on history, lived experience, collective memory, and everyday actions by the Israeli occupation, a qualitative approach was chosen to enable deep engagement with participants' stories.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the main method for data collection to capture individual perspectives while maintaining flexibility in the conversation. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, as it is the native language of the residents of Jenin refugee camp. They included multiple questions designed to gradually explore their personal and collective identities. Each interview lasted between 30 and 50 minutes and was audio recorded with informed consent. The questions focused on themes such as identity, experiences, memory, and place under occupation. The opening question was "Who are you?" which aims to elicit spontaneous thoughts that may be connected to their identity. Other questions used in the interviews are provided in an appendix for further detail.

After all the interviews had been completed and transcribed, the transcription was translated into English to help with the thematic analysis process. Analyzing the data thematically made it possible to identify patterns and themes that reflect the participants' lived experiences and their perceptions of their identity within the camp.

The data demonstrate that Palestinian identity has experienced significant changes over the years, evolving from a collective experience of displacement and loss to a more complex and hybrid identity formed by the camp's unique social, economic, and political conditions. These findings greatly influence our understanding of how identity forms and develops in the context of forced displacement and long-term refugee situations. This will, of course, be emphasized more clearly in the findings and discussion.

3.1. The sample

A **purposive sampling** method was used to select participants who could offer in-depth insights into the study's themes, such as displacement and resistance. **Snowball sampling** was also utilized, where participants recommended others who could provide relevant perspectives. The study involved a sample of 30 refugees living in the Jenin refugee camp. The chosen

participants were residents whose histories trace back to the original displacement caused by the Israeli occupation in the 1948 Nakba. The participants fell into the following age groups: (18-29), (30-39), (40-49), (50-59), (60-69), and (70+). This selection ensured equal representation of both males and females, with a 50% gender distribution.

The selection of participants was partly random, while also considering their backgrounds related to the Israeli occupation. This approach aimed to ensure the inclusion of a wide and diverse range of experiences and histories that refugees have experienced.

To identify participants, the researcher assigned codes to their names based on age, gender, education, and their number in the sample, such as 29_F_Yes1. This method was used to protect their identity and preserve confidentiality. The goal of this approach was to cover all major historical events in Palestinian history that have shaped Palestinian identity and its development since 1948, including those related to displacement, resistance, and transformation.

3.2. Limitation

This study has three main limitations: its small sample size, its temporal scope, and the ongoing Israeli occupation. As a qualitative study, the focus was on depth rather than breadth; however, the experiences of refugees in other Palestinian refugee camps are not represented, as the study is limited to the Jenin refugee camp. The second limitation concerns the study's temporal scope. Although the Jenin refugee camp was established in 1948, Palestinians experienced multiple changes before 1948 that may have influenced their identity and that of future generations. The ongoing Israeli occupation is the third limitation, due to its impact on refugees in Jenin. The researcher was unable to interview some participants because of actions taken by the occupation, including killings, arrests, and daily oppression.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is not fixed; it is constantly shaped and reshaped over time. According to Erikson (1982), age significantly influences identity development, highlighting that identity is formed through lived experience. In Jenin, this development happens under the long-standing and ongoing control of Israeli occupation. As Khalidi (1997) notes, “*The PA has become a sort of subcontractor for Israel and has thus served in part to mask the reality of an Israeli military occupation whose full security control over all these territories, and total domination over land and other resources, is now in its forty-second year.*” Such domination directly affects how identity is formed both individually and collectively within the camp.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the research findings, aiming to answer the main questions through the lens of Third Space Theory and Rashid Khalidi’s framework in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. It examines how Palestinian identities—both individual and collective—are shaped in response to occupation, focusing on factors such as history, place, collective memory, and historical narrative, along with social elements like age, gender, religion, education, and work. By concentrating on the Jenin refugee camp, this analysis underscores the significant and complex influence of Israeli occupation on identity formation within a space characterized by resistance, displacement, and resilience.

4.1. Identity of the Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp

During the interviews, I asked participants to introduce themselves and reflect on meaningful aspects of their lives. This process allowed a deeper understanding of how they perceive and build their identities. Many participants started by defining themselves through core social pillars, especially family and education. For example, Participant (46_M_Yes15) said, “*Family is very important to me,*” highlighting the central role of family relationships in shaping their sense of self. Likewise, Participant (29_F_Yes1) stated, “*My education is important to me,*” showing how personal growth and links to wider societal structures influence individual identity. These responses show that identity is not created in isolation but is closely linked to both private social environments and public spheres.

Moreover, participants did not discuss identity solely in personal terms; instead, they often positioned themselves in relation to the “Other”—specifically, the Israeli occupation. This was especially clear in statements that linked educational goals to resistance and future ambitions. Participant (51_M_Yes19) asserted, “*Education is important, particularly in the hard situation under the Israeli occupation. It is related to the nature of our life here in Palestine under the Israeli occupation. It serves as a key for our freedom.*” Another participant (32_M_Yes9) said, “Our life here in Palestine made me want to be a journalist.” These responses show how identity formation in Jenin is influenced not only by internal values but also by ongoing negotiations with external forces. In this context, education and work become both personal and political acts—tools of empowerment, resilience, and even resistance under occupation.

Therefore, the identity of Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp is complex, dynamic, and multi-layered. It is continuously shaped by a mix of historical events, the physical and social environment of the camp, collective memory, and personal experiences. Palestinian identity here cannot be seen as fixed or unchanging; instead, it is in a constant state of negotiation, influenced by the interplay of past traumas, ongoing occupation, and daily struggles for survival, which involves a production of power, narrative, resistance, and the in-between.

To understand how identity is constantly negotiated, Bhabha (1994) introduces the concept of the liminal or “third space” — an in-between zone where fixed identities break down, allowing new, hybrid identities to form. These hybrid identities develop in dynamic, in-between spaces where they serve as both a survival strategy and a subtle form of resistance. As Bhabha (1994) explains:

“The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.” (Bhabha, 1994, p.5).

Homi Bhabha’s (1994) concept of the liminal space, symbolized by the stairwell, reflects a site of transition and negotiation where fixed identities are unsettled, and hybrid forms of self emerge. In this context, individuals experience a sense of being in between as they construct their identities. Occupation, as an external force, does not simply suppress identity but creates

conditions in which people are compelled to renegotiate who they are in response to the Israeli occupation. Several participants described feeling split or lost between their own identity and the "imposed" identity shaped by occupation. Therefore, they neither fully belong to one side nor the other but move between them.

Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of the third space or liminal space, the Jenin refugee camp can be seen as both a physical and symbolic site—an "in-between" zone where imposed narratives and identities intersect—between displacement and belonging, resistance and survival. For example, residents live in a space that is geographically Palestinian but marked by their refugee status and the Israeli occupation. This creates a situation where identities are neither fully national nor completely displaced but are constantly reshaped based on political realities. The camp functions as a liminal zone where Palestinians express their identity through collective memory, resistance, and everyday social interactions, carving out a sense of belonging despite the occupation.

The participants' emphasis on education, family, work, and resistance illustrates how identities in the Jenin refugee camp are continuously shaped in the liminal space between oppression and self-determination. Through their narratives, it becomes clear that identity is both relational and resistant, shaped by social roles and the lived experience of occupation.

Rashid Khalidi (1997) further explains how Palestinian identity is influenced by various factors—transnational, local, and familial—and by the ongoing fight for sovereignty, which Palestinians have not yet fully achieved. This lack of complete national independence keeps Palestinians in a continuous state of negotiation and resistance, shaping their identities actively in response to occupation and displacement. Therefore, Khalidi (1997) demonstrates:

“Clearly, this relationship between definition of the self and of the other is characteristic of many peoples in the Middle East and elsewhere, particularly those in the numerous nation-states established since World War I. For all of these peoples, transnational identities (whether religious or national), local patriotism, and affiliations of family and clan have competed for loyalty. The pull of competing loyalties has been considerably stronger for the Palestinians than for others, so that these multiple foci of identity are characteristic features of their history.

Why is this the case? Part of the answer is relatively simple: unlike most of the other peoples in the Middle East, the Palestinians have never achieved any form of national independence in their own homeland. In spite of some success in asserting their national identity inside and outside

Palestine, they have consistently failed over the years to create for themselves a space where they are in full control or are fully sovereign.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.10)

Considering this, individuals living under occupation face constant tension in their identity formation. They often find themselves torn between a deeply rooted self-understanding and a newly constructed sense of identity, as well as the imposed structures, narratives, and classifications enforced by the occupying power.

In light of this, Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp explain themselves by combining various aspects while sharing self-introductions and emphasizing important parts of their lives, such as experiences, family, work, and education. In other words, Palestinians primarily define themselves through the presence and actions of the Israeli occupation. This also extends to describing their relationship with the outside world concerning the Israeli occupation, such as their connections to family, education, and work.

Their responses show that they are attached to their family because Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp have been losing relatives since 1948. Therefore, family is a very important part of their lives. Education is also very important because it is seen as the future of Palestine and the next generations. Similarly, work is highly valued. Some types of work, like doctors and journalists, are especially influential for Palestine's future. Many Palestinians' responses clearly indicate that their choices about education and work are heavily influenced by the Israeli occupation's presence and actions.

This highlights the importance of education as a form of resilience and resistance against occupation. Educated Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp emphasize their education as their act of resistance. Those who did not pursue their education shared details about their work, if relevant. Some Palestinians introduced their work in relation to the Israeli occupation, as it involves direct or indirect engagement with it.

The correlation that the Palestinians emphasize between their work and the Israeli occupation shows how deeply the Israeli occupation influences the thoughts and decisions of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, based on the situation. The narrative shared by the participants indicates that their lives and choices would likely be very different if not for the occupation.

Some participants' self-identities were confined to the outcomes of Israeli occupation actions, as reflected in their responses: *"I am a refugee."* (46_M_Yes15), *"My personality results from being a girl from the Jenin Refugee camp."* (22_F_Yes 5), and *"We sacrificed our years and people for Palestine."* (40_F_Yes 14).

Considering this, the influence of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp grows stronger based on individual experiences. The occupation greatly shapes their understanding of identity. Palestinians describing themselves as refugees highlight the lasting effects of the displacement trauma from 1948. Alternatively, it may reflect their deep connection to their roots, constantly reminding themselves that they are labeled as refugees. Likewise, Palestinians who associate their personalities with living in the Jenin refugee camp reveal how the trauma of displacement in 1948 and its ongoing effects permeate every part of their lives. For example, living a different life within the camp symbolizes a part of their identity and a testament to their suffering.

In that sense, many participants mentioned the Jenin refugee camp as their birthplace when asked to introduce themselves. Furthermore, many highlighted the importance of the Jenin refugee camp in their lives. In their self-introductions, they stated: *"Jenin refugee camp is important to me."* (39_F_Yes6), and *"I am from the Jenin refugee camp."* (51_M_Yes_19).

Given this, the Jenin refugee camp appears to play a significant role in shaping individual identities as their liminal space. Although Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp were forced to live there, they developed a strong connection to the camp, which will be further explained later.

In contrast, other participants identified themselves through their original lands. They emphasized the importance of their original lands: *"I am from Zir'in and in 1948 I was only 6 years old."* (82_F_No27), and *"I was born in Alghubaya near Haifa."* (92_M_No30). This illustrates the impact of the Israeli occupation based on the age of the Palestinians. Older Palestinians who experienced displacement in 1948 tend to return to their original land. However, this does not diminish the significance of their liminal zone in their lives, as it shapes their realities. As was clear in the participant's words: *"I am from Yafa, and I am living in the Jenin refugee camp."* (80_M_Yes29).

The difference in how younger and older participants describe the place shows the different effects of the Israeli occupation on various generations. While younger people see themselves in relation to the occupation and their actions, older people tend to define themselves mainly by their

history. This suggests that the younger generation connects to their present, emphasizing a theme of resistance. In contrast, the older generation is defined by their past and loss, highlighting resilience. This variation in how different generations identify with the place demonstrates that occupation affects each generation and individual differently. As a result, it influences how people form and develop their identities. It also underscores the difference between how individuals express their identities and navigate their realities.

As stated earlier, “Identity is partly the relationship between you and the Other” (Khalidi, 1997, p.9). Notably, many participants portrayed themselves as connecting to the other. In the context of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, this connection shows how deeply the Israeli occupation affects the lives of Palestinians. The degree to which individuals mention the Israeli occupation during their self-introductions is closely linked to how much the occupation impacts their lives. The Israeli occupation affects all residents of the Jenin refugee camp, but there is a variation in the level of impact. This variation is due to individual experiences under the Israeli occupation. In this context, Bhabha (1994) argues:

“But great events persist beyond their happening, leaving a sense of expectation in the air like the telling vacancy of weather, the silence, that often follows a spectacular storm, never letting you forget that it happened.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. Preface).

Khalidi (1997) also argues:

“The construction of identity... involves the construction of opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from ‘us.’” (Khalidi, 1997, p.10)

The identity of the Palestinians is shaped not only by external perceptions but also by their personal experiences in relation to others. Although their identity is influenced by historical trauma and ongoing occupation, Palestinians’ personal experiences are not identical. Participant (40_M_Yes14) stated, “*I am a former prisoner in the prisons of the Israeli occupation, where I felt that I lost many years captured. My brother is a martyr whose killing has changed our lives and roles in the family.*” The responses given by the participants support the previous theory of the in-between, suggesting that individuals develop their identity through the midst of significant events. These events influence how they construct and reconstruct their sense of self through their personal influences and experiences. This process enables individuals to develop their unique sense of identity.

In light of this, there is variation in how the Israeli occupation impacts Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. Throughout the interview, one participant focused solely on her child, his suffering from the occupation, and her suffering along with him. Participant (80_F_No26) said, *“My whole life, I wanted a boy. God pleased me with a boy, but because we live in the Jenin refugee camp under Israeli occupation. My boy was injured in the camp. He was also arrested, and I went to all Israeli occupation prisons to visit him for 17 and a half years. The Israeli occupation killed him.”* Therefore, it is clear how they define themselves in relation to the impact of Israeli actions. While some Palestinians are affected by the loss of family members, others are impacted by the time spent in Israeli prisons. Some also expressed worry about aspects like safety and the future. Participant (30_F_Yes7) said, *“Safety is important because we do not have safety here,”* and participant (49_F_Yes13) stated, *“I am afraid of what is going to happen.”* Therefore, loss is a key aspect of their self-definition.

I aimed to understand the participants’ identities more deeply; therefore, I asked them to describe their understanding of identity. They responded with diverse and expanded answers. Their responses vary and grow when asked directly about identity. One participant said: *“Identity consists of mixed experiences that build the personality of a human.”* (29_F_Yes1).

In the context of the Palestinians, Khalidi (1997) argues:

“As Palestinian identity has evolved over time, its elements have varied, with some eventually disappearing and others newly emerging.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.19)

Therefore, the identity of the Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is shaped, developed, and transformed through their experiences under Israeli occupation.

Other responses regarding identity included terms such as: “Family,” “Education,” “Future,” “Culture,” “Language,” “History,” “Human,” “Life,” “Nationality,” “Present,” “Community,” “Place,” “Time,” “Religion,” “Personality,” and “Homeland.” However, most participants related their sense of identity to the Israeli occupation or its effects. These connections were expressed through words like: “Loss,” “Martyrs,” “Jenin refugee camp,” “Determination,” “Palestine,” “Israeli occupation,” “Freedom,” “Roots,” “Resistance,” “Suffering,” “Refugee,” and “The Right of Return.” The use of these words depends on how involved the participant is with the Israeli occupation.

Some participants perceive their identity as unclear or lacking because of their refugee status, stating that:

“The identity of the refugee is unknown.”

(22_F_Yes 5)

“We want to return to our original lands to preserve and complete our identity as Palestinians.”

(32_M_Yes9)

“The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the *n de siècle*, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, *fort/ da*, hither and thither, back and forth.” (Bhabha, 1994, p.2)

In the context of Palestinians, Khalidi (1997) argues:

“Palestinian identity, by contrast, never having enjoyed such success, has since its beginnings struggled for acceptance and legitimacy in the outside world,⁹ and even for recognition of its very existence as a category of being. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir’s widely disseminated dismissive remark that “There was no such thing as Palestinians. . . . They did not exist” was significant not only for its broad impact on public discourse, but also as expressing a common view that over time has come to be widely held among westerners generally.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.147)

Bhabha’s concept of “beyond” offers a crucial framework for understanding the difficulties of building and sustaining identity in an occupied space, as Khalidi (1997) highlights the Palestinians’ long fight for recognition. In this context, everything depends on a different narrative of history and the complex dynamics shaped by the power of the occupier. This creates a period of uncertainty that is ambiguous and multifaceted, where identity is formed in the gaps between inclusion and exclusion. Our current existence is marked by a shadowy sense of survival, living on the edges of the ‘present,’ which seems to have no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix ‘post’: postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism.” (Bhabha, 1994, p.1) Instead of seeing identity as something fixed that can simply be preserved, third space theory suggests that identity is always being negotiated. In this space, individuals constantly reconstruct their identities in relation to conflict and shifting power structures. Therefore, “maintaining identity” in such a context becomes an ongoing process of redefinition rather than mere preservation.

In that sense, being a refugee poses challenges for Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp as they go through their identity development. Part of their identity remains incomplete until they finish the process by returning to their original lands and reclaiming the missing piece.

Many Palestinians over the age of 70 mentioned their original lands, such as Zir'in and Caesarea, as an essential part of their identity. This shows their strong connection to their birthplace, history, and the loss they experienced through displacement in 1948. It also reflects their deep ties to their ancestral lands. Conversely, some Palestinians aged 18 to 39 identified the Jenin refugee camp as a key part of their identity, emphasizing the importance of their current reality and suffering. For example:

“The Jenin refugee camp is significant in my identity, as well as everything I have been through because of the Israeli occupation.”
(22_F_Yes2)

Palestinians aged 40 to 69 responded with different perspectives between the Jenin refugee camp and the original lands, showing how history and the current situation influence their views. This indicates that reality mainly shapes the perspectives of younger generations; however, the stories of the older generation also influence the younger ones. Erickson (1982) illustrates: “From here we could once more follow the stages of development and study the way in which in given languages the fatherhoods and motherhoods, the sisterhoods and brotherhoods of the ‘we’ come to share a joined identity experienced as most real.” (Erickson, 1982, p.90). In this context, the shared family identity affects individual identities through stories about experiences or history, among other things.

Despite the different answers about the location, many Palestinians confused their responses regarding the place. Khalidi (1997) argues:

“In every case, this was based on the development of preexisting loyalties and the inception of new ones, just as with the Palestinians. In every case, these new identities can be shown to have been contingent, conjunctural, and dependent on circumstances rather than essential or primordial.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.20)

Some participants replied:

“I am a Palestinian from Haifa, and my birthplace is Jenin refugee camp.”
(54_M_Yes16)

“Jenin refugee camp created two identities for us. One is the identity of the Jenin refugee camp, which is temporary, and the other is the identity of our original lands.”
(22_F_Yes5)

In light of this, Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp struggle to balance their multiple identities concerning their place. Palestinians may experience confusion about their identity as

they try to uphold their roots in Palestine. While the original lands are highly significant, the Jenin refugee camp also holds great importance.

I aimed to examine the participants' sense of identity concerning the Jenin refugee camp by exploring how the Israeli occupation has influenced their identity development. Consequently, I asked the participants to describe their identity as Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp. Participants agreed that their identity is rooted in Palestine. Khalidi (1997) explains, "This theme, moreover, hints at the beginnings of an identity rooted in Palestine which, while not separate from other overlapping elements of identity at this stage, had its own specificity and its own unique characteristics." (Khalidi, 1997, p.142) As a result, most participants' responses included Palestine, the Jenin refugee camp, or the original land from which they were displaced. Their answers reflect their resilience and hope for Palestine to forge a path toward becoming a free state.

*"We cannot forget our origins and original lands."
(27_M_No3)*

Further explanations reveal their suffering as refugees resisting the achievement of the Palestinians' right of return. Additionally, it emphasizes that identity development is shaped by ongoing events in Palestine while also highlighting the enduring connection to the core identity rooted in Palestine.

Based on their responses, I asked participants whether they viewed their memories as a core part of their identity. A significant number of them agreed that their identity develops in line with their memories. Their answer highlights the importance of memories in shaping their identity as Palestinians, which stems from life-changing events in their memories.

As Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp, their feeling of being different, which comes from residing in the camp, is complex. Some participants see their difference as positive, while others see it negatively. Some also feel similar to other Palestinians outside the camp. Their views are mostly based on their experiences inside and outside the camp. However, nearly all participants agree that all Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp share similarities. These similarities come from shared suffering under Israeli occupation and common dreams. It is clear, as Khalidi (1997) argues:

"What the Palestinians now shared was far greater than what separated them" (Khalidi, 1997, p.194)

Participants conveyed this by stating:

” *Our pain is the same.* “
 (22_F_Yes2)
 “*Our reality is one.*”
 (43_M_Yes12)

Participants also expressed the shared dream of return as a source of strength, stating:

“*Our strength is our unity.*”
 (49_F_Yes13)

Despite all of this, almost all individuals who participated in this research are proud Palestinians. Therefore, the responses and perspectives of the Palestinians to the questions aimed at understanding their identity show that their identity is primarily shaped by the Israeli occupation and military actions. Additionally, key factors influencing the personal and collective identities of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp include history, place, collective memory, and historical narrative.

4.1.1. Historical influences on identity

I thoroughly examined the history of Palestine, focusing on key events such as Al-Nakba 1948, Al-Naksa 1967, the First Intifada 1987-1993, the Second Intifada 2000-2005, the invasion of Jenin refugee camp in 2002, and other recent or personal events. Participants shared their levels of suffering due to the occupation, which ultimately played a significant role in shaping their identity, as noted in history. Additionally, they expressed that suffering across generations strengthens their connection to Palestine and reinforces the right of return.

In that sense, Bhabha (1994) illustrates:

“In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a ‘received’ tradition.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 3)

Bhabha’s (1994) notion of “restaging the past” shows that the past is not just remembered or passed down, but actively re-interpreted, re-narrated, and re-enacted in the present. Since Palestinian history is a key part of their identity, even this aspect of their identity is continuously shaped and developed through various narratives and in response to current circumstances.

4.1.1.1. Al-Nakba 1948

The Nakba of 1948 was a crucial moment in Palestinian history, marking the creation of the Israeli state on Palestinian lands and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

Using Bhabha's theory of major events as transformative ruptures, the Nakba is not just a historical event but a defining moment in Palestinian life. It represented a deep loss of home, land, and sovereignty, while also reshaping Palestinian identity around dispossession and exile. As Khalidi (1997) notes: "*These traumatic events of 1947–49, which cost the Palestinians their majority status in Palestine and their hope of controlling the country, and cost half of them their homes, land, and property, are inscribed in Palestinian memory and historiography as al-Nakba, 'the catastrophe'*" (p.178).

For Palestinians, the Nakba is both **personally experienced and collectively remembered**, forming the basis of a shared history of suffering and resilience. Khalidi (1997) emphasizes this, describing 1948 as "*a great leveler, and a source of a universally shared experience*" for both those who were expelled and those who stayed but were traumatized by the violence (p.194). This sense of universality is evident in the stories of older participants who lived through the event: "*We were displaced from our homelands; I was 6 years old*" (86_F_No27); "*It was hard; we were displaced to leave our homeland*" (80_M_Yes29); "*We moved from one place to another after displacement, but we have been in the Jenin refugee camp from 1948 until now*" (90_F_No28). Their voices reveal the ongoing pain of forced exile and how displacement continues to shape Palestinian identity.

The intergenerational transmission of the Nakba is just as important. Participants from younger generations consistently explained how their sense of identity is shaped by the stories their parents and grandparents share. One participant said: "*My father taught us history through stories. We lived in his stories through his talk. You can imagine yourself inside the stories so you can't forget*" (46_M_Yes15). Another pointed out: "*Displacement generation transferred their hope of a return to our original lands to us*" (51_M_Yes19). These testimonies emphasize the role of oral history in maintaining collective memory, where the Nakba becomes not only a personal trauma but a cultural legacy. As a participant stated: "*I think that we lived it through their stories*" (43_M_Yes12).

Crucially, Palestinians emphasize that the Nakba is not a closed chapter of history but an ongoing reality. This is clear in statements such as: "*It started before 1948, and until today, it is happening every day*" (22_F_Yes5); "*We did not suffer from one Nakba but rather multiple ones*" (32_M_Yes9); "*The tragedy of the Palestinians started in 1948, and it continues until today*" (40_M_Yes14). These reflections portray the Nakba as a continuous process of

dispossession and violence, connecting 1948 to later events like the Naksa of 1967, the Intifadas, and the 2002 Jenin refugee camp invasion. The refugee camp itself reflects this ongoing history: it is both a tangible result of the Nakba and a symbol of its persistence across generations.

Despite the enormity of the catastrophe, participants also expressed how identity remains rooted in Palestine and the aspiration of return. While one participant described the Nakba as *"a method to obliterate Palestinian identity"* (32_M_Yes9), others emphasized how it reinforced attachment to land, culture, and community. Khalidi (1997) confirms this resilience: *"Instead of causing their absorption into these countries, the trauma of 1948 reinforced preexisting elements of identity, sustaining and strengthening a Palestinian self-definition that was already present"* (p.22). This explains why Palestinians across generations continue to describe the Nakba not only as a story but as heritage, passed down as both trauma and hope.

Therefore, the Nakba acts as a historical break, an ongoing lived experience, and a core part of identity. For those who went through it firsthand, it is remembered as loss, suffering, and displacement. For later generations, it is passed down through stories, collective memory, and the reality of exile. Throughout all generations, however, the Nakba remains central to defining Palestinian identity—one shaped by dispossession but upheld by resilience, memory, and the strong belief in the right of return.

4.1.1.2. Al-Naksa 1967

While Al-Nakba of 1948 displaced Palestinians across various regions, Al-Naksa represented a second major dispossession for Palestinians. For those in the Jenin refugee camp, Al-Naksa was not just a separate historical event but a continuation of displacement and loss that deepened their collective trauma and altered their understanding of identity. Several described it as additional dispossession.

"The significant event was Al-Nakba; Al-Naksa is the continuation of Al-Nakba."

(22_F_Yes5)

"Al-Naksa increases our determination and strength."

(22_M_No4)

"More people were displaced, and they took control over Jerusalem."

(32_M_Yes9)

"They got control over Jerusalem."

(43_M_Yes12)

"More displacement, suffering, and pain"

(51_M_Yes19)

"Colonizing what was left of the lands, displacement, and killing. This increases our determination and resistance."

(51_F_Yes17)
“I was psychologically affected.”
 (68_F_No24)
“Al-Naksa was hard as well.”
 (80_F_Yes26)

These stories demonstrate that Al-Naksa is remembered not only as a military defeat but also as a period of increased displacement, particularly through the loss of Jerusalem and the shrinking of remaining Palestinian lands. However, the responses also reveal the paradox of loss and resilience—while participants acknowledge pain and dispossession, they also express how these events have strengthened their resolve to resist: “Al-Naksa increases our determination and strength.” (22_m_No4)

Apart from material dispossession, Al-Naksa had psychological effects. One participant noted, “I was psychologically affected.” (68_F_No24)

The event was also interpreted as a direct challenge to Palestinian identity. A participant reflected:

“It is colonizing what is left of Palestinian lands to leave us without a place or identity.”
 (40_M_Yes14)

When asked to clarify, the participant explained that while the world often sees Palestinians after 1967 as a people without land or identity, Palestinians themselves actively resist such erasure: *“No, it is the way the world perceives us as people without identity or a place. We have maintained our identity, and to this day, we are fighting for our right of return. It is preserved through our resistance and loss. They said, ‘The old Palestinians die, and the young Palestinians forget, but we did not.’”*

(40_M_Yes14)

Considering the responses of the participants, Al-Nakba is more significant in the lives of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp than Al-Naksa. The reason is that all Palestinians interviewed in the Jenin refugee camp were displaced during Al-Nakba. Therefore, Al-Nakba is a crucial experience that transformed the lives and identities of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. Al-Naksa, on the other hand, increases their determination and resistance to seek their right of return, especially since they have lost more land and control of Jerusalem as well.

4.1.1.3. First Intifada 1987-1993 and Second Intifada 2000-2005

To understand the views of young generations experiencing events similar to Al-Nakba and Al-Naksa, I analyze the impact of the First and Second Intifadas. The responses are as follows:

“In the second Intifada, my brother was killed, and I can’t forget this. I hated the Israeli occupation even more.”

(27_M_No3)

“We lost a lot of things and people, but we grew stronger because we love life. We love life if we find a way to it.”

(39_M_No10)

“Our Palestinian identity was developed in this period, maybe another identity layer. I think it is because of the brutality of the Israeli occupation.”

(32_M_Yes9)

“There were martyrs and bodies everywhere. I was a kid, but it was hard and scary.”

(30_F_Yes7)

“The event that sticks in my mind is the killing of Dr. Khalil Suliman. They bombed him in the ambulance and let him burn until he died. We are moving from one event to another, so all of this leads to hating and wanting to end the occupation in Palestine.”

(49_F_Yes13)

“In the first one, my brother was killed. In the second one, they took my other brother.”

(50_F_No20)

“We thought that my brother was killed. The news was contradictory about this. I lost a part of me.”

(51_M_Yes19)

“I gave birth in Al intifada, and this was terrifying.”

(68_F_No24)

“It was a hard time for us, the Palestinians. We resist because we do not want to live like this anymore.”

(60_M_Yes22)

“There is no alternative for the revolution. There was a significant number of martyrs, prisoners, and injured Palestinians. This did not affect the determination of the Palestinian people.”

(68_M_No21)

“Instant fear”

(86_F_No_27)

In light of this, Palestinians and their identity are initially shaped by Al-Nakba. However, the events that followed Al-Nakba also influenced the Palestinians and their identity. Although Palestinians are initially affected by Al-Nakba, they are also shaped by events they have personally experienced. Therefore, each event and each day under Israeli occupation impacts the Palestinians and their identity. Furthermore, not only do collective events influence Palestinian identity, but also individual experiences, such as Dr. Khalil Suliman’s incident, which was highly mentioned by Palestinians. This incident involved Dr. Khalil Suliman being bombed in the ambulance while

performing his duty in the Jenin refugee camp during an invasion in 2002. The Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp are deeply affected by his incident in 2002.

4.1.1.4. The Jenin refugee camp invasion in 2002

I aimed to learn more about the Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, so I asked them to provide additional details about the 2002 invasion of the Jenin refugee camp and its effects. The purpose was to emphasize the significance of individual experiences during the actions of the Israeli occupation. Here is an example of sentences that reflect participants' historical background of suffering under the Israeli occupation, shaping their identity development:

“The smell of blood.”

(29_F_Yes1)

“I was born in 2002. I was not born in a hospital, and my family dropped me off while they were going out of our home. My life has not been normal since I was a kid. Until now, this story of my birth has had an impact on me. 2002 was different as it was centered against the Jenin refugee camp. I remember the story of Doctor Khalil Suliman’s ambulance that was bombed.”

(22_F_Yes5)

“Palestinians were resisting to achieve their right to return to their original lands. There were massacres, killings, and bombings. I was born hearing this, so it is scary, but it increases my determination.”

(22_M_No4)

“I was one week old when the house above us was bombed.”

(22_F_Yes2)

“When I saw a human in the street after 2002, I was shocked because we thought everyone was killed.”

(46_M_Yes15)

This detailed description of the event reflects its profound impact on the Palestinians. It is what is seen, but not limited to it; it also includes the smell. Therefore, the effect of the Israeli occupation's actions is deeper than it appears. The senses here create a sensory memory for the individual, with the vision and the scent of blood serving as reminders of an event caused by the Israeli occupation. This influences the Palestinians' perspective and worldview, which in turn affects their identity as they are both physically and psychologically impacted.

4.1.1.5. Recent events related to the Jenin refugee camp

I aimed to assess all Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, so I asked them to explain the most recent events there and how these events have affected them. The purpose of this is to highlight experiences common to all Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp and how these impact their individual and collective identities. Here is an example of sentences that reflect participants'

historical background of suffering under the Israeli occupation, influencing their identity development:

“There were two people with us in the recent invasion; one was British, and the other was Dutch. I felt that I had impunity.”

(22_F_Yes5)

“Going to prison to see and get to know my father for one and a half years was not enough. I want to spend an entire lifetime with my father.”

(22_M_No4)

“I only visited my original land when the Israeli occupation put me in prison in Haifa.”

(46_F_No11)

“Prison is a graveyard of ambition.”

(51_M_Yes19)

“They destroy dreams.”

(36_F_Yes8)

“We love life if we find a way to it.”

(39_M_No10)

“I said in my mind there was no way the Israeli soldier would shoot me; I am a paramedic.”

(43_M_Yes12)

“It is not easy to be Palestinian.”

(54_M_Yes16)

“If I can serve our country more, I will, and there will be no regret.”

(68_M_No21)

The feelings expressed by the participants about their history reveal ongoing trauma and the significant impact of the Israeli occupation on the identity development of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. However, it also reflects their desire for freedom for Palestine and themselves from Israeli control, along with their hopes for a better future. This provides a brief overview of Palestinians' history in Jenin refugee camp and the lasting effects it has caused. It shows feelings of fear, displacement, death, loss, and insecurity. At the same time, it also displays feelings of hope, resolve, and resistance.

The sentence illustrates how Palestinian individuals view themselves as negatively different in the world. Their difference revolves around being born as Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation's influence on their lives also shapes their identity development. Their history, suffering, and events caused by the occupation can lead them to question their identity or its layers. Kiecolt's (1994) study explains that events with significant impacts cause individuals to question their identity and its layers. This process prompts individuals to assess whether their identity is changed or preserved. Consequently, the Israeli occupation's

impact on identity goes beyond development, leading to the loss of specific layers of identity for some individuals.

Reviewing Palestinian history, Al-Nakba clearly played a key role in shaping the Palestinians' identity over time. However, this does not mean that other historical events in Palestine have not influenced the Palestinians. Al-Nakba was the primary transformative event in the lives of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, as it resulted in their status as refugees. For refugees, it was the event that most profoundly changed their lives. Nevertheless, their identity is also shaped by all other historical events and actions caused by the occupation. Consequently, resistance and a connection to their original land remain vital components of the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp.

Although Palestinians' identity traditionally centered around Palestine, culture, and language, among other factors, which represent the typical layers of identity, there has been a change in their self-perception. This shift in the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp results from the introduction of a new factor into their lives: the Israeli occupation. Nevertheless, their sense of identity is evolving in relation to their history under Israeli rule. Khalidi (1997) illustrates:

“But inconvenient though their identity often has been for others, the Palestinians have remained stubbornly attached to it. This probably must be adjudged a success, although it is a small one.”
(Khalidi, 1997, p.209).

Khalidi (1997) furthermore illustrates:

“Yet this sequence of setbacks, far from weakening it, seems to have reinforced the sense of Palestinian national identity that had emerged over the preceding decades out of the disparate strands of religious and local attachments to Palestine, commitment to Arabism, and resistance to what Palestinians perceived was the creeping encroachment of the Zionist movement on their homeland. The Palestinians held fast to this strong sense of identity after 1948, both those who became refugees, and those who remained in their homes inside Palestine. Even while it continued to evolve and change, this sense of identity remained the foundation upon which the Palestinian nationalist groups that emerged after 1948 were to build.” (Khalidi, 1997, p. 27).

So, Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp managed to preserve their Palestinian identity rooted in Palestine, which is reflected in their responses and resistance.

4.1.2. Place influences on identity

I aimed to study how the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp develops concerning their place. The goal is to evaluate how dislocation from their original land and the new location both influence their identity.

Khalidi (1997) explains the dispossession of the Palestinians and the impact on the Palestinians as they became refugees:

“Given the centrality of attachment to place characteristic not only of Palestinians, but also of others in traditional and semitransitional societies, it can be imagined how powerful an impact these events must have had: by the end of the process of dispossession in 1949, more than four hundred cities, towns, and villages in Galilee, the coastal region, the area between Jaffa and Jerusalem, and the south of the country had been depopulated, incorporated into Israel and settled with Israelis, and most of their Arab inhabitants were dispersed throughout the region as refugees.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.179)

To evaluate the significant impact of displacement on Palestinians becoming refugees in the Jenin refugee camp, I intended to ask about their attachment to both their original lands and the Jenin refugee camp. Their responses vary depending on their generation and historical background, which is reflected in their answers.

Participants aged 70+ primarily responded about their original land in Palestine, highlighting the deep connection of Palestinians who experienced Al-Nakba to their native lands. Additionally, it reflects the trauma caused by forced displacement in 1948. The trauma of the older generation is directly linked to their displacement during Al-Nakba in 1948, which significantly affected their identity. In this context, the impact is rooted in their strong attachment to their original lands and their disconnection from the Jenin refugee camp.

Khalidi (1997) argues:

“Thus although Jaffa is today a rundown slum, a southern suburb of the Tel Aviv urban complex, with a poor, largely Arab population (and a small night life district much frequented by Israelis in old, renovated Arab homes), in the Palestinian imagination it is the place of origin of all those who still proudly call themselves Jaffans.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.205)

This appears in their response to the questions, stating:

“I consider Jenin refugee camp my home, but it is because we have no other place to live. I hope we can return to our original lands.”

(92_M_No30)

“Zi’rin forms a huge part of me.”

(90_F_No28)

Participants aged 18 to 69 showed varying responses because these generations have not directly experienced Al-Nakba. Some believe that Palestine as a whole is a significant part of their identity. Their attachment is not limited to a specific place in Palestine but to Palestine itself. Participants emphasizing their connection to Palestine:

“It is indeed all Palestine.”

(40_M_Yes14)

“We belong everywhere in Palestine.”

(22_F_Yes2)

Other participants’ responses included the Jenin refugee camp and the original lands connecting the places as a way for their return. The participants consider the Jenin refugee camp a significant part of their identity because of the life they have spent there.

“Definitely, the Jenin refugee camp created something in us. It has a great effect. However, it is only a station that will connect us to our original homelands.”

(22_F_Yes5)

“Jenin refugee camp is our birthplace, and our life is here. However, we cannot forget our original lands.”

(27_M_No3)

“Our attachment is to its history and the land of our ancestors. However, we were born in the Jenin refugee camp. If we took back our land, of course, we would go back to our original lands.”

(39_M_Yes10)

“It is hard to leave the Jenin refugee camp, but the right place to be is my original land, Alsindyane.”

(39_F_Yes6)

“The right of return is sacred, and no Palestinian will abandon it.”

(40_M_Yes14)

“I hope we can gain our independence and return to our lands.”

(46_F_No11)

“The right of return is our dream that we are trying to make a reality.”

(54_M_Yes16)

“Here in the Jenin refugee camp, we are refugees.”

(60_M_No22)

Other responses affirmed the camp symbol as a station until return and emphasized the importance of the return.

“Jenin camp is our way to return to our lands.”

(32_M_Yes9)

Some participants emphasized their right to choose where they want to live.

“I did not choose to live in Jenin refugee camp.”

(22_F_Yes5)
“No one wants to stay a refugee.”
 (22_F_Yes2)

Their responses reveal different perspectives gained from the stories of older generations about displacement. The trauma of displacement shows up differently across generations. For the younger generation, the narrated trauma of displacement influences their identity, forming a strong bond with every part of Palestine. However, they initially seemed only connected to the Jenin refugee camp; as they asked questions, it became clear that they also felt a strong ties to their original lands. It also demonstrated their deep connection to the Jenin refugee camp as a place of refuge, their reality, and a symbol of their hope to return to their ancestral lands, which completes their sense of identity.

I explore the topic further by asking more specific questions about the place to understand the participants’ thoughts and connections. The findings show that the Jenin refugee camp is a significant part of the identity of the Palestinians living there, shaping their reality. However, it is less important for those in the 70+ age group, highlighting their strong connection to their history. Most participants see the Jenin refugee camp as a temporary home, describing it as a waiting station until their return. The younger generation feels more attached to the camp, but this does not negate the right of return or the recognition of Palestine as an independent state. Some participants see the area as a unified country that needs to be liberated.

“Pain in Jenin refugee camp is like breadcrumbs that everyone shares.”
 (54_F_Yes16)

Their responses demonstrate their shared identity as Palestinians living in the same place. Moreover, refugees in the Jenin refugee camp expressed their hope to return and live in their original lands once liberation occurs, highlighting how generations’ collective memory, narrative, and identity influence Palestine's future. Palestinians shape their imagined communities through their experiences of loss, dispossession, and longing, which are rooted in their memory, history, and stories. In this way, Palestinians connect themselves to their original lands—even those they may have never seen—serving as acts of resistance and resilience.

4.2.3. Collective memory influences on identity

I aimed to examine how memories influence the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp and its development, so I inquired about the importance of those memories. Participants highlighted the significance of recalling past events. Consequently, collective memory arises from shared experiences. It plays a vital role in remembering, interpreting past events, and passing them down through generations. In the context of Palestinians, the Israeli occupation led to these historical events, such as Al-Nakba in 1948. Khalidi (1997) discusses the memory of Al-Nakba. “These traumatic events of 1947–49, which cost the Palestinians their majority status in Palestine and their hope of controlling the country, and cost half of them their homes, land, and property, are inscribed in Palestinian memory and historiography as al-Nakba, “the catastrophe.”¹” (Khalidi, 1997, p. 178).

Khalidi (1997) also argues about the impact of memory on identity:

“Such a distorted vision of the Palestinian national narrative denies the complex genesis of this identity over many decades around the turn of the twentieth century, which the previous chapters have chronicled. Beyond that, it obliterates memory of two subsequent periods that were decisive for the shaping of Palestinian identity.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.177)

The importance of memory is also demonstrated by the participants' responses, who say:

“Each memory is an experience that affects our lives.”
(29_F_Yes1)

“Our memory is a part of our identity because our history is our life.”
(39_M_Yes10)

“Memory is important because the place and the environment make people the way they are.”
(36_F_Yea8)

“Not only our memory but the personal memory and the collective memory of the Palestinians.”
(49_F_Yes13)

In light of this, Palestinians share a collective memory of events carried out by the Israeli occupation, which, in turn, affects their individual and collective identities. For example, Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp develop both personal and shared memories of historical events related to the Israeli occupation, influencing their present and future. As a result of transmitting collective memory through generations, newer generations remain connected to their original lands through shared history and narratives. Therefore, they inherit culture, history, and memories—both individual and collective—across generations.

4.2.4. Historical Narratives’ influences on identity

During interviews, I aimed to evaluate the significance and influence of both individual and collective historical narratives across generations on those that follow. Historical narratives cannot be understood without acknowledging the presence and actions of the Israeli occupation. Khalidi (1997) argues:

“Clearly, within this paradigm, the Palestinians exist not as an independent entity with an independent narrative, but only in relation to another entity and another narrative.” (Khalidi, 1997, p.147)

However, narrative is mostly transmitted from families to children through personal experiences and the interpretation of history; it is not limited to this. This process extends to all Palestinians, as it is conveyed both as an individual and collective narrative. In turn, individuals develop their perspectives of others while forming their own interpretations of the individual and collective historical narratives.

It is clear from the participants' responses, stating:

“The first question the child in the camp asks is Why am I here? What brought me here? And here it starts, the role of the parents is to answer these questions. It is the occupation. You are here to go back there.”

(22_F_Yes5)

“I always teach my children about our original land and the right of return.”

(54_M_Yes16)

“It is significant for the generation to understand the source of the conflict with the occupation as they are being raised.”

(49_F_Yes13)

Khalidi (1997) argues:

“Although Palestinian identity undoubtedly involves unique and specific elements, it can be fully understood only in the context of a sequence of other histories, a sequence of other narratives.”

(Khalidi, 1997, p.9)

In light of this, individuals sharing their personal and collective experiences, ideas, and interpretations about historical events play a crucial role in shaping and developing the identities of future generations. As the narrative defines them, it helps answer questions about the present that arise in their minds. Palestinians, therefore, form their own views and interpretations of the narratives, which add new layers to their identity. For example, the narrative about Al-Nakba has fostered a strong connection between Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp and their original lands, which contributed to the first and second Intifadas, especially the invasion of the Jenin

refugee camp in 2002. All historical narratives and reflections on past events prior to 2002 also influence the recent events in the camp. Therefore, historical narratives can be vital for acts of resistance and for maintaining identity.

4.2.5. Impact of age on identity

Since history greatly influences the identity development of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, each age group's sense of identity is shaped differently by the historical events they have experienced under Israeli occupation. In that sense, the process of identity development varies from one generation to another. As the impact of the Israeli occupation is likely to increase and identity continues to evolve, age plays a crucial role in this process. Erickson (1982) illustrates:

“Gradually, then, and with every new strength, a new time sense appears along with a sense of irrevocable identity: gradually becoming what one has caused to be, one eventually will be what one has been.” (Erickson, 1982, p.81-82)

Preserving the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, individuals over 70 played a significant role in shaping their suffering and history for future generations. Some participants shared stories of their parents and grandparents, saying:

” We lived in our original lands through their stories.”
(49_F_Yes13)

This shows the different views toward Palestine based on generational differences, which in turn shape Palestinian identity. Palestinians' identity development depends on, but is not limited to, the experiences they have gone through, mainly related to age. It also includes the stories of earlier generations.

Furthermore, others emphasize the significance of these stories in understanding Palestine's history. In that sense, one participant stated:

“It is significant for each generation to understand the source of the conflict with the occupation as they are being raised.”
(49_F_Yes13)

Each generation of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp has experienced different events caused by the Israeli occupation. Therefore, older generations pass down history for future generations to build their understanding. In that sense, a generation's identity development is

shaped by the historical events they have experienced, as well as those experienced by previous generations.

Therefore, age plays a significant role in the process of identity formation and development. In the context of Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp, their history is mainly centered around their displacement by the Israeli occupation, as well as their current and future lives. However, Palestinian identity does not only include each individual's personal history; it also encompasses the shared history of previous generations. This reflects the complex layers of Palestinian identity, which is shaped by each person's history, present, and future. Due to the prolonged occupation across generations, Palestinian identity combines various perspectives of history, their current experiences, and differing visions of the future based on their generation.

4.2.6. Impact of gender on identity

In the context of the Jenin refugee camp, gender is a central factor shaping identity under occupation, with men and women navigating different yet interconnected forms of resistance. While men more often engage in active, visible acts of resistance, women's resistance typically appears through endurance, resilience, and the reorganization of daily life, though at times it also takes on more explicitly political forms. This gendered difference in resistance can be understood through the metaphor of the stairwell as a liminal space: just as the stairwell exists between fixed designs of architectural order, the identities of men and women in Jenin are formed in the in-between—shaped by the occupation but also by gendered expectations of resistance.

Men's identity may be linked to public acts of defiance, while women's identity often exists in a more ambiguous, "in-between" space where endurance, mourning, and caregiving become political acts. This liminality highlights how Palestinian identity in Jenin is not uniform but gendered, fluid, and constantly negotiated in relation to both occupation and social expectations, thus reflecting the broader instability of identity in contested spaces.

4.2.7. Impact of religion on identity

Religion plays a central role in shaping identity under Israeli occupation. Many participants explicitly connected their hopes for Palestine's liberation to their religious beliefs, citing the Qur'an and their faith in God as sources of strength. For example, one participant referenced the verse: "*Only those who are patient shall receive their rewards in full, without reckoning*" (46_M_Yes15), while another reflected: "*The life of the life-sentenced prisoner is*

devoid of a future, yet the presence of hope remains constant. The reason behind this hope is our belief in God and our resistance” (40_M_Yes14). These responses show that religion is not just a private matter of faith but a vital part of collective identity and a framework through which Palestinians express resistance.

This intersection of religion and identity relates to Fowler and Dell’s (2004) faith development theory, which views faith as a core and evolving part of identity. In Jenin, religion acts both as a stabilizer and a catalyst: it offers moral support that boosts resilience during loss, while also allowing individuals to envision liberation beyond the immediate occupation. Thus, religion becomes a vital layer of a complex, developing identity influenced by socio-political conditions.

Bahaba’s stairwell as a liminal space offers a useful lens to understand this process. Palestinians’ identities exist in the in-between: between occupation and liberation, despair and hope, dispossession and belonging. Religion acts as a structuring force within this liminality—grounding individuals in uncertainty yet propelling them with visions of justice and freedom. Thus, the religious dimension of identity in Jenin illustrates how faith is not static but actively negotiated within the unstable conditions of occupation, transforming the “in-between” into a space of resilience and possibility.

4.2.8. Impact of education on identity

Education is a crucial part of identity development for Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, serving not only as a means of personal growth but also as a form of resistance under occupation. Many participants stressed that education is closely tied to their sense of self and struggle, framing it as a way to resist. One participant, for example, said: *“Resistance is not limited to armed resistance, but education is also a tool of resistance. Dr. Khalil Suliman was a great example of this. He was killed in 2002 by the Israeli occupation. He was not armed, but he was resisting occupation through his work as a doctor saving people’s lives in Jenin refugee camp until he was bombed”* (50_M_Yes18). Such stories show a wider understanding of education as both a protective and empowering force that preserves identity under occupation.

This view aligns with Khalidi’s (1997) argument that, without a sovereign state and unified educational system, Palestinians base their identity not only on formal education but also on “historical narratives” that maintain a collective memory of dispossession and resistance (p.146). In Jenin, this dual approach—formal education and historical knowledge—serves as a way to build

resilience, affirm belonging, and resist occupation. Participants consistently expressed this idea, with one stating: *"Knowledge and education are the keys to preserving our identity"* (32_M_Yes9).

Education offers a path through which identity is both maintained and changed, linking individuals to collective histories while opening doors to future opportunities. In this way, education acts as a tool of resistance and as a fundamental part of Palestinian identity, helping individuals cope with the uncertainty of occupation while promoting a vision of resilience, self-determination, and continuity.

4.2.9. Impact of work on identity

Work plays a vital role in shaping Palestinian identity in the Jenin refugee camp, with many participants describing it as both a personal act of resistance. Participants often stress that their professions—whether in healthcare, education, or journalism—are not just sources of income but key parts of who they are. For many, working under the constant threat of Israeli occupation gives their work political significance, turning it into a form of resistance. As one paramedic said: *"During events, they shot at our ambulance, but we don't usually notice because we are under a huge stress. We only focus on our main goal, which is saving lives"* (43_M_Yes12). This testimony shows how work, even when done under extreme danger, becomes a core part of identity by affirming purpose, resistance, and resolve.

The connection between work and identity goes beyond individual experiences, extending to collective consciousness. For example, participants who worked as journalists described their roles as essential for shaping awareness and building resilience. Their work was seen as not only documenting oppression but also amplifying Palestinian voices to local and international audiences. This aligns with Khalidi's (1997) observation that newspapers such as *Filastin* have historically helped develop Palestinian identity by providing narratives that challenge colonial representations (p.127). Similarly, current work in fields like journalism, healthcare, and education is seen as shaping identity, with resistance woven into professional practice.

Overall, participants' responses indicate that work in Jenin is deeply connected to the occupation, shaping how people see themselves and their role within the collective struggle. Work is not just seen in economic terms but as an expression of resilience, agency, and resistance. It becomes a lived experience through which Palestinians affirm their identity, hold onto hope, and influence the course of their future despite the instability caused by the occupation.

4.3. Individual identity

Identity development among Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is deeply connected to the realities of Israeli occupation. For participants, identity is not seen as a single concept but as layered, shaped by many intersecting factors throughout life. Many described how they cannot separate their sense of self from the occupation, emphasizing its widespread impact. As participants explained: *“I cannot separate myself from occupation because our identity is too much related to occupation, being refugees and Palestinians”* (40_M_Yes14); *“I cannot imagine because we are under occupation”* (92_M_No30); *“I have never thought about my identity separated from the Israeli occupation”* (51_F_Yes17); *“I did not live the feeling of freedom before so I have never thought about it”* (27_M_No3). These responses show that identity formation is heavily influenced by the Israeli occupation, which forces individuals to navigate their sense of self through the experience of dispossession, statelessness, and oppression.

At the same time, participants recognized that the impact of occupation goes beyond personal experience and influences future generations, shaping identity over time. As one participant reflected: *“Research showed how the things the mother experienced and suffered can impact the children’s genes. So, everything I lived will impact my children in the future”* (29_F_Yes1). This intergenerational transfer of trauma and resilience highlights how identity is both inherited and actively rebuilt under occupation conditions.

While occupation remains a key factor in identity development, Palestinian identity cannot be created or grown solely as a reaction to it. Khalidi (1997) critiques the idea that Palestinian identity mainly developed in response to Zionism, noting that Palestinians had strong ties to their land and culture long before modern Zionism (p. 154). He stresses that although Zionism influenced the specific form of Palestinian national identity, Palestinians had historically interacted with various “others,” including Ottoman, British, and regional actors, and their identity was part of broader processes of state formation and cultural connection (pp. 20, 154).

This complexity is reflected in participants’ testimonies, which point to sources of identity beyond occupation: *“I want to be a more successful woman”* (29_F_Yes1); *“I am a Palestinian from Haifa”* (54_M_Yes16); *“My culture is a part of my identity”* (22_F_Yes5). These responses show that Palestinians in Jenin also base their identities on culture, family, place, and future goals. Despite the challenges of occupation, they find strength in these different layers of identity, reaffirming their connection to Palestine as their homeland.

As Khalidi (1997) asserts:

“The Palestinians have asserted their identity without the trappings of an independent state and against powerful countervailing currents” (p.194). In light of this, while the occupation is an undeniable and critical force shaping the identity of Palestinians in Jenin, their identity cannot be understood as solely reactive. Rather, it is multilayered, resilient, and sustained through culture, education, family, and a profound attachment to Palestine. This enduring rootedness demonstrates that Palestinian identity, though transformed by history and oppression, continues to be asserted as an act of resilience and continuity.

4.4. Collective identity

Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp often see themselves as similar to each other, a view based on their shared experiences of suffering, displacement, and hopes under Israeli occupation. Most participants expressed a strong sense of belonging to the camp’s community, highlighting that common experiences of violence, uprooting, and ongoing struggles create a unifying bond. As one participant said: *“Our pain, suffering, and goal in one”* (36_F_Yes8). Another reflected on the roots of this unity: *“Al Nakba forced people to live together under the same circumstances, suffering under the Israeli occupation”* (68_M_Yes23). These responses show that the Nakba of 1948 remains both a collective trauma and a key part of identity within the camp.

However, participants also expressed a sense of distinction between themselves and Palestinians living outside the camp. Many noted that although all Palestinians face life under occupation, the level and immediacy of suffering vary by location. This perception creates layered forms of identification: a strong sense of internal solidarity within the Jenin camp and a broader identification with the Palestinian people overall. Some participants emphasized the unifying power of occupation, which ties all Palestinians into a single shared experience of dispossession and resistance. Others highlighted the uniqueness of refugee camp life, where daily encounters with military incursions, poverty, and overcrowding foster a distinctive form of collective existence.

This dynamic can be examined using Tajfel’s (1982) social identity theory, which suggests that group identities are built through comparison processes, highlighting similarities within the group and differences from out-groups. In Jenin, refugees develop a strong “in-group” identity based on shared suffering, historical displacement, and the collective hope for return. This identity is also distinguished from Palestinians outside the camp—who might not face the same level of occupation—and is integrated into a broader Palestinian identity that crosses geographic

boundaries. Therefore, identity is experienced at multiple levels: the local (the refugee camp), the national (Palestine), the international (Palestinians outside Palestine), and the transhistorical (the memory of the Nakba and the hope for return).

Khalidi (1997) reinforces this idea by noting that Palestinians resemble “a few other peoples in the modern era who have reached a high level of national consciousness and have developed a clearly defined sense of national identity, but have long failed to achieve national independence” (p.11). The Jenin camp exemplifies this paradox: despite—or perhaps because of—the absence of sovereignty, Palestinians nurture an especially strong sense of collective identity. The refugee camp thus becomes a place where national belonging is maintained, reproduced, and strengthened, even without state structures.

Given this, the collective identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is shaped mainly by shared suffering and resistance, but it is also kept alive through memory, place, and ongoing expressions of national consciousness. It is both unique—mirroring the specific conditions of refugee camp life—and broad, connecting refugees to Palestinians everywhere through common experiences of displacement and oppression. This dual process of differentiation and unity highlights the complexity of Palestinian identity: divided by geography and circumstances, yet united by history, struggle, and the hope of return.

Chapter 5

Results

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the interviews. Throughout the chapter, the goal is to connect these findings to the core theories of the study, "third space theory" by Bhabha (1994) and Rashid Khalidi's book, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. This connection between the findings and the theories aims to address the research questions regarding the impact of the Israeli occupation on the individual and collective identities of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp since 1948.

Their development of identity has been deeply shaped by the harsh reality of living under Israeli occupation. Their connection to place is complex as they navigate their memories, which are linked to their original home lost during Al-Nakba, and their current reality in their new homes in the Jenin refugee camp. This in-between negotiation between memory and lived experience reflects what Bhabha (1994) calls the *third space*, where identity is not fixed but continually redefined in the tension between past and present. Additionally, the impact of historical events, such as Al-Nakba, Al-Naksa, the First Intifada, the Second Intifada, and recent developments—along with other significant events—on individuals' identities and their collective identity, rooted in the common experience of living under occupation, is important to explore. It is also essential to investigate how factors like history, place, collective memory, and historical narratives influence the development of their identities. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine how aspects such as age, gender, religion, education level, and occupation also play a role in this process.

5.1. Interpreting Identities Development in the Jenin Refugee Camp

The Palestinians' identity constantly develops throughout their lives, influenced by the context they live in. Khalidi (1997) shows that their identity is shaped by others. Bhabha (1994) similarly argues that identity forms in a *third space* of encounter with the other, where hybridity emerges. An analysis of the data revealed that the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is negatively affected by the Israeli occupation in many similar ways, though with different details. Therefore, the identity of these Palestinians is mainly shaped by the impact of the Israeli occupation on their place and history, depending on their age.

Constructing Palestinian identity, age plays a vital role in the process. It is important to recognize the significance of both early and later stages of adolescence, as they greatly influence individuals' identity development (Erikson, 1982). Therefore, Palestinians are shaped not only by their present but also by their past, especially since they have multiple narratives about it. When these narratives connect to lived experiences, they form a hybrid identity that occupies Bhabha's third space — neither entirely rooted in the memory of the lost homeland nor the reality of the refugee camp, but in the negotiation between the two.

Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camps are deeply connected to their homeland. As refugees, they maintain ties to two places: the Jenin refugee camp and their original land. However, this connection shapes their sense of identity differently depending on their age. The analysis initially revealed that the Jenin refugee camp influences the identity of Palestinians aged 18-29 more strongly. For those aged 70 or older, their original land is more significant. Therefore, birthplace plays a bigger role in their identity. Other age groups—those aged 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60-69—have varying perspectives because their sense of identity is linked to their place. Some believe the Jenin refugee camp is more important to their identity, while others feel their original land holds greater value. Still, some see Palestine as a whole, shaped by how they were raised. While opinions differ by age, all Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp share the goal of returning to Palestine, establishing it as an independent country, and reclaiming their original lands.

After delving deeper into the analysis, it revealed that the identity of most Palestinians is strongly connected to their original land, as they seek to fulfill their right of return. Regarding the Jenin refugee camp, the analysis showed that it plays a key role in shaping Palestinian identity, as it represents a tangible alternative home. However, it is viewed as a temporary holding station for refugees until they can return to their original homes. This *waiting station* itself illustrates Bhabha's third space: it is neither homeland nor home but an in-between place where hybrid forms of belonging are negotiated. They want to live and be reintegrated into their original lands because they believe they are meant to live there, rather than in the Jenin refugee camp. Others think they have the right to choose where they want to live. As a result, they pursue both freedom and choice in their living circumstances.

The analysis showed that the connection of the Al-Nakba generation to their original lands and their disconnection from the Jenin refugee camp can be linked to the traumatic loss of their

lands during Al-Nakba. Khalidi (1997) highlights the importance of Palestinians' bond to their ancestral lands as a key part of their identity. He also comments on Palestinians' ongoing effort to uphold this identity and pass it down through generations. For generations after Al-Nakba, Palestinians remain connected to both the Jenin refugee camp and their original lands. Their connection to the refugee camp results from the displacement and forced migration of Palestinians. The loss of their lands symbolizes their determination to preserve their alternative homeland. Their attachment to the original lands is also driven by the loss of these lands, along with their families and the Palestinian community overall. Palestinians actively work to pass down their attachment to the original lands and the right of return across generations. This ongoing negotiation of place—between collective memory and current camp life—illustrates Bhabha's concept of hybridity in action.

5.2. Education as a Tool of Resistance

Education is seen as a form of resistance for Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp against the Israeli occupation. It serves as a tool of resistance in multiple ways. "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, how men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world." (Shaul, 1970, p. 34).

Education also exemplifies Bhabha's concept of the *third space of enunciation*. While the occupier tries to enforce a specific logic of domination, Palestinians reinterpret education as a hybrid form of resistance. It offers knowledge not only of the past but also of strategies for resisting now and passing on identity to future generations. In this in-between space, oppressive systems are undermined and redefined into tools of resilience.

5.2.1. Historical Awareness

Understanding history helps clarify the current situation of Palestinians living in the Jenin refugee camp under Israeli occupation. It also sheds light on their hopes for the future. Through knowledge, especially education and historical narratives, Palestinians recognize their history, culture, rights, and the path to achieving those rights through resilience and resistance.

Here, Bhabha's third space is clear in the interaction between narrated and lived history. The narrated memory of Al-Nakba and the lived memory of the Intifadas exist together in a hybrid space, creating identities that are neither fully linked to the past nor completely disconnected from the present. This hybrid historical awareness allows Palestinians to continually renegotiate their sense of belonging and resistance.

5.2.2. Religion Education

Education about religion is also important since religion plays a vital role in the journey toward a liberated Palestine. Providing Palestinians with knowledge about their faith strengthens their connection to their land as Muslims because it includes significant religious sites controlled by the Israeli occupation, as well as their belief that the liberation of Palestine is linked not only to resistance but also to religion. This, in turn, enables their knowledge to be passed on to future generations.

Through Bhabha's perspective, religion becomes a hybrid act of resistance within the third space, merging both spiritual and political elements along with personal and collective aspects. Faith offers Palestinians a framework that goes beyond the occupation, yet it is continually reinterpreted to respond to the realities of dispossession and struggle.

5.2.3. Cultural Resilience

Culture is a vital part of Palestinian society. As Palestinians explore their culture and history more deeply, their curiosity for knowledge grows. This learning strengthens their bond to their land and their resistance. Cultural resistance includes various forms, such as resilience and symbolic acts of defiance. Palestinian culture, which includes art, food, language, heritage, songs, and clothing, among others, acts as a tool of resilience and resistance against the ongoing efforts of the Israeli occupation to weaken Palestinian identity. The strength of the Palestinian people is reinforced through symbolic forms of resistance, like olive trees and traditional clothing.

From Bhabha's perspective, these cultural symbols serve as hybrid markers in the third space. For example, the olive tree is both an agricultural symbol, a historical memory, and a political act of resistance. In this hybridity, culture is not fixed but becomes a negotiated identity that resists erasure while adapting to new forms of struggle.

5.2.4. Broader Educational Context

Knowledge, however, is not limited to education in schools and universities but also includes stories from other Palestinians and books. So, these are ultimately the points where education becomes a tool of resistance for the Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp against the Israeli occupation.

This broader form of education demonstrates what Bhabha describes as informal third spaces of resistance. Storytelling, family narratives, and oral histories operate in hybrid in-between sites where official histories imposed by the occupier are challenged and reinterpreted through alternative voices. In these informal spaces, Palestinians build an identity that is both resistant and regenerative, rooted in memory yet focused on the future.

5.3. Navigating Individual Identity

The Israeli occupation greatly impacts the identity development of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. Therefore, this influence is deeply connected to their identity and cannot be viewed separately. Said (2003) highlights the importance of opening up discussion areas, while Bhabha (1994) adds that identity forms in the space *between*, where the colonizer and the colonized meet.

Although the Israeli occupation influences the development of Palestinians' identity in the Jenin refugee camp, it does not completely define or restrict it. Their ability to maintain their identity rooted in Palestine despite the occupation shows their resilience. Therefore, we cannot understand the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp without considering the occupation, as it greatly affects their lives and experiences. However, it does not fully control their identity or limit their choices. Their resistance and resilience against the occupation are a key part of how they see themselves. This tension between imposed constraints and defiance reflects the hybridity of the third space.

5.4. Collective Identity Dynamics

The formation of the collective identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp is built on shared suffering and future hopes. Palestinians in the camp have developed a sense of shared identity mainly connected to the Jenin refugee camp itself. However, through Bhabha's perspective, this collective identity is hybrid, drawing from both the memory of the lost homeland and the reality of life in the camp.

The aspirations of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp for a better future are rooted in the history of Palestine before Al-Nakba in 1948, as well as their current reality under occupation. This act of imagining aligns with Anderson's *imagined communities* but also echoes Bhabha's concept of the third space. In narrating a shared past while living in a different present, Palestinians develop a hybrid community identity that balances both loss and hope.

Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp maintain strong connections with Palestinians outside the camp. These connections demonstrate another third space — a cross-boundary identity that isn't limited to the camp or exile but is formed through shared suffering, language, and culture.

5.5. Navigation Identity Change

The identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp develops over their lives. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that identity is a changing concept that adapts in response to others (Khalidi, 1997). Moreover, some layers of identity are more likely to change, especially for Palestinians in the camp under Israeli occupation.

Bhabha's (1994) concept of the *third space* helps to understand this dynamic. The Jenin refugee camp itself acts as such a third space: it is neither the original homeland lost in Al-Nakba nor a permanent residence, but rather a liminal area where identities are constantly negotiated and reshaped. Palestinians navigate this hybridity by holding onto the narrated memories of the original land while also adapting to the real-life conditions of camp life under occupation.

The occupier influences the perspectives and decisions of the occupied, especially regarding education and work. Examples such as doctors, paramedics, and journalists show how the occupier guides the viewpoints and choices of the occupied. Yet, within this tension, a *hybrid identity* develops in the third space — one shaped both by coercion and resistance. Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp often study or work in fields that help them resist occupation. This negotiation of imposed limits and chosen forms of resistance reflects what Bhabha describes as the in-between space of enunciation, where new cultural and political meanings are created.

This also includes all refugees in the camp; it increases their responsibility to evaluate their own identity based on what benefits their individual and collective sense of self. In this process, Palestinians exist in a third space where their identities are neither fully defined by occupation nor entirely autonomous, but shaped through ongoing negotiation, resistance, and resilience.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this qualitative research, the researcher examined the impact of the Israeli occupation on the layered identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp. The researcher traces their identity development and changes since 1948. By conducting interviews with participants, the researcher explored how the Israeli occupation affected the individual and collective identities of Palestinians in Jenin over the years. The researcher gathered data through interviews, which emphasized the importance of age in the process. Data analysis revealed the negative impact of the Israeli occupation on identity development and change. These findings enhance our understanding of refugees' identities under occupation and highlight their various acts of resistance.

Based on the data collected, the research found that individuals' identities develop within the context of their lives. Therefore, identity is not static; it evolves and is shaped by various factors. In the case of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, their identity is dynamic and complex, rooted in their trauma of displacement and hope for return. This study drew on third space theory, which emphasizes the complexity of their identity in relation to their environment. As a result, the Palestinian refugee identity develops not only according to the history of Palestine but also through collective memory and the personal stories of individuals. Additionally, each Palestinian's identity and its components develop based on multiple elements, such as age, gender, religion, education, and occupation. Consequently, conflict intensifies the process of development and transformation of individuals' identities. The prolonged Israeli occupation, under certain conditions, forces individuals to change their identities and perspectives based on their experiences. This research provides a deeper understanding of how the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp evolves within the context of living under Israeli occupation, as an inseparable part of a legacy passed down across generations.

Therefore, the research highlights that the Israeli occupation influences the personal identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp and its layers. The environment, history, collective memory, and historical narrative mainly shape it. However, the impact of the Israeli occupation varies depending on age, gender, religion, education, and occupation. These factors

affect identity in different but related ways. Each generation of Palestinians experienced a different phase under the occupation. In each generation, the impact on identity differed between males and females. It also varies among Palestinians based on their religious beliefs, education level, and type of employment.

Furthermore, this research highlights that Palestinians do not limit their resistance to armed struggle. Palestinians view education as a crucial tool of resistance, considering knowledge vital for preserving their identity and fighting oppression. They also see certain types of work as active resistance against the occupation.

Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp have further solidified their collective identity. This identity is mainly formed through their shared suffering and common hopes. Facing similar hardships under Israeli occupation has brought the refugees together as a community. Additionally, their desire to end this suffering includes aspects such as pain, loss, depression, and attacks, which have also contributed to building this collective identity.

Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp have also formed a shared identity with Palestinians outside the camp. Palestinians outside the camp experience the same suffering under Israeli occupation, but the suffering of Palestinians in the camp is different from that of those outside it.

This research expands theories of identity and identity development by exploring how refugees under occupation develop their identities. The study offers insights into how the Israeli occupation has impacted the identity of Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp, including its transformation and growth since 1948. It contributes to the literature on identity by deepening our understanding of how occupation influences refugees' sense of self and the degree to which it shapes their identities. Additionally, the research highlights the role of education as a powerful tool of resistance against occupation.

Based on the findings regarding Palestinians' identity and its development in the Jenin refugee camp, future studies should investigate this identity further to better understand its connection to personal experiences. This is especially important because of the ongoing Israeli occupation affecting the Palestinian refugees in the camp. As the occupation persists and intensifies, the identity of the refugees continues to evolve. Additionally, comparative studies that

examine different camps across Palestine would offer a broader understanding of the complexities of Palestinian refugees' identities.

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Appendix

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are the most important things to you?
3. What does this place you are living in (Jenin camp) mean to you?
4. Do you consider the Jenin camp your home?
5. Can you imagine yourself and your life separated from the camp?
6. Where are you originally from?
7. Did you visit?
8. How many times?
9. Which one do you feel that you are more likely to be attached to?
10. Which one do you feel that you are more likely to live in?
11. Do you think that you will eventually return to Palestine?
12. What is your thought about leaving the camp to your original land?
13. What about your identity?
14. Tell me about Al-Nakba or things you heard about it.
15. How did it affect you?
16. How is it that you have all of these feelings toward the original land, even though you were born and raised here?
17. Did the way you were raised affect you?
18. Tell me about Al-Naksa or things you heard about it.
19. Tell me about Al intifada 1(1987), Al intifada 2 (2000), and Alijtiyah (2002), or things you heard about it.
20. What were events or situations that radically changed your life?

21. Has the way you look at life changed over the years? If so, how?
22. Tell me about the recent events.
23. How did it affect you?
24. Define identity from your point of view.
25. How do you identify yourself as a Palestinian?
26. Do you think that memories can be a part of your identity?
27. Do you think that the original land has a more significant part of your identity?
28. Do you think your identity is different because you are from the camp?
29. What did you do about it, stay or try to change?
30. How is the relationship between the people in the camp?
31. Do you feel that you are similar?
32. How is your relationship with Palestinians outside the camp? are they similar to you?
33. Do you feel accepted here more than in other places?
34. Which part of your identity you are proud of?
35. Do you feel that someone or something has a role in shaping your identity?
36. Do you think that your identity will be the same after 10 years?
37. Does the occupation have positive effects on your identity?
38. What about negative effects?
39. If you were to form your own identity, how would it be?
40. If there were no occupation and I asked you, who are you, separated from the occupation, what would be your answer?
41. If I asked you to give the percentage of the occupation's impact on your identity, how much would it be? What about ten years ago?

المخلص

في سياق دراسات اللجوء والتهجير القسري، تبرز أهمية فهم الكيفيات التي تتشكّل من خلالها الهوية لدى اللاجئين، لا سيّما في السياقات الممتدة للنزاع والاحتلال، وتتناول هذه الدراسة حالة مخيم جنين للاجئين الفلسطينيين بوصفه نموذجاً دالاً على تداخل عوامل التهجير والاحتلال في إنتاج الهوية الفلسطينية. فعلى الرغم من عيش اللاجئين الفلسطينيين تجربة الفقد والتهجير، يميّز مخيم جنين بدوره الرمزي البارز في المقاومة، وبخصوصية تاريخية ناتجة عن حدة ممارسات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي.

من خلال مقابلات شبه مهيكلة أُجريت مع عدد من سكان المخيم، تستكشف الدراسة الأبعاد المختلفة التي تسهم في تشكيل الهوية، بما في ذلك الذاكرة الجمعية، والسرديات التاريخية، والمكان، والتجربة المعيشة تحت الاحتلال، وتشير نتائج البحث إلى أن الهوية الفلسطينية في هذا السياق ليست معطى ثابتاً أو موروثاً فحسب، بل هي هوية ديناميكية تتشكل باستمرار عبر التفاعل مع الواقع السياسي والاجتماعي، وتعكس في جوهرها ارتباطاً عميقاً بالانتماء الوطني الفلسطيني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فلسطين، مخيم جنين للاجئين، الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، الهوية.