

An Identity Remaking Endeavor: A Story of a Displaced Palestinian Child

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Abstract

Following her displacement from her native land as a result of the Arab Israeli war in 1967, a Palestinian child relocated to a new home as a refugee. As people find meaning in their environments they chose to live in, and build their identity through engaging in meaningful occupations, such forced displacement left her with many challenges, and unanswered question that she had to deal with in an environment that she never belonged to in the past. The environmental outliers played a significant role that obstructed the child's ability to play various roles she has previously played, or to engage in culturally meaningful occupations that had provided nourishment to her identity. In this ethnographic study, the researcher launched an attempt to understand consequences of the displacement experience on the child's identity, means she adopted to cope with the challenges, as well as avenues she employed to reshape her dismantled identity.

Keywords: displacement, identity, occupation, engagement, environment

Identity Remaking Endeavor

In this study, the researcher explored consequences of displacement on the identity of a Palestinian child, and mechanisms of coping she employed to deal with the dilemma. Being rooted in a family-oriented, and a faith-based culture, the anticipation was, while experiencing remarkable difficulty and a period of identity struggle, for her to survive the displacement through capitalizing on built in value systems, and restructuring her identity.

Methodology

The criteria set by Spradley (1979) informed the selection of the participant including locating one who is (a) thoroughly enculturized, (b) has a current involvement in culture of interest, (c) choice of a culture with an unfamiliar scene to the ethnographer, (d) an informant who has adequate time for the study to be completed properly, and (e) one who is able to provide a non analytical perspective of own culture (Spradley, 1979, p. 46).

Ethnography used to develop an understanding of the culture from the participant's point of view. Such effort allows for better understanding of routines, activities that make up life style, value system, traditions, native language, and more. While such data collection method can be carried out through observation and/or through interviews, for the sake of this project, the author chose the interview method to explore the culture of interest. All interviews were audiotaped, and an ethnographic record was compiled. Ethnographer kept a journal to jot down questions, points to be clarified, as well as observations. In order to collect cultural knowledge, descriptive, structural and

contrast type questions were asked in relation to various aspects of informant's life. Following data collection, subsequent analysis of interviews was completed. This step involved reviewing filed notes to search for cultural symbols, and for relationships among those symbols. Various symbols and domains surfaced, resulting in rising of additional questions for which ethnographer went back to recheck answers with informant. As to identify larger units of cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1979, p. 94), and for categorization of such knowledge, domain analysis method was used in this study. Finally, the ethnography was completed highlighting cultural domains and themes related to culture of study.

Cultural Background

The informant's story started at an early age when she and her family was forced out of their home after the Arab armies' defeat in the 1948 war by the Jewish minority, leading to the creation of the State of Israel on the land of the Palestinian people. Prior to the war, the Palestinians owned approximately 87.5% of the total land in Palestine, while Jews owned about 6.6% (Brynen, & Al Rifai, 2007; Israeli Information Center for human Rights in the Occupied Territories [Btselem], 2008). Following the creation of the State of Israel, the Israeli government enacted legislation to expropriate the Palestinian land to Israel. As a result, following the Arab-Israeli 1948 war, and later after the 1967 war, when Israel captured the rest of the Palestinian land, 75% of the native Palestinians were expelled to neighboring countries in order to provide the Jewish immigrants land needed to build settlements.

Those Palestinians who were not expelled were cramped in what is equal to one third of the original land they previously occupied, which is now known as the Occupied

Palestinian Territories [OPT]) (Amnesty, 2003; Palestinian Monitor, 2008). The wars led to the demolishing of hundreds of homes, mosques, churches, schools, and businesses. Today, about five million displaced Palestinian who became refugees live in 58-refugee camps in five neighboring countries or nearby towns (Brynen, & Al Rifai, 2007; & United Nations Relief and Works Agency [UNRWA], 2003). In addition, in order to accommodate Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories, the Israeli government established housing in form of settlements and outposts that exceeded 235 by 2007 (Amnesty, 2007; Btselem, 2008; Carter, 2006; United Nations [UN], 2005).

Further, the Israeli government enacted numerous laws that impacted all aspects of Palestinians' domestic lives, including restriction of mobility, house demolition, confiscation of farmland, and the outlawing the drilling of wells in the OPT. The Israeli army's widespread destruction of schools, arrests, as well as closures and attacks on educational institutions created a hardship for schoolchildren and to staff, and resulted in large number of casualties among them.

Family Background

Today, Palestinian refugees continue to have living memories of their pre-refugee life style, and the dream of returning to their native land. One of those Palestinians who were forced out of her homeland was the study's informant, Sarah. As a child, Sarah lived in Palestine until she and her family were eventually forced out in 1967. She was the first born to a well-to-do family in small village known as "Beit Noba," which is located 15 miles outside Jerusalem. In 1948 they had to flee the war and move to a nearby village that later became under the control of the Jordanian armed forces where they lived until 1967. In 1967, at age 12, following the Israeli seize of the Palestinian

West Bank, Sarah and her family were forced out of their home and moved to Jordan in search of a safe shelter. For generations prior to their initial displacement Sarah's family had lived in their village. Her father's post as the Mayor of the town, owning businesses and being landlords, led the family to live an upscale and prosperous life. Sarah indicated "for generations, my family lived there, my father was the mayor of the town; we lived a very good life; we owned businesses, had lots of family around, and I lived a better life than my siblings."

As the youngest of seven children in the family, she enjoyed her childhood more than her brothers and sisters, "my brothers and sisters were married when I was born, so I grew up with nephews and nieces; all lived together and owned houses with a big land." Sarah spoke proudly of her family, status in the society, and of their lifestyle:

My brothers owned a flourmill, a supermarket, a chicken farm, and a gas station. I had a bicycle, and we were squared away financially. One of my brothers was an air force pilot with the Jordanian air force. I lived and played with my nephews and nieces who were same age. We had all kinds of trees; apples, figs, apricots, nectars, and plums; so did not have to buy anything, as had everything. When I got sick, I went to near by clinic. The school was a walking distance away. We lived in a strategic location. As my father was the mayor, officials, dignitaries, teachers, and United Nations personnel would stop by for a meal, or for an over night stay, accordingly, always had guests. My Mom's daily routine involved spending lots of time in cooking; with her favorite meal being stuffed lamb almost on daily basis. Our house was like a city hall or hotel.

Home

With a smile and lots of pride, Sarah spoke of her neighborhood and the house that she grew up in fully aware of her surroundings, neighborhood, and the status of her family in the society. She perceived the family's house as a place where she was comfortable and embedded; a place that encapsulated the family's history (Newton, 2008); one where she was able to find a point of orientation in the world, and where she experienced social stability (Rowles, 2006).

Sarah shared how home was a place where she belonged as a place that nourished a sense of identity, a source of security, and facilitated both physical and psychological well being (Rowles, 2006). With lots of privacy, and an open view, their house was built out of stone, with two bedrooms that the family used, and an additional two rooms that were available for guest use. The walls were covered with two by three foot pictures of the Arab presidents mounted all over the house. Marble flooring covered the floors, and crystal vases, which were imported from Cuba, were visible through out the house.

She spoke of the preparations they made to accommodate guests, "when we had guests, we would put two tables together to have extra room. The guests would have a meal, and stay over." She indicated that, years later, when visited the White House, she noticed that the marble was of the same type that her family had in their house in Palestine. She added, "we had lots of chairs around the house, mostly leather chairs. The big area of lawn outside was great for summer times, and we sat out there surrounded by grape vines. People would come and join us every evening." They raised Arabian horses on their grounds. Their garden was a stretch of 20 acres, with cactus trees planted around

to serve as a divider in between houses on the northeast side of the property. Sarah recalled some of the landmarks they had on their property:

Back then, there were lots of caves which were scary for us. In 1967, we found artifices in a cave that we left when we ran away. As well, behind guest room, there were huge stones that looked like cascades with knobs, which scared us as children. There were lots of historical sites around us which we were told that Saladin stayed at after he defeated the crusaders.

Sarah's family enjoyed quality times together through engaging in cultural chores that fostered their ties, and functioned as a connection that kept them busy year round; "during harvest season, mother and sister would spend their time in staining straw, and then weaving it at night during story telling time. We read a story and had no TV but only a radio." Sarah's family routine and activities appear to be consistent with Wenger's views (1998) in connection to how individuals engage in mutual activities within their communities and negotiate participation in meaningful occupations so as to align themselves and seek acceptance in their desired community.

Sarah appeared to have built an emotional attachment with her home, and would only be away voluntarily when she traveled away with her father on a business trips, "I traveled with father to meetings and business. I was embarrassed when I was the only female with men in a coffee shop, but that helped me develop a sense of security." It was a place that they would have never thought about leaving. Her brother managed to hand rig a homemade walkie-talkie for family to use for communication between the family members living in separate houses. She indicated that her father was an education champion, and believed in the power of building one's own skills to promote an

individual's ability to live a better life, "during summer, when we did not have regular school, there was a blind woman who taught us to net and crochet." Sarah recalled how talented this woman was, "I learned to do everything during these summer times. At end of the day, I would come home and practice." Spending time in making crafts, Sarah and her nieces learned making necklaces, beading, weaving straw trays, and were able to help make string noodles that her mother used year round.

For Sarah, summer days started with a cup of tea, after which, she would get busy weaving baskets. With bright eyes, she looked up and commented, "we always kept busy. During olive season, we camped out in olive farms, had a big olive fair and fun activities; paid people and entertainers with olives; and used to collect olives that fell off trees from laborers." Her family would later get together to crush olives using small rocks in order to make olive oil.

In discussing various childhood activities that she engaged in, and personal belongings she had, Sarah recalled playing with dolls, and a headband that she owned. This reflected how occupations she selected provided means for her to relate to, and to make sense of the environment she lived in, indicating, "we played in dolls and had all that we wished for. I had special types of dolls that no one else had; father bought special cookies and bread." Other childhood memories appeared to be alive in her mind and to have a special place in her heart. She recalled a headband with roses all around that she once had, recalling, "people thought it was made out of gold, so it attracted lots of attention. It was not gold!"

Individuals carry out their daily routines within a particular environment that either enables or constrains engagement in occupations (Yerxa, Clark, Jackson, Pierce, &

Zemke, 1989). Sarah shared to how they had different kinds of sports at the time, “we ran all over the huge yard we had; climbed trees, and played hide and seek.” The children had trees assigned to each one of them. They played dollhouses, collected empty cans, dug holes in ground, and filled them with water as water wells. During Ramadan, children played with date seeds; “we would collect them, but boys played with marbles.” She elaborated on games they played, “we would dig a hole, place seeds, and if you throw a seed in the hole, all would be yours, same as marbles.”

Both Wenger (1998) and Christiansen (1999) believe that individuals shape their own identity by participating in activities, and through their ability to affect and control these activities. Christiansen (1999) views occupation as the principle means through which people develop and express their personal identities.

In the village, elementary school was set up in such away that all students in first through third grade were crammed in one room; while students in fourth through sixth grade sat together in another room next door. They had one teacher in each room who taught all subjects in that room. When she started seventh grade, she started going to school in RamAllah, a town next door, during which her day ended at seven P.M, “it was an hour ride, after which we had to walk to school for about 15 minutes.” School was out on Fridays and Saturdays. At that point of her schooling, Sarah was able to buy her lunch from vendors who spread around school and “sold bread and falafel.”

In describing her daily routine, Sarah talked about starting her day in early morning to get on the school bus:

I would be on Abu George’s bus by five in the morning. I had no problems waking up early. We would walk from bus stop to school that was in the city next

to my little village. We had to study Christianity besides Islamic studies. Non-Muslim girls had to have a permission from parents to allow them to attend Islamic studies class. We had Gym class, which was different from the way we had it at the village. We had seven periods. At end of the day, we would run to the bus stop so we would not miss the last bus. In this case, walking was risky, as we needed to take longer routes to avoid getting shot at by Jewish settlers. Girls wanted to walk alone, but boys wanted to walk with us for the company and safety. To make things worse, the Jordanian soldiers would harass us, and would flatter with girls. Once got home, we would do our homework.

For Sarah, participation in various occupations allowed her to achieve sense of self-worth and provided meaningfulness that facilitated ability to achieve preeminence and occupational competence (Jackson, 1996). She indicated that her elementary school education was at her village, Bait Noba, where the school consisted of two rooms, “multiple grades sat in the same room. As there was no fifth grade, my sister stayed in forth grade. Since I sat in same room, I learned all they taught fourth graders when I was in third grade.” Later, the town celebrated when sixth grade was opened with a new classroom.

Sarah lived a simple life, and had her nails and hair hygiene checked at school. When it came to school lunch, she would go to her house, to her sister’s house, or would buy lunch at the nearby store, after which, she would go back to school. Her school program included physical education class, “I was good at jumping higher than other girls. As I was good, I became the teacher’s assistant who would check other girl’s work, or to punish them when they did not do their work.”

Teachers had a special status in the society. They were tough and had an extended authority over their students, “teachers will have us redo homework if we made any mistakes. Even if a teacher spotted us playing in the neighborhood after school, she may punish us by giving us extra work.” Sarah thought that such punishment was a more acceptable punishment compared to other possible choices. Her relationship with the teachers went a step further when one of the teachers resided at her brother’s vacant house and dined with them frequently, “she was not the kindest, favored some girls and did not like me.” Sarah spoke of how her teacher’s presence was not a source of comfort, but still had appreciation for her position, “her presence caused discomfort while living with the family as a member who had authority. She still was picking on me and on my nieces in the classroom.” Sarah denied that she or her colleagues had nicknames for teachers who they did not like “due to respect we had for educators.”

Sarah confessed that she was involved in picking nicknames for classmates, “one had a name [Shorty] as she was short and carried schoolbag that was close to her height.” Sarah used to come up with some of these names and was not scared of punishment as “I was the teacher’s deputy in class; I would not hurt anyone, even when my nieces physically hurt me, I would just repeatedly ask them to stop.”

While school curriculum included various types of subjects and topics, the curriculum did not discuss the history of Palestine. Sarah and her sisters learned about Palestine through stories they heard from her parents. Her father told stories about his life in Jaffa where he used to work along with one of Sarah’s brothers in early 1940s aboard ship loading and unloading goods. Sarah recalled the time when her father told stories of

Jewish refugees who used to arrive to Palestine with lots of heavy boxes, later found to contain weapons.

As well, Sarah heard stories about the era when the British Army occupied her town in 1930s-1940s. Back then, “the British army abused people and hanged my father three times but he was not meant to die.” Her father was arrested for arms possession. He managed to escape his arrest several times, “one morning while at the yard, he saw the army approaching, chased him for some time until got to the other end of the house, and came back to find that army was waiting to arrest him.” Sarah’s father managed to hide once among a herd of goats, but still was captured and was sent to prison several times. She described ways her father demonstrated his resilience:

Every time my father would run away from police, he would be arrested and be escorted to court. One time, he paid bribes and had lots of friends who enabled him to be released from prison again. Some of his friends hired some women who chanted and celebrated his release; on his way out, as a fearless man, he raised his middle finger to the policemen. His well-known court oath was “I swear I would never tell the truth.” Every time her father was hanged, the whole town was present, and the soldiers would swing him in order to force him to die. Villagers who watched him getting hanged urged him to hand out any weapons that he may be hiding to the British soldiers, but he would confirm that he did not own any. All what he had was a bullet that they spotted with him at one time.

Family Life

The evening routine was another special time for Sarah. Children were able to stay up until late. In winter times, they went to bed after grandmother’s story telling time.

During summer, they played outside; neighbors and relatives would come over; consequently, Sarah and her family were never alone, “we played hide and seek, brain games, and riddles. I would finish my homework right after I get home from school. It would take me an hour or longer as I had to do long writing.”

Socially, Sarah’s family had an extended network; with a great harmony between them, environment, and occupations they engaged resulting in an optimal occupational performance as defined by Christiansen, Baum & Bass-Haugen (2005). Weddings took place frequently, and all people who lived in town were at the weddings. Children would stand in middle of a circle of women who danced the cultural “dabkah.” In describing the interaction between people in relation to sharing invitations for meals and how people helped one another she indicated, “I cannot remember invitations over. But would send some food over to others or people will share some of theirs. We did not go out for meals, as we would be the ones who would always invite people.” When people got together for socialization, they discussed town related issues, farming problems, difficulties they experienced selling their harvest. Sarah added, “they really did not have big issues, no crimes or other worries to talk about.”

When needed to, Sarah and her family visited other families at end of the day where no meals were involved. During “wheat harvesting season,” people would gather and stayed up all night working on wheat and socializing, “we had four major tribes in town that interacted well. During elections, candidates would visit my father to solicit support, or to seek help for documentation, as father was literate while many others were not.”

Due to the status her father had in town, voters solicited his recommendations regarding candidates they should vote for saying, “I do not know who to vote for; tell me what to do?” In addition, many in town knew Sarah’s father as he was in charge of the water well that provided water to neighboring towns in return to little income, “It did not really make him money, people paid him pennies to purchase water, and it was more of a service to the town.” Frequently someone would accidentally fall down in the 24-foot deep well and die. Later, the municipality built a room to house the well’s pump and others took charge of it but did not do a good job, ending with her father retaking charge of it. Sarah recalled her father as a “celebrity” indicating, “he was kind, and understood people’s needs.” She perceived her father as the man who had leadership skills and the model family man:

Absolutely was very distinguished; after his death, our family dismantled. He was the man who never turned anyone away. At times people would knock at the door at four in the morning to ask for his help with a case of domestic violence, or some other problem. He helped people financially a lot, and multiple times never asked people to repay him the loan.

As Sarah’s father was the mayor who handled all documentation related to births, deaths, marriages, and properties people owned, Sarah got to know every one in town. In seventh grade, she enrolled in Girl Scout, and had field trips. Sarah had to attend school in a neighboring town named “Emwas” that she walked to, and learned to manage avoiding neighborhoods where Jews lived by taking alternative routes. As well, she learned to avoid areas where the Jordanian army hanged out at in order to avoid getting

flattered by soldiers. This “made me stronger and more independent at an early age; all of which affected my personality.”

Her mother on the other hand was the stay home mom who had other women over to help cook as they frequently had guests visiting, “my mother had her friends who came over to spend time, drink tea, and made them fresh yogurt and margarine almost on daily basis.” When her mother had some spare time away from cooking, she was part of a craft-making group that handmade various types of cultural crafts.

Sarah was influenced tremendously by her parents, but had her worries, “my parents were generous and welcoming. We were living a happy life but always worried that the Jewish people may invade our town, or even shoot at us.”

Displacement

Sarah proceeded to talk about the time when she and her family’s dream came to an end when they were forced out of their house on June 5th of 1967, “we heard there would be a war on the radio; did not know what to expect but stayed alert.” Sarah’s sister and her family who lived on the other side of village stayed together in their house; “we all stayed together in one house. My oldest brother’s family gathered with the other neighbors.” Since the time war erupted, Sarah and her family lived moments of uncertainty as they were not aware of what to expect, or what is happening around them. This feeling deprived them the opportunity to engage in orchestrating daily occupations in the environment as means of adaptation to the changing life events (Yerxa et al., 1990)

Shortly before midnight, some of the neighbors stopped by and wandered to what Sarah and her family were still doing in town when the Israeli Army had arrived, took control of the town, and forced villagers out; “we gathered with our neighbors; my uncle

and his wife were first to leave, but told everyone that we would be back in hours, so my sister left the lantern on.”

Surrounded by Israeli soldiers, people fled town in mass numbers before sunrise on foot, “it was chaos; did not know where to go, we were wandering with no direction, and just followed the crowd.” Village by village, Sarah watched the evacuation in progress at gunpoint under the watch of army tanks that were placed on near by hills:

People walked faster as they did not know what else to do. At sunrise, we are arrived at “Bait Ouor” where tanks were all over. As we had to go down the hill, people rolled or slid. It was after that point that we started walking for the next three days. We had no water, no food, and no belongings. Some people milked cows they found on their way. I did not like milk, but had no other choices. As we arrived at “Ein Areek,” we found water, so we washed up and drank what we could. Being 12 years old, with many other children around, I had no idea what was going on, why we had to keep walking, or to carry white flags. For the following two weeks, we had no food. We looked for food around town, but people where scared and did not want to sell food.

Finally, Sarah’s family ran across one of their olive business customers who provided them wheat, after which they got in trouble “in the way, the Israelis stopped us and arrested my sister. Woman and children watched her getting arrested, panicked and screamed, but could not do anything to help her, or knew what her destiny may be.” Sarah’s sister was married and had five little children, which worsened the scenario, “I cannot forget how all cried and pulled their hair; later she was released.” The family went starving for the next two weeks, the children were hungry, and ended sleeping on the

ground under walnut trees, “it was June, and even that walnuts were not ripe yet, we still ate them, and ate the leaves.” When Sarah’s sister went around asking others for some bread to feed the children, people told her that the bread was not for sale, “my sister told them that she needed the bread for the children, and eventually, whispered to a woman : I am begging.” Some other children managed to take some bread by force, which was not a common behavior in the traditional value system.

Eventually, Sarah and her family arrived to a newly established refugee camp in Al Dlieel in Jordan. In reflecting on how Human-caused events had led to displacing people from home against their will, it can only traumatize and disconnect them from a place that they had become attached to, and called home (World Bank, 2001); Sarah proceeded to discuss types of feelings she experienced at the time “in my mind, as I was not used to humiliation, I was confused, for losing what we had, for having no choices, and for losing the network that we had.” Shortly after that, and as a result of the connections her father had with United Nations officials, some officials arrived at the refugee camp and looked into the conditions people. Sarah and her family developed a deeper sense of physiological, economical, and social inferiority that impacted all aspects of their daily living

We had no choices, and would get a bowl of soup for the day. We had to go to wilderness in dark if we had to go to the bathroom. I once lived the best life, and then was nobody. I still felt better when I was with others rather than being alone.

After they were moved to another refugee camp in Amman, Jordan, Sarah and her family had to search for meanings of belonging in their new home, and had to start learning how to deal with a new environment with many unfamiliar elements. Law

(1991) asserted that in interacting with the environment, an individual would need to deal with various types of out-of-control elements including cultural, social, institutional, and physical contexts that occur outside the individual. In Amman, the family lived in one bedroom unit, with a centrally located bathroom that was shared by other families who lived in nearby units furnished by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Such experience forced Sarah's family along with other displaced families to share surviving "chronic disabling conditions through which they are marginalized or socially excluded" (Kronenberg & Pollard, 2005, p. 1).

The environmental impact on the family continued to grow. While Bandura (1991 & 1989) identified a number of environmental elements that could serve as extrinsic enablers of performance; including natural and built environments; culture and values; and the social and economic systems; in the case of Sarah's family, such elements became inactive resulting with the environment constituting a barrier to achieving mastery and to extract meaning (Bandura, 1991). Since occupations are carried out within a particular physical, social, political and historical environment (Yerxa et al., 1989), Sarah's displacement played a pivotal role that led to creating an imbalance in the ability to carry out daily routines that typically characterize individuals. She described ways she experienced occupational deprivation:

I felt the humiliation. We had to buy everything when we did not have to buy anything before. When my father used to go on business trips, he would always bring me something, a toy, a pair of shoes, just something. In Amman we had nothing. I only had one sweater, which I slept in it, and one pair of shoes that I had to wear for along time. I saw other children wearing all kind of clothes,

dressing up, fashionable, with different hairdos, I felt like no one, but was embarrassed.

Later, Sarah's family became keen in establishing their belonging in the new environment. For Wenger (1998), both engagement, and alignment are distinct modes of belonging as they "expand identity through space and time in different ways" (p. 181). As engagement entails the "definition of common enterprise in the process of pursuing it in concert with others" (p. 184), it leads to engaging in shared activities, and in accumulating shared experiences that fosters sense of belonging. Accordingly, Sarah's family started looking into getting her in school. This chore turned to be another challenge that the family had to deal with, Sarah shared ways she suffered:

I was smarter than others, despite the interruption of the education, and even that I did not go to school right away. As my father wanted to enroll me in a school, we went to the nearby school everyday, only to find that there was no room for additional students. Our worn out clothing attracted giggling from other girls who saw us during our numerous visits to the school.

In reacting to the occupational dysfunction that they experienced in their natural environment, Sarah and her family took it upon themselves to activate the adaptive nature of their humanity to respond to in order to restore a meaningful life style they desire for themselves, and to re-inject order in the society (Reilly, 1962). This adaptive behavior allows negotiation between the available resources and limitations (of the new environment) against a background of personal meaning. Through engaging in identifying own goals (e.g., education, employment), Sarah's family engaged in authoring own story, which better enabled them to shape their future, and minimized

sense of deprivation. This occupational enrichment served to “support engagement in occupations congruent with those that the individual might normally perform” (Molineux & Whiteford, 2004, p. 127), Sarah explained:

Later, I managed to enroll in evening classes. The classes got better over the years, and I was focused. I had to deal with many new things at the same time, me being a teenager, new culture, being refugee, new neighbors, new people, and being poor. We progressively became very poor, and had no money. It was very hard to become this deprived, while watching other girls having the good life that I used to have; while I am suffering, using one pair of shoe all the time, it was hard, and I was envious.

Over the months and years that followed, to Sarah, her displacement was an act of confinement or obstruction from participating in self-shaping occupations leading to changes related to their health and behavior resulting in dysfunction, disease, disability or death (Wilcock, 1999a; as in Kronenberg & Pollard, 2005), “we were getting sick, but did not have a way to receive decent medical care; the whole thing took quite a toll on us.”

Even when Sarah grew to realize the new realities, she frequently continued to have strong feelings for being “a refugee.” Her family lost sense of agency, and in turn, was in need for help of others. Their friends turned into refugees in a refugee camp. Their network was dismantled, the neighbors they knew disappeared, and “people were busy and into their own life, broken apart, not caring about one another.” For Sarah, occupational deprivation not only led to compromising the physical and mental health, but as well, strained ability to live a satisfactory social life due to loss of control over life routines, lost contact with their immediate, as well as their extended families and friends.

In turn, they were unable to fully engage in social life activities, which resulted in the dilution of social networks, inability to observe culturally and socially relevant holidays, and to changing the overall dynamics of the lived social life.

The true sense of family was destroyed. My brothers lived far apart could not see them often, visited people because had to, did not have much to share, felt like I am fake as I was not myself, or what I wanted to be. I participated in demonstrations and screamed to find something to do and to get the anger out.

This gave me sense of hope that someone will listen and help me go back home to live my true life again.

At 12 years of age, who used to live a good life including being served, ended up having a lot on her mind, learning to tolerate more than what she could, maturing sooner, and understanding more about life than she needed to by hunger and deprivation. Sarah's suffering was in line with Wilcocok's (1999b, 2003) findings who argued that individuals shape an accepted self through negotiating balance between doing, being and becoming which is an essential construct to healthy living and wellness.

Sarah had to grow up with memories of children getting killed in front of her eyes, houses bulldozed, and scenes of walls being pushed and crumbled indicating, "I hate the bulldozers, do not want to see them anywhere as they bring back bad memories." This experience turned her to be a more serious person who could not easily find joy in simple things. Sarah described the different ways she experienced psychological instability following her displacement:

I still feel that what happened needs to be corrected, never thought I would walk

away from my house that way, feel I need to tell everyone about what happened to us. You cannot dissolve natives as if Palestine was no mans land. I still

remember staying up late at night playing and laughing, story telling, climbing trees, running around especially during summer time under the lights of a lantern. During day, we would play and run all over the place. All neighborhood kids played together till sunrise. These great times are gone forever, they took it a way from us, and life is tasteless. In Amman we had to live behind closed doors and be strangers, with no freedom. In seventh grade I woke up early in the morning to be school by seven, walked to school, and returned home at five in the evening, still enjoyed it, and loved the company of other girls. On Thursdays, our teacher used to take us on fieldtrips with girl scouts. On Fridays, at four in the morning, we went hunting with my brother in law and father. My father shot 11 pigeons using one bullet. I had all what I hoped for. After all this, I had to live in a tent, I was embarrassed of my life as a teenager, whose life was full of challenges even without war; now with no guilt, and just because of war, this great life is gone forever.

In 1970, Sarah's brothers helped her father build a one-bedroom house.

Her father managed to resume some of his duties as the mayor of then "displaced villagers." Sarah slept in the same room where visitors were received when they came to visit, or when needed some paperwork that her father may have had as the keeper of legal documents. Sarah discussed the different ways she struggled at the time:

At age 14, while trying to adjust to a new environment, the last thing I needed was to wake up in the morning to find visitors in the room. There was no privacy, and

therefore, I had to stay at my sister's house, leading some people to think that I was part of her family.

In her attempt to minimize the sense of displacement, and to reinstate a sense of meaningfulness, Sarah engaged in occupations that made life ultimately meaningful (Meyer, 1922); including returning to playing with her nieces, and through reestablishing her social network. Before she knew it, in 1970, the civil war erupted in Jordan. Sarah was destined to live yet another trauma, another war, "three of my cousins who were my age and I used to play with were killed, one was injured, all at same time." She then had to go back to living a life where she had no control over the daily life routines, with unpredictable events, leaving her limited opportunity to realize occupational fulfillment or to develop self - actualization (Lavin, 2005), "we had to live through another war. A taxi was taking us to school, but frequently won't show up due to violence, so we had to walk, and would get home at midnight."

As the displacement created an environmental shift following moving to a less-familiar environment, with lack of community support and limited occupational choices for Sarah, she developed an emotional outrage as she refused the external manipulation of her lifestyles, "my first three years in Jordan were bad; was subject to humiliation by Jordanian army, suffered school issues, and was called names."

This was consistent with findings of the developers of the person- environment-occupational performance model (PEOPM), who recognized the environmental influence on an individual's behavior, and suggested that occupational performance is a product of a dynamic, interwoven relationship that exists among people, their occupations, and the environments in which they live, work and play (Christiansen & Baum, 1991). With all

occupational injustice she experienced, Sarah “was full with anger, did not understand what was happening, why I have to live like this, did not understand politics, why I had to suffer, why is it happening to me.”

With deterioration of the quality of her life as a result of loss of control over her environment, and disengagement from **participating** in meaningful occupations that nourished her identity, Sarah experienced a growing sense of **occupational marginalization:**

I had lots of unanswered question. When looked around, I had good feelings towards those who gave me comfort. I felt good that we had family in Jordan. Having family there gave me some sense of security; which fell short when I started going to school and dealing with reality. In one occasion, I was returning to my sister’s from school, saw a crowd of people and was curious to find out what was going on. It turned out that the United Nations was distributing canned foods, sugar, flour, chlorine, and margarine. Out of now where, a soldier standing nearby whipped me hard that I flew up and landed few feet away. I had no idea what wrong I did as I was only watching, was hungry, but still was treated like a criminal, which made me angrier and reminded me that I am no one.

As the PEOPM asserts that the person-environment interaction is an ongoing process that can lead to either developing an adaptive, or a maladaptive behavior (Christiansen & Baum, 1991). Sarah continued to grow deeper feelings of occupational injustice due to loss of control over her environment, and restricted privileges; “ I felt choked, had no freedom, no control over my life, and cannot do what I wanted; having to

learn and deal with new rules, people, a lot that I cannot do. Life became more complicated in Jordan.”

According to Townsend and Wilcock (2004), occupational injustice leads to deprivation and marginalization of individuals. As a result, their occupational rights are compromised. As occupational beings (Clark et al., 1990, p. 300), through social inclusion, individuals have the right to have equal privileges in their ability to engage in health-promoting, meaningful occupations of choice, which provide enrichment in daily life (Clark et al., 1990). Following her displacement, Sarah was unable to make choices relevant to her social life, was deprived her social network, and had to self-regulate in order to conduct herself in most conducive manner:

I felt blocked out of my childhood, and sad. Only comfort I had was when I was dealing with nieces and nephews; not having many friends as was I living in difficult conditions, and due to way people looked at me. When you come to a different culture, you see how people receive you. Later, I was able to make some friends in the neighborhood.

Similar to millions of other displaced Palestinian children, Sarah later came to realize that the neighborhood that she grew up in, and have always belonged to, is no more home for her. She found herself forced to change established routines, needed to adapt to a new habitat, and to adopt new *daily life routines*. Additionally, she found herself no longer able to engage in many of the meaningful occupations that have typically provided her a sense of fulfillment, and only were able to engage in occupations that the new environment allowed for her to perform.

Kronenberg and Pollard (2005) argued that as sociopolitical conditions become barrier to access, people experience *occupational apartheid*. *Occupational apartheid* “is more or less chronic established environmental (systemic) conditions that deny marginalized people rightful access to participation in occupations that they value as meaningful and useful to them which jeopardizes their health and well-being” (Kronenberg, 1999, p.25). It describes circumstances that go beyond the description of *occupational deprivation*, and takes place based on the premise that “some people are of different economic and social value status than others” (Kronenberg & Pollard, 2005, p. 65).

Adaptation

In line with Townsend’s (2003) views, as *participation* in life is at “core concept for human, resistance results from the need to protect self and ways of living, including occupation, habits, routines, beliefs, culture and privileges” (pp. 4-5). As Sarah got older and was able to realize the realities she had to deal with, and in searching for her identity and ways to adapt to the losses that she realized, she engaged in contemplating her possible reactions towards her displacement. Sarah who was used to function in harmony with her native environment, had to deal with an “injury or underdevelopment in an area of mental or physical functions that affected meaningful change in a person’s entire identity” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 299).

She witnessed the emergence of the Palestinian armed resistance against the occupation, the growing anger and frustration among other Palestinian refugees, and the various types of diplomatic and political actions that took place following the Palestinian crisis. While trying to deal with her own anger and sense of humiliation, and in rejection

to the *human-caused* apartheid, Sarah believed that she had to set the records of her injury straight. She came to grips with the need to unleash the inner leadership and pragmatic abilities that she inherited from her father. While other refugees may have elected a proxy agency in order to realize sense of self-efficacy, Sarah employed her own abilities (e.g., cognitive, social, motivational) to achieve desired outcomes. Through activating her agentic role, she enacted the power of rationalization over the control of emotions, and was determined to lead her own battle from freedom against forces of occupation.

As one who believed in power of education, even when she was stripped out of her home and a life that she enjoyed, she was determined to grip her identity through education. Consequently, Sarah launched a slew of endeavors that included educating others about her cause, organizing seminars, and through planning bazaars where Palestinian crafts were displayed. She became very keen in collecting every piece of information that she came across that was related to her displacement, her town, or relatives, indicating, “it helps me collect pieces that once made me.”

Further, as to abolish a sense of occupational dysfunction, and through her ability to engage in advocating for her cause, Sarah was able to rebuild her identity in what was previously a strange and non-welcoming environment. In order to achieve meaning and choice as means of self-shaping after experiencing health crisis, she was able to “realize own abilities and limitations, and consequently managed to redevelop self-esteem” (Whalley-Hammell, 2004, p. 155). Sarah found various ways to find self-healing including enrolling in social work and counseling classes in order to acquire knowledge she needed to assist others; frequently hosted guests at her home who would otherwise be

at hardship; and always exercised sympathy towards those who were displaced no matter what background they come from.

As with occupations being pivotal in enabling growth or enabling destruction through ways of participation in daily life, Sarah chose participation as basis for empowering her marginalized self. She traveled through out her life telling her story and searching for personhood. Through her resilience and determination, she managed to explore the environmental elements that have once barred her engagement, and converted them to be resources and vehicles that enabled her to reengage in occupations while struggling to maintain her fragmented identity. As a result, she managed to replace confining occupations that have historically transitioned her from her agentic role to playing a victimic role (Polkinghorne, 1995) with those occupations that enabled her to restore her agentic role in an adapted approach.

Conclusion

The study was an attempt to explore implications of displacement on the identity of a Palestinian child who lived an experience that she continued to perceive as a stranger to her, and struggled to deal with realities proposed by such experience. As a child, Sarah continued to work on sorting out the events that took place following her displacement, and to figure out the new identity that was assigned to her as a refugee. Even after her adaptive skills fell short of serving her, as a child, to deal with the displacement experience in a positive manner, her convictions and values enabled her to gather her powers needed to get on the road of identity restoration, converting her to a community advocate for a cause that she long believed in. Sarah's story provides a positive model for other refugee to adopt in order to acquire resilience they may be in need for in order to engage in a similar identity-remaking endeavor.

While the author managed to explore various aspects of the informant's life, further exploration should take place in future to explore additional aspects of the culture, including spirituality, family lineage, demographics, history of her village, language, anger management styles, as well as cultural values related to weddings, celebrating and as well as morning patterns. Some of the study limitations include employing a single informant for culture exploration. Additional number of interviews would allow for exploring additional aspects of culture. Such cultural exploration would have been enriched through interviewing additional family members who lived the displacement experience along with informant. As well, since the informant gets involved in various community advocacy events, researcher could have arranged to attend one of her community events in order to learn more about informant's adaptive behavior and ways she has evolved years following her displacement.

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