



**MACQUARIE**  
University

**“The home that dwells in us”: A social  
constructionist perspective of the displaced  
narrative identities, work ethic and spirituality of  
Palestinian-Australians**

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*Faculty of Business and Economics*

*Department of Marketing and Management*

*Student Name: Farah Fayyad*

*Student ID: 43783368*

*Supervised by: Professor Alison Pullen*

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*“Where can I free myself of the homeland in my body?” – Mahmoud Darwish*



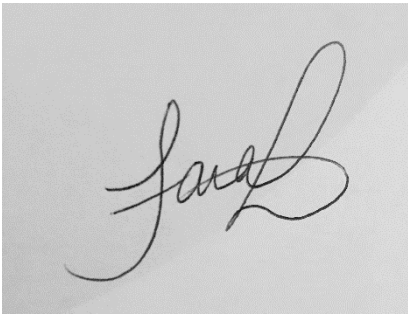
*This thesis is dedicated  
to the homeland that dwells in all of us.*

## *Declaration*

I, Farah Fayyad, hereby declare that the work in this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Candidate name: Farah Fayyad

Candidate signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Farah', is shown on a light gray background. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

## *Acknowledgments*

I would like to express my utmost appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Alison Pullen, who was invaluable in this entire process. Her *blunt comments, open hearted discussions, critical reflections, strong but much needed reality checks, witty charisma* and *empathetic capacity* had a profound influence on my work. I look forward to more exciting projects with her in the near future.

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## *Preface*

Before embarking on the journey of this study, I knew I wanted to decide on a topic that represented an intersection of the things I was truly passionate about. I knew that my topic had to have a cultural component, because I was fascinated with the behavior, traditions and customs of individuals from an array of backgrounds. I also wanted my research to be ethnographic in nature because it allowed me to make use of the quality I am most known for – talking to people! I was also intrigued with the intricate web of beliefs, attitudes, emotions, memories, values, experiences and stories that make up an individual and particularly the way they present themselves in the work domain. After all, this is something I continuously observe and analyze in my family members, friends and colleagues – perhaps a little too much! But I have always been interested in the way individuals present themselves, their gestures, mannerisms, personalities and most of all how they speak of their *identity*. Perhaps the reason is because the topic of identity has been at the very core of my upbringing and in particular, my *displaced identity*.

I am *Palestinian* by blood, *Kuwaiti* by birth, *American-Australian* by education, *Palestinian-Kuwaiti-Jordanian-Australian* by upbringing which yields to one complex, hyphenated, eclectic and curious being!

So, it is not surprising that identity has been a topic discussed on the way to school, on the breakfast table, in dinner parties, on summer vacations, in university presentations, and in my work domain. It is largely unavoidable! Being displaced, although not a refugee, was and will always be a major part of who I am. It may come to a surprise that it was never a burden, quite the contrary, I enjoyed it. The ironic part was that when choosing the topic of my study, I seemed to have taken the very core component of my individual construction for granted! It was easy for me to observe, explore and analyze what makes other individuals who they are, yet I seemed to have dismissed those from my own community. Did I take it for granted? Was I so entrenched in my own identity that I never questioned its composition? Was everyone in my community just like me?

I started to explore the intersection of culture, ethnography and identity, and subsequently, began to question more about my own identity. I acknowledged that it was complicated, due to the ongoing complex Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but that made it more compelling to explore further. How does this complex and convoluted identity manifest in an individual? How does it manifest in an individual in their work domain? Does it make them stronger? Does it make them weaker? Is it a burden? How is it embodied? How is it expressed, if it is expressed at all? How socially constructed are we? To what extent do we internalize our social factors and values, specifically in societies of conflict? Does discourse play a role? If so, is it divisive? What does it mean to be displaced? Are our identities fluid and dynamic or are they fixed and static? The questions were endless! But I knew I wanted to explore these complexities and I knew how: talk and listen to people! It is after all, what I love to do.

The more I explored identity in the work domain, the more I learnt about work ethic and workplace spirituality. However, I got a sense from my reading and research that there has to be more to work ethic and spirituality than meets the eye. There has to be more than just scaled, measurable and quantifiable approaches. Individuals are far more complex than questionnaires and surveys – they have an inner being that is worth navigating! Throw identity in the mix, you have yourself a very complex topic! I started thinking: perhaps if I interviewed a group of people with a very complex and contested identity, like the Palestinians for example, I may unravel some pretty interesting things! So the exploration was initiated...

I specifically chose work ethic because I was interested in the concept of hard work, and the centrality of hard work. I grew up hearing tales of hard work and it has always intrigued me. I wanted to explore this topic in the form of a qualitative research question based on in depth narratives of individuals that I interview. Spirituality in my opinion was more metaphysical and transcending in nature than other work related concepts. This helped me bridge the Nakba, the event that is at the core of Palestinian identity, culture and upbringing, to the workplace while keeping an open mind that this may mean different things to different people.

The idea of spirituality rose from an interest in the sense of spirituality an individual experiences in their workplace, be it professional or not. I began exploring where this sense of spirituality that encompasses factors such as purpose, drive, and connection originates from. Could there be an external driver? Such as a traumatic event, whether lived or not lived that could possibly influence this sense of spirituality. I began putting the pieces together and wondered whether a traumatic event that has surpassed generations, such as the Nakba or similarly the Holocaust, could possibly influence or play a role in an individual's sense of spirituality. I have heard stories growing up about the sense of hard work amongst Palestinians but wanted to investigate this issue in relation to spirituality as I wanted to explore whether there is a relevance between the two. Support from the literature helped me build this connection as I began looking for gaps in the research. Identity was not only inescapable when researching Palestinians but provided a strong backbone and foundation to the research. Although there are other topics that may be relevant, it would be too exhaustive for this project but will be taken into account for future research. I spoke to members of the community and started recruiting individuals from a variety of migratory backgrounds and from various occupations, ages and lifestyles. While being a Palestinian-Australian gave me access to my community, it also challenged my integrity as a researcher. I felt empowered with information and intuition about this cohort and I understood how to deal with various reactions that require cultural and emotional intelligence. However, I began to question: How can I remain impartial when I am so embedded in this journey? How can I interpret their stories and not make conscious or subconscious assumptions? At the same time, how can I let my voice flourish? Or as my supervisor says, how can I find my voice? Although this did prove to be challenging, it nonetheless allowed me to experiment with the emic and the etic of my position as a researcher. It also unraveled aspects of my existential being I had probably dismissed. Most of all, it made me appreciate the complexities that make an individual, and that we are not what we just present ourselves to be but rather multiple and intricate layers of beliefs, values, histories and a lot more.

This research is intended for both Organizational Theorists and managers/practitioners in the practical business world who would benefit from understanding the complexities that make up an individual and how that manifests in the workplace. Some complexities may often be overlooked or misunderstood, and I hope through this thesis, it will open doors to exploring more of the building blocks of organizations which could be used to create more inclusive, diverse, harmonious and vibrant organizational cultures. Such information could present to be useful in exploring issues such as identity crisis, stigmatized identities, motivation, purpose, spiritual connection etc.

I hope that through reading this thesis, you will explore a dimension of identity, work ethic and spirituality you did not come across previously. I hope through this body of work you get a rich insight into the identity construction of Palestinian-Australians, and explore the manifestation and embodiment of their displacement.

*Farah Fayyad*

*November 14, 2016*

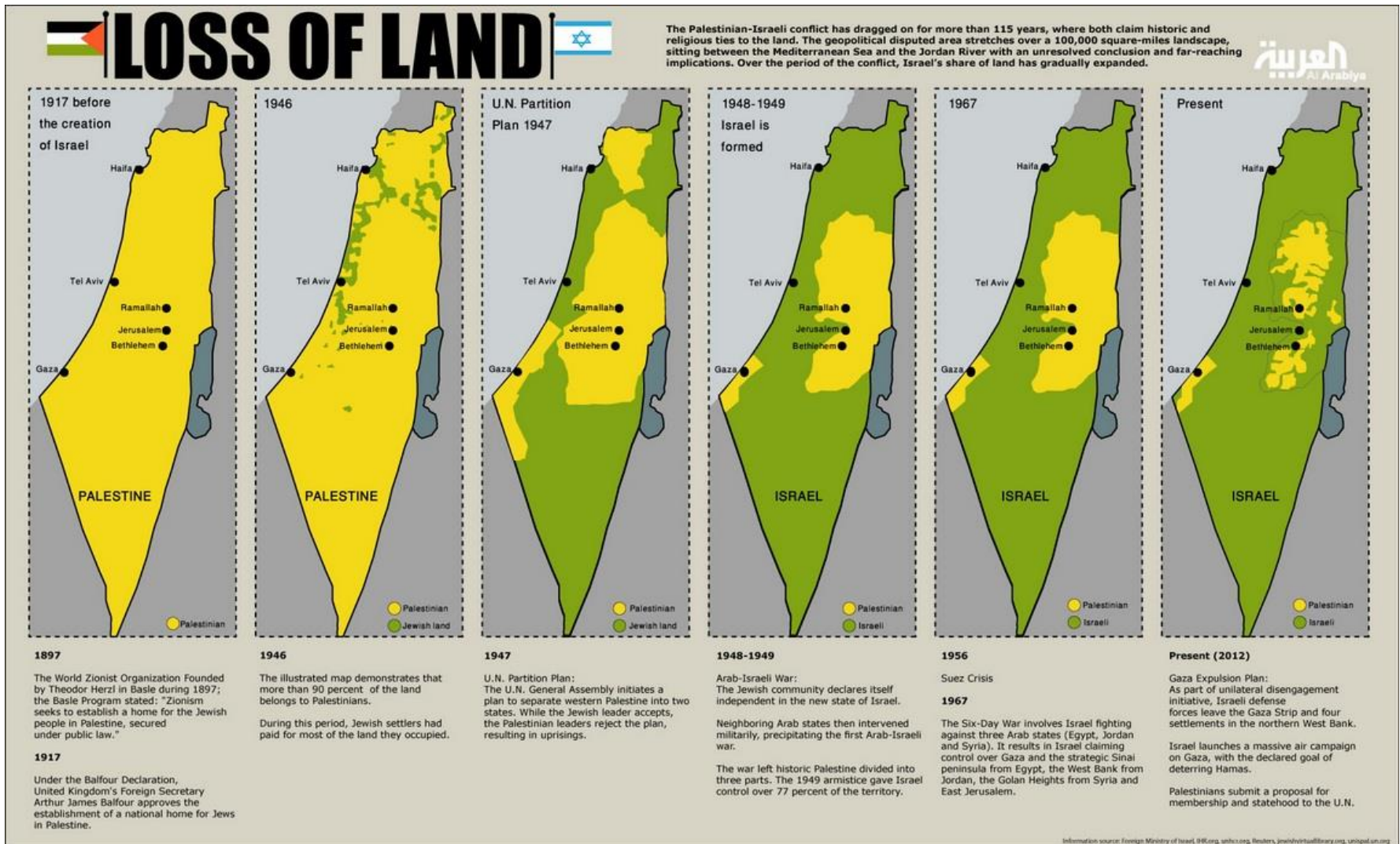


## *Nakba in pictures*



The above photographs were taken around the onset of the Arab-Israeli War (1948), which resulted in the destruction of villages, homes, and the uprooting of families from their home towns.

Retrieved from: <https://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com/2010/10/10/al-nakba-the-catastrophe/>



**Figure 1:** Palestinian progressive loss of land (1917-2012)

Retrieved from: <http://www.cadfa.org/resources/maps/>

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## *Abstract*

This study sought to explore the influence, manifestation and embodiment of the Palestinian catastrophe (“Nakba”) on Palestinian-Australians through the exploration of their personal narratives. Through their narratives, it sought to explore how their identities are constructed, in particular, their displaced identities and how that may influence or play a role in the sense making of their own work ethic and sense of spirituality in their work contexts. This study adopted a qualitative approach underpinned in the *social constructivist interpretive* philosophical foundation. Fourteen in depth semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted that explored the manifestation and embodiment of the *displacement* of Palestinians within the work context of participants from varying ages, professional backgrounds, industries and migratory patterns. This allowed participants to provide rich insights into the construction of their stories that included reflections on their *past, present, and future*. Through a *thematical analysis* of the narratives, it was found that “*Processes of identity*” surfaced that included the *lack of the sense of belonging*, the presence of *hidden vs. visible identities*, and a *racism and discrimination* dimension. *Childhood values* were also strongly discussed in the narratives that suggested the manifestation of displacement, which included the *value of education* and the *notion of hard work*. The manifestation of displacement was also discussed in their discussion of “*who am I at work?*” which included how they *express their identity* at work, how displacement allows them to bring a more “*humanizing the workplace*” and how displacement is related to their *sense of spirituality*. The cohesive interplay of these overarching and sub-themes suggest that displacement is *strongly manifested* and *embodied* in the identity construction of the individuals, which play a role in how they make sense of their work ethic and spirituality in the workplace. This thesis provides an in depth contextual exploration of the narratives of Palestinian Australians in relation to their identities, work ethic and spirituality that has not previously been studied.

# *Chapter 1:*

## *Introduction*

*“Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.”*

Edward Said

(Reflections on exile: and other literary and cultural essays, 2001)

## *Introducing this study*

This chapter will provide an outline of the body of work presented in this thesis. Firstly, it will begin by introducing the main direction of the thesis. Secondly, it will provide a befitting understanding of the context of this study. Thirdly, it will provide a highlight of the major aims and the scope of this study. Fourthly, it will highlight the major potential research contributions which will lastly be followed by a brief guide to navigating the rest of the thesis.

The concept of “diaspora” has been shown to be troublesome and quite controversial amongst many academics. The initial understanding and definition of “diaspora” revolved around the dispersal and displacement of a group of individuals from their homeland, particularly after experiencing a traumatic event or experiencing coercive forceful pressures. But not all scholars agree on this simple explanation and in fact, understanding diasporas has shown to be a lot more complex and convoluted (Schultz and Hammer, 2003). Schultz and Hammer argue that to collapse the understanding of diaspora to a simple migratory movement as a result of a traumatic event does not justify its true essence. Rather, they argue that it constitutes a deeper sense of a homeland, whether real and defined by geo-political borders or a mythical aspiration still unachieved. But perhaps, a diasporic experience is not just about a deep sense of homeland, but rather the ongoing lived experience of diasporicity. Does our lived experience of displacement have ramifications that exceeds its historical significance? Is it just in the past or is it at work in the core of our present – our gestures, our sense making, our understanding of the world, how we behave and how we interact with the world? Could it extend beyond its ancestral memory and manifest in our day to day lives? This is what this study sought to explore.

This study sought to explore the influence, manifestation and embodiment of the Palestinian catastrophe (“Nakba”) on Palestinian-Australians through the exploration of their personal narratives. Through their narratives, it sought to explore how their identities are constructed, in particular, their displaced identities and how that may influence or play a role in the sense making of their own work ethic and sense of spirituality in their work domains. *Work ethic* which generally refers to the *value and importance of hard work* (Miller et al., 2002), and *spirituality*, which is often associated with “*the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of a community*” (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, p. 137) will be discussed further in the literature review in greater detail.

Before continuing, it is important to grasp an understanding of the specific context chosen for this study.



## *The Palestinian context*

### *“Nakba”*

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Palestinians world-wide commemorated the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “Nakba”, “the catastrophe”, marked by the forced displacement of at least 780,000 Palestinians from their home in the British Mandate of Palestine which led to their diaspora (Khalidi<sup>1</sup>, 2010). Not only did it mark the initiation of the Arab-Israeli War and the establishment of the State of Israel (1948), but it also marked the beginning of the loss of Palestine where more than 450 villages were destroyed and 78% of the total population were expelled from their homes. This catastrophic expulsion marked the beginning of their displacement – dispersion outside their original homeland (Smith, 1986). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Palestinians world-wide is estimated to be around 12.36 million, where roughly 4.74 million (38.4%) reside in the Palestinian Territories, 1.47 million (11.9%) in Israel, and 6.15 million (50.3%) are scattered across the Middle East & Africa, North America, South America, Europe and Australia (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

How the term diaspora is viewed often dictates how the Palestinian diaspora is understood and in some cases, may not reveal the true reality of this diasporic movement. In Arabic, the notion of a diaspora has taken on many names which are heavily reflected in Palestinian literature, in particular nationalistic literature. Mahmoud Darwish<sup>2</sup>, Palestine’s literary symbol and laureate poet refers to the diaspora as “al-manfa” (Nassar & Rahman, 2008), or exile, while others have referred to it as “al-ghurba”, or alienation from the homeland, or in other contexts, the commonly used “al-shataat”, or scattering and dispersal (Khalidi, 2010). How the term diaspora is used or understood may be controversial. The very use of the term dispersal/scattering can be seen as accepting the status quo of Palestinians which Kodmani (1997) argued against, and the association of a homeland to the term diaspora is a notion that Edward Said opposed to although most diaspora scholars agree that the notion of a connection to the homeland is a vital component of the term (Kodmani, 1997). Kodmani (1997) argued against using the term “diaspora” as this could potentially be a barrier for Palestinians to return to their homeland. It was seen by Kodmani as a definitive “end” to Palestinians in exile which could potentially make it difficult for Palestinians to be given the legal rights of refugees who eventually still want to return home even if they have assimilated to their host land.

While each of these terms in relation to diaspora and exile present with their own set of complexities, it is important not to deny that each term explores the manifestation of the Nakba from a certain angle and must therefore be clearly explained as not to mislead those investigating the topic. I would therefore not take a stance on which term is best to be used as each term serves a purpose. All the terms and controversies combined highlight the complexity of the aftermath of the Nakba which cannot be collapsed to one simplified term.

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<sup>1</sup> **Rashid Khalidi (1948-)**: A Palestinian-American “Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies” and a Historian at Columbia University. He is currently the editor of *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, an academic journal that publishes on behalf of the Institute for Palestine Studies (“Rashid Khalidi”, 2016). The Institute for Palestine studies is the oldest nonprofit public research organization in the Arab World (“Institute for Palestine Studies”, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> **Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008)**: A Palestinian poet and author widely recognized amongst Palestinians as the Palestinian national poet. His published work strongly illustrates the themes of loss, dispossession, occupation and diaspora (Darwish, 2013). He received many international awards for his work that was published in over 20 languages (“Palestinian national poet dies”, 2008).



## *Palestinian identity*

While it may seem that the Nakba gave birth to the Palestinian identity with the proclamation and establishment of the State of Israel, the history of the Palestinian identity stretches back to encompass the Biblical, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyid, Fatimid, Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottomans and lastly, the Zionist periods. Khalidi firmly argues against the notion that the sense of a distinct Palestinian identity is modern, but rather the above periods in time all play a role in what we now understand as Palestinian identity (Khalidi, 1997). However, the purpose of this study is not to illustrate the “evolution of Palestinian identity” but rather use the Nakba as a temporal reference point that changed Palestinian lives beyond recognition.

Rabinowitz recognized that Palestinian identity rests on the consequences of the Nakba, accentuated by the effects of dispossession, displacement and exile, and in many aspects, the lack of acknowledgment for Palestinian rights and the scale of their suffering (Rabinowitz, 1994). Although Palestinian identity is deeply rooted in its rich and complex history, several scholars identify the 1948 Nakba as the defining marker of identity for many Palestinians, as it represented the largest displacement in its history (Bowker, 2003; Hammer, 2005; Khalidi, 2010; Mason, 2007). The Nakba, in many ways, extended the understanding of Palestinian identity to include but not be limited to dispossession, loss, displacement, military occupation and exile (Khalidi, 2010), contributing to the extension of the Palestinian identity to include the *displaced identity*.

Due to the nature and complexity of the Palestinian identity, several scholars have attempted to understand it and categorize it from multiple perspectives. Given the nature of the Palestinian diaspora, and the dispersal of Palestinians all over the world, the dependency on narratives were striking in the discussion of Palestinian identity. Khalidi (2010) stresses that the core of narratives amongst Palestinians, particularly after 1948, is to re-iterate the stories of *challenges*, *struggle*, and most importantly, *survival*, and to *portray triumph* to the best of their abilities against all *odds*. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) state that history is not reported on the past but rather it is a *collection of memories* that are preserved, fixed, and transmitted through and by people which may to some extent be *self-constructed* or even “*invented*” (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). In the case of the Palestinians, such narratives played a significant role as a political tool in which they were used not only to aid in *narrative memories* and *sustaining identity*, but also used to strive for *independence*, and recognition by the international community as an aspiring *self-determined nation*, a concept highly valued but never experienced by Palestinians (Hammer, 2005). Said has stressed the notion of developing a *variety of narratives*, depending on which community Palestinians were *dispersed* to that were adjusted accordingly to their *new* experiences. Through such network of narratives, Said stressed the importance of recognizing not only various narratives, but also to acknowledge the fundamental differences in Palestinian identity amongst these *displaced groups* (Said, 1992), for instance, in hindsight, we now see that Palestinians dispersed within Israel are different from Palestinians dispersed in Kuwait to those dispersed in Chile.

Rushdie and Said (1991) both advocated for a “definite masterwork, an institutionalized narrative of Palestinian history” to counteract efforts of a perishing narrative. Hammer (2005) argues that such narratives play a significant role in building a national identity particularly for the younger generations in the diaspora as these stories provide the missing pieces particularly in school curriculums where the Palestinian narrative is absent. Furthermore, Hammer stresses that such narratives provide Palestinians, particularly those in the diaspora with a “source of knowledge, a sense of attachment, and a national identity” (Hammer, 2005).

Among the Palestinian narrative, there exists a '*master narrative*' that dictates and hegemonizes Palestinians to a certain discourse (Said, 1979), such narrative revolves around the concepts of loss, belonging and the aspirations for self-determination, and that the loss that followed the 1948 Nakba is characterized by loss, uprooting and the desire for freedom and dignity (Abdel-Jawad, 2006; Sa'di & Abu Lughud<sup>4</sup>, 2007). The absence of a permanent solution coupled with a brutal military occupation has had an influence of the master narrative dominant amongst Palestinian society, and as such, insecurity and injustice are commonly reoccurring themes amongst the Palestinian narrative (Khalidi, 1997; Pettigrew, 2003). The use of a narrative provides individuals with the ability to discursively select their discourse to construct their own life stories in the context they choose which would ultimately provide them a sense of meaning, direction and purpose (Bruner, 2008), and the case of the Palestinians is no different. Through selective discourse, Palestinians have been able to make sense of their history, identity and lived experience as a result through the use of narratives (Hammack, 2010).

## *Aims and scope of this study*

The main research question of this study was "How has the displacement of Palestinians affected the self-identities, work ethic and spirituality of Palestinian-Australians?"

The research objective of this study was to *explore* the ways in which Palestinian-Australians narrate and make sense of their displacement. Specific aims have addressed how Palestinians narrate and make sense of their displacement in relation to:

1. The ways in which individuals make sense of their self-identity and how this influences their work ethic.
2. The interplay of spirituality on the processes of self-identity and work ethic.

The study adopted a "*narrative*" approach with a *social constructivist* philosophical direction to explore the above concepts and ideas in a cohort of 14 Palestinian-Australians from an array of varying backgrounds, ages, professions and migratory patterns. Identity was explored using the personal narrative approach because it provides a "subjective sense of self-continuity as it symbolically integrates the events of lived experience in the plot of the story a person tells about his or her life" (Ezzy, 2005, p. 43). Epistemological assumptions play an important role in adopting this approach, and this is because through personal lived experiences, there is a sense of respect for the *differences* between people and their social construction of subjective meanings. In addition, in line with this approach, there is the assumption that knowledge is gained through personal experience and cannot be collapsed to a simple interpretation but rather a complex interweaving of the individuals own narrative (Cohen et al., 2007).

## *Research contributions*

Although several research gaps have risen from my research, I primarily intend on locating this thesis within the *Identity* literature, as I believe it offers insight into how Palestinians make sense of their displaced identities in their work domain which is largely underexplored. This was the very first study that explored the identities, spirituality and work

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibrahim Abu Lughud (1929-2001)*: A Palestinian-American Princeton graduate and academic who served as the Vice President of Birzeit University in his final years. He was regarded by Edward Said as "Palestine's foremost academic and intellectual" ("Abu Lughud", 2001).

ethic of Palestinians in general, and the first within the Palestinian-Australian context. In addition, the majority of studies that investigate work ethic and spirituality are heavily focused on scaled, measurable and quantifiable approaches and often neglect the rich insight that emerges through narratives, particularly when specific socio-cultural-political contexts are taken into account. Also, the literature attempting to bridge identity and spirituality is largely underexplored, particularly in specific social contexts (Crossman, 2011). Furthermore, the linkage of these concepts is still poorly understood because there is no clear consensus on the definition of spirituality which makes it more difficult to understand spiritual development and spiritual identity and its relation to identity development as a whole (Klenke, 2007). In relation to work ethic, much of what we currently know is related to Protestant Work Ethic and one of the weaknesses of the existing literature is that there is little understanding on how work ethic may be constructed outside the Protestant context (Storr, 2006). Specifically, within the Palestinian context, there has been no known studies that have attempted to explore the influence of displacement on Palestinian's work ethic and spirituality, and this study is the very first of its kind to tackle this complex issue. Within the social sciences domain, we have also seen a rise in the use of narratives to explore the expression of identity and it has become increasingly popular, particularly with the emergence of the post-structuralist notion that narratives constitute everything from identities to organizations (Watson, 2008). Interestingly, "narrative identity", or the notion that individuals are "stories" of some sort, has given it much more potential in the social science field as it unravels what constructs an individual that could explain who an individual is at work and how this may influence the organization as a whole (Watson, 2008).

## *Navigating the thesis*

The above introduction intended on providing a broad view of what to expect from this body of work. It provided an overview of the direction, context, main ideas and concepts discussed, aims and scope, and potential research contribution of this study. What remains is how to navigate through this thesis which will be explained as follows. *Chapter 2* provides an in depth exploration to the *background literature* relevant to this body of work. This includes an exploration of narratives in organizational studies, organizational and individual identities, spirituality and work ethic. *Chapter 3* provides an elaborate explanation of the *research methodology* adopted in this body of work and which highlights the philosophical assumptions, the mode of analysis, the reflexivity of the researcher and a hindsight reflection on the research experience from my perspective. This will then lead into *Chapter 4* which is dedicated to the *analysis of the data*. *Chapter 4* is divided into 3 parts which tackles the 3 major overarching themes that emerged from this study, namely, "*Processes of Identity*", "*Childhood Values*" and "*Who am I at work?*". Each of these parts discuss the major subthemes that emerged accordingly. This is followed by *Chapter 5* which is the concluding chapter, the *discussion*, which evaluates the meaning of the results, their importance, and how they compare to other research. Further research has also been explored in the concluding chapter. Please refer to the appendix the ethics approval letter, the interview questions and a full comprehensive analysis of each narrative.

## *Chapter 2:*

# *Literature Review*

This chapter provides a good overview of all the major concepts, ideas, and nuances addressed in the research questions, to provide a robust understanding of the present literature. I will firstly start by addressing the use of *narratives* in the field of *organizational studies*, and highlight the rise of their importance as unique methodological approaches. Then this will follow with an exploration into *organizational identity* as a whole and *individual identity* as the building blocks of organizational identity. Such macro and micro approach will demonstrate the locality of the *construction of individual identity* in the work domain. Through the exploration of individual identity, I will then explore the emergence of the concepts of *spirituality* and *work ethic* and highlight their relation to *identity*. From there, I will situate this *interplay* within the *Palestinian context*.

## ***Narratives in Organizational Studies***

Although narratives are deeply rooted in the fields of psychological sciences, they have nonetheless made a presence in the field of organizational studies. There has been an emergence of work on the role of narratives in unraveling organizational issues over that past two decades that have contributed to our interest in narrative identities (Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). But it was not only the interest in narrative identity that emerged in organizational studies, it was the interest in narratives in general. Earlier works by Stutts and Barker suggested that narratives were able to produce richer bodies of knowledge that were perhaps not accessible through other methodological approaches (Stutts and Barker, 1999). Other works have also suggested that narration may give organizational theory a way to “reinvigorate itself” (Czarniawska, 1998, p.13). Issues that relate to organizational practice such as narratives, discursiveness and dialogue have been studied previously and have established some foundations that have contributed greatly to our current understanding. Dialogues, for instance, have shown us that they contribute greatly to the process of narrative constructions as they are tools for stories to be told and retold often within a place for interpretation and contention (Humphreys, 2002). It is argued that humans use narratives to construct their life experiences along with significant human interactions that would often be, if not narrated, presented as a web of convoluted and messy experiences (Bruner, 1991). Through the study of narratives, we are able to gain a better understanding of the discourses involved and the role they play in the cultural constructions of organizations. Czarniawska (2004) highlighted that while discourses are definitely important to understand and take into account, it is the temporal nature of narratives specifically that give us the sense of the past, present and future of the organization and its members (Czarniawska, 2004). While some potential of narratives has been appreciated such as storytelling and managing the sense of meaning (Gabriel, 2000; Boje, 2008), perhaps some aspects of narrative analysis has *not been fully appreciated* in the cultural understanding of organizations.

## ***Organizational and individual identity***

### ***Organizational identity***

In recent years, we have seen the interest in identity expand to cover a much more macro level; organizational identity. Organizational identity, in simple terms, is study of “who” an organization is and what it means to be an organization in today’s society (Ashforth et al., 2011; Czarniawska, 1997). It was the seminal work of Whetten (2006) that put organizations as a whole on the identity spectrum and which triggered further research in what identity is in the

organizational context and what its possible implications can be (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Fox-Wolfgramm et al., 1998). The early interest in organizational identity has also illustrated some interesting findings, such as how organizations construct their identities and defend them against potential attacks (Boje, 1995; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), or how the identity of an organization has centralized and distinctive features (Whetten et al., 1992). But more recent work has also emerged on organizational identity. Issues such as mergers and acquisitions, corporate image, knowledge sharing, motivation, and change have all been linked to a better understanding of organizational identity (Alvesson & Empson, 2008).

Several studies have investigated the construction (Coupland and Brown, 2004) and formation of some aspects of organizational identity (Clegg et al., 2007), but very little studies have investigated the formation of organizational identity comprehensively (Gioia et al., 2010). Through the literature, one may grasp an understanding of how an organizational identity originated such as through the influence of the founder's values or values that are derived from the industry membership, or perhaps they are derived from sources that are not yet fully understood (Gioia et al., 2010). The notion is that perhaps the leaders or the managers of an organization are those that play a role in constructing an organization's identity in such this influence is extended to values systems and mission statements that allow its members to get "a sense" of what their organization's identity is (Gioia & Chittipedi, 1991). While this may appear in some cases, and does indicate some processes of organizational identity, it may not give a comprehensive and intricate perspective on what constitutes its identity on a grander scale. Some major studies have investigated the construction of organizational identity and have illustrated some interesting findings. For instance, earlier studies by Czarniawska and Wolff (1998) suggested that through their study of new universities, the successful university was the one that formed an identity in comparison to its counterparts in the industry and that its identity was driven by the fact that it was a part of a group of other well established universities, and thus became "one of them". Rhodes and Kornberger (2007) highlighted that some organizations tend to situate themselves with their competitors and non-competitors and thus establish their own distinctive identity (Rhodes & Kornberger, 2007).

I argue that understanding organizational identity and its components on a macro level could perhaps allow individuals who make up this organization to interact with their organization's identity by understanding their own. Perhaps through this understanding, we explore how individuals segment themselves and others in their organizational domains. For example, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) argued that individuals aspire to shape their individual identities within their organizations and that discursive practices may sometime pressure the formation of their identities making this formation dynamic and not static. They also argue that identity is often viewed as a struggle and that individuals strive to create meaning and integration through their own identities and their work domains. They also highlight that discourses, self-narratives and work roles are intertwined in each other and may therefore have an impact on each other (Alvesson et al., 2008). This may open doors for further questions: How does an individual's identity fit in their organization? Does it align with their organization's identity? Is there an interplay? Could it be beneficial? What aspects of an individual's narrative may give us insight into how an individual is constructed? How does this influence their role at work, or their work identity? Can we simply detach some aspects of an individual's narrative from the puzzle or is it deeply embedded in their identity? This is why I argue that it is important to understand both organizational identity (on a macro) level and individual identity (on a micro) level. Alvesson and Sveningsson highlight a very important point in which they probe future research, and which is particularly relevant to this study: "There is a certain 'thinness' to the treatment of identity in much of the literature. In order to

understand identity in depth we need to listen carefully to the stories of those we claim to understand and to study their interactions, the discourses and roles they are constituted by or resist – and to do so with sensitivity for context” (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1190).

### *Individual identity*

Some early work in organizational studies has paid particular attention to how an individual's identity is constructed in the workplace including earlier works of Epstein and Schlenker, who studied how self-conceptions of individual are affected by the demand of modern organizations (Epstein, 1973; Schlenker and Leary, 1982), or even much earlier work by Goffman (1959) that investigated self-presentation and self-concept. Early interesting work by Lanzetta et al (1976) and Hochschild (1983) also investigated how the restriction on the expression of one's individuality in the organizational context can influence a person's emotional health.

But how do we understand the notion of identity from an individual's point of view? MacIntyre's notable notion that “man is his actions, as well as his fictions, essentially a story telling man” can perhaps be the key to understanding what constitutes an individual's identity from their own point of view (MacIntyre, 1981). And perhaps through MacIntyre's claims, we can investigate the notion of narrating one's story, plot or life in an attempt to grasp the construction of one's identity. While some may argue that the very notion of identity is often understood in terms of images and concepts, perhaps according to some social psychologists (Tajfel, 1982), it can also be argued that narratives can be the window into an individual's understanding of identity. Ezzy (2006) argues that narratives give an experience a clearer, richer meaning and that self-identity is formed as a narrative. Furthermore, he argues that the plots of narrative identities are often formed as a part of a complex web of events, habits, others and a person's monologue that tend to comprise a person's self-narrative (Ezzy, 2006). This notion is heavily influenced by Ricoeur's ideas, that through narratives, a person's experiences are assembled in a series of events in plot (Ricoeur, 1991). For example, Cunliffe et al stressed that through the understandings of Ricoeur's ideas of narratives, plot and temporality, organization members and researchers can realize the significance of all forms of stories told. Such stories, with temporal significance, can often guide organizational members and researchers in drawing on the past, present and future of individuals and their organizations that contribute to our experience and the construction of our identities. Through such narratives and with the understanding of their temporalities, we are able to grasp how cultural and social factors affect the way we construct our personal narratives. They also strongly advocate for continuously making sense and interpreting experiences, and participation with organizational members often allows for reflexive conversations that draw on past narratives (Cunliffe et al., 2004). They asserts that “This process involves imagination and poetic license as novel connections may emerge in our narrative performances. The outcomes are narratives about how we live our lives, make meaning, relate, and orient ourselves to our surroundings, and in doing so, create ‘realities’ and ‘identities’: in the process, we might revise, re-narrate, invent new, or continue with old narratives” (Cunliffe et al., 2004, p. 281).

Such understandings of an individual narrations can often facilitate how organizational researchers not only understand what constitutes an individual's identity but how issues such as discursiveness play a role particularly when the social and historical contexts are well understood (Humphreys, 2002). This micro level of understanding an individual's identity can often guide organizations in understanding the backbone of their organizations, their members, and provide a better understanding into how the interplay between individual and organizational identity unfolds.

Some work in the field of organizational studies has attempted to understand the role of narration in understanding an individual's identity in the workplace. For instance, one issue that has gathered interest in the field of organizational studies is *professional identity*. Professional identity refers to the individuals professional self-concept based on their attributes, beliefs, motives, and experiences (Ibarra, 1999) and can often be related to the degree of success in a career (Hall et al., 2002). Interestingly, there has been a shift in the way we used to understand individuals that constitute the labor market because of the mass mobilization of civilian population, perhaps due to contentious politics, such as the complex conflict in Palestine/Israel that is highlighted by years of disputed and disagreements, which would generate an interest in one's identity in relation to ethnicity, race, or age as opposed to more conventional work structures. For instance, Piore and Safford (2006, p. 319) argue that "It is impossible in today's world to imagine one's career without incorporating one's social context into it . . . such aspects of lives as . . . the social stigma that may attach to one's race, religion, or gender". They also claim that very little recent research has investigated one's professional identity in relation to a stigma that may be attached due to their cultural identity. Could such understanding contribute to an individual's construction of their identity in the workplace? Could "de-bunking" such stigmas through a thorough understanding of one's identity highlight aspects of an individual's identity we did not unravel? For example, in our understanding of work identities, namely our self-concept as working subjects, some assume that work identities may be constituted by the individual's understandings of themselves, such as through their life history and work experiences. But can these socio-cultural components of identity construction have constraints or even barriers to the constructions of one's identity in the work place? (Eteläpelto et al., 2015).

One specific sector that has received attention in recent research in relation to the use of narratives in professional identities is the education sector. Although the narrative professional identities of teachers has been quite extensively in recent research (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Akkerman and Meijer, 2011), we still lack a universal understanding of the concept of identity in relation to this group. Some research has tackled this issue by highlighting the role of sociocultural theory in relation to the development of identity to grasp a better view of a teacher's professional identity, perhaps suggesting that multiple dimensions need to be understood to get a better understanding of one's identity development in the professional setting. What is riveting is how although not much has been agreed upon in terms of what constitutes a teacher's professional identity, some have argued that professional identities are developed in a context, emerge in relationships with others and are very much related to meaning making (Rogers and Scott, 2008). Through such example, such as a teacher's professional identity, perhaps it highlights that the context in which an individual is present in, the relationships they form, and the way meaning making emerges from such context may influence the formation and development of an individual's identity. Could the social context play an important role in the way one makes sense of their meaning? If so, could that influence how they develop their individual identity?

Others have also posed that professional identity is characterized by the complexity of multiple identities, its lack of continuity and by the essence of its social structure (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011). Interestingly, in relation to the formation of one's professional identity, it is perhaps worth noting that narration formation is *not independent* of life circumstances, and often an individual may re-interpret their life stories to make sense of their influence, and some traumatic or life changing events can dramatically change these personal narratives (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013).

We have also seen some interest emerge in the use of narratives in the understanding of one's *career identity* which differs from professional identity as it is not tied to one specific profession



but covers a range of professions throughout an individual's career life. What is particularly interesting in the study of narratives in relation to career identity is the embedded influence of discursiveness and performativity. The influence of discourse was recognized not only as a tool for reflecting reality but as a one actively contributing to and constructing one's identity, as was highlighted in the works of Mead and Goffman that situated identity in its social context rather than just innate (LaPointe, 2010). Although more recent theories on career identity demonstrated the impact of social factors on its development (Ibarra and Deshpande, 2007), there may still be a normative assumption attached to its development and that it is primarily internal to the individual of concern, although identities have previously been situated in terms of the discourse present in its socio-cultural context (Gergen, 1992). This detachment between the "internal nature" of identity and the external forces acting upon it from its social context often trigger further debate on the acting forces that shape identity. LaPointe (2010) argued that there needs to be particular attention paid to the local context of identities given the wide range of socio-political-cultural environments, and that identity needs to be situated in terms of its discursive practices, perhaps highlighting that discourse is not merely utilized for representation but also for social action.

Narrative identity has also gained a recent spike in interest in the field of entrepreneurship. In the entrepreneurship literature, it has been widely accepted that when an entrepreneur chooses his/her network, they are often drawn to those individuals with whom they associate and bond with, much like what we understand from the phrase "birds of a feather, flock together". This social process that guides entrepreneurs in making such decisions is known as *homophily*, and it is often assumed that such decisions are static and somewhat involuntary. However, very recent research has suggested that perhaps by studying the narrative identities of entrepreneurs, we are conceivably, to an extent, able to unravel the rich process that entrepreneurs bear to deliberately choose their networks. Such explorations can often reveal shared identities between the entrepreneur and their network(s) and often highlight how values are crucial to understanding the potential ventures at stake. Phillips et al (2013) revealed that through the study of the narrative identities of entrepreneurs, how individual identities unfold in the web of complex entrepreneurial networks (tie portfolios) and how homophily is embedded in the construction of shared identities across the network and how various aspects of the "self" are either related or not per any given context. Interestingly, narrative identities also shone light on the significance of discourse on a macro-cultural level that often influenced the choices of the entrepreneurs, and how having "multiple identities", when understood, can give the entrepreneur a competitive edge across their networks (Phillips et al., 2013). While this specific example focuses on the identity of an entrepreneur, it could possibly assist in the deconstruction and construction of one's identity. For example, it could assist in asking questions such as: How does one's identity influence their work-related decisions, such as choosing networks? Are shared identities between an individual and their network worth investigating? How does discourse play a role in constructing an individual's work identity, whether in the domain of entrepreneurship or not?

Literature on identity has helped us understand that identity not only infiltrates every aspect of our life, but when understood better, can reveal, in close and intimate details, "the dynamic interplay between internal strivings and external prescriptions, between the self-presentation and labeling by others, between achievement and ascription and between regulation and resistance" (Ybema, et al., 2009: 301). But in trying to understand identity, we may often unconsciously deviate towards understanding either the internal and external aspects of identity construction, and often neglect the interplay of both these forces. But approaching identity from a narrative and social constructionist perspective can often help alleviate the tendency to sway

towards either of these forces, perhaps giving a much more holistic view of identity construction. Such methods have helped researchers in unraveling identities of managers in the organizational setting, and how managers tend to present themselves in various contexts inside and outside of the organization which would give light to what managers “are” and what they “have to be”. Rhodes and Brown (2005) have illustrated that such navigations can often highlight a great deal on an individual’s working life, but it may dismiss the notion that humans are “holistic” and that the managerial activities of a manager can sometimes only highlight a certain segment of their self-identity (Watson, 2009). Watson (2009) discovered through the study of managers that, “managerial identity” only formed a part of their self-identity, i.e. their *work identity*, but much more was revealed through the understanding of the manager’s “whole life”. What was particularly intriguing is that through such narrative analysis of identity, it was discovered that the managerial identity is at the core of the individual’s self-identity, but contributions to what constituted this particular identity came long before the individual became a manager which could have only be understood through the exploration of their life story and experiences (Watson, 2009). While “managerial” and “work” identities were revealed, it directed further research into understanding identity as a whole, through the full narration of an individual’s life, which could possibly allude to the notion that we are holistic beings and our life experiences affect who we are in the most direct, indirect, explicit and implicit ways.

Narrative identity research has also played a role in understanding how identity and leadership can better be understood in relation to each other. Through such narratives, we are able to gather better understanding of the social construction of leadership, and how discourses are often involved when we explore field of identity and leadership. Through the study of the narratives of a sample of leaders, some fascinating findings were revealed in relation to their identity and leadership potentials. All of the three narratives studied showed that “space of action”, i.e. an “area” open for a particular activity, for these participants was very much driven by the deviation from the mainstream discourse. More specifically, it further enhanced earlier views that “the more competitive the discursive field, the greater the field to move or space of action” (Fairhurst, 2007: 99). In more simpler terms, individuals are sometimes aligned to their leadership identities to a point where it can be counter-productive where the individual deviates from the normative discourse of “what to do” and rather swerve towards “what kind of person to be”. In such cases, the idea of studying such narratives would open up the idea of allowing alternative identity narratives to be open and active given that leadership development is highly influenced by discursive practices (Carroll and Levy, 2010).

While it is impossible to exhaust all of the literature on identity construction, the above examples may highlight how identity construction, particularly through narratives, can open doors to the examination of the factors, the actors, and the drivers that may influence it. Through such examinations, we can then begin to appreciate the tensions that may occur not only in the individual’s construction of identity, but how that may manifest in interactions with others, such as other organizational members. Cerulo (1997) suggested that by understanding who an individual is, it can possibly lead to an understanding of how an individual acts. Furthermore, Knights and Willmott (1989) suggested that an individual formulates their self-narratives by making reference to their cultural understandings, their memories and experiences to gain an insight to their sense of self. Could identity be a dynamic process rather than a static and stable notion? Could the changing of the social contexts produce different dimensions of identity? If so, how does that manifest in our day to day life? Could the use of narratives in the study of identity construction assist in the feeling of existential angst in the face of powerful discourse, whether within or outside of the work domain? Could the study of individual narratives provide a rich insight into the *subjective socially constructed human experience* and thus attempt to

elucidate on an individual's reflection of who they are? Alvesson and Willmott (2002) have previously alluded to the notion that we can never really explore the construction of an individual's identity at work without understanding other elements in their life history that could potentially be relevant to its construction.

## *Spirituality in the workplace*

As identity has gained interest in the field of social science, so has the relationship between identity and spirituality. But what is spirituality? There has been no clear consensus on what spirituality is definitively, but some define it as "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of a community" (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000) and others define it as the "state or experience that can provide individuals with direction or meaning or provide feelings of understanding, support, inner wholeness or connectedness" (Smith and Rayment, 2007). This "holistic approach" to understanding employees assists in the understanding of how the inner life, community and workplace are all intricately related. While spirituality can be studied at a micro, meso and macro level, it is the relationship *between* and *across* these levels that has caught the attention of multiple respected authors (Benefiel 2005; Fry and Cohen, 2009; Fry et al. 2011).

### *Spiritual identity*

Early work using narrative theories have attempted to integrate various interdisciplinary theories into understanding how an identity is developed and what constitutes the conceptualization of the "self" (McAdams, 1993). These stories of the self often include various life experiences, symbols, events and interactions that together comprise what we understand to be the self understanding the self. Such integration of all aspects of one's life in a coherent order allows the individual to develop a healthy and reflexive identity which should ultimately produce a meaningful whole story (McAdams, 1993). Similar to how identity is formed and constructed through personal narratives, the "spiritual self" is often contained in these narratives through symbols, schemas and scripts (Poll & Smith, 2003). Early work of Robertson (1990) suggested that the spiritual self is often developed and achieved when an individual is able to connect their life stories to the narratives of their respective religious communities (Robertson, 1990). However, many researchers argue that spirituality in essence may not need to be related to a particular religious affiliation. McGinn, for instance, argues that there are three major ways in which spirituality is expressed in the workplace: a) *theological/dogmatic* (relating to religious scripture), b) *anthropological understanding* (relating to human nature and experience) and c) *historical contextual experience* (relating to experience that is rooted in a particular community) (McGinn, 1993). In some cases there is a distinction between spirituality and religion, in which spirituality is inclusive and personal while religion is external and exclusive (e.g. Harlos, 2000; Shafranske et al., 1990), while in some cases they are seen as inseparable and intertwined (Zinnbauer et al., 2013). Miller, for example, as a result of the lack of agreement on what constitutes religion or spirituality, proposed to use the term "faith" which would encompass the formal and informal expressions of these concepts under one encircling term.

While these processes of spirituality make it easier to encompass a wide range of issues in the workplace, it obstructs the idea of codifying spirituality for its study in the workplace. But it is noteworthy to mention that the very reason why spirituality has become incredibly popular

amongst academics and particularly in the workplace context is due to the ever increasing of ethnic and spiritual diversity, a wide range of religious, social and economic changes, a reaction to the outdated organizational structures and practices and an “awakening” to the concern for human rights and justice.

Although there is a plethora of scales developed to “measure” and “assess” workplace spirituality such as “the Spiritual Well-Being Scale” (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982), “Spirituality at Work scale” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), “Spirit at Work Scale” and many more, they do not relate to the interest of this research. As with identity construction on an individual level, I am mainly concerned with how an individual constructs their own spirituality in relation to their identity, whether it is rooted in religion, in a particular ethnic community, in the human experience or a combination of all.

Spirituality, has seen a spike in interest amongst academics in the field of organizational studies, although, for a while it was considered a “fashionable fad”. However, as it has started to be discussed across various disciplines, reasons for its emergence in the organizational studies field have also started to emerge such as feelings of disappointment and insecurity following the global financial crisis (Aburdene, 2007), and a lack of concern for the spiritual, personal and emotional aspect of an individual (Priest and Quaife-Ryan, 2004; Crossman, 2008).

Spirituality, as illustrated earlier, may be studied on a micro level all the way to the macro level in the organization, however, it must be noted the one of earlier empirical studies on workplace spirituality conducted by Mitroff et al. (2009) focused on how managers and executives bring their personal spiritualities to work and how that reflects their sense of identity and what they stand for (Mitroff et al., 2009). For the sake of this particular research, the focus will be on the personal narratives of individuals and to explore how their displaced identities play a role in their construction of their own spiritualities. Interestingly, Crossman (2011) highlighted that while much of the interest around spirituality revolves around religion and faith, national culture also seems to play a role in explaining and understanding workplace spirituality as it is intrinsic to cultural values and beliefs however, little work seems to have investigated the interplay between individual differences (such as ethnic) of members of an organization in relation to the organizational culture and spirituality (Moore, 2008). This may suggest that more needs to be understood about what constitutes an individual, such as their identity through their narratives, that could possibly allude to how this plays a role in their understanding of workplace spirituality.

Earlier work on spirituality tended to focus on the individual level of spirituality but not in the context of the workplace but little attention was given to how spirituality is embedded in the workplace and how personal and organizational spirituality are inherently related (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). However, newer approaches to understanding an individual’s sense of spirituality in the workplace has focused primarily on what gives a person a sense of meaning and the ability to express their “holistic” selves without compromising or fragmenting their self-identity and without feeling the sense of detachment in all that constitutes the self (e.g. Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007). What is particularly interesting to my particular study is that within the field of spirituality, there has been an expression of discontent over the little research conducted that explores how workplace spirituality is related to individual differences and organizational culture, which could open a plethora of suggestions and further research to be conducted (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Moore, 2008). Furthermore, some earlier research (Poll & Smith, 2003) and newer research has also expressed concern in the little research conducted that investigates the relationship between identity and spirituality (Beaumont & Scammell, 2012, p. 352). While some work has also attempted to

bridge the gap between spirituality and identity (e.g. Gebelt & Leak, 2009), the personal and organizational contexts particularly in the workplace still seem under researched.

## *Work ethic*

Throughout my research on identity and spirituality, it allowed me to explore the roles of religious and ideological dogmas and their influence on identity and spirituality development. Throughout these readings, one specific movement was particularly interesting and that is the Protestant Culture which embeds the Protestant way of life and specifically the *Protestant Work Ethic*. Protestant Work Ethic strongly encourages the notions of hard work, discipline and frugality, not only in the work place, but also in one's daily life as well. Such work ethic is often engrained in the Protestant way of life that deeply influenced by its set of values and moral code. Adherence to such work ethic is often concentrated in the United States, and countries situated in Western Europe such as Germany, the UK, Switzerland etc. Protestant work ethic was popularized by the work of Max Weber when he published his seminal work titled "*Protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism*" (published in 1905), in which he discusses and analyzes how Protestant work ethic shaped and was a major influencer of the modern understanding of capitalism as we understand it today, making it a pioneering and influence written work in economic sociology (Weber, 2002). Although processes to "measure" or analyze Protestant work ethic may seem unclear or ambiguous, some studies have attempted to understand Weber's notions of work ethic in modern settings. For example, van Hoorn and Maseland examined the effects of unemployment in societies driven by Protestant work ethic in comparison to those who are not, and found that from a sample of 150,000 from 82 societies (data collected from the European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association in 2006 and 2009), unemployment seems to have a worse effect on those in Protestant societies and those who adhere to the ideology. Perhaps such studies can situate Weberian ideas in modern contexts and suggests that there are more comprehensive ways of studying Protestant work ethics and its impact on society (van Hoorn & Maseland, 2013). Previous studies on Protestant work ethic have demonstrated the difficulty is measuring such a concept due to the lack of the methodological problems associated with "measuring" it (Maseland & van Hoorn, 2009; van Hoorn & Maseland, 2013). But it leaves a few major questions open: given that work ethic, for instance in the case of Protestant work ethic, is difficult to measure and presents with methodological problems, can work ethic be analyzed using non-quantifiable measures? What other sources of work ethic exist that are not dominated by the Protestant culture and way of life? Could there be another understanding of work ethic?

Others followed Weber in his interest in work ethic, such as Miller, but reframed it with a more modern non-doctrinal understanding. Miller defines work ethic as a commitment to the value and importance of hard work and argues that work ethic is *multidimensional* and is *not a single unitary construct* but a) pertains to work in general and not a specific type of job b) is learned c) refers to attitudes and beliefs d) is a motivational construct reflected in behavior and e) is secular and not necessarily tied to specific beliefs (Miller et al., 2002). For example, Woehr et al (2007) translated and used Miller's Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) to Spanish and Korean to demonstrate that the MWEP can be used across various cultures perhaps opening avenues for further comparison across cultures. For instance, questions such as how work ethic relates to work behavior may be easier understood if translated and intact work profiles are used across several cultures since some cross group differences were found (Woehr et al., 2007).

Other forms of work ethic have emerged in recent literature that are perhaps different from the usual Western setting. Ryan and Tipu (2016) conducted an empirical analysis of work ethic in the Arab context using Miller's MWEF and provided some interesting insights into how work ethic is perceived amongst Arab youth of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study highlighted differences across the multiple variables studies, for example, that Centrality of Work and Hard Work ranked very high on the work ethic scale (Ryan and Tipu, 2016). Such studies can go beyond understanding work ethic in an organizational setting, but may also provide interesting insight into the current unrest in the Middle East (Cordesman et al., 2013). Other studies have also attempted to understand work ethic in different settings with different ideologies, such as Confucianism, in the Asian context. For example, Leong et al (2014) compared the effectiveness of the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) and Eastern Confucian values in influencing employee job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. It was found that each set of values, PWE and Confucian, played different roles in understanding satisfaction and commitment and alluded to the fact that while PWE may be universally applicable, applying values of the local culture expand the understanding of organizational behavior (Leong et al., 2014).

The above literature on work ethic demonstrates that it has gained interest across various fields and has demonstrated curiosity amongst scholars. In my opinion, I think that while this calls attention for further investigation as the dimensions of work ethic are endless, it also requires one to think differently and unconventionally. For instance, perhaps there are other ways in which work ethic can be understood, ways that are embedded in narrative, in identity and socio-cultural-political factors that are largely underexplored. Perhaps approaching work ethic from a qualitative, non-measurable approach that relies heavily on how an individual constructs it may open doors to a deeper and richer understanding of this fascinating topic. This is where the integration of narrative identity, spirituality and work ethic within a specific cultural context may highlight issues that not only underexplored, but also not explored in this *integrative* manner.

## *Identity, spirituality and work ethic: an interplay?*

Throughout the search within the literature on identity, and particularly, narrative identity, which is concerned with the individual construction of it, some points surfaced that could possibly trigger new lines of thought. Ezzy argued that through narratives, we may be able to unravel a web of events, habits, others and a person's monologue that tend to comprise a person's self-narrative (Ezzy, 2006). Furthermore, LaPointe (2010) argued that there needs to be particular attention paid to the local context of identities given the wide range of socio-political-cultural environments, and that identity needs to be situated in terms of its discursive practices, perhaps highlighting that discourse is not merely utilized for representation but also for social action. If we precisely look through an individual from the *lens* of their *work life*, then we can understand Piore and Safford's (2006, p. 319) argument that "It is impossible in today's world to imagine one's career without incorporating one's social context into it . . . such aspects of lives as . . . the social stigma that may attach to one's race, religion, or gender". This could perhaps allude to the notion that a person's "work life" and their work-related identity are not simply compartmentalized and independent or detached from one's whole self-identity. The identity one displays in the organizational setting or workplace can convey a great deal about their values, beliefs, principles, skills, abilities, affiliations, views, characteristics and an array of other deeper level attributes. Through such understanding of one's self, we could perhaps gain a better understanding of their spiritual identities, and what constitutes this particular aspect of their identity. Although we have not come to a consensus of what spirituality is in the workplace, we may at least gather from the literature that it does vary from individual to

individual, and that the construction of spirituality is heavily influenced by many factors. As we learn more and more about an individual's identity and spirituality, we also tend to discover more about their values, beliefs and in some cases, more about their work ethic. Although we've seen some connection made between religious beliefs, spirituality and work ethic such as Protestant work ethic, Confucianism and Islamic Work Ethic, could there be other sources of work ethic? If so, how are they associated with spirituality? How are they associated with identity? What if discursive practices are introduced in the construction of one's identity, could that then influence how we view one's spirituality and work ethic? Humphreys (2002) suggested that through the understanding of an individual's narration, we can not only often understand what constitutes an individual's identity but how issues such as discursiveness play a role particularly when the social and historical contexts are well understood. If one's identity is naturally contested through political conflict and its discourse is intertwined with discursive practices, then does that not naturally influence the narration of their personal lives? Could that shift the way they speak of their self-identities, including their work-related identities, which would ultimately shift how they view their own spiritualities and work ethic? Crossman (2015) argues that we still do not understand the extent to which spiritualities vary across cultures, let alone cultures with a complex and convoluted history and that people can have various levels of spiritualities in a term she coined as "spiritual eclecticism". Our lives cannot simply be compartmentalized. Whether subconsciously or consciously, there is a relation between every aspect that constitutes our life.

### *Identity, spirituality and work ethic in the Palestinian context*

Identity and understanding oneself, in the case of Palestinians is more challenging than what meets the eye! The reason being is that Palestinians still struggle to understand what makes them who they are because of the nature of the continuous political conflict still existing to this day (Khalidi, 2010). Hammack (2006) states that "the struggle for self-understanding assumes particular salience in the context of political conflict as the absence of peaceful coexistence between groups [Palestinians and Israelis] creates a divisive discourse that frames the *life-course* experience of individuals" (Hammack, 2006, p. 324). When it comes to understanding identities that make up our diverse demographics, some identities are *visible* such as race, gender, physical appearance, relative age, speech patterns, dialects etc, however, some identities tend to be more *invisible* and are a lot harder to understand and conceptualize. In the case of the Palestinians, the national origin and social group memberships may be of particular interest. Due the scattering of Palestinians around the world, many communities may not know much about each other but there is a sense of a shared national identity that resides (Hammer, 2005). So what?

Although there exists a body of literature on Palestine and Palestinian narrative identity (Khalidi, 2010), there seems to be little to no work that explores how displacement has manifested in their development of identity, spirituality and how they influence work ethic. There are some scattered studies that investigated, in more quantifiable methods, the level of work ethic amongst Palestinians which did not necessarily incorporate the sense of displacement as it was not conducted on the diasporic community. For example, Abboushi (1990) studied the work ethic of Palestinians in the West Bank, and found that occupation (work/professional occupation) and the level of their formal education influenced their pride at work and their attitudes towards earning (Abboushi, 1990). It however barely touched on the topic of "the occupation" and did not take into account the influence of the diaspora as he investigated the Palestinian community *within* the West Bank. Some studies have also looked at work ethic amongst Arabs, also quantifiably, where Palestinians were not the center of the context (Sidani and Thornberry, 2010; Ryan and Tipu, 2016), although the effect of nationality

and ethnicity on work ethic were briefly discussed (Ryan and Tipu, 2016). Earlier works by Said et al. (1988) also briefly discussed how Palestinians view work ethic because of their catastrophic displacement (Said et al., 1988). Such notions were also briefly discussed in the study by Yasin et al (2008) in his study of Palestinian courage in organizational culture (Yasin et al., 2008). Sharabi (2016) also recently examined the work ethic of “Israeli Jews and Muslims”, that is heavily religion based, but with a very brief mention of the conflict from the perspective of the Palestinians, further enhancing the discursive practices that we need to pay attention to (Sharabi, 2016). No known studies as of yet have studied Palestinian spirituality, particularly in the diasporic communities.

Elder (1998) has shown as that human development always takes place in a particular social, cultural and historical context. Furthermore, positioning life course as *historically* and *culturally* situated brings us closer to understanding the cultural psychology of *life course* human development (Elder, 1998; Shweder, 1990). Studying the identity, spirituality and work ethic of Palestinians could offer an interesting insight into the perhaps an exemplary example of a community driven by discursiveness, a divisive discourse and contention which would perhaps open doors for future research in other *contested* and *non-contested* communities which would not only broaden our horizons in the above topics discussed but open doors for future *unexplored* and *untapped* areas.



# *Chapter 3:*

## *Research Methodology*

*“The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character.”*

Paul Ricoeur

(Oneself as Another, 1992)

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodological approach adopted in this research study. It will first highlight the philosophical, epistemological and ontological assumptions. Secondly, it will explore the modes of analysis. Thirdly, it will explore the notion of reflexivity in this research study. Fourthly, it will explore the specific research methods utilized. And lastly, it will conclude by providing a reflection of the research methods used in this study illustrating the highlights of this experience.

## *Philosophical, epistemological and ontological assumptions*

Methodologically, this research project focused heavily on the way Palestinian-Australians make sense of their narratives, and ultimately make meaning of their identities. Therefore, the meaning they *ascribe* to their identities was the main focus of this project. This research project adopted a social constructivist approach with an emphasis on the importance of interpretation and symbolic interactionism (see e.g.: Rouhana, 1998, p. 4; Jones et al., 2007; Carol & Levy, 2010; LaPointe, 2010). The main focus of this approach is that the way individuals understand the world is often bound by the cultural and historical context, and that the way individuals think and create their own systems of knowledge based on their socio-cultural understandings (Burr, 2003). There is also a particular emphasis on the way discourse is used in the course of an individual's social life that influences their interactions and modes of thinking. Furthermore, social constructionists also believe that the truth as an individual understands it is a product of the way they understand the world which may vary across social and cultural contexts. The empiricist notion that truths are objective is often rejected in this anti-realist relativist approach and that it is heavily dependent on the everyday social interactions of individuals that dictate their process of comprehending the world. There are a few characteristics that I believe highlight the essence of this approach and its relevance to my research topic: the anti-essentialist perspective, anti-realist, the historical and cultural specificity of the context and the importance of discourse as an influencer (Burr, 2003; Schwandt, 2003). A social constructivist approach focuses heavily on steering away from trapping people into restrictive identities and personalities, and reducing individuals through processes of reduction to simple, elementary descriptions that often miss the complex web of intricate and interrelated details that constitute an individual. One of the main ideologies that guide this approach is also the notion that an individual does not merely just perceive reality, but the influence of culture and society is intertwined and embedded in the way we understand reality. In addition, the emphasis on language as a part of how we construct our reality plays a significant role that often creates framework and categories that guide us in the way we view the world (Young & Collin, 2004). Rather than seeing language or discourse as a mere representation of our thoughts, in social constructivism, it is often seen as the principle tool which we use of reality construction. Symbolic interactionist theories also highlights that “meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person dealing with the things he [sic] encounters” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)”, and focuses on how we internalize social institutions from the very early stage of infancy (Oliver, 2012).

## *Philosophical assumptions in context*

There are particular reasons why this approach is relevant to this research project given that the cohort chosen for this study hail from a specific cultural context, being Palestinian-Australia, therefore, the cultural specificity is significant in interpreting the data. But it also must be noted that the recognition of the political and social context in which contemporary Palestinians lived are situated also dictate how an individual views their life and ultimately their identity (Hammack, 2010). The way Palestinians approach their understanding of their cultural standing is heavily influenced by the experiences of loss and displacement (Said, 1994), and in which they feel a continuous questioning of their identity given the complexity of their political situation (Khalidi, 2010). Since the 1948 catastrophic Nakba, Palestinians were dispersed all over the world, and in so, multiple identities have emerged depending on where they settled. Specific examples may include Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Palestinians residing in the West Bank, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinian-Australians and a myriad of hyphenations and multiplicities (Abdel-Nour, 2004; Khalidi, 2010). Additionally, Palestinians represent an exemplary example of an identity caught in the middle of *ongoing* discursiveness through discourse and contention, and in which language, through a *master narrative* has played a huge role in shaping how Palestinians see and situate themselves (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). Hansen (2006), for instance, claims that as language changes, so does the construction of identity, and this may be evident in the understanding of Palestinian identity *before* and *after* the Nakba as mentioned in the introduction. While other post-colonial contexts have also been shaped and molded through their discourse, Palestinians may their own dimensions of their narrative which includes themes such as military occupation (Falah, 2016), existential insecurity (McNeely et al., 2014), and displacement (Abdel-Nour, 2015).

## *Mode of analysis*

The nature of the research is not only highly subjective but depends heavily on the interpretation of the lived experienced of the subjects. It is therefore proposed that in order to respect the ontological and epistemological assumptions put forth, then the choice of the method of collecting and interpreting data is equally important. In line with previous research that focuses on sense making, meaning, and individual realities, then conducting in depth interviews is the most appropriate form of collecting data to gather such information. There are several ways in which such in depth interviews can be conducted however, the researcher opted for a narrative analysis approach to the interviews for various reasons. Narrative analysis, “refers to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form and in which a ‘narrative’ is in a sequence and consequence: events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (Riessman, 2005). There are several ways in which narratives may be analyzed, such as, *thematic* (with a focus on “what” is told rather than “how”), *structural* (with a focus on the *way* a story is told), *interactional* (with a focus on the dialogue between listener and teller) and *performative* (with a focus on what the individual *says* and *performs*) (Riessman, 2005).

## *Narrative analysis*

Adopting a “narrative” analysis to explore the interplay between identity, spirituality and work ethic of Palestinian-Australian professionals has been chosen as the most appropriate approach for this study. The reason why I argue for the use of narratives in exploring such topics, that are usually “quantified”, “measured” or “statistically analyzed”, is because I see narratives as a means through which concepts such as identity, spirituality and work ethic “come to life” in cultural and social settings. Such narratives can be used as tools towards a more humanistic approach to studying “complex” individuals that could possibly lead to a paradigm shift from the “Cartesian rationality” (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001). Such approach allows the participants to recount their life stories to get a rich understanding of the ways in which people make sense of work ethic and spirituality in relation to their self-identity. Narrative analysis provides rich insights into the construction of stories by individuals (Clandinin & Connelly, 2008) and is successful in exploring the ways in which people talk about their “narrative identity” which allows the individual to form an identity by integrating life experiences into a story that constitutes a past, present and future (McLean et al., 2007; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Ezzy argues that a narrative conception of identity implies that “subjectivity is neither a philosophical illusion nor an impermeable substance. Rather, a narrative identity provides a subjective sense of self-continuity as it symbolically integrates the events of lived experience in the plot of the story a person tells about his or her life” (Ezzy, 2005, p. 43). Understanding the construction of the individual, and how individuals make sense of their identities, spiritualities and work ethic through narratives, as proposed in this study, can help in the understanding employees as the “backbone of organizations”. For instance, Rhodes & Brown (2005) argue that rapid expansion of narrative methods has contributed broadly to management and organization theory research and that the implications are not only significant to the processes and methods, but to the research enterprise as a whole (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). However, in this case, a few issues need to be addressed: firstly, the relationship formed between the researcher and the subject, and secondly, the involvement of the researcher in the data analysis process while not remaining impartial.

## *Reflexive position*

Reflexivity, as seen in previous qualitative research, has been a pivotal element in the process of generating knowledge (Dunya et al., 2011). For example, some journals have dedicated special issues dedicated to the subject of reflexivity and its significance (Berger, 2015). The debate on the reflexive position of the researcher in heart of the research is an evolving debate as the academic community has seen an inclusion of the *self* across a variety of qualitative research methods such as auto ethnography, reflexive ethnography and narrative co-construction (Wint, 2011).

Such inclusion of the *self* as the center of the analytical process of qualitative research may have significant impacts on the nature of the research and should therefore considered closely. Such impacts may include an *alteration* in the researcher’s *access* to the field though knowledge and sensitivity of the cohort, the *researcher-participant relationship* and the *filtration* used by the researcher in terms of language, views, ideologies etc. These impacts may not necessarily be negative, as they can assist in how the researcher can *perceive* and *understand the cohort*,

assist in *triggering the sharing* of information by the participant and providing a *unique* understanding in the way he/she *makes sense* of the data provided (Kacen and Chaitin, 2006).

Being a Palestinian-Australia greatly helped in accessing this cohort for a variety of reasons. Firstly, being a *Palestinian* meant that I had to *some extent* experienced similar experiences to the cohort, whether this is in the form of migration, displacement, insecurity etc. This fluidity in shared experience made it much easier to relate to the cohort as I could relate to their experiences, both the positive and negative. Secondly, being an *Australian* also meant that I can make sense of the values and culture of Australian society and therefore can relate to a group that had migrated to Australia, as I also had experienced the process of migration. Thirdly, Palestinians hold education with great value (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003), and therefore, being a mother pursuing a postgraduate degree in research provides easier access as Palestinian mothers are often seen as national icons and representatives of larger society (Loadenthal, 2014). Lastly, being a socially active member of the Palestinian-Australian community has given me leverage not only access the community but establish rapport and trust amongst them.

Such access also comes with its own set of challenges. Such challenges may include too much self-involvement that may prevent certain opinions from being heard, too much familiarity between researcher and participant that may cause some points to be “taken for granted”. Subsequently, some information may be subconsciously omitted and a comparison between the researcher and participant experience may occur as they both may have shared similar paths (Padgett, 2008; Drake, 2010). In order to address these challenges, I acknowledged that while integrity is crucial as a researcher, it nonetheless does not invalidate that it may provide *fluidity*, and that the *constant tension* and *interplay* between an *emic and etic* continuum in research can guide me in approaching the situation in the appropriate manner (Eppley, 2006).

Denzin strongly suggests that the researcher not remain neutral in the research process but their experience is rather embedded and their values and viewpoints are reflected in the outcome of the research, and further stresses that naïve realism and naïve positivism no longer exist (Denzin, 2001). Interestingly, Denzin also provides a framework that guides in qualitative research that states that research work that involves interpretation is able to provide the framework for social criticism and social action. In the case this particular research project, it can provide a foundation for the understanding of how political events, which have transformed into social phenomenon, can influence the identities, spiritualities and work ethic of employees even decades after the course of the event. Denzin also stresses that the researcher is responsible for taking an ethical and moral position with an understanding of the moral discourse involved (Denzin, 2001).

The role of the researcher in the research process is extremely critical in qualitative research and may perhaps, even in naturalistic research, humans are becoming increasingly more and more involved. Erlandson (1993) and Natasi and Schensul (2005) argue that even in naturalistic settings, humans have become the instrument of choice as they are respond to the external environment, understand and perceive situations from a holistic, more comprehensive approach. This may enable them to give immediate feedback and can process some unusual responses that may not be sensed if the researcher was not closely involved (Erlandson, 1993; Natasi and Schensul, 2005). Sandeloswki (2005) also highlights that the researcher in a qualitative research setting “complicates and unfreezes the idea of evidence, foregrounds the politics in definitions of evidence and precludes a priori prejudices against certain type of evidence” (Sandeloswki, 2005, p. 1382). This openness to ideas allows the researcher to tackle the hegemony of evidence to provide a more nuanced and complex understanding of the research findings. Anonymity, confidentiality and consent were all very important issues that

are have been understood, researched and applied in this particular setting to ensure the maximum outcome with the minimum intrusion or invasiveness. Each participant signed a consent form after they understood and agreed to the terms of the research. It is clearly stated in the consent form that a pseudonym will be used to protect their identity.

## *Research method*

In the course of this study, fourteen semi-structured interviews were carried out amongst Palestinian-Australian professionals who work fulltime or part-time (see for example, Hammack, 2010). The projected time for the interviews was one to one and a half hours however, some interviews exceeded the projected time and lasted approximately for three hours. Given the rich nature of the information, the researcher did not interrupt and allowed the participants to provide as much information as they saw fit. The cohort included seven males and seven females (explained below). The projected age range was 18-65 to encompass working adults however, the actual age range was 21-72, as the oldest member of the participants was still working part-time. The professions of the participants were well varied and included the following professions: Human Resource Manager, Social Case Worker, Research Assistant, Telecommunications Engineer, Sole Business Owner, Journalist, Internship Director, Visual Artist, Civil Engineer/Project Management Director, Occupational Therapist, Chief Delivery Operations Officer, IT Consultant, Financial Consultant, and Mechanical Engineer/Project Management Director. All participants identifies as having maternal and paternal Palestinian roots, although this was not necessary for the study, and have migrated to Australia at different stages, with a mixture of first and second generation Australians. Once the interest was shown, the research well explained and a verbal consent was determined, an interview time and place was determined by the participant as they saw fit. Ethics approval was granted prior to commencing these interviews and they are attached in the appendix for further validation. A physical consent form was provided at the start of the interview for the participant to read and sign and the interviews were recorded immediately. Once all the interviews were audio recorded, they were analyzed using *thematic analysis* and interpreted as the researcher saw fit. It is worth noting that within the data analysis chapter, please refer to the table labeled “participant profile” (page 69-70) and figures labeled “participant’s migration patterns” (page 71p) for an interactive understanding of each participant’s narrative. In addition, the appendix contains an in depth individual analysis of each participant’s narrative. The appendix also includes a list of guiding questions that were used. Although there were some guiding questions given to the participants, the idea was to encourage them to speak about their life stories. In most cases, participants did not need directive questions and began to speak of their lives without interruption. These questions were only designed to be directive and to keep the participants motivated to speak as some were shy and not as talkative. Overall, most participants spoke freely with little direction required.

## *Purposive sampling*

I began navigating the local Palestinian community in Sydney for participants that fit the participant criteria who showed signs of interest in the study. Once the ethics application was approved, I began formally contacting potential participants who showed an interest in taking

part in this study. The interview sample was chosen based on a deliberate as opposed to a representative sample of Palestinian-Australians. There are a few reasons as to why this specific sample was chosen. Firstly, I began contacting members of the Palestinian community and asked each member if they could reference another member as a potential participant. This snowballing effect led to a few leads that could possibly take part in the study. This generated a pool of potential participants. Secondly, using my judgement, I focused on recruiting participants with a wide range professional backgrounds, age range, a combination of fulltime and part time working participants, varying migratory paths to Australia, and varying stages of migration to Australia. During the snowballing method of recruiting participants, I asked if the participants were motivated to engage in a narrative discussion on identity, work ethic and spirituality, and this helped filter those who were interested and were willing to share their stories in comparison to those who were not.

## *Analytical approach*

This research focused heavily on the personal narratives of each participant and as mentioned previously, this cohort is a non-representative sample of both Palestinians in general, and Palestinian-Australians specifically. Each narrative was analyzed in two different approaches. Firstly, each participant's narrative was *thematically* analyzed as *a whole* to provide a more holistic analysis of the participant. Such analysis entailed listening to the interviews, taking notes, re-listening, and contacting the participants for clarification. Through this personal analysis, themes emerged within each personal narrative (discussed in data analysis chapter). These themes were then interpreted in the context of each narrative as an *individual entity* to maintain its integrity and coherence (Mishler, 1999). Secondly, all the narratives were interpreted and analyzed as a *cohort* and subsequently themes *across all the* participants emerged. The extraction of themes occurred well after the interview process. After listening to the interviews and transcribing them and re-listening closely, I began to search for repeating ideas. For example, almost every participant spoke of the Value of Education to the point it became evident that it was a major theme. However, there were variations in the manner in which this was described so these were highlighted in the excerpts. It is difficult to point out which themes emerged directly or indirectly as each participant spoke of the same theme differently, some spoke freely, while some were asked directly. The main concepts of concern are *self-identity*, *spirituality* and *work ethic* but given the richness of the data, more subthemes emerged which assisted in the process of conceptualization of ideas in the discussion.

## *Reflection*

Qualitative research methods, and in particular, narrative approaches, have the power to evoke a powerful emotional reaction from both the interviewer and the interviewee. It is particularly challenging to withhold emotions, to a certain extent, when stories not only resonate with me on a cultural level, but on a deeper metaphysical level. Feelings I did not expect to surface emerged in the majority of interviews, and were relived through the participant's experiences. For example, phrases such as "I felt insecure", "I felt isolated", "I never belong...", "I had nowhere to go...nobody wanted us" and an array of other phrases were much more prevalent than I had expected. The emotional responses were manifested in their facial expressions, their

awkward fumbles, long pauses when not being able to convey messages and speed fluctuations in speaking all indicated the extent of the emotional engagement in the interview process. Although participants were asked to make themselves comfortable and treat this as a casual conversation, some could not help but stay rigid until the interview started to run smoothly.

The structure and intimacy of the interviews were all included in my reflexive process to ensure that the following interviews would create even better environments for rapport and confidentiality. This reflexivity worked which was exemplified in one of the participants severely emotional breakdown at the mention of a very sensitive topic that they opted to be completely removed from the interview text. This level of emotional involvement was not expected but researcher learn from one interview to another that there is a liability in asking interviewees to relive difficult situations (e.g. Smith, 1998). It was in cases like this that challenges the ethical integrity of the researcher. To what extent does one push the boundary for a richer insight? And at what expense? Although participants did talk freely, it does place the research in a position that requires a great sense of reflexivity. For example, one of the questions listed that was asked to all participants was “what does it mean to be Palestinian-Australian?”. Some participants spoke of their dual and displaced identities, including what this meant for them in the workplace. Others for instance, needed some direction. Not all participants were as vocal as others. The idea was to get them to speak of how they see themselves as Palestinians at work, and some did without any direction or lead while others needed some directive assistance.

I felt a sense of urgency from the interviewees perspective to tell these stories, some for the very first time. I felt, in their revelations, a voice that was not heard, and in particular the female voices, and that I was viewed as not just a mere researcher but as the amplifier of these unheard voices. After all, why do we tell stories? Perhaps they are a reminder of our existence, to make sense of the world around us and to immerse others in our experiences.



# *Data Analysis - Part 1: “Processes of Identity”*

This part of the chapter will highlight a major overarching theme that emerged across the participants, namely, “*Processes of identity*”. Through the interviews, processes of the participants’ identities emerged in various ways in the narratives that allowed an emergence of further *subthemes*. There will also be a focus on the discourses used in describing these processes to highlight the discursivity of the construction of their identities.

## *Forced vs. elected migration*

The participants across this cohort have varying migratory patterns from Palestine. If we look back to 1948 at the history of their migration, we find two distinct patterns of migration: *forced* and *elected*. These patterns are in most cases geographically dependent on where their origins hail from. For instance, one of the first points the participants were asked to make was to recall their family history, around 1948, and to trace back their history to the best of their abilities to understand how they left Palestine to begin with and to where they migrated to. Some participants have a history of *forceful migration*, in which they were forced to flee from their home towns in fear of death or persecution. Nearly all of the participants that have a history of forceful migration traced their origins to the *Northern Region of Palestine*. The reasoning behind this that this area was the location of the onset of the 1948 war and had become of what is now known as present day Israel (Morris, 2004). There were some exceptions to those who trace their origins back to Gaza.

However, some have a history of *elected migration*, in which they were coerced due to economic and occupation pressures to seek safer environments for their families elsewhere. All of the participants with a history of elected migration traced their origins to villages, towns and cities in the *West Bank*. These differences are significant as they highlighted the then status of the participant’s parents/grandparents, in other words, whether they were refugees or not. Nearly all who had a history of forced migration were *refugees*, and all who had a history of elected migration were *not refugees*.

From my interpretation, the manner in which they describe this characteristic, and whether they ascribe to the label of refugee or not, had a great influence on the construction of their identity. For example, Maysa, who grew up in Lebanese refugee camps, stated:

“In Australia, I used to look at the difference between the way Palestinians were brought up compared to my Lebanese friends, we were a lot more conservative in the way we did things and I think it has a lot to do with the constant fear we lived in as refugees when we were always tippy toeing and we always felt inferior to everyone”

As can be seen from Maysa’s account, issues of fear and inferiority were prevalent in her family as they suffered from the hardship of living in the refugee camps of a neighboring country. Maysa also reflected on the hardship of the life in the refugee camps, and how her parents were compensating in Australia, by trying to provide a life with a safe, secure, and with relative normality. Maysa also spoke of how the diaspora, with a particular attention to her forceful migration, was deeply embedded in her grandfather’s narrative of growing up in the Lebanese refugee camps. Ironically, her parents spoke of the feeling of being “scattered” in Australia as opposed to the strong sense of community growing up in the refugee camps despite the hardship and difficulties.

On the contrary, others such as Mike, viewed themselves differently from those who identified with the refugee status. For example, when Mike was asked about his academic struggles approaching university applications, he stated:

“At home, it was stressed that we need to score really high. Maybe for people who have temporary passports [alluding to refugees], I would say being Palestinian and stateless definitely plays a role but in our case, we always had permanent passports so maybe it didn’t affect us as much. I think it’s the constant struggle for those that have temporary passports so maybe for us, it was more of a pride issue”.

I sensed a difference in the tone and approach in both Maysa and Mike’s narratives although they were speaking about different contexts. While there is a sense of fear, insecurity and inferiority in Maysa’s reflection, this was not necessarily palpitated in Mike’s narrative. Perhaps one’s status, as a refugee or not, influences their language and the characteristics they ascribe to their own identity.

There are different migration trajectories that have been documented in recent Palestinian history, primarily after the Nakba. Some Palestinians such as Maysa, who originated from the city of Akka (Acre), were forcefully displaced and relocated by the UN to the Lebanese refugee camps (AbuFarha, 2008), and for the first time in history during the Nakba, the term “refugee” was included in Palestinian vocabulary (Mansour, 1988). On the other hand, Mike’s family who originated from Nablus, were not forcefully displaced from their hometown but the economic and political conditions after the establishment of the State of Israel had drastic effects on the Palestinian controlled regions (West Bank and Gaza). Interestingly, although the exodus of Palestinians from the West Bank outwardly, has been primarily related to political instability as a part of the Israeli rule, some studies suggest that economic reasons were attributed to this migration trajectory (Gabriel & Sabatello, 1986). Some radical changes included the cut off of major commercial and industrial centers that were the generators of the economy prior to the Nakba, losing access to the Mediterranean Sea ports and an increase in unemployment rate. This change in the employment situation caused a massive influx (approx. 300,000) of Palestinians to present day Jordan and another great influx to the Gulf Region which attracted many Palestinians because of the oil boom (Hadieh, 2013). I argue that there *may* be a difference between the way identity is constructed in the case of Palestinians who were forced to flee and those who elected to flee, although both directly faced the consequences of the Nakba. Mike’s family for instance, became naturalized Jordanian citizens and enjoyed most of the rights of Jordanian nationals (Nasser, 2013). On the other hand, Maysa’s family were forced to relocate to refugee camps in Lebanon and were denied citizenship rights, right to education, right to work and lived a life heavily dependent on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) (Howe, 2015). There have been no studies that compare the identities of those Palestinians who lived in refugee camps in comparison to those who did not, but deducing from the information available, I argue that their *identities may be shaped* by issues of security, instability and access to citizenship rights.

### *Lack of the sense of belonging*

One major theme that was also observed across the participants was the lack of the sense of belonging. This was highlighted in the majority of the participants, with varying descriptions. For instance, Nadine, whose parents were also refugees in Lebanon but migrated and settled in Northern Queensland stated:

“I get the sense that I was different. I was the only one with curly hair. I did stand out. I got called “the jungle woman”. Yes there was racism, but it wasn’t so bad though. I was targeted by some people growing up but some people did

apologize. But I really felt like I didn't belong. I always knew I was part of a settler colonial culture and that I was living in a white culture"

In another account by Hadi, who migrated to Australia in the early seventies, he spoke of the struggles of not belonging anywhere in a time of major political turmoil:

"I was born in Yaffa in 1945 and moved to Gaza in 1948 then moved to Egypt in 1962 and in 1969 I moved to Kuwait then in 1971 I moved to Australia. But you need to know something. I had nowhere to go. The war broke out in Palestine and I wasn't allowed to go back to Gaza so I literally had nowhere to go...nobody wanted us. I was very sick at the time and my nerves broke down. I was at the top of uni in Egypt but I had to regain my dignity. I said I'll work as a factory worker here in Australia, I'll have my dignity. I worked as a laborer here. I hated Arabs at the time. Nobody wanted me. I didn't know about identity at the time. I wasn't a citizen of anywhere, in comparison to those who lived in Jordan. But I worked so hard to reach where I am right now"

This segment highlighted a clear lack of the sense of belonging as he not only witnessed an internal diaspora, from Yaffa to Gaza, but after completing his university degree in Egypt, he had nowhere to return. The clear lack of the sense of belonging is highlighted in this account as he refers to being a "citizen of nowhere", not able "to go anywhere" and that "nobody" wanted him. Not only is the lack of the sense of belonging evident here, but also other important characteristics of his identity, namely, *rejection*, *disparity*, and the *benchmarking* against other Palestinians who had settled elsewhere across the Arab world.

Rabih, expressed a similar point of view:

"My parents told us that no matter what we would always be foreigners and that we can be deported at any time. I think that's why my dad sold his business because he just didn't feel he belonged anymore. I think he started to feel the international pressure of politics and unfortunately we paid the price"

In another completely different context, Amir, 21, who was born in Australia but grew up in the UAE, speaks of the notion of not belonging, with a particular attention to the "physical belonging" to Palestine.

"I'm just a human being. I don't really have a stable identity and it's a bit fragmented. My different backgrounds affected who I am now. Being a Palestinian is there in the background. I can't say it drives me significantly in anyway. I don't have a sense of belonging especially because I didn't experience it [the Nakba] and didn't go through it. I was brought up the same as my sister but she had a much stronger sense of belonging that I do. I put more focus on what I actually experience rather than what has been passed down no matter how traumatic".

Here we see a clear lack of the sense of belonging but understood differently from Maysa, Nadine and Hadi. While Maysa, Nadine and Hadi recognized that the lack of the sense of belonging stemmed from being a Palestinian in a foreign environment, Amir understood his lack of the sense of belonging from a different perspective. His idea of the lack of the sense of belonging was related to the notion that he did not experience the Nakba, and therefore, did not feel a sense of belonging to Palestine. Additionally, having lived the Nakba vicariously reduced his sense of belonging because he placed heavy emphasis on *physically* experiencing events for them to have an influence on his life. Another interesting point highlighted in Amir's narrative is how he compared himself to his sister who was brought up the same way as he has, possibly suggesting that identity may not only be socially constructed, but that there is a *strong*

*individual aspect* that needs to be taken into account, despite being exposed to the same narrative in their household. Another participant also alluded to the notion that his sense of belonging to Palestine was influenced by his visit to Palestine and not by the narratives passed down from his parents. Mazen, 53, stated:

“I didn’t see Palestine till I was 12...but of course you don’t feel that unless you go and visit and see with your own eyes. It is not something you can directly relate to or understand until you go and visit...when I visited when I was 12, it hit me”.

According to my interpretation, accounts from Amir and Mazen’s narratives illustrate that the sense of belonging can be viewed differently. While Maysa, Nadine and Hadi struggled with belonging as Palestinians in a foreign home, Amir and Mazen struggled to belong to Palestine in the first place, having either never visited or visited briefly at a young age. Amir places heavy emphasis on experiencing the Nakba to develop a sense of belonging to Palestine, while Mazen places heavy emphasis on visiting Palestine to develop a sense of belonging to Palestine. Such segments of the narratives may demonstrate that sense of belonging is understood differently across the cohort, and that there is a tangible/intangible aspect that should be considered.

One of the participants, Yasin, viewed the lack of the sense of belonging in a different perspective that deserves recognition. Yasin, 55, who was born, raised and still lives in Kuwait, viewed the notion of belong differently.

“For us Palestinians, we didn’t have a place we can call home, so wherever we were, we had to make it our home”

I think this is an interesting way of viewing the notion of belonging as he did not explicitly state that he didn’t belong, but rather that it was his only choice. He alluded to the idea that Palestinians struggled with returning to their “homeland” and that the only way they can belong elsewhere is to put effort into making it their new home.

The sense of belonging has been explored in various contexts within the qualitative research domain. Several qualitative studies explored the themes that emerged from the study of the sense of belonging. Such themes explored the sense of belonging to a relationship, group or system and later expanded these to include belonging to a historical/current event or a place. Themes that emerged across the 22 different studies included: subjectivity, reciprocity, groundedness, dynamism and self-determination (Mahar et al., 2013). But further studies expanded this notion to include aspects such as the conflict of belonging, the role of identity, and the role of power. In the case of the participants in this cohort, we saw some examples of dynamism that highlighted an interplay between the enabler and the barrier that influence an individual’s sense of belonging. Such barriers may include behavior towards an individual from the social context which may lead to discrimination or prejudice. This was for instance seen in the Nadine’s narrative as she experienced the notion of “being different”, or in Rabi’h’s narrative of being told by his parents that he is a “foreigner”. In addition, Chaitin (2009), studied the sense of belonging of Palestinian and Israeli immigrants to the United States and found that individuals adapted their sense of belonging to their own culture, religion and events to make it flexible to their current situation in their new country (Chaitin, 2009). This was similarly observed through the narratives of Yasin, who spoke of making Kuwait his “new home” given the fact that Palestine was no longer accessible for his family. Athias (2009) makes an interesting contribution to the study of belonging and identity in which she argues that these concepts have been tied to centered focus of the individual in which Brubaker named “groupism” (Brubaker, 2004), and that “translocational positionalities” shifts towards the shifting locales of individuals due their movements with a focus on the complexities that emerge that should take into account time, space and meaning (Athias, 2009).

In a study by Mason in 2007 of Palestinians in Kuwait who migrated to Australia following the onset of the Gulf War in 1990, the lack of the sense of belonging was evident amongst the participants. The idea of “home” was illustrated to be a multi-faceted notion of Palestine as the “home of origin” and current country of residence as the “home of reality”. For instance, some Palestinian-Australians that had resided in Kuwait prior to immigrating to Australia felt little affinity to Kuwait where they were not citizenship, even though they were born and raised there, but were also met with some anti-Arab or anti-Muslim sentiment. In addition, when some of these individuals were finally able to visit Palestine, as Palestinian-Australians, they felt a sense of dislocated and more like “visitors”. Multiple immigrations, multiple identities and a lack of the sense of belonging attributed to their identity being “out of place” (Mason, 2007).

## *Hidden vs. visible identity*

Another interesting theme that emerged through the observance of the characteristics of identity is the difference between an individual with a *hidden* identity in comparison to an individual with a *visible* identity, but not according to my observations, but rather their narratives. Some participants highlighted that their identity is at the forefront of their individuality and often exposed in their day to day life, while others saw their identity as being hidden or concealed, and not at the forefront of their individuality. For example, Fadwa, 37, concluded her interview by describing whether the Nakba had a lasting impact on her and she stated:

“It is a part of my everyday life...the injustice of it all...the bureaucratic bundle of it all...it makes me angry...I think about it all the time and it is at the forefront of my identity”.

Fadwa explicitly stated how the history of the Nakba is deeply embedded in her day to day life, and how it is at the forefront of her identity. We can also see through her narrative, the hegemonic discourse illustrated by her choice of words such as “injustice”, “bureaucratic” and “angry” that are intertwined in her narrative.

The explicit visibility was also highlighted in Mary’s narrative, as she spoke of retiring from her administrative work at Concord Hospital to focus on her visual art work.

“I retired and focused on my art. I found myself as a Palestinian in my art, not working in administration. I always talk about my roots and my identity and this is reflected in my art”.

From Mary’s reflections we can see that she not only explicitly explained the visibility of her identity but also how her identity is interwoven in her art work, in comparison to her administrative job (discussed further in chapter 3).

Other participants such as Mike for instance, admitted that he is a Palestinian, but that this aspect of his identity is often hidden or concealed. Mike spoke of growing up as a Palestinian-Jordanian in Saudi Arabia and on issues of fitting in the society. He said:

“I had no issue fitting in. In Saudi Arabia I was Jordanian. I tell people I’m Jordanian. I didn’t really tell people I was originally Palestinian”.

In other parts of the narrative, Mike would speak of what it is like to a Palestinian as he states:

“To be called a Palestinian, I feel you have to have a certain understanding of the conflict. Growing up outside of Palestine makes me “kind of Palestinian” but I wouldn’t say completely. Palestine has always been a topic of conversation in school and it’s a topic that stirs a lot of emotions and empathy. The real challenge was mainly in uni. I was at the Jordan University of Science and Technology where it was a lot more tolerant in comparison to Jordan University where it is a lot more divisive. For example, when I moved to Australia, I was faced with the Israeli narrative and I’m always on the defense to defend my narrative”.

In another part, Mike, spoke about what it means to be a Palestinian. He said:

“Under the hood, being a Palestinian is for me. I don’t see any obvious relevance on the outside. Under the hood it is a part of me and affects me on a daily basis. I can’t speculate about the future. Perhaps if I found a place where I can express myself as a Palestinian, I can express my sense of belonging”.

From my interpretation, accounts in Mike’s narrative highlight some significant observations. As previously mentioned, his narratives do point towards a lack of sense of belonging. But other issues emerged such as the concealing of his identity in certain situations and exposing his identity to others. It seems as if there is a tension between visibly displaying his identity and concealing it in situations he sees fit. Perhaps aspects of identity may be stigmatized, and individuals choose to display them or hide them according to different contexts of their lives. In comparison to the narratives by Fadwa and Mary, Mike chose to conceal or display his identity depending on the situation he is placed in.

Previous research has examined how individuals express their identities in the workplace can influence the identity management processes of the organization (e.g. Ellison, 2003; Ragins et al., 2007). Such research has also found that those employees who predict that they may be discriminated against are those most likely to conceal their identities. This is perhaps due to the ever changing demographic makeup of most organizations in highly diverse contexts, which would include a diversity in ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliations and disability statuses, and may stir feelings of stigmatization or exclusion (Madera & King, 2007). Other studies posited that it may be the other way around and that group identity management may lead to discrimination which would ultimately lead to some individuals concealing their identities (Madera et al., 2012). Parker (2002) mentioned in earlier studies that it is not enough to know whether racism exists because of one’s identity in an organizational setting, but rather, how people create those interactions in their day to day life, and supported the opinion of Fine (1994) that stressed the importance of understanding the structures and practices that represent the “other”.

## ***Racism and discrimination***

Throughout a close reading of the narratives, I came across specific examples that illustrated that some of the participant’s identities were highlighted by the sense of racism and discrimination. Racism and discrimination varied across the participants depending on where they grew up and where the source of discriminatory remarks came from. For example, Mazen, 53, spoke of growing up in Kuwait, that was home to one of the largest and most influential Palestinian communities in the world. He said:

“I think it’s the discrimination that helped us understand that we didn’t belong there. We struggled with that. I was excelling in school and I was a professional soccer player but I was denied the opportunity to join local soccer teams because the priority was for Kuwaitis. Or in fact, solely for Kuwaitis. You start thinking, I’m just a guest here”.

Here Mazen’s point of view highlights that through the feeling of the lack of the sense of belonging and tangible discrimination, he began to understand that he was merely a “guest” in the country he was born in and spent most of his life there, which was perhaps driven by his racism experiences.

Zaina, 53, who was also born and raised in Kuwait, but migrated to Australia in 1992, also experienced racism and discrimination for being a Palestinian. In the following account, she explained what is what like working for an IT consortium in Kuwait at the time of the Iraqi invasion, where many Palestinians were persecuted and were ultimately exiled. This was mainly due to the involvement of the then Palestinian leader, Yasin Arafat, in the support of an Iraqi led invasion of Kuwait. Zaina remembered:

“I was the head of the IT consortium in Kuwait. They challenged me to implement a new software in 6 months and I did it in 3 months. It was a proud moment for me. During the invasion, I took my two kids and went to work and hid the server in my house. Because I worked with the government and we backed up [our server] overnight. They rewarded me with 2 months salary. I cried when I went home because they treated me like an outsider. I wasn’t expecting anything. I decided I wanted to leave. My sense of belonging was hurt”

Throughout my interview with Zaina, she explained how she felt like she did not belong because of how she was excluded through this ordeal. She felt discriminated against by not merely being recognized for the contribution she had made to her “family”, as she described her workplace. She felt offended by being offered monetary rewards and later explained, after the interview, that she would not have experienced this if she were a Kuwaiti citizen. Could it be that monetary rewards may be viewed as “offensive” where as a mere recognition, appreciation and acknowledgement of her work could have played a role in her sense of belonging?

Although most Palestinians in Kuwait were not granted Kuwaiti citizenship, they thrived as a dynamic and vibrant community of highly educated and highly skilled individuals who integrated well into the economy and the culture of Kuwait. They also enjoyed a lot more freedom and the capacity to express their identity more than any other neighboring country such as Lebanon and Syria (Ghabra<sup>5</sup>, 1988). According to Rosen, “they occupied an honorable place in local society, giving them a sense of belonging and performance” (Rosen, 2012: pg 77). However, many aspects of this vibrant community changed after the Gulf War when Sadaam Hussain invaded Kuwait and was backed by then Palestinian leader, Yasin Arafat. The invasion led to the expulsion, ethnic cleansing, and deportation of over 300,000 Palestinians who had been living in Kuwait for generations and considered it a home away from home. Many of those deported were highly educated lawyers, doctors, engineers and bankers who helped develop Kuwait’s economy at the onset of the oil boom (Nakib, 2014). So it is not surprising that Zaina

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<sup>5</sup> *Shafeeq Ghabra*: A Palestinian-Kuwaiti Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University. He authored several books and articles on critical Arab issues with a special focus on the question of Palestine. He was the first founding president of the American University of Kuwait (“Shafeeq Ghabra”, 2016).



felt a sense of discrimination and being an outsider in the country she was born and raised in, and a place where she was given the capacity to express her self-identity.

Other accounts of racism were also present in Mary's narratives as she spoke to moving to Australia and starting her administrative job at Concord Hospital. She stated:

"It was hard for us as migrants. I felt discrimination here [Australia] when Anglo Saxons who were much younger than me got the jobs I should've gotten. I never stopped. I was very ambitious. And there were many jobs I didn't get but others in my cohort did".

Here Mary compared herself as a migrant to her Anglo Saxon counterparts at work and revealed that she felt a sense of discrimination in the workplace, in particular, related to hiring and promotions. However, it is not explicitly stated in Mary's narrative that this discrimination is particularly related to being a Palestinian, but rather as an immigrant.

Discrimination in the lives of immigrants is not a surprising notion. However, discrimination in the workplace, in particular amongst highly skilled immigrants, has received little attention in the literature (Bingelli et al., 2013). Some research has shown that highly skilled immigrants may receive more subtle and subdued forms of discrimination than lower skilled immigrants (Krings et al., 2014). It is also interesting to note that Krings et al also found that discrimination amongst immigrants should take into account the diversity of the group and that they should not be treated as one entity (Krings et al., 2014).

## *Data Analysis - Part 2: “Childhood Values”*

This part will illustrate a significant overarching theme that was observed in the narratives, namely, “*childhood values*”. Throughout the narratives, I noticed a heavy emphasis on childhood values that I believe deserves recognition. Throughout the narratives, similarities and nuances were observed, which will be highlighted below. As with the previous part, the Palestinian discourse will also be highlighted to illustrate discursivity of the construction of their identities.

## *Value of education*

If there is one theme that was observed across a significant part of the cohort, it is the value of education that was instilled in their childhood. Below are several excerpts highlighting the significance of education in the participants' childhood as well as *how* education was viewed.

Rabih, 38, was born in Kuwait and was raised between Kuwait and Jordan. He migrated to Australia just over 3 years ago. When asked if his parents ever told stories at home or whether his parents often spoke of their history, he said:

“We [the family] didn’t really used to see my dad as a child. It was a lot of pressure on my mom. I remember my dad constantly working from 5 am ‘til very late. Although my dad never used to tell us a lot of stories but he did lecture us a lot about education because he always linked it to hard work.”

In another part of his narrative, Rabih described academic competition in school amongst various nationalities, who were all immigrants in Kuwait. He said:

“The competition was really high between different nationalities in school. I think it [value of education] was to make a point that we exist. Our country was a lot more advanced than many countries in the Middle East and when that land was taken away from us, we wanted to show that we have the capacity, the competency, and the ability to continue and survive. We simply are driven to make a point and that energy was directed in the stress for education”.

Through Rabih’ narratives, we cannot only see the role of education played in his upbringing but also how education was viewed. According to Rabih, education was seen as a tool for survival, and one that is used to demonstrate “capacity, competency and ability to continue and survive”.

In another part of her narrative, Zaina also placed heavy influence on education in her household. She recalled:

“They [parents and community] always implanted in our brains that unless you work hard, you have nowhere to go. Unless you are educated, you’re doomed. It still lives with me. Unconsciously, I implanted that in my kids who were brought up at a very young age here [Australia]. Academic excellence is something we always stressed in our house which can be annoying sometimes because it doesn’t always allow you to enjoy your life. Palestinians are always serious about that”.

Here we can see clearly that education played an important role in Zaina’s upbringing. I discovered through her whole narrative, that it was not merely a choice but rather a way of life which can be illustrated through the use of language such as “nowhere to go” and “you’re doomed”.

Similar experiences also constituted an important part of Yasin’s childhood values. Below is a long segment that describes growing up in Kuwait in relation to his education. He recalled:

"I had a pretty normal childhood...except for the fact that since 1967 and with the breakout of the war. I attended a special type of school in Kuwait and that was the PLO school<sup>6</sup>...basically since the establishment of the PLO in 1964, they started to have a lot of presence in Kuwait...and the influx of Palestinians from Palestine to Kuwait increased around that period....so the Kuwaiti government made an agreement with the PLO that the public schools in Kuwait couldn't handle this influx of immigrants....so they made an agreement that Palestinian students will go to school in the afternoon so from 3-9..using the campuses of the Kuwaiti public schools...since the schools couldn't handle that influx...so us Palestinians were forced to attend these schools...it was a unique experience....all students were Palestinian...we pledged the Palestinian national anthem before the Kuwaiti one...many teachers worked for free as a sign of their patriotism and nationalism and in making sure that their students don't fall victims to the lack of resources...you can imagine the level of competition was very high and this is related to that fact that with the influx of other immigrants and the fact that we suffered from the insecurity....Palestinian kids were always striving to be at the top....because education was the only weapon we had...we had no country...no military...no unity...this was the only way for us to move forward and wherever we go, it was the only thing we can hold in our hand....for us Palestinians, we didn't have a place we can call home so wherever we were we had to make it our home..."

This detailed description of how education was viewed in Yasin's childhood is of a particular interest. Yasin attended a special school that was designed based on ethnicity because Kuwaiti schools, due to the oil boom and the 1967 war, could not handle the influx of immigrants. This model was not found in any other country in the Arab world, let alone, the rest of the world where Palestinians had settled. According to Yasin's accounts, not only did it instill a very high level of competition amongst a group of students who lived by the motto of education, it also fostered a sense of "nationalism" and "patriotism" amongst its staff who, according to Yasin, worked up to 12 hours a day (6 paid hours in the morning, 6 unpaid hours in the afternoon/evening). Yasin views education as he was brought up, as a "weapon" since Palestinians felt they had "no country, no military and no unity", and that education was the only way they could prove themselves.

Mike for instance, also spoke of the value of education that was instilled in his childhood however, he did not explicitly relate to his Palestinian struggle. He said:

"My parents stressed always being on top academically. It was always about the chances of survival. Not sure it its Palestinian pride but maybe just pride of parents that we need to score really high. My dad had to study abroad because being a Palestinian in Jordan probably didn't give him the best chance to study Medicine and I think that struggle implicitly inspired us to do better. I never really thought about it that way".

Fadwa, also mentioned but not in detail about the importance of education in her household. She stated:

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<sup>6</sup> **PLO schools:** In 1967, following the six-day war, the PLO office in Kuwait along with the Kuwait government established a unique scheme for Palestinian students in Kuwait. They established the "PLO schools" due to the exceeding pressure of Palestinian immigrants to Kuwait by using existing public schools during school *after hours*. This was designed exclusively for Palestinian school students, run by Palestinian teachers and governed by both the PLO and the Ministry of Education. Students attended school from 3-9 pm. This was a unique scheme that was not paralleled among any other ethnic community in Kuwait or in the Arab world. Palestinian nationalism, identity and resistance were often enforced in these schools. This scheme lasted from 1967-1976.

“Education is a huge part of growing up and it wasn’t really a choice. We didn’t really get the ‘go find yourself’ approach. That was considered a waste of time.”

Rosemary, 57, who was born and raised in a small Christian town of Birzet in the West Bank migrated to Australia at the age of 16. In the following account she compared her understanding of education in comparison to the way her Australian counterparts viewed education when first she first migrated to Australia. She said:

“My first job was at Coles in Marrickville. Education wasn’t very popular here [Australia]. It was very different amongst Palestinians who value education as a part of their identity. We [Palestinians] were deprived from our land and from living our life in peace. My grandparents always told us that it is by far the most important weapon for survival. My first degree was in science and anthropology and my second degree was in political science”.

Here, Rosemary makes an interesting observation between her understanding of the view of education in comparison to what she understood of education when she first migrated to Australia. She noticed a difference in the level of importance of education across both communities. She also reiterated the metaphor of “education as a weapon” which was also used in the narratives of other participants, as a tool for survival.

The reflections from above demonstrated not only the value placed on education, but rather how education is often used as a “weapon”, which from my experience, is commonly used across the Palestinian discourse in various communities. In many narratives there was almost an absolute belief that education was seen as a means of survival, while in other narratives, there was hesitation and perhaps skepticism that it is related to the Palestinian struggle at all. In many cases across the narratives, participants were not given a choice to complete their education, but rather an expected norm in society.

Education plays a great role in Palestinian history but the idea of the value of education changed after the Nakba. Prior to the Nakba, the main focus of Palestinians was to take control of their education systems in fear that the British would take control of it since Palestine was under the British Mandate. There were fears of indoctrinating British ideologies and unfair discrimination against Palestinian villager’s access to education in comparison to the elite that completed their education in Beirut, Cairo, England, France, Germany and the United States (Ricks, 2009). Totah<sup>7</sup>, Palestinian Professor and Columbia graduate, who was an advocate of Palestinian control of their own education system prior to the Nakba once stated:

“The major grievance of the [Palestinian] Arabs as regards education is that they have no control over it. It is the right of every self-respecting community to control its own education...Arabs feel strongly that they are competent to manage their own education. They feel they have as much right to control the education of their children as the Iraqis have, as the Trans-Jordanians have” (Ricks, 2009).

However, while the importance of education remained unchanged, it took a different turn after the Nakba. After the displacement of Palestinians throughout the world, the role of education became ingrained as an important aspect of Palestinian identity. A study by Alzaroo and Hunt (2003) strongly suggests that the sense of displacement and prolonged conflict plays an important role in pushing Palestinians toward education and is often seen as a coping strategy in the face of displacement (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). Building on Haber’s (1991) ideologies of political education, namely, the conservative, liberal and radical approach, Alzaroo and Hunt,

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<sup>7</sup> **Khalil Totah (1886-1955):** A Palestinian-American lecturer, Columbia graduate, author and co-editor of *Palestine: A Decade of Development* published by the American Academy of Political and Social Science. He is regarded as one of the few Palestinian educators and intellectuals that critically advocated the role of education in the liberation and development of Palestine before the Nakba (Ricks, 2009).

provide explanations into how education in Palestinian society is viewed. They argue that education is often viewed as a remedy for the aftermath of the Nakba, a mechanism for social and political mobilization and as a tool for identity building (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). Palestinians are amongst the most educated communities in the Arab world, and is often seen as a method of survival and is often viewed as an insurance strategy and a transferable commodity against a world of uncertainty (Davies, 1979).

## *The notion of hard work*

Along with the value placed on acquiring an education, many participants narrated the notion of hard work across their narratives and some gave specific examples to demonstrate that.

Nadine, who migrated to Australia at an early age and grew up in a town in Northern Queensland, gave an interesting account of how “hard work” was discussed in her family, and how this value was instilled in her as a child. She recalled:

“We had an acreage as kids and we were expected to work on that land and we were expected to work hard...we started as early as we could walk....my dad used to tell us about our farming history...it’s in our blood...he replicated this and wanted us to learn about the hard work and values here in Australia being from a “Falaheen<sup>8</sup>” background [Arabic for peasant, farmer]...these values have been instilled in me....being productive was not a choice....it’s very physically demanding....that connection to the land and being a Palestinian....he passed it down to us...being hard working and being connected to the land...Palestinians romanticize their connection to the land in everything they do...in arts, in work....”

This account illustrated the value of hard work instilled in Nadine’s childhood but also exposed aspects of Palestinian discourse that are embedded in her narrative. Her recollection of her childhood demonstrated an interesting notion of identity as a metaphor, comparing the physically demanding work of her farmer ancestors to the importance of her hard work in her day to day life.

As mentioned previously, Zaina, who grew up in Kuwait, also recalled the notion of hard work in her house hold by saying:

“Everything was hard. Life was hard. Even for uni, it was hard to be recognized against Kuwaitis [Kuwaiti university students]. They [parents and community] implanted in our brains that unless you work hard, you have nowhere to go”

Preceding this part of the narrative, Zaina told me that when the 1967 war broke out, it diminished any hope for her family ever returning to Palestine. She also explained that her parents were “being protective from the unknown” and that they always felt like they were in a “waiting game”. Zaina believes that the sinking feeling that they will never return to Palestine, and the hopelessness and fear that dominated further encouraged Palestinian parents to engrave the importance of hard work in their upbringing.

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<sup>8</sup> **Falaheen**: An Arabic word which refers to farmers or agricultural laborers in the Middle East and North Africa. In the Palestinian context, it often represents more than farmers as drivers of the agricultural segment of the economy, but are rather intertwined in Palestinian culture, history, and identity. In Palestinian culture, farming is often associated with a spiritual connection to the land, and is expressed in the symbolic importance of the olive tree, an essential symbol of Palestinian culture and identity. Farming is widely regarded as a way of maintaining a significant relationship with the land (Abdulnour et al., 2012).

Rabih, 37, who was born in Kuwait and raised in both Kuwait and Jordan, spoke of hard work across his narrative in the following two accounts; namely, on Palestinians sense of hard work in Kuwait and the influence of the displacement.

“They [Palestinians in Kuwait] didn’t have issues growing up as Palestinians...they were treated very well in Kuwait....I think it was well known around the region that Palestinians deliver and are extremely hard working....I think the insecurity really pushed them....they didn’t get support from other countries...Palestinians take their jobs very seriously and I think they want to make a point of survival to the international community and that became their motive....”

And in another except:

“In terms of how the displacement affected me...first of all my dad’s lack of education was a major driver for him and instilling that in us...but I also think that because of the struggle we [Palestinians] face, we needed to create opportunities...we needed to stand out...we needed to distinguish ourselves...and its true...that was shown in the way Palestinians are highly ranked....very educated...I think it’s in us...we need to compensate and even overcompensate...we always needed to go the extra mile...we needed to always look for security and it was the only way we could get that security and it was only achieved by working hard”

In the above segments, Rabih discussed how hard work was often viewed as a way to compensate for Palestinian loss of land, dignity, and in many cases, international support. In Rabih’s case, this insecurity drove his parents, particularly his father to instill the importance of working hard as a child.

Mazen, 55, for example combined the notion of hard work with the importance of education as he discussed his childhood in the following account:

“Working hard wasn’t really a choice, it was a tough life. Competitiveness for Palestinians was a big deal...always standing out...education was very important to us since it is what we have left after losing our land...it was our only hope...it was our main focus to compensate for other losses. They [society] motivated us to think that this way was the only way...”

Mazen described how competitiveness was extremely important for Palestinian children, and it was thorough this pressure that forced them to work hard. This was often seen as the only way to move forward in a society that uses education and hard work as tools for compensating their losses. Work ethic of Palestinians, particularly in qualitative methodologies is largely unexplored. Most studies only capture a glimpse of the Palestinian context (as a segment of Arab context) and pay very little attention to the complexity of the construction of work ethic as a result of displacement. In addition, no work has examined the Palestinian work ethic as being instilled in childhood values of children. However, some earlier studies have touched on the topic of parent involvement of instilling the value of hard work in children. For example, Lopez (2001) highlighted the importance of transmitting hard work as a value through the communication between parents and child, and that this can be done in various ways such as working in the fields, like Nadine’s family (Lopez, 2001). Interestingly, Gomez also highlighted the importance of understanding how some parents, who may feel marginalized for various reasons, tend to transmit their values of hard work in their specific social context. Earlier studies showed that hard work is an important value for immigrant parents to transmit to their children (Chavkin, 1991; Prewitt et al., 1990), but it may still be largely underexplored in various contexts. In the case of the Palestinian context, we can see that it is heavily embedded

in the narratives of the participants and that it is driven by discursive discourse that may open doors for further comprehensive analysis. In addition, I argue that the more we understand about the ingraining of such values in their childhood narratives, the more we understand how this affects them in their work life.

The narrative parts selected and demonstrated above highlight the importance of childhood values instilled in this cohorts' childhood and upbringing. Could unraveling more about childhood values demonstrate an embedded value system that may be portrayed in an individual's work domain? And to what extent are these childhood values driven by the discourses of this particular social context? Could an event, such as the Nakba, be so embedded in the childhood values of individual even if they experienced it vicariously?



## *Data Analysis - Part 3: “Who am I at work?”*

Using a narrative approach to explore issues of identity, work ethic and spirituality at work has shown to be particularly useful in this study. It may be, that, in order to explore what an individual is like in their “work life” namely, their organizational setting, one needs to understand the construction of their identity. The past two parts of this chapters highlighted some important themes that emerged through the understanding of the participant’s narratives which would then lead into their discussion of their “work life”. In order to explore notions of work ethic and spirituality and their relation to their displaced identity, I began by asking one open ended question “what are you like in your workplace?” Some participants required follow up questions while some were given the space to answer uninterruptedly. Throughout this part of our discussion, the following themes emerged and include the expression of identity,

## *Expression of identity*

The participants across this cohort spoke of the way they either express their identity or not in their workplace. Some spoke about their previous workplaces, but the emphasis was placed on their current workplace in Australia.

Hadi, 72, is a semi-retired part time journalist, who migrated to Australia in the early 1970s. In the following excerpt, he described an incidence that took place in his previous workplace as a Legal Researcher just four years after arriving to Australia in 1975. He recalled:

“I once had a clash with a previous boss of mine who was a fanatic Jew and wanted to bring me down. He wanted to make sure that I don’t even get a job in Sydney. But that didn’t stop me. It was a tough life for us. We were still confused about our national identity. Some used to say that they were Jordanian just because it was the easy and safe way out. Some used to say they were Lebanese. But I insisted to remain with my Palestinian national identity”

At a time of political turmoil in the 1970s, some Palestinians felt stigmatized because of their identity and often some resorted to ascribing to other national identities to avoid difficult situations such as the above. However, Hadi insisted on expressing his identity in the workplace. Kreiner et al (2006) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) have previously argued that individuals are often forced to *adjust* and *adapt* certain work place demands that shape how they express their identities in the work place. Such demands often reflect a tension between their various identities and what each identity requires. Could aspects of identity expression often requires adjustments of adaptation so that the individual is able to belong and fit in?

In another extract from Hadi’s narratives, he explained to me how he fits better in his current workplace in comparison to his previous workplace that he worked in for just over 25 years as a Legal Researcher. He said with great disappointment:

“I started as a legal researcher for the Supreme Court and 10 years ago, I retired and now I wrote part time for the Arabic newspapers. I feel I fit in a lot more in my current job, despite it being part time. It’s my culture. I’m a lot happier. It’s my environment. Even though I was there [previous workplace] for 25 years, I

feel my knowledge is more appreciated here. And I can use my identity more. I felt like I was denied my efforts and denied my hard work. I felt lost in my previous job. I didn't feel like the diversity I bring in was appreciated. I feel a lot more spiritual now and a lot more connected to my job"

There are several points in Hadi's account that deserve attention. I think this excerpt highlighted that there was a feeling of "disconnection" at his previous workplace which he credited to the feeling of being out of place because his identity was not only not expressed, but underappreciated. This may point to an important question: does the expression of identity, whether self-identity in general or national identity, make employees feel a better connection to their work? How important is diversity in creating an environment where's identity is comfortable expressed? Does expressing one's identity contribute to them feeling a "spiritual connection" to their work? Has this received enough attention in the literature? Crossman (2015) argued that albeit the recognition that managing spirituality has become one of Australia's significant issues of the twentieth century, it still has not received the necessary attention.

Nadine also expressed her identity in the workplace in very similar ways to Hadi as she stated:

"I am extremely vocal about my identity. I am completely immersed in my heritage. People know I am a Palestinian and very outspoken and honest about it"

However, an interesting point was discovered at the end of Nadine's conversation, and that was she had a "late spurt of identity" in relation to her Palestinian identity. She stated:

"My identity went through stages. I was always aware that I was not from here [Australia]. I had the feeling of being out of place. It was the injustice that I clearly started to understand when I started to develop an interest in what I wanted to work and it grew. Working on my thesis [on Palestinian feminist resistance through art] put my identity in the forefront. I think about it every day. It never leaves my mind. Being a part of the BDS9 movement...bringing my heritage into my work played a major role"

Nadine grew up in a small town in Northern Queensland where she was one of few students in her school that were not Anglo-Saxon. She later explained to me that while she was always proud of her identity, it was not until she moved to Sydney a few years ago that she felt she was able to express her identity in her current workplace where diversity is not only celebrated but embraced.

Zaina for instance, expressed aspects of her identity in slightly different ways, when she said:

"I used my accent to break the silence with my clients to break the ice. I used it to my advantage. I didn't want anything to stop me"

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<sup>9</sup> **BDS:** "Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity... The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement works to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law" (BDS, 2016).

This was an interesting point that Zaina made on how more visible aspects of one's identity, such as accent or dialect, which may sometimes be a point of stigmatization, was used positively to break the ice between clients.

When Maysa was asked "what is it like being a Palestinian at work?", she spoke the importance of making Palestine a part of her work conversation. She said:

"I think people live in a very apathetic society and I think my issue was that the people I met kind of lived in a bubble and thought that if something did not impact them, then it's not important to know about and I made sure that when I speak to them, they understood who I am and where I came from"

And later on in the conversation, she said:

"But of course there is sense of frustration because you feel some people [at work] don't understand you and what you've been through and where you come from but I think it helps you become more of a tolerant person....sometimes I feel like I'm orbiting in space because I may not be accepted by earth society. And also I don't feel like I'm completely accepted by the Australian society although I think I bring a lot of different dynamics to my friends because I am different to them because of the way we are represented in the media and we get marginalized and stigmatized."

I can sense that there is almost a need to explicitly express her identity in the above passage, and an obligation to tell her story to those who may not know it, particularly in the workplace. It is as if there is a need to rebuttal the narrative heard in the media which may affect how she is viewed in the workplace. Perhaps the more we understood about one's holistic identity, and not just their work identity, this could create a better understanding of the person as a whole.

Others such as Amir, for instance, do not place value on expressing their identity explicitly in the workplace, as he stated:

"I don't think it [Palestinian identity] really affects me that much. It's not something I think about. It's just there. It's not significant. It's not something I discuss at work"

In addition, Mike expressed a similar opinion:

"I legally changed my name from Mohammed to Mike. It was mainly for practical reasons. I wanted to fit it instead of losing my identity. My name is shown by who I am and how I act but I think it gives me the power to control my own narrative. I controlled how I wanted to express my identity. My last name is obviously "different", I would say I'm from Jordan and not Palestine because I feel I didn't live there, I wouldn't know how it's like. But everyone knows I'm Palestinian, not everyone at work though. I didn't hide it but I didn't feel the urgency to mention it"

Amir did not view his identity as one that needs to be explicitly expressed in the workplace and prefers that it is not discussed in the workplace. It was interesting to observe a tension between wanting to fit in and wanting to express Mike's identity. Perhaps, in Mike's case, he was empowered by concealing his identity which gave him a sense of control over his own narrative. However, this tension of expressing and concealing his ethnic identity as a part of his self-identity was also prevalent across several stages of his narrative. Newheiser and Barreto (2014)

studied the influence of hiding one's "stigmatized" identity, and challenged earlier claims that concealing one's identity may increase feelings acceptance and belonging. They found that, through four different studies and settings, feelings of acceptance and belonging were actually lowered because of the individual's effort to conceal their identity. Although this study was not conclusive, but it challenges the way we approach the expression or lack of expression of identity, and whether we really understand their consequences in the work place.

## *Humanizing the workplace*

Some participants expressed how through their displaced Palestinian identities, they were able to bring a "human aspect to work".

Maysa spoke of her current workplace as a Senior HR Manager:

"Being a Palestinian allowed me to focus on the human aspect of everything at work which has influenced my work values which is to focus on fighting bullying and injustice. Especially being Palestinian, if I didn't do so, I'll be a walking contradiction".

Through this reading and across other parts of her narrative, we see that the burden of her history has instilled the need to re-in force the need to include emotion and passion as a significant part of work life, and although Maysa is often criticized for being "too emotional" at work, she said that they [colleagues at work]:

"need to be more human and less robotic, if not, then I won't be able to have a purpose of drive in what I am doing right now".

Rosemary also shared some similar opinions to Maysa in regards to bringing a more human aspect to work. She said:

"It [being Palestinian] affects me in my values. Although I am a human at work, it made me more human. I saw the suffering. We are all migrants. I don't want to build anger or hatred and I always want to use this energy positively"

I think it is interesting to see the embodiment of the Palestinian history which is laced in displacement, suffering and oppression be expressed in the workplace in more positive ways to tackle issues in the workplace and to bring more emotion and passion in the workplace.

Nadine, also expressed similar ideas to Maysa and Rosemary. Nadine, a social worker, stated:

"Being a Palestinian at worked allowed me to understand a broader perspective of the issues I deal with such as domestic violence, child abuse, foster care etc. and understanding my heritage made me empathetic towards our clients because as a Palestinian, I saw things from a unique position particularly when I dealt with refugee families"

Does a history of displacement and hardship give Nadine a leverage in her workplace? Does this in turn give her the emotional intelligence to tackle sensitive issues at work such as trauma, abuse and neglect? To what extent can cultural intelligence translate to emotional intelligence in the workplace? Alexander and Charles (2009) have questioned the boundaries that are often created between a social worker and their client. Such boundaries may often not be aligned with the values of the professional (the social worker), and may alter the actuality of practice. Could

the understanding of a traumatic history, such as Nadine's, help bridge this worker-client boundary without necessary restrictions? Could the expression of one's trauma through the expression of one's displaced identity assist in creating more favorable worker-client relationships?

## *Work ethic embedded in displaced identity*

One of the first observations I made when speaking to the participants while trying to understand the concept of work ethic in relation to this particular cohort, is the urgency to display a set of behaviors that highlight Palestinian work ethic. For example, Rabih stated:

"My history pushed me forward. We struggled a lot to make a good impression and regain that power and glory we had before the Nakba....I always want to give the impression that despite the struggle, Palestinians have channeled this energy in hard work, honest work by being very serious and sincere...especially in my professional community....I think there's a message I want to always deliver particularly in my work..."

In another part of his narrative, Rabih explained:

"Here in Sydney, I'm still finding ways to grow my business. There's a lot of stereotyping here. But the more I speak about my culture, the more people understand the struggle we went through and how that affected us at work and how that drives me to do better and stand out. Sometimes we feel like that the lack of the sense of belonging can be hard so I think we always try extra hard to want to belong and work hard...but we are used to this type of life. I think that the Palestinian case is different due to its complexity you know the political, religious and cultural dimension"

Fadwa also expressed the need to display a set of behaviors in her workplace. She said:

"I make sure to be hard working, sincere and knowledgeable and I always mention that I am Palestinian. Palestinians are good people and we deserve justice and I make sure that people distinguish between what they see on TV and what they see in me"

In addition to Rabih and Fadwa's point of views, Yasin also expressed a similar point of view:

"Palestinians live by the motto of working hard. I think it's because of the lack of security we had as Palestinians. We have no "home". We had to belong and the only way was to distinguish ourselves. No Arab states wanted Palestinians and I think this really pushed us to test our limits and it really made us want to prove ourselves"

These three parts from the narratives of Rabih, Fadwa and Yasin offer a slightly different view of work ethic. They focused more on the notion that a strong work ethic was not only the norm

in Palestinian culture and society, but rather that this “image” or “reputation” must be maintained. We observed how work ethic is deeply embedded in the values instilled in the childhoods of the participants, and in the workplace, we see how there is a sense of urgency to maintain this work ethic.

## *Spirituality in the workplace*

Spirituality was not particularly easy to discuss. Some participants easily spoke of their understanding of spirituality and discussed finding meaning at work, drive and purpose, while others needed more probing questions. Once the participants began to speak freely about spirituality, I directed the conversation towards whether they believe their spiritualities are related to their displaced identities. Some participants illustrated an association while others did not. Given the nature and complexity of the topic of spirituality, only some aspects of it were highlighted in the following extracts and it must be noted that these narratives are in no way exhaustive of all the elements of spirituality.

## *Finding meaning and drive at work*

Through my conversations with the participants, I wanted to know whether they found meaning in their current work and whether this meaning is in anyway related to their displaced identities. The responses varied across the cohort.

Zaina for instance gave an interesting description of how she sources meaning in and out of work. She explained the following:

“The concept is that Arabs are hardworking people but it’s more difficult with Palestinians because of our situation because we are all over the world and we don’t have a country...and to be able to make it, you have to distinguish yourself so that no one rejects you...especially your academic qualifications...I think it reflects a lot about yourself and your country and if you are in a position of power, you are able to help others...that’s what Israelis do...it’s a long term strategy but it works....we learn from the enemy...they have the power and the money...we only have individual efforts...the individualism of the person is what makes a difference....that’s the personal motivation....like for me at work, I always feel like I’m on my toes...I’m active because I need to be...I do this for my case [Palestinian cause]...24/7 its part of my everyday life...that’s the circle of life...I do this for myself, family and country simultaneously...doing for my family....doing for charity...multitasking really motivates me....that circle gives me a sense of meaning and purpose at work...I don’t take the glory for myself...not just for my company, but for my society and for my country...this way you end up achieving more”

This account from Zaina’s narrative highlights some very interesting observations. Zaina highlights the importance of individual effort even in tackling issues that are important to her, such as fighting for the Palestinian cause. She states that it is a “part of her everyday life” and that she does not take the credit for herself, but for her community as well. This notion of

embedding her role in fighting for the Palestinian cause in every aspect of her life, including her work life, may suggest there is a connection between one's identity in and out of the workplace. It may also suggest that they feed on each other, and a sense of pride and achievement outside of work, may influence how an individual is driven and given a sense of purpose at work. But what makes work meaningful? Although the issue of meaning of work has been seen to impact various aspects of the individual in their work context, the issue is still vastly underexplored and under researched although there have been attempts to examine single dimensions that contribute to the meaning of work. Opportunities for comprehensive research, that includes both theoretical and methodological advances are still missed (Bailey and Madden, 2015). However, there were suggestions by Rosso et al (2010) that one path an individual may take to "find meaning at work" is through the contribution of service that is greater than the "self". Furthermore, they suggested that a "self connection" between the self and the work self may contribute to finding this meaning. Could this be the case for Zaina? Could her incorporation of her fight for her cause with her work role play a role in finding meaning at work?

When Nadine, a social worker, was asked about what brings meaning to her work, she replied:

"I find meaning in the progress of the people, knowing that people are safe. It is a great motivator, especially when you hear stories of war and hardship. I know how it feels. I know that level of trauma because my family has experienced it and I can cope a lot and provide more at work because of my roots"

Linking hardship of refugees and hardship of her own parents and community was quite interesting to see in Nadine recollection. It made me think, to what extent does an individual align the achievement at work with personal achievement? And can this affect the way in which meaning is found in the workplace? Nadine makes a connection between what gives her meaning at work to the trauma she has witnessed as a child and finds that her history and identity are deeply embedded in the way she understands meaningfulness of her work. Nadine also spoke of how her work is a cycle of self-learning and the more she deals with such issues at work, the more she is able to discover herself and this discover what gives her meaning at work.

Although some participants explicitly expressed an association between their displaced identities with their understanding of finding meaning at work, others perhaps demonstrated an implicit association in other parts of the narrative without making any direct associations. For example, Mazen, said:

"I value freedom. I moved to contracting [from an office job] for that. I can't go through that pressure cycle at work. I need that freedom. I felt a major connection with my work. Achievement is a major aspect in my work and it gives me a lot of drive and meaning. Initially I thought connectedness with my workmates was important but then I realized no one was putting the effort. The system here in Australia focuses on the individual effort...what keeps me going is the self of ability in myself"

Mazen alluded to the possible idea that hardship through displacement can have a dramatic influence on the construction of the self but in this particular segment when asked if his meaning at work was related to his displaced identity, he did not associate the two ideas. He did not also particularly negate the idea but focused more on other individual factors that give him drive and meaning at work. Perhaps in some individuals, their displaced identities are explicitly expressed and directly associated with their understanding of meaning and drive, and in others,



not. Similar to Mazen's views were also expressed in Mike's point of view on what gives him meaning and drive at work and whether that is related to his displaced identity. He said:

"The assumption is that there is meaning. But not with this job. Its not permanent. Its quite temporary. Nothing really gives me meaning at work. Its not meaning to my life goals. Just a financial vehicle. I just see it [my work] as a tool. I find challenge more motivating than meaning the challenging environment means more to me than meaning of work. I think meaning is important but important in my overall career but not in my current job. What I do now is more like testing for what I want. Im just trying out things and see where I fit best. Meaning is just one element."

But he did mention later on:

"I tend to find meaning from elsewhere since I don't really get that from my job. Since I didn't grow up in a democracy I didn't really know the value of contributing back to society. And since moving here, social activism has given me a lot of meaning. Something I believe in. I get a lot of meaning from there. And also, being a productive citizen. I love paying taxes. Makes me feel like a member of community giving me a sense of community and connectedness. That's something I really value. It's not just the fact that it [my work] is temporary but I really don't like the culture here. I value personal contribution, recognition, team work, challenge... these are very important to me. They drive who I choose to be. Even the people I relate to. The people I choose to hang out with in the pub afterwards."

When asked what kind of social activities outside of work contribute to his notion of meaning, he replied:

"Participating in things I'm convinced in like the Palestinian cause or Islamophobia. That energy gives me a lot of drive and purpose at work. It's not like I connect the two. I believe that the pursuit of happiness if the pursuit of meaning. They don't really compensate each other. When that happens, I just feel more in harmony and in sync at work"

There was an interesting response from Mazen and Mike. When asked what gives them meaning, drive and purpose at work, they both perhaps did not negate the association of being displaced but they both also did not show any association. Although on multiple occasions, Mazen did speak of hardship and displacement. In Mike's case, meaning at work was not only non-existent but also significant, and explicitly said that he searched outside work for meaning in social activities that are important to him and those he believes in. Previous research has shown that when meaningful work is available, it becomes more central to the individual's life and therefore becomes more important (Steger et al., 2012). Could this be the case with Mike? If he found meaningful work, would it illustrate a greater importance to him? Was the fact that he did not find this sense of meaningfulness a barrier? Mike also noted that being a member of community, a sense of connectedness, personal contribution, recognition, team work, challenge and a culture he connects with are far more important than "meaning". In addition, Mike also stated that this may not necessarily be because his work is temporary, but that he did not find these elements in his current work place.

It was interesting to explore how individuals find their sense of meaning at work, as an expression of spirituality, but there was another way in which individuals expressed their spirituality: through their connection to work.

### *Spiritual connection to work*

Some participants illustrated how spiritually connected they feel or have felt to their current or previous work and expressed this throughout the following parts of their narratives. When I asked what they meant by “spiritual connection”, they explained that it was a special connection they had with their job, particularly a connection with their identity.

Imad, 37, was born in Beirut but raised across the Arab world because his father was exiled for political involvement when Imad was a young child. He migrated to Australia about 3 years ago but spoke of his current business endeavor which is rooted in his family ties; a family agricultural business specializing in the harvest and distribution of dates sourced from Jericho, West Bank.

“It [the project] was a family business but we were forced to join with other well established families. We were frustrated. We were so connected to that project. I was really in favor of doing something as a family which we were never able to do. This job was a relief. I loved it. I loved seeing it become successful. It gave me a sense of passion and I felt a sense of connection to the farming aspect. A real spiritual connection. I was sad when we had to join other families. I wanted this to be our project. We had to join with other Palestinian businesses and they invested in various companies so it was just an extension to their other investments. But we started from zero. We watched it grow. They don’t care about it like we did. It was a family business in my own land. And now I’m working here to expand this business. It’s very close to my heart.”

In other parts of his narrative, he spoke about his other work experiences in Palestine where he felt a great deal of disconnection.

“I worked as a customer service supervisor in Palestine when I returned from Cyprus where I was studying. It was really disappointing going back to see the situation there. I would’ve liked it more in my imagination. Life is very hard in Palestine because of the occupation – in every single aspect. In Palestine, you can’t really separate work and life. They’re embedded in each other. There was really no work life. There was no professional life which is hard. It’s different than anything I’ve ever experienced. I didn’t feel any drive. Nobody had sophisticated goals. I could fit in but I didn’t enjoy it. That was very difficult.”

Imad’s accounts both highlight some very interesting views. Through close reading of these excerpts and a holistic interpretation of Imad’s narrative, I can see the difference in his language and expressions when comparing a repetitive desk job with a family business. While both of his experiences took place under the Israeli occupation, there was a difference in the way he portrayed both experiences. The family business was seen as a “relief”, a project that gave him “a spiritual connection”, and one that he “loved”. Although both experiences are in the past, he is still continuing and expanding his family business to Australia. That sense of connectedness to the family business is still present. Could a family business revive a missing sense of spirituality for an individual? Could Imad’s narrative highlight the difference he sees between

a non-spiritual environment to a spiritual one? And on a larger scale, could family business assist those living under tough conditions such as the occupation? Would it serve to give them a sense of meaning, a sense of purpose and drive?

### *Source of spirituality*

Mary, a visual artist, credited her spirituality in her work to God but also alluded to her identity in the following segment:

“I think the work in my art really gives me a sense of purpose and meaning and I do contribute a lot for free, with no pay. I like being independent and especially being an artist, I need that freedom. Having my own time is something I really value. You know I found myself in art. It is where I am able to express myself and express my identity. For example, if I had stayed in the administrative job, how would that have helped me express myself and explain myself? That ability to reflect on myself is something that is very important to me. I can’t find meaning, purpose or creativity in repetitive work....money is not enough for me....if I was not Palestinian, maybe that wouldn’t happen...if I had my own country it would have been different...I did express my oath to this country....and I feel a moral obligation to give back...I have faith in the need for community involvement...life is really short and everyone has to do their part....my spirituality to God is highly reflected back...I don’t know they call it “artist visionaries” ...I don’t know if there is a connection I don’t know....I’ve had many connections as a child and that is something I really use as a drive in my work....and I do look for God for guidance in my work...”

Mary spoke earlier in her narratives about her experience in administrative work, but always felt disconnected and was not in a position to fully express her identity or spirituality. She found this in her art and credits her source of spirituality to God, and her identity to her Palestinian identity. Through her narrative, I can get the sense that there is much more than monetary and extrinsic rewards that contribute to this sense of purpose and drive, but it deeply embedded in her need to express her identity. I examined her art work, and it is thematically consistent with migration, identity, religious spirituality (particularly Christianity), feminism, liberation, peace and a sense of belonging. Examples of her art work can be found in the appendix.

There was one other participant who alluded to a source of spirituality, but deviated from it being from a religious source.

Rosemary, explained:

“I do have a strong sense of spirituality in my work and I do have faith. But I don’t gather my faith or spirituality from religion. I don’t separate my spirituality from my work. I think it comes from my values.”

She mentioned earlier:

“Sometimes I feel we can’t really come as a full community at work because we each have our own rich backgrounds but I do feel it makes up who we are and that is reflected in our values”

Perhaps not all individuals source their spirituality from a religious source, but rather their values. And while these values that make us who we are cannot be collapsed into a simple description, particularly in a group context such as the workplace, it may contribute to our own individual complexities.

An individual’s sense of identity can often be a point of negotiation in the workplace. In increasingly diverse and complex organizational settings, some individuals are often placed in positions where they have to face the demands of their complex identities and the roles and relationships that they entail (Swan et al., 2009; Watson, 2008). In many cases it involves a process of understanding the tensions and interplay between every aspect of an individual’s constructed identity, and how these aspects are expressed or not, and what consequence they have in the workplace. Collins (2009) suggests that “the intersection of the social and the individual” is usually what contributes to the construction of an individual’s identity (Collins, 2009: p. 24). I argue that with the exploration of an individual’s complex social context, such as through the exploration of the displaced identities of Palestinians, we can examine socially constructed elements that *may* contribute making sense of their sense of work ethic and sense of spirituality in the workplace.

In the case of the expression of identity in the workplace, such as those highlighted above, we can perhaps view it as an *individual agency*. Some scholars argue that the active expression of one’s identity, or a constituent of one’s identity, may help individuals define themselves and that it can be a means of self-determination (Down and Revelry, 2009; Saayman & Crafford, 2011). Saayman and Crafford (2011) also argue that expression of an individual’s identity in the workplace may affect their motivation, drive, self-esteem and an individual’s concept of work (Saayman & Crafford, 2011). Could this be the case for the participants studied in this cohort? Could their expression of their identities give them a sense of empowerment and liberation, and make their work environments more meaningful? A sense of belonging was highlighted throughout the narratives, could that perhaps be facilitated through their ability to express their identities? Through our exploration of the understanding of work ethic and spiritualities according to the participants, can we then understand how they may not only be socially constructed but also how they may also play a role in identity construction as a whole? Can we really separate our identities at work with our holistic understanding of who we are?

The case of the narratives above may highlight some examples in which there is an intricate web of inter-related elements within the construction of an individual’s identity that may open doors for further explorations. It allows us to explore the memories, values and events of an individual and give us a rich insight into what not only constructs an individual’s identity, but rather how this manifests in their work domain behavior.

<b>Name*</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>	<b>Year of migration to Australia</b>	<b>Visited Palestine?</b>	<b>Route of Migration in Family History (1948 +) **</b>	<b>Forced/Elected Migration?</b>
<b>Maysa</b>	F	37	Senior HR Consultant	Beirut, Lebanon	1982	No	Akka (Israel) → Lebanon → Cyprus → Sydney (NSW)	Forced (refugee)
<b>Nadine</b>	F	37	Social Worker	Schwabisch Gamund, Germany	1982	No	Tiberias (Israel) → Lebanon → Germany → Caboolture (North QLD)	Forced (refugee)
<b>Hadi</b>	M	72	Freelance Journalist	Gaza, Palestinian Territories	1971	Yes	Yaffa (Israel) → Gaza (Palestinian Territories) → Syria → Soviet Union → Romania → Kuwait → Sydney (NSW)	Forced (refugee)
<b>Zaina</b>	F	53	Chief Operations and Delivery Officer (IT)	Kuwait City, Kuwait	1992	Yes	Nablus (Palestinian Territories) → Kuwait → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)
<b>Fadwa</b>	F	37	Occupational Therapist	Beirut, Lebanon	1983	No	Akka (Israel) → Lebanon → Sydney (NSW)	Forced (refugee)
<b>Mary</b>	F	65	Visual Artist	Gaza, Palestinian Territories	1976	No	Yaffa (Israel) → Gaza (Palestinian Territories) → Kuwait → Sydney (NSW)	Forced (refugee)
<b>Rosemary</b>	F	57	Internship Director	Birziet, Palestinian Territories	1975	Yes	Al Ramle (Israel) → Ramallah (Palestinian Territories) → Sydney (NSW)	Forced (refugee)
<b>Yasin</b>	M	55	Mechanical Engineer/Construction Manager	Kuwait City, Kuwait	1995	Yes	Jenin (Palestinian Territories) → Kuwait → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)

<b>Rabih</b>	M	38	Financial Consultant	Kuwait City, Kuwait	2013	No	Nablus (Palestinian Territories) → Kuwait → Jordan → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)
<b>Amir</b>	M	21	Software Engineering Research Assistant	Sydney, Australia	1994	No	Tulkarem (Palestinian Territories) → Kuwait → Jordan → Sydney (NSW) → UAE → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)
<b>Mike</b>	M	31	Software Engineer	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	2013	No	Nablus (Palestinian Territories) → Jordan → Saudi Arabia → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)
<b>Imad</b>	M	37	Private Food Business Owner	Beirut, Lebanon	2011	Yes	Jericho (Palestinian Territories) → Lebanon → Jordan → Iraq → Tunisia → Jericho (Palestinian territories) → Sydney (NSW)	Forced (political asylum)
<b>Mazen</b>	M	53	IT Consultant	Kuwait City, Kuwait	1993	Yes	Jenin (Palestinian Territories) → Kuwait → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)
<b>Isam</b>	M	57	Civil Engineer/Project Manager	Amman, Jordan	1998	Yes	Jerusalem (Palestinian Territories) → Jordan → Saudi Arabia → Sydney (NSW)	Elected (labor migration)

**Table 1: Participant's Profile**

\*Pseudonyms have been used to conceal the identity of the participants.

\*\* the above table highlights the migratory patterns of the participants and their immediate families around the onset of the Nakba. The division of the cities above, i.e. under “Israeli” or “Palestinian” territories represent the status *after* the declaration of the State of Israel. Please refer to the figure titled “Palestinian progressive loss of land” for an understanding of the territorial representations *before* and *after* the Nakba (p. 8).

## Participant's Migration Patterns

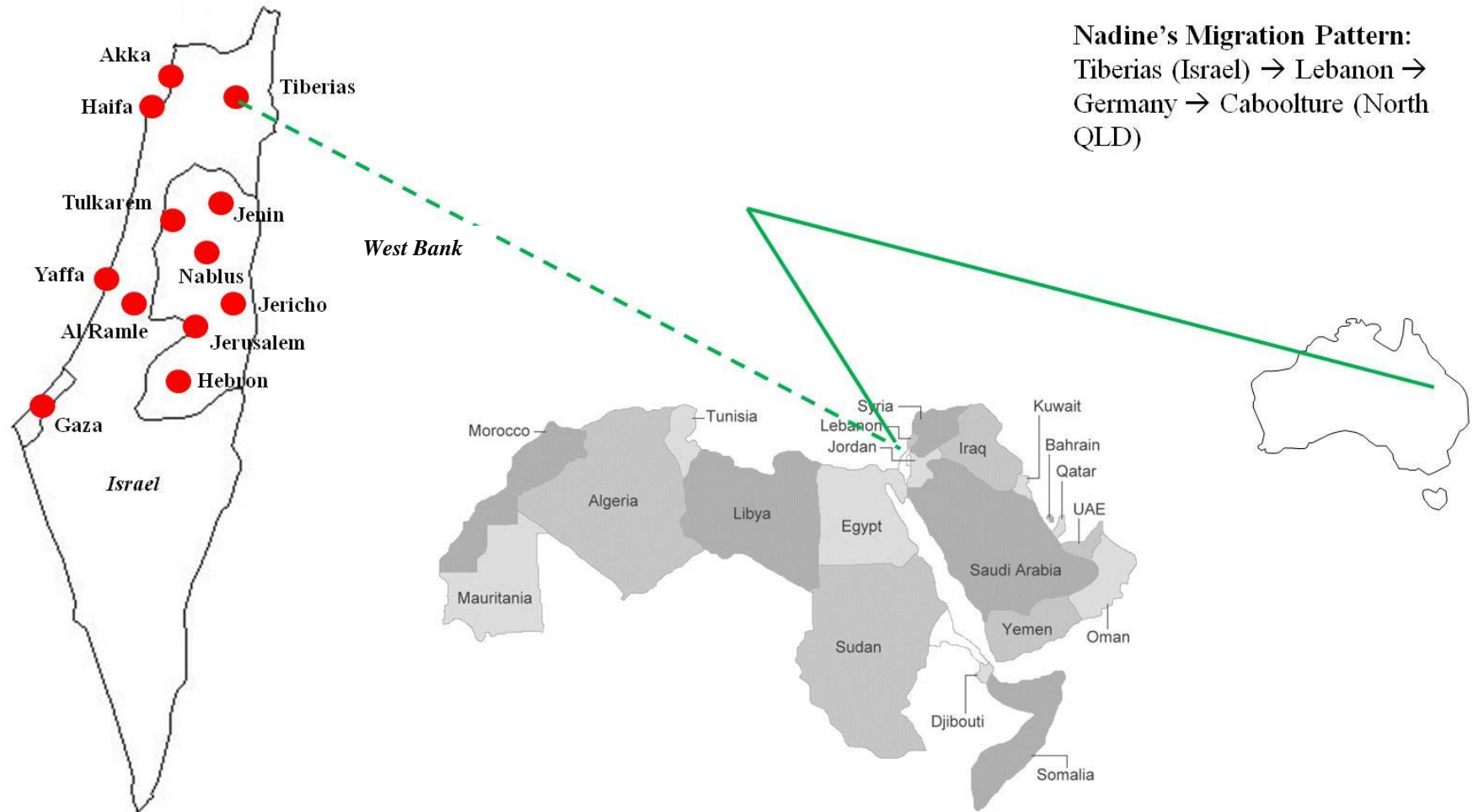
Figure 2: Maysa's Migration Pattern



Please note:

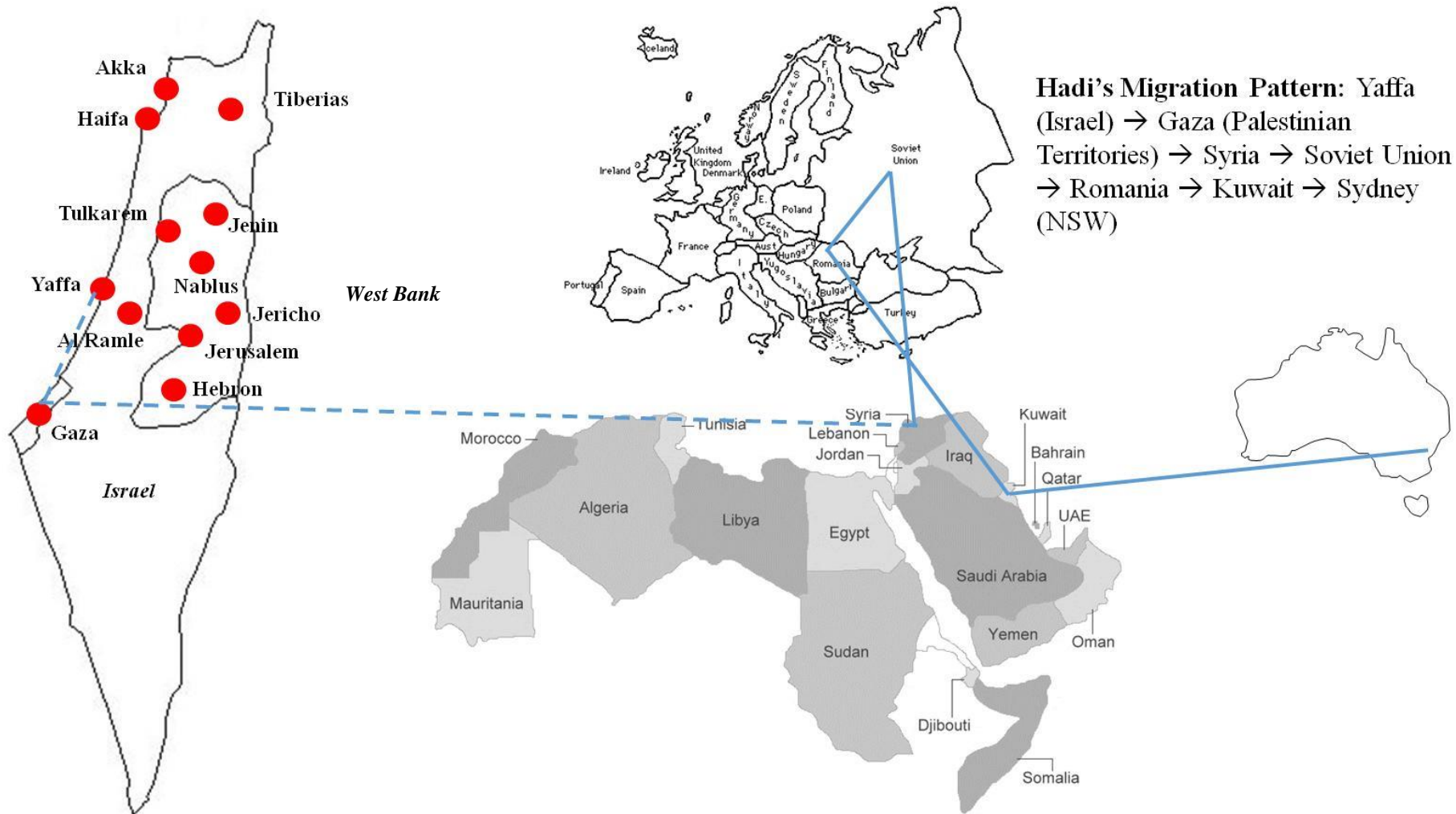
1. The political boundaries in this map represent the political status at the onset of the Nakba (1948) – for example, The Soviet Union.
2. The dotted line(s) represent the initial displacement from the Palestinian Territories/Israel. This may include an *internal displacement* to another town/city with the Palestinian Territories/Israel.

**Figure 3: Nadine's Migration Pattern**

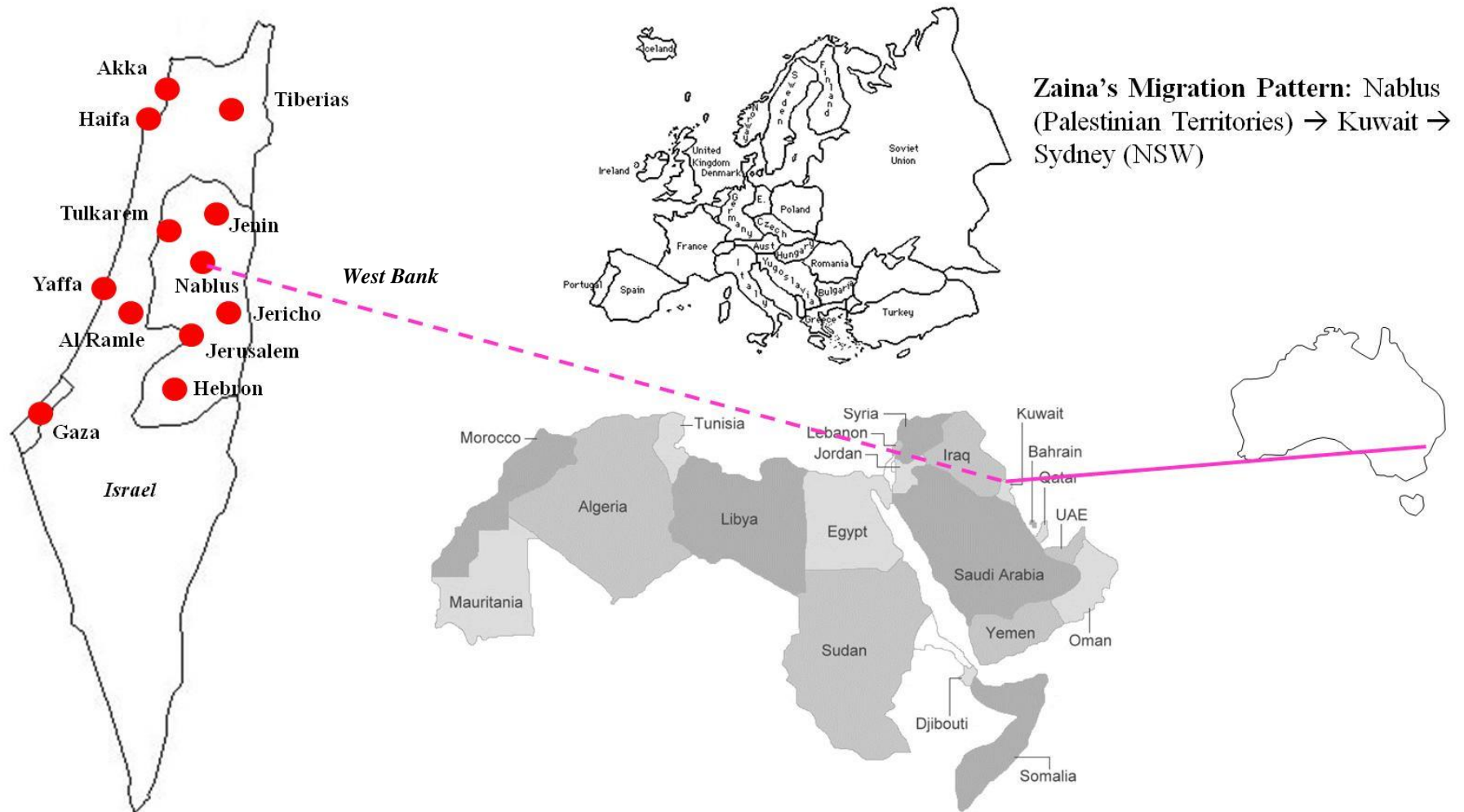




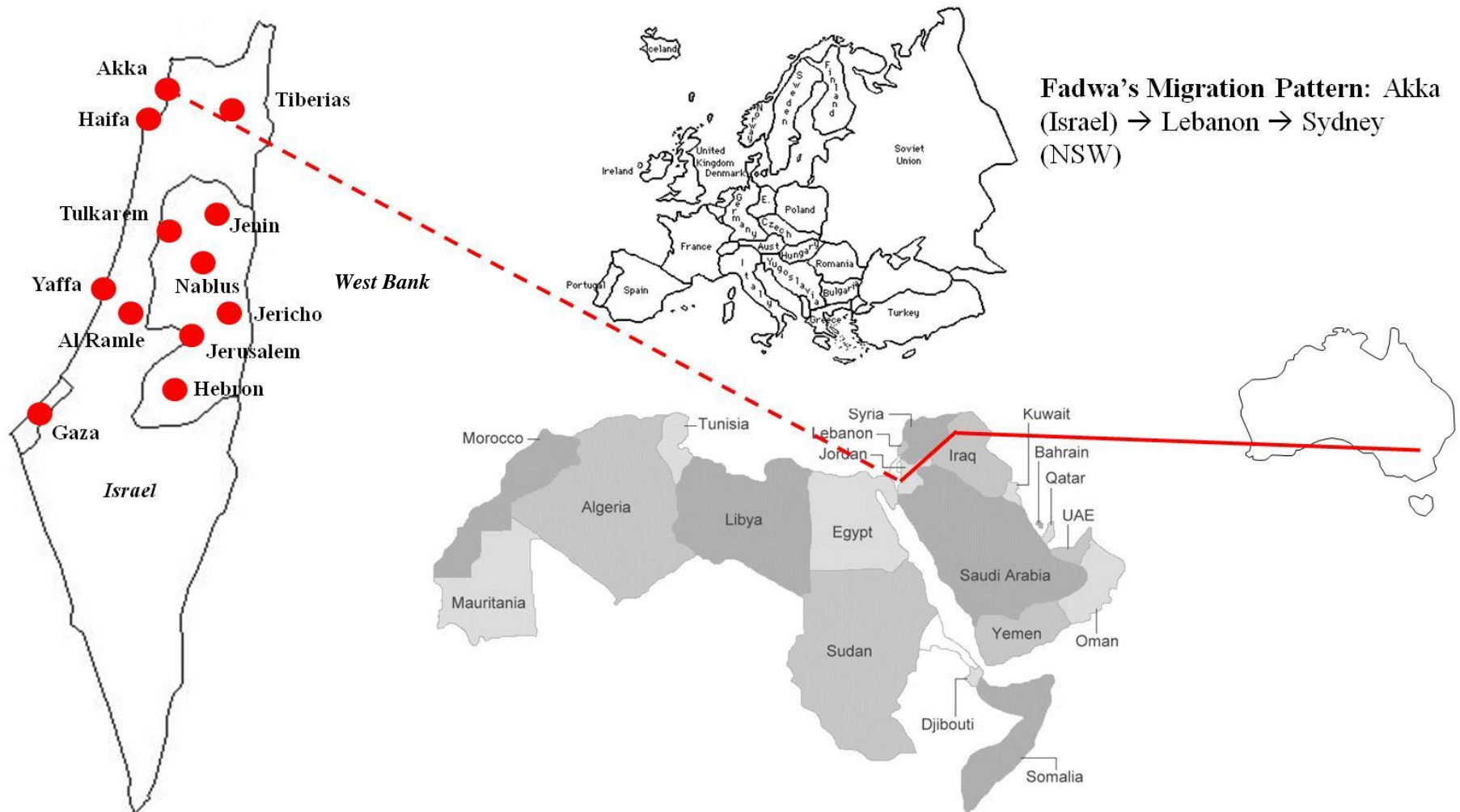
**Figure 4: Hadi's Migration Pattern**



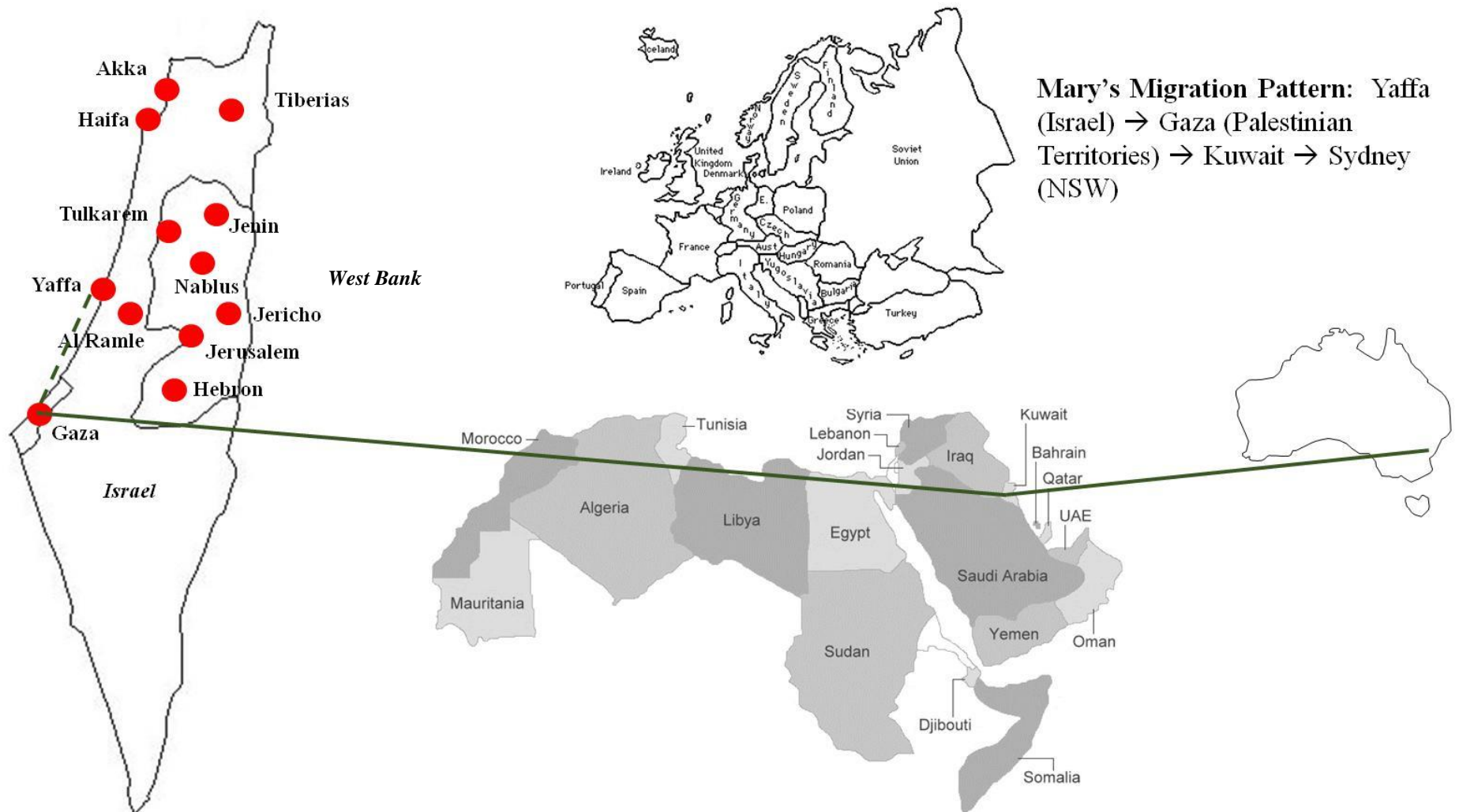
**Figure 5: Zaina's Migration Pattern**



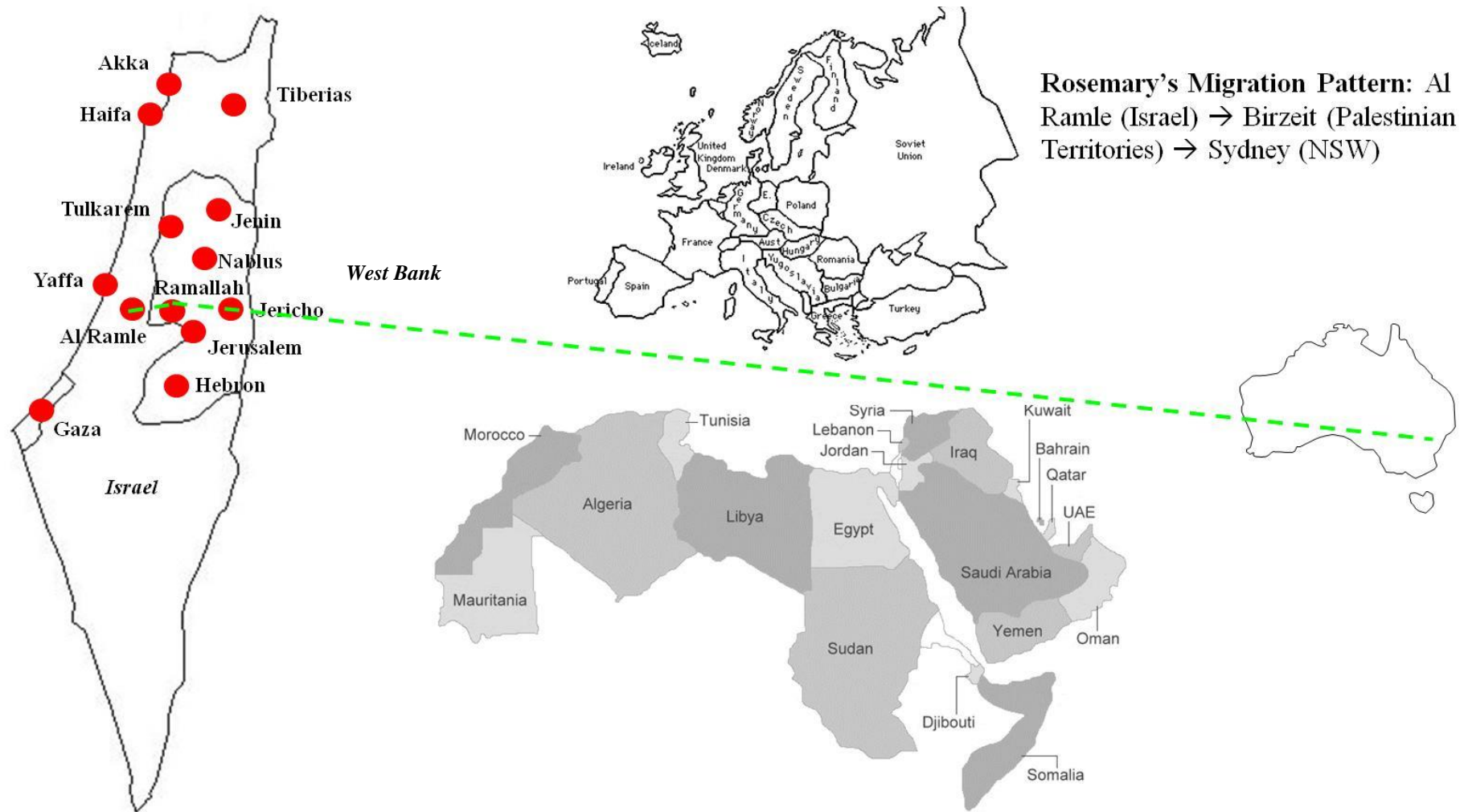
**Figure 6: Fadwa's Migration Pattern**



**Figure 7: Mary's Migration Pattern**

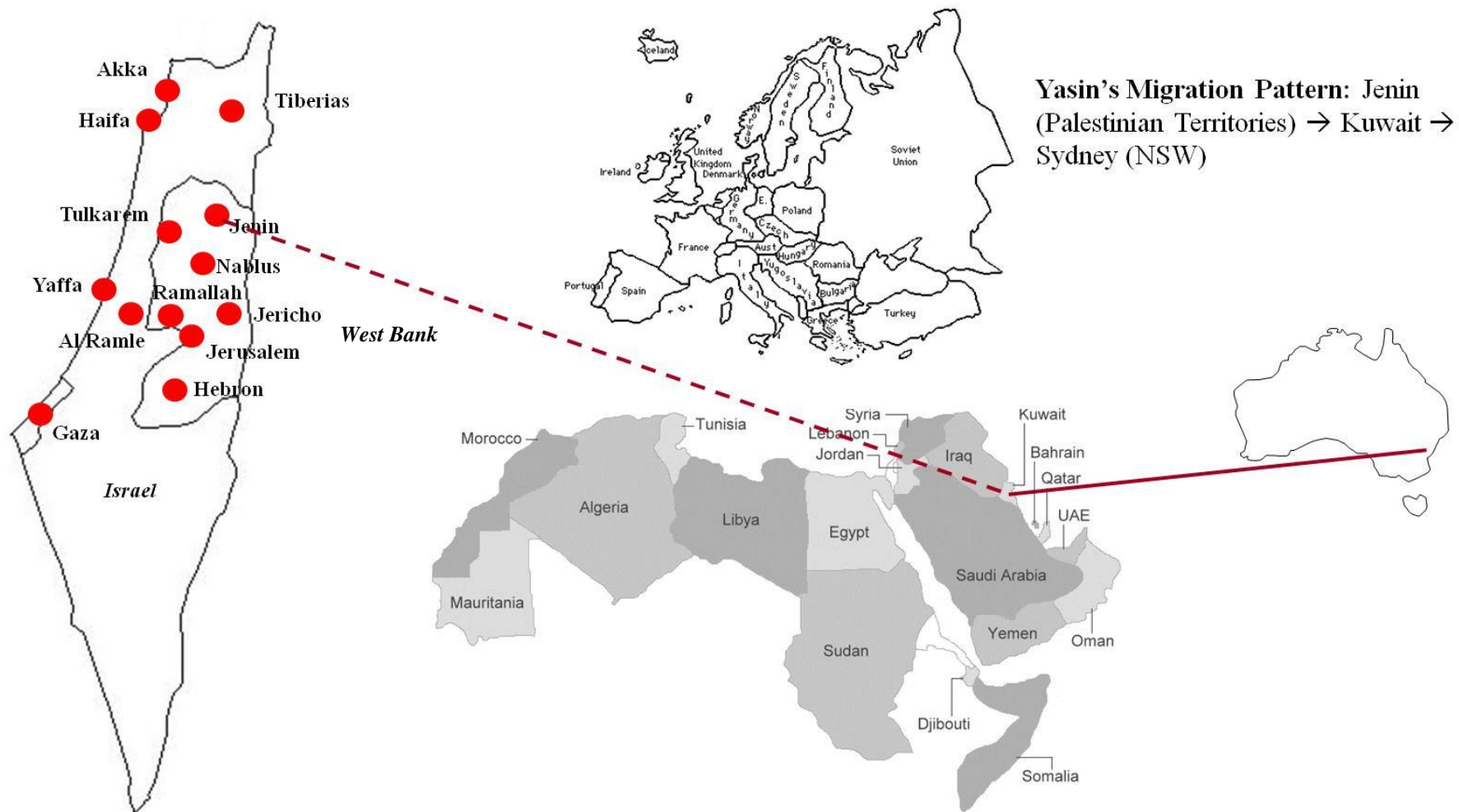


**Figure 8: Rosemary's Migration Pattern**

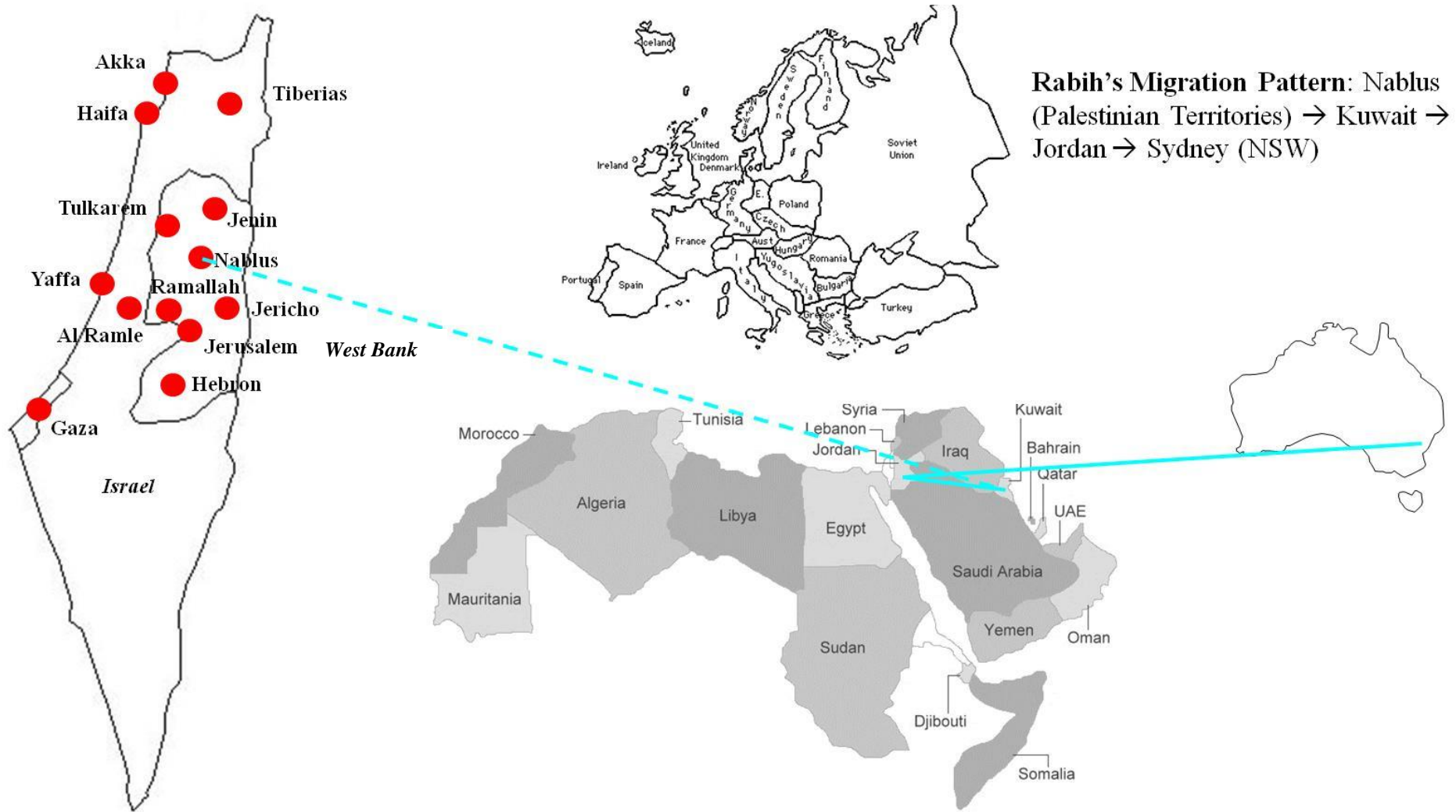




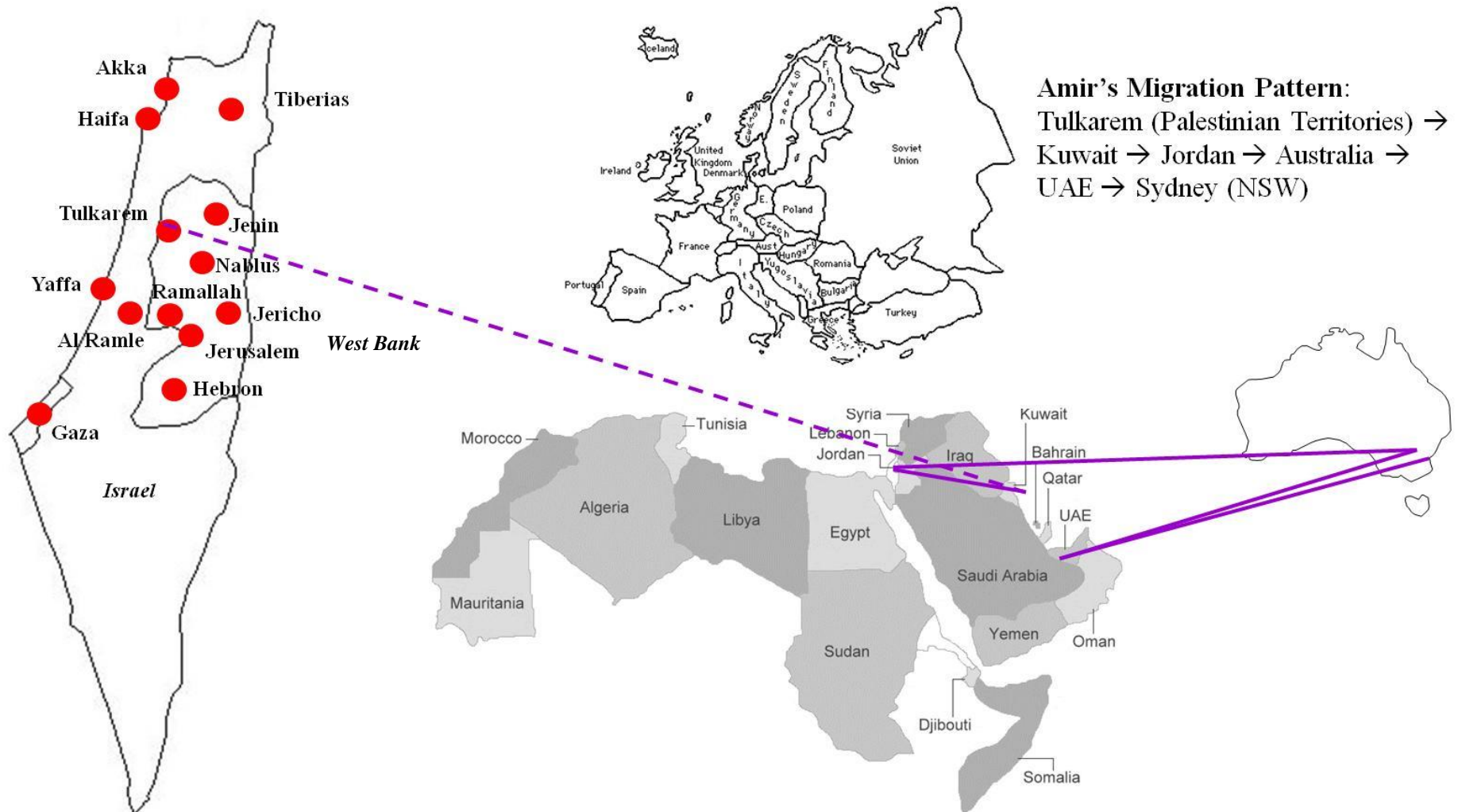
**Figure 9: Yasin's Migration Pattern**



**Figure 10: Rabih's Migration Pattern**

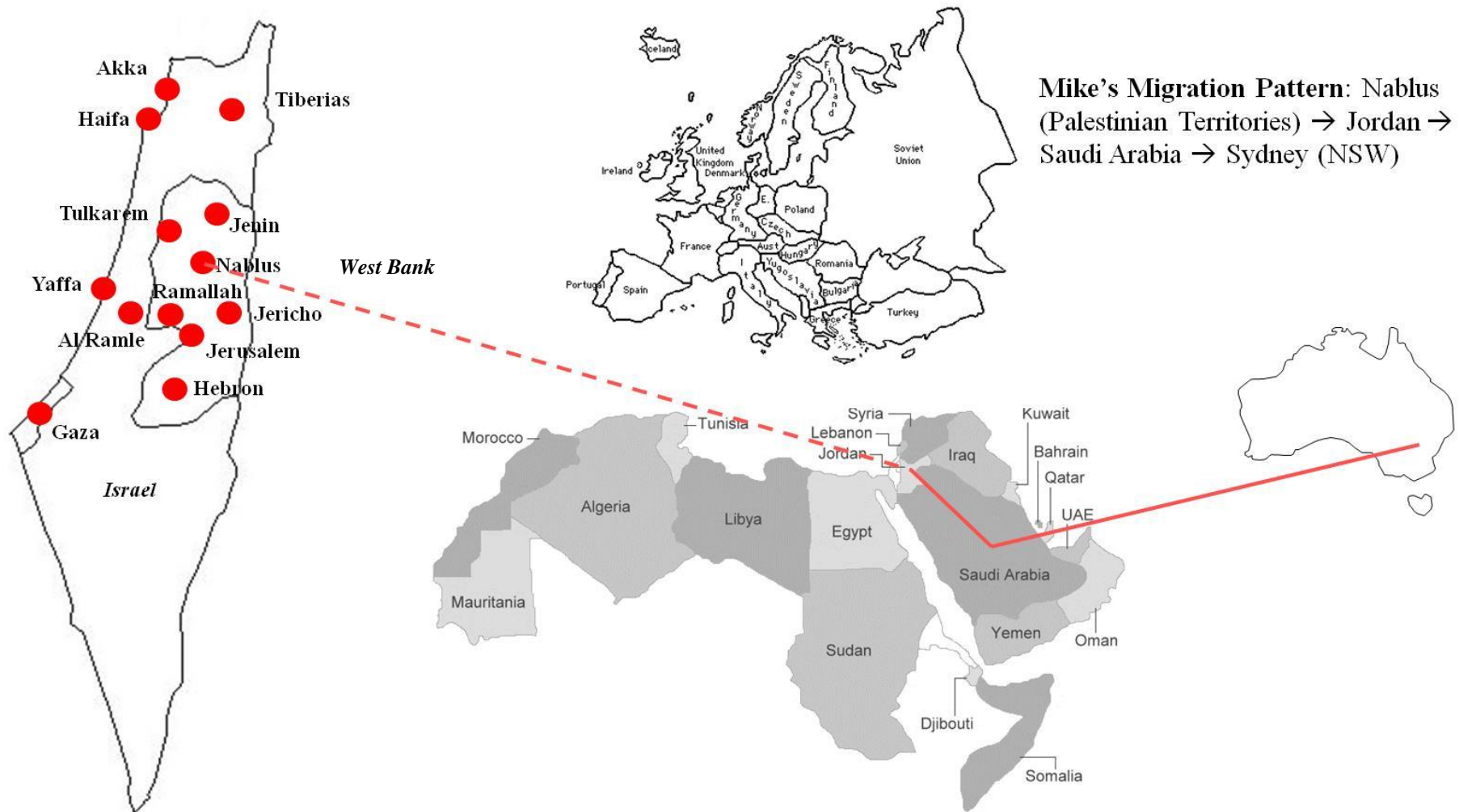


**Figure 11: Amir's Migration Pattern**

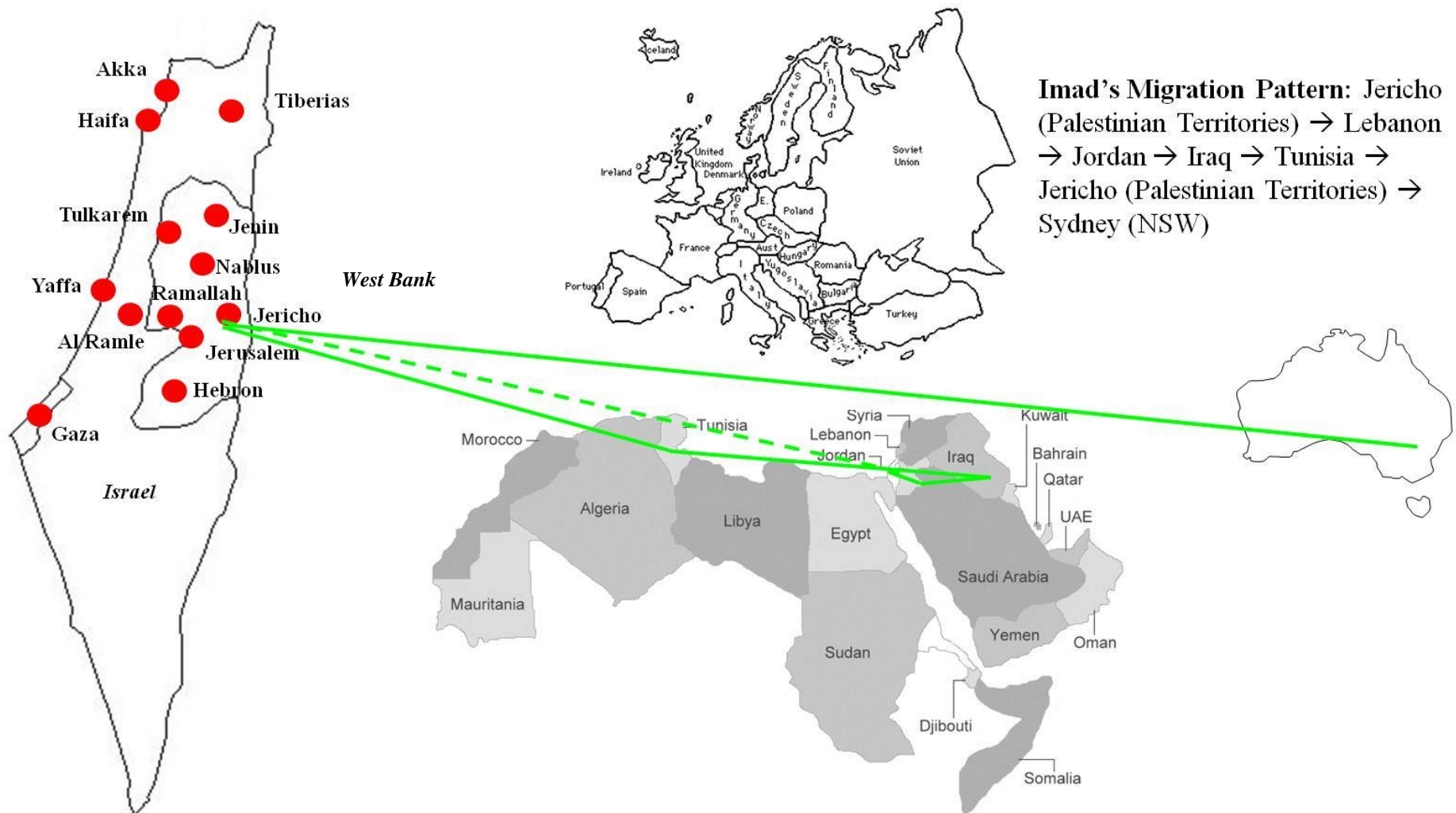




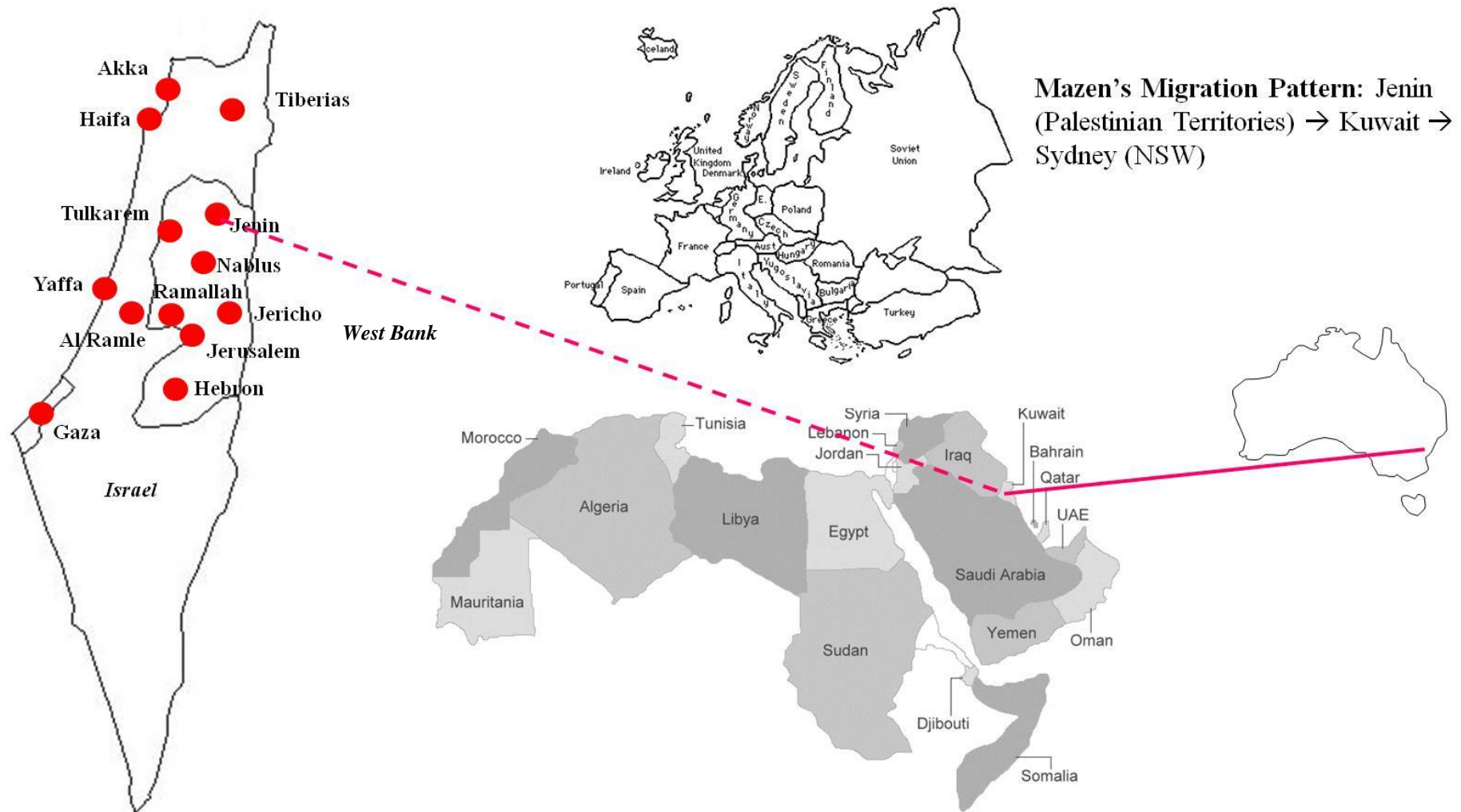
**Figure 12: Mike's Migration Pattern**



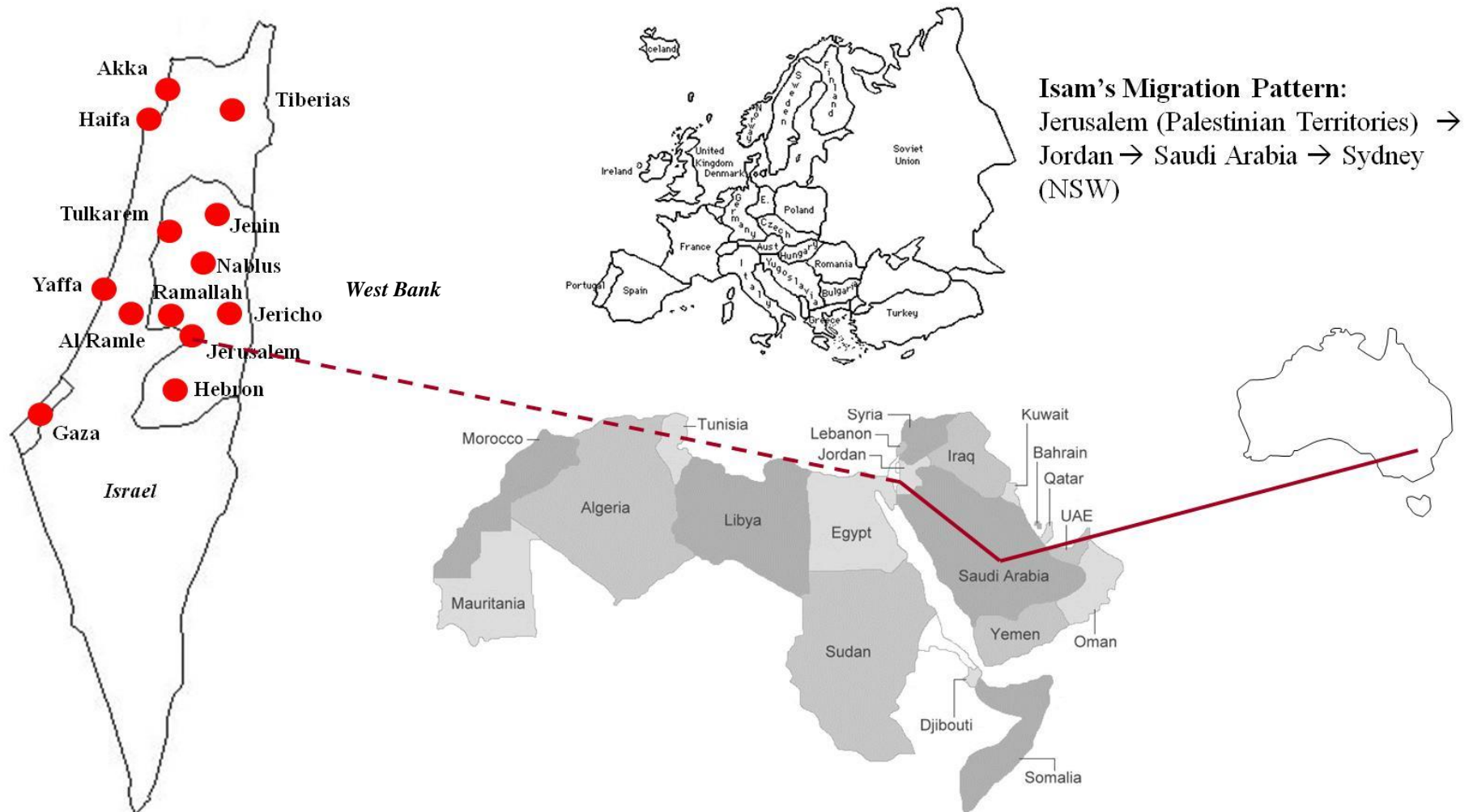
**Figure 13: Imad's Migration Pattern**



**Figure 14: Mazen's Migration Pattern**



**Figure 15: Isam's Migration Pattern**



# *Discussion*

*“Man is the Storytelling Animal, and that in stories are his identity, his meaning, and his lifeblood.”*

Salman Rushdie

Luka and the Fire of Life (2010)

This chapter will firstly provide an overview of the findings that emerged from this study. Secondly, this will be followed by an analysis of the significance of these findings in relation to the existing literature. Thirdly, future directions of this study will be discussed along with concluding remarks.

Several scholars have argued that narratives play a crucial role in not only making a point about the narrator themselves (Linde, 1993) but also that they are expressive in nature and often comprise what we make of identity (e.g. Bruner, 1990; McAdams, 1996). Not only are narratives crucial in their ability to express deeper issues relating to the narrator, they also point to the importance of engaging with stories that are often seen as foundational to human development (McLean, 2007).

Throughout the past two decades, we have started to come to a realization that the “stories” humans tell deserve much more attention than they previously received. Some may refer to this as the “narrative turn”, in which views that narratives may be “ambiguous, particularistic, idiosyncratic and [and offer an] imprecise way of representing the world” (Ewick and Silbey 1995:198) have been questioned. Such disputes often made scholars question the manner in which they conduct their research, and perhaps allowed them to explore various ways of examining concepts and phenomena (Loseke, 2007). The field of social science and in particular organizational studies has recently experienced this shift as well. In organizational studies, there began an understanding that stories, narratives and myths centralized in methodologies were not only overlooked but were valuable, and placed the researchers themselves as *storytellers* (Brown and Rhodes, 2005).

I propose through this study, that narratives should be integrated as a valuable and crucial element of the study of individuals in organizational studies. In particular, studying the construction of identity of an individual from a social constructivist approach may not only open doors for further exploration but add interesting dimensions to the construction of identity and relevant topics.

The aim of this study was to explore how Palestinian-Australians narrate and make sense of their identities in relation to their spirituality and work ethic. Throughout the exploration of their narratives, I started to make sense of their narratives, and how they relate their identities, spiritualities and work ethic. Through this process, I came to a few important findings. But before, discussing these findings, I wish to reiterate that the aim of this study was never to draw conclusions or generalizations from these narratives as the cohort presented were not representative of Palestinian-Australians, nor Palestinians in general.

## ***Interpretation of findings***

### ***Processes of identity***

Through the exploration of the participants’ narratives, it was quite clear that displacement played an important role in the construction of their identities. Most of the participants placed a heavy value on the role of displacement and the role of their Palestinian identities as a constitute of their whole self-identity. Throughout their narratives, I began to observe processes that were surfaced in relation to the individual’s construction of their identity, and they included *forced vs. elected migration, lack of the sense of belonging, hidden vs. visible identities, and racism and discrimination*. As per my interpretation, these constituted a large part of the construction of their narratives and were prevalent across the majority of the cohorts. I was able to observe a difference between the manner in which individuals constructed their identities through the way they described their pattern of migration from Palestine, and the consequence

this had on their lives. Although all participants experienced displacement from their home country, there was a difference between the manner in which individuals from a refugee background spoke, in comparison to those who were not. For instance, issues such as “constant fear”, “tippy toeing” and “insecurity” were prevalent across those who identified as refugees, whereas, those who did not, had a lesser feeling of insecurity and pointed to their statuses as offering a “safety net”. While this is not conclusive in nature, I propose that the manner in which individuals identify themselves, in relation to refugee status, may have affected their sense of understanding of themselves in relation to the external world. How an individual understands their sense of place in relation to their socio-cultural context can play an important role in the meanings they ascribe to this experience. In line with the theories of social constructivism, Stokowski (2008, p. 44) argued that “places are actively created in social interaction, and people come to have senses of place and share meanings about place through symbolic communication”. This may suggest why some participants ascribed different meanings through their narratives in relation to their migratory patterns, the place they resided in and the implication of that on their sense of place and in turn their sense of self. In line with the theoretical suggestions of Alfred Schultz, in which he emphasizes the importance of the social world and the key social players in an individual’s life, and how that influences their construction of their reality (Schultz, 2012). This may highlight our phenomenological understanding of the world we exist in and that cultural inter-subjectivity may shape the way we perceive our one realities. In the context of this study, could such inter-subjectivities have played a role in how the participants perceived their realities in relation to others?

The lack of sense of belonging was also an aspect that was found through the exploration of their sense of identity. However, what was interesting is that some participants understood “belonging” in terms of belonging to their current environment, while other participants understood it as belonging to physical notion of Palestine. This presented an interesting finding that belonging may mean different things for different people, and that some participants place importance on the “tangible” sense of belonging. The major features of belonging in this specific cohort were related to the ideas of *being/feeling different*, *feelings of rejection*, *being a “citizen of nowhere”*, *feeling like a foreigner* and *“actual vs passed down experience”*. While the majority of participants placed heavy emphasis on their ability to fit in in their current or previous environments, some participants placed emphasis on how an unexperienced event such as the Nakba did not play an important role in their life, and such influenced their sense (or lack) of belonging to Palestine. This was particularly important as it highlighted the extent to which displacement through the catastrophe of the Nakba was embodied or not embodied in the individuals’ construction of identity. Some studies have investigated sense of *national identification* amongst immigrant communities in the US, Britain or the Netherlands, and suggested that there needs to be an exploration into the differences depending on the country of origin (e.g.: de Vroome et al., 2014).

Some of the participants were not only vocal about their identities, but also expressed that they openly express their sense of identity whether in their personal or work lives. There was an interesting justification amongst the participants in regards to whether they openly express their identities or not, and it pointed to the notion whether the *embodiment of displacement* is necessarily expressed. Can some individuals embody certain experiences that greatly influence how they make sense of themselves without necessarily expressing it performatively? If so, what effect does this have on them in their personal lives and more importantly, in their work lives? Can this “performance of identity” vary between an individual’s personal and work life? Some individuals choose to hide or expose parts of their identities, in particular in relation to their displacement, in their work lives, but still admit that it plays a crucial part of who they are.



This is echoed with the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962), in which the idea of “embodiment” is highlighted not only through the experience of the body, but through awareness of the specific social context. What subsequently follows is that experience is spread to the social world and that perception of who an individual is exceeds the physical being (Smith et al., 2009). This is important to understand in terms of how certain environments can provide an opportunity for individuals to express or suppress themselves, and whether a “dominant” culture prevails that often leads to the negation of other individual identity expression (Sharma, 2006).

Many of the participants spoke of *racism and discrimination*, that I believe characterized their conception of their own identities, which was evident across various parts of their narratives. Interestingly, some participants were very general in their explanation of being discriminated against, such as migrant discrimination, while others spoke specifically of how these discriminatory remarks were related to their Palestinian identity. This may suggest that while racism and discrimination were prevalent amongst the majority of the narratives, the context of these experiences may converge and diverge amongst the cohort.

## *Childhood Values*

One of the most the most interesting aspects of the narratives of this cohort was the discussion on childhood values that were instilled during their upbringing. There was an overwhelming mention of the *value of education* amongst the participants. Education, for the most part was referred to as a “weapon”, and as tool for success no matter where they were scattered. “Weapon”, throughout the narratives, was used as a metaphor that is so deeply ingrained in their childhoods in line with the Palestinian master narrative, to counteract the idea that Palestinians are not only “stateless”, but also lack any kind of a formal military. In this case, education is often seen as a tool for self-defense in the face of an insecurity a Palestinian may face in displacement.

One overwhelmingly prevalent theme that was also observed during the discussion on childhood values was the “*notion of hard work*”. Many of the participants discussed heavy parental and societal involvement in instilling the value of hard work at a very young age. In many cases across the narratives, hard work was often linked to *insecurity, doom, compensation, loss, and productivity*. In the majority of cases, hard work was not only displayed through performance by the parents, but also played a huge role in their day to day conversations. In a few cases, there were examples of how hard work is exemplified by the Palestinian farmer’s connection to the land, which is often romanticized in Palestinian literature and Palestinian discourse in general. It was also fascinating to note that there was a great masculine influence on their understanding and appreciation of work ethic, in which the majority of participants referred to their grandfathers, fathers and brothers as a source of inspiration. This could perhaps open doors for the role females play in constructing and passing down work ethic in future research.

## *Who am I at work?*

### *Expression of identity*

Towards the end of the conversation, I asked the participants to explain to “who they are at work”, and to elaborate on whether being displaced played a role in their identity in the work place. I also asked if their work and non-work identities were separated or were inseparable. There was an *overwhelming* response from the participants that demonstrated that their Palestinian identities through displacement due to the Nakba were indeed embedded in their work and non-work identities. However, there were some points where the participants



converged and diverged. All participants converged on the notion that their displaced identities constituted a part of their work and non-work identities, however, the *degree* and *visibility* of these identities is where they diverged. For instance, the majority of participants openly expressed their identities in their work place, while some chose to conceal it but nonetheless admitted that it still plays a role in the construction of who they are. A few participants stated that their displaced identities did not play a role in their work identities and therefore did not directly influence their work behavior. Some participants verbally expressed their identities and felt a great sense of belonging, appreciation and connectedness to their work place. Others felt they were obliged to inform their work colleagues of their displaced identities and felt a great sense of empowerment through this. Some participants believed that their displaced identities were embodied in their behavior at work in which it gave them the capability to comprehend and act upon issues such as *injustice*, *bullying* and *violence*, that they *paralleled* with their own community's struggles.

### ***Work ethic embedded in displaced identity***

The majority of participants demonstrated a connection between their displaced identities and their work ethic. *Hard work* was at the center of their understanding of work ethic, and there was continuous referencing to the values that were instilled in their childhoods in relation to their work ethic. There were some aspects of their work ethic that are worth mentioning. Firstly, work ethic was heavily guided by discursive discourse that was specifically associated with the Palestinian struggle. Such examples include “we struggled a lot to regain our dignity...”, “Palestinians have channeled their hard work...”, and “we have to work extra hard to belong because of our lack of the sense of belonging...”. Secondly, work ethic was often understood as a “performance” that was dictated by their societies and that individuals had great expectations to live up to in line with their master narrative. Such examples include “*Palestinians live by the motto of working hard. I think it's because of the lack of security we had as Palestinians*”, “*I always like to keep the image that Palestinians are hardworking, responsible and love their work*”, and “*I think there's a message I want to always deliver particularly in my work*”. These expectations may sometimes manifest in the way individuals put effort to establish, maintain or challenge their identities which sometimes involves tactics and strategies referred to as *identity work*. Recent literature has argued that individuals use their societal discourses to guide them in how they should think, act, present and position themselves (e.g. Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Linstead and Thomas, 2002). When Palestinians, such as in this study narrate “I like to keep the image that Palestinians are hardworking”, this could possibly suggest that they view themselves as distinctive and valuable (Essers & Benshop, 2007). In the case of this cohort, could a “Lyotardian” expectation of identity work be relevant? Lyotard (1979) suggests that individuals often need to act in a particular way to live up to certain expectations, in a way that is often “performed” within their context.

### ***Spirituality in the workplace***

Spirituality in the workplace was particularly difficult to understand for some participants. While we do not have a consensus on a clear definition of what spirituality is, I gave the participants an understanding based on several dimensions discussed in the literature while keeping in mind that spirituality means different things for different people (Marques et al., 2005). Some dimensions included but were not limited to “meaningful work” (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000), “inner life” (Gupta et al., 2014), “sense of community” (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003), “sense of purpose”, “sense of direction”, “sense of meaning”, “feelings of understanding and support”, “inner wholeness” and “connectedness” (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Smith and Rayment, 2007). The majority of these dimensions were highlighted in

scattered parts of their narratives, however the majority of the participants discussed spirituality in relation to “finding meaning and drive at work”, “spiritual connection to work”, and as a “source”. The participants were also asked whether their understanding of spirituality in the workplace is in any way related to their sense of displacement. There were some points where the participants diverged and converged. For instance, in terms of finding meaning and drive at work, the majority of participants embedded their sense of displacement and their displaced identities in their narratives. Some participants said that being active in their communities affected their ability to find meaning and drive at work in a cyclic manner, in which all aspects of their life were seen as one cycle in which all factors feed into this cycle. Other participants derived meaning and drive from witnessing the progress of their clients which was often paralleled with their own displacement struggles. Some participants did not find meaning or drive in their workplace and often sought

to find this externally through their involvement in social activism in relation to Palestinian struggle. While the majority of the participants related their quest to find meaning and drive in the work place to their displacement, one participant did not make any connection at all, and focused more on their individual abilities. This may suggest that in some aspects of their work place behavior, some are in line with the master narrative while others tend to deviate from it.

One participant discussed that they have or had a spiritual connection to their work/work place. This was highlighted in some parts of their narratives as being spiritually connected to a family project. The spiritual connection to a family project was compared to feeling disconnected and de-motivated in their previous administrative job, which could possibly allude to the idea that being involved in a family project may increase the sense of spirituality in the work place.

It was interesting to note that the majority of participants did not highlight that they source their spirituality from religion or “God” with the exception of one participant that embedded their Christian spirituality in their work spirituality.

## ***Significance and Implications of findings***

### ***Why a social constructivist view?***

Although the study was contextualized among a cohort that identified as Palestinian-Australian, I believe, it nonetheless, allowed for the surfacing of concepts, ideas, questions and nuances that deserve attention. The study demonstrated that the Nakba was *more* than just a *historical event*, but rather extended to their *present* and *manifested* in their day to day lives.

Social constructivism encourages individuals to challenge the universalist, essentialist, positivist and realist views of the reality and the world around us. It also encourages to take an epistemological and phenomenological stance that steers away from the notion that conventional knowledge is unbiased and is unilateral. There is an appreciation for the *cultural* and *social specificity* not only characterizes social constructivism, but also differentiates it from other philosophical directions. What we observe in particular socio-political-cultural settings may not only be relative, but also are not fixed and are subject to the particular social and economic settings of that specific time (Burr, 2003). Adler (1997) highlighted that through social constructivism, we are able to illustrate the role collective understandings play and that they are often taken for granted when knowledge is “diffused” and “consolidated”.

According to my interpretation, this is crucial to understanding the identity construction of Palestinians, in particular, those who have been displaced in the wake of the diaspora. I believe

that the understanding of a particular contested culture that is deeply rooted in conflict and political power, offers a different reality of intersubjective knowledge. Palestinians create and construct their own version of their reality based on the social, political and cultural experiences they have been through, which in turn manifests in the daily interactions of over their course of life. The narratives of this study demonstrated to us salient points that are in line with the social constructivist view. Firstly, the Nakba created a cultural and social specificity for Palestinians, that highlights that what we understand of the world is not fixed, but dynamic and evolving. It provided a temporal reference that shifted the way Palestinians “understood” their identity to include notions of loss, exile, dispossession, displacement, and diasporacity. Secondly, it situated Palestinians in their existential conflict in relation to the Other. Kelman (2005) highlighted that through his study of Palestinian and Israeli identity, the way an individual speaks of their identity influences the way they act on it, and that it depends on the conflict and subsequently, is shaped by the conflict. Thirdly, the discourse presented in a community of conflict is deeply engrained in the thoughts, actions and presentations of an individual and is laced with discursiveness. The three points re-iterate Adler’s notion that cross-cultural and cross-ethnic discrepancies across communities must be explored and analyzed for a comprehensive view of the “*conflict phenomena*” (Adler, 1997). I argue that through the understanding of this conflict phenomena, perhaps we can unravel its extension to a *social phenomenon* which can have a profound influence on the identity of individuals and subsequently, how that manifests in their work contexts.

### *The significance of narratives*

Since the start of this study, I have argued on the methodological importance of using narratives in the field of social sciences and in particular, in organizational studies. The reason being is that studying organizations is incomplete without the studying of their building blocks, the employees. And through the study of employees and their contribution to their organizations, we discover that their identities play a huge role in the constructions of who they are. Their work-identities reveal can reveal complexities that are far more than meets the eye. Several scholars have highlighted that identity in the workplace can reveal a whole range of complexities as individuals have different ways in which they identify in their work domain (Ashforth et al., 2008; Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

I argue that through the study of the narratives of this cohort, we can reveal complexities that can only be explored through the exploration of their narratives. Furthermore, they are capable of revealing and highlighting work related aspects such as work ethic and spirituality that are a part of a cohesive and integrated personal narrative. Through these narratives, I was able to make sense of their recollection of their personal story in the past, present and future, and attempt to “connect the dots” between their life events and their narrations.

The narratives highlighted that through the exploration of a specific social and cultural cohort, we may be able to unravel how events such as the Nakba and the consequences that followed played a role in shaping individual’s identity construction. In line with the *social identity theory*, the social category which an individual falls in, often defines how an individual visualizes their *self-concept*, in which the Nakba is seen as significant in the Palestinian social context. The Nakba was *embodied*, *personified* and *manifested* in their narrations and revealed that their displaced identities were not separate from their whole identities but rather embedded in a *convoluted*, *intertwined* nature. I argue that when exploring work identities, it is important to pay attention to what is known as “coactivation” in which more than one identity can contribute

to an individual's complex identity (Blader, 2007). This may include the activation of more than one aspect of an individual's identity such as their organizational, community and professional identities. Drawing on the work of Hobfoll (1989) and Callero (1994), exploring complex identities of individuals may contribute to an individual's ability to acting, creating structures and for political means. For instance, some of the participants used their stories of displacement to tackle workplace injustice, bullying, harassment and violence, while other participants (e.g. a social worker) used this for connecting to clients struggle with domestic violence, resettlement and belonging. Shin and Sanchez (2005), for instance, argue that complex work identities may increase an individual's psychological health and give them leverage to withstand adversity and hardship.

## *Connecting with the field of identity construction*

Exploring phenomena such as the Nakba can allow us to understand how socially constructed our realities are and how the interpretation of our social contexts can influence the way we make meaning of our realities and identities (Cunliffe, 2009; Hoskings, 2008; Pye, 2005). I believe, that through this study, many *new topics* emerged that are not only worth investigating, but led to the exploration of future potential research gaps.

Through the exploration of the narratives, I came across the concept of "resilience" which refers to a "dynamic process wherein individuals [that] displays positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma" (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000, p. 858). The inclusion of "resilience" in the study of "whole" self-identity of an individual is still underexplored as it explores the skills of an individual rather than integrating the personal and professional self (Hughes, 2011; Rankin, 2013). Could the manifestation of the Nakba bring about "resilience" in the construction of the self-concept of Palestinians? Although highly subjective in nature, perhaps we can extend the study of the construction of identity to the study of resilience of a community that suffered years of trauma, displacement and dispossession. Could this expand our understanding of the identities of those who are displaced? Lynn (2009) argues that the awareness of one's values, beliefs and experiences are not only important to one's self concept, but also who they present themselves to be professionally. Could this also translate to work ethic and spirituality as *implications* of resilience? Perhaps how an individual positions themselves in the *process of resilience*, particularly when socially constructed, allows for the surfacing of even more dimensions of the self. For instance, the Nakba was a traumatic experience not only for the generation that experienced it, but for the generations that followed. Some of the participants suggested that being exiled, in diaspora, or being a refugee for instance, gave them the purpose, drive and ambition to achieve higher, work harder and overcome hardship. This, in my opinion, is could allude to an example of resilience as a part of participant's narrative of their struggles with their identity and the embodiment of the Nakba.

Management studies have approached identity from various avenues, such as the *managerialist perspective* or the *interpretive perspective* (Alvesson et al., 2008). For the purpose of this study, we have argued in line with the interpretive approach that suggests that identities are dynamic and emerge according to temporality and space. However, from my study of the interpretive perspective on identity, there seems to be some gaps in the literature that can perhaps be linked to this study. Aygoren and Nordqvist (2015) suggest that there is a *lack of interpretive studies* on identity that illustrate the influence of social transformations on an individual's construction of identity. Could this be related to the influence of the social transformations of displacement? Perhaps the study of a displaced community, such as the Palestinians suggested in this study, may help explore this under researched perspective in management studies. Subsequently, this

could highlight how processes of identity are constructed in an individual which would then expand our understanding of the individual in the organizational setting.

One issue that emerged through this study was the “shattering of the myth of separate worlds” which was examined by Ramarajan and Reid (2013) which suggested that the parts of ourselves in work and outside of work may not be distinctly separate. They propose that there is a dual system of *pressures* and *preferences* that illustrate whether an individual includes their self-identity at work or excludes their self-identity. They also propose that the alignment of the pressures and preferences may influence how an individual shapes their experience with the setting of their organization. Could this be relevant to this current study? Since the embodiment of displacement was obvious and prevalent amongst the participants, can we really separate that from their “work” identity? Some scholars strongly argue against this notion (e.g. Ashcraft, 2012; Watson, 2009) and suggest that this may incur a cost in trying to understand a wide range of organizational and management issues. Is it time to break down these barriers? Perhaps, this way, we may make use of the individual’s construction of their identity and use it positively in the work context.

### ***Future Research***

This study argued that the socio-cultural-political context in which an individual exists in and the histories that accompany it, can have a profound influence on how an individual constructs their identity and how that ultimately influence other work related behaviors. I suggest that future research could possibly examine other similar narratives that may provide other salient socio-cultural-political implications. This may allow for the exploration of other dimensions of an individual in and out of work, and as suggested earlier, can debunk the myth the identities are separate. Research on the convoluted web of memories, events and histories of individuals could also highlight how some *traumas* and *adversities* may produce positive work outcomes if examined in an idiosyncratic manner that focuses on the individual themselves. In addition, Said (1992) has stressed the notion of developing a *variety of narratives*, depending on which community Palestinians were *dispersed* to that were adjusted accordingly to their *new* experiences. Through such network of narratives, Said stressed the importance of recognizing not only various narratives, but also to acknowledge the fundamental differences in Palestinian identity amongst these *displaced groups* (Said, 1992). In the case of displaced communities, this could also encourage research with the context of the theory of “*orthogonal cultures*” (Oetting and Beauvais, 1991; Venner et al., 2006) in which cultures may be seen as a *continuum*, and identification with one culture does not negate the other (for instance like Palestinians living in Australia). This could possibly encourage future research in not only other Palestinian communities, but also other communities in general, as varying narratives would produce a wide range of rich in depth information that can have endless implications. At the end of this study, what remains important is not what version of the narrative it encapsulates, but rather defining the social actors in the social sphere explored and the interactions they produce to make narratives a very powerful inquisitive and rigorous tool into exploring identity and other work related behaviors.

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# *Appendix*

## *Appendix A: Interview Questions*

### **Interview Questions:**

1. Can you please introduce yourself?
2. Can you please tell me about your family's history since 1948. Where did they settle before then? where did they migrate to/from?
3. Tell me about your childhood. What was it like? What were you like?
  - a. Follow up questions may: include what were you like in school?
  - b. What was it like growing up as a Palestinian?
  - c. What were you like as a teenager?
  - d. How did you make your educational choices...university/degree etc?
  - e. What did you learn growing up? What values did your family/community teach you?
4. When did you migrate to Australia?
  - a. Why did you or your family migrate here?
  - b. What was it like? Did you find it difficult or easy to assimilate?
  - c. What was it like moving to Australia as a Palestinian?
  - d. What has change since you moved here (if they were not born here)
5. When did you start working in Australia?
  - a. Tell me about your work life
  - b. What is your current job like?
  - c. What is the environment like?
  - d. Do you feel a spiritual connection with your job? Does it give you meaning or purpose? If not, why? Is so, how?
  - e. What values do you hold close at work? Why are they important?
  - f. What do you think are the source of these values?
6. What did you learn coming from your home town?
  - a. Were you told stories about leaving your hometown growing up?
  - b. How do you think it affected your family? Yourself?
  - c. Was it difficult? How?
7. How did that (alluding to previous question) influence your work?
8. Where do you see yourself in the future?
9. In your point of view, what does it mean to be a Palestinian-Australian?
10. What does the Nakba mean to you?

**Please Note:** Given the nature of unstructured narrative interviews, some participants required further direction while others felt comfortable in leading the conversation with little interruption.

## *Appendix B: Individual Participant Analysis*

### *Maysa*

Maysa was born in Lebanon to Palestinian parents whose parents forcefully migrated from the Northern Galilee region in Palestine and settled in the Lebanese refugee camps of “Ayn Al Hilwe”. They then migrated, through the help of her aunt, to Australia in the early 80s and have been living in Australia since then. Maysa is currently a senior HR manager at a real estate development organization and has been a member of this organization for 5 years, and was promoted to this position 2 years ago.

I took a glimpse of her childhood, which was described a normal Middle Eastern upbringing in Australia that consists of Arab and Australian values embedded in her upbringing. Maysa speaks of the conservative patriarchal influence in her family, particularly from her grandfather, that has had a long term influence on her family. When asked about the most important aspect of growing up, Maysa speaks on the importance of “giving” and “providing” that was instilled in her as a child. Maysa reflected on the hardship of the life in the refugee camps of Lebanon, and on how her parents were compensating in Australia by providing her with a safe, secure and a relatively normal life.

The concept of Palestinian identity was quite evident and vocal in the manner Maysa spoke of herself. She begins by addressing that she is a Palestinian, a product of parents who were raised in the refugee camps of Lebanon. Even without addressing the concept of identity, Maysa states that growing up in Australia, she understood that first and foremost she is a Palestinian but does not deny that she is also Australian in various other ways as well. She acknowledges the difficulties of growing up in the political turmoil of the Lebanese Civil War and credits her “passion for justice” to the treatment of Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps, stating “In Australia, I used to look at the difference between the way Palestinians were brought up compared to my Lebanese friends, we were a lot more conservative in the way we did things and I think it has to do with the constant state of fear we lived in as refugees when we were always tippy toeing and we always felt inferior to everyone”. Maysa speaks of how the diaspora is embedded in their daily life and credits her grandfather for instilling the narrative of hardship of forcefully migrating to Lebanon and living as second class citizens. The Human Rights World Report estimates that there are between 300,000 – 500,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon, where the majority live in the 12 official refugee camps scattered across the country (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, and its 1967 protocol does not provide legal security to its refugees. Palestinians, who were born and raised in Lebanon, just like Maysa, are denied political, social and economic rights in comparison to a Lebanese national, are barred from citizenship rights, are denied access to national public schools, and are denied a plethora of professional jobs in the fields of medicine, engineering and law (Howe, 2005).

When asked if Maysa can make sense of her family’s history growing up, she spoke of her connectedness to her parents who constantly reinforced their values with a particular focus on the sense of community and the importance of belonging to a community, which Maysa has revealed, she values greatly. Her parents spoke to her of the feeling of “being scattered” in Australia as opposed to the strong sense of community they had growing up in the refugee camps despite the hardship and the difficulties. Maysa credits this to her strong sense of confidence in her identity and states with assertiveness that instead of feeling inferior for being different, this actually made her reignite her pride in her identity and propelled her to instigate conversations and educate people about her identity.

When asked what it is like to be a Palestinian at work, Maysa spoke of how important it is to make Palestine a part of her work conversation. She does struggle with the fact that some people at the workplace are apathetic to social issues that do not concern them but Maysa feels obligated to not only educate her co-workers on the Palestinian struggle but to re-inforce her identity. Interestingly, Maysa credits her identity to making her understand and deal with injustice at work, because according to Maysa, “it has added so much value to who I am right now and allowed me to pursue a career where I can strive to make a difference in people’s lives...that drive came from being a Palestinian and seeing

my parents and what they went through. I think what makes me who I am today is the fact that I am made of many layers. I'm a Palestinian refugee and that is an important element of who I am because I can see things from multiple perspectives". On her work ethic, Maysa comments that "people at work know me as a person of integrity and a strong work ethic that has maintained its solidity. I think this comes from my passion for justice that I can credit to being Palestinian". This is reflected in the way Maysa speaks of her current job "I'm a senior HR manager and I always grew up wanting to be in a position of influence and I managed to do that with my work ethic. I think because of our current political situation, I put a lot of effort in fighting illegitimacy, and it is something I am very passionate about...being a Palestinian allowed me to focus on the human aspect of everything in my work which has influences my work values which is to focus on fighting bullying and injustice...especially being a Palestinian, if I didn't do so, I'll be a walking contradiction". Maysa utilizes her identity and history as a guide to dealing with her work ethic and as a reflection of that values she stands for. The burden of her history has instilled the need to re-inforce the need to include emotion and passion as a significant part of work life, and although Maysa is often criticized for being "too emotional" at work, she stresses that "they need to be more human and less robotic, if not, then I won't be able to have a purpose or drive in what I am doing right now". Maysa credits her passion as a driver of her work ethic, and that passion arises from her family's history and the belief that she is in a position to make a difference. There is a sense of responsibility that Maysa shares in that being a Palestinian has added an extra responsibility at work in which she does not want be seen as "letting anyone down", and as previously mentioned "not being a walking contradiction", and she uses this responsibility in a direction where she is able to use her influence to fight issues close to her heart such as injustice and illegitimacy.



## *Nadine*

Nadine Zuaiter was born in 1979 in Germany where her father had lived for 8 years prior to marrying her mother. Her father is from the ethnically cleansed village of Lubyia on the outskirts of Tibirias and her mother is from a village on the outskirts of Safad, both located in present day Israel. Her parents lived in “Ain Al Hilwe” refugee camp in Lebanon, one of the main 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Her father migrated to Germany followed by the rest of the family, but began applying for migration in the late 70s and early 80s. She migrated at the age of 3 to Australia in 1982 and grew up in Northern Queensland in a town named Caboolture, an hour north of Brisbane.

Nadine remembers her childhood as that of a “lonely one” highlighting the fact that she had no relatives or distant family members. She recalls only knowing her family members through long distance phone calls particularly during celebrations such as Eid. Nadine reflects on the lack of the sense of belonging early on in the conversation, in particular to her childhood period as she spoke a language no one understood or spoke in school – Arabic. Nadine speaks of her parents insistence on speaking Arabic as a form of preserving their Arabic identity and roots, but she persistently resisted by repeating to her family “why do we need to speak this language? No one else speaks it”. Nadine highlights during the interview that she did not understand the value of heritage as a child and her resistance to speak Arabic was driven by the pressure she felt in school as a migrant student. In hindsight, Nadine now confesses that she wishes she learnt more Arabic as she cannot read or write the language, but feels the urge now that she has matured and understood the concept of identity in the form of language.

The concept of lack of belonging is evident in the manner in which Nadine presents herself, and references her school life as an example. “I always get the sense that I was different...I was the only one with curly hair...I did stand out...I was called ‘jungle woman’”. When asked if she had experienced any form of racism in school, Nadine asserted that there was racism towards her, being the one of a few persons of color in school, but also stated that the racism “wasn’t that bad”. Nadine also speaks of how she felt she belonged to a “settler colonial culture” and that she was living in a very “white culture”. Nadine reflects on how at a very young age, she understood the concept of an indigenous culture and equated that to the “settler colonialism” culture currently present in present day Israel and Palestine. Nadine was always intrigued by what she describes as the “captain cook version” of Australia, and was always curious to read more about the owners of the land she grew up on. Interestingly, although her parents generally concealed information about the Palestinian struggle, she understood the concept of colonialism and it is not surprising that this concealing of the information perhaps increased her curiosity to “question everything”, as she puts it. Nadine’s mother was more inclined to speak of her struggle in the Lebanese refugee camps, and the direct struggle with the Lebanese army, as opposed to her father, which is perhaps a reflection of a typical Middle Eastern, Arab, Palestinian and Masculine society. Nadine’s home village was ethnically cleansed by Israeli settlers in June of 1948 as they captured it during the Arab-Israeli War ( Palestine remembered, 2016). During the British Mandatory period of Palestine, Lubyia was a thriving village, with a population of 2350 inhabitants that was completely depopulated during the war (Palestine Remembered, 2016). The local militia of Lubyia fought with the Israeli militia (now the Israeli Army) and was transformed into a militaristic guidance and support hub (Palestine Remembered, 2016). Nadine spoke of the fury of the depopulation of her home village and mentioned the documentary “the village under the forest” which was created to highlight the history of ethnic cleansing in which the village was transformed into a town with a forest under the name of “Lavi”.

When asked about her identity as a child, Nadine recalls hiding her identity but quickly affirms that “it was always very difficult for me to reply when my Anglo Saxon friends asked me but I just wanted to avoid the political baggage that comes with it...i used to lie...I used to say I was Turkish, Italian or South American”. Nadine however does affirm that her sense of identity has grown since then, and as she grew up, she found herself mingling with friends from diverse backgrounds because “I felt like I could relate to them, we had similar experiences”. Although Nadine reflects on how she spoke English as a native speaker, and can fit in if she did not express her heritage. However, growing up in a largely Anglo-Saxon school with no multicultural events, and no chance of displaying her heritage, and where, according to Nadine “white was normal, white was okay”, it drove her to explore more about what

constituted her identity. Nadine went through two phases as a child, where in her earlier years, she focused on fitting in but her curiosity and inquisitive nature, drove her to evolve to her second phases in which she not only embraced her heritage but also display it in a society deemed “uncultured” by Nadine herself.

When Nadine was asked about her parents, she spoke of the values they tried to instill in her despite the difficulties of growing up in a very uniform society. Nadine’s mother is a house maker and her father a cabinet maker, and they lived on a 24 acre land which to no surprise resembled the farm her father grew up on in his home town. Although Nadine’s father was 2 when he was forced out of his village with his family, he instilled the significance of land and agriculture in his children’s upbringing to remind them of the connection Palestinians have with their land. Nadine’s father expected his children to work on the land as “early as we could talk” and that her father instilled the notion of hard work as a significant part of Palestinian ancestral history. Nadine’s father, whom she admires greatly as evident in the conversation, often spoke of farming stories of his village, although he was only 2 when he was expelled. Nadine reiterates that her father wanted to replicate the daily life of farmers in Palestine but in the modern urban setting of Australia to further instill the concept of hardwork. Although it was physically demanding, Nadine states that being productive in her household was never a choice and the “connection to the land” is a concept that is significant among her family. Nadine states “my father passed this down to us because Palestinians romanticize their connection to the land and in everything they do, our spirituality is connected to the land and such traditions still drive me today at work...I did not get that realization although it was instilled in me at a very young age”. The connection of Palestinians to their land is particularly strong, perhaps due to the fact that Palestinians are considered some of the pioneers of agriculture, and have played a role in developing and transferring agricultural technologies since ancient history. Not only is agriculture significant to Palestinian economy (particularly rural economy), but is also an important constituent of their narrative, history, culture and traditions. Not only has the farming life contributed to the sense of hard work and physical labor amongst Palestinian generations, but has also become the way in which Palestinians have demonstrated their resilience and resistance in the face of the Israeli occupation (Al Shabaka, 2016).

When Nadine was asked about her current job and what she makes sense of being a Palestinian, her response was quite impassioned as she spoke with a great deal of pride. Nadine is a case worker in the refugee re-settlement program and has had experience in early intervention child protection. Nadine is heavily involved in her job and it is quite evident from her demeanor how passionate she is about her job. Nadine reflected in the interview on how being a Palestinian allowed her to understand a “broader perspective” of the issues she dealt with such as domestic violence, child abuse, foster care etc and says “understanding my heritage made me empathetic towards our clients because as a Palestinian, I saw things from a unique position”, particularly when she has recently dealt with refugee families. She often relates the progress her clients make to the overall progress Palestinians make since they have been scattered for 68 years, and they too were forced to re-settle in new countries, new cultures and new communities. Nadine also highlights that her passion, drive and spiritual connection she has with her job is derived from the meaning that is found while conducting her work as she states “I find meaning in the progress of the people, knowing that people are safe, it is a great motivator, especially when you hear stories of war and hardship, I know how that feels, I know that level of trauma because my family has experienced it and I can cope a lot and provide more at work because of my roots”. Nadine makes the connection between what gives her meaning at work to the trauma she has witnessed as a child, and finds that her history and identity are deeply imbedded in the way she understands the meaningfulness of her work. Nadine also speaks of how her work is a cycle of self-learning, and the more she deals with such issues at work, the more she is able to discover herself and thus discover what gives her meaning at work.

Prior to her current job, Nadine also revealed during the conversation her interest in feminism, art and Palestinian culture and always strived to do a documentary on the intersection of these issues. She often asks herself if she can deal with such trauma, and often finds herself concluding that being a Palestinian is so embedded in her selfhood that she often feels the obligation to embody this aspect of her individuality. She speaks of the importance of connectedness to any given project she deals with and

has repeatedly mentioned that in order for her to feel that spiritual connection with a project, it must reflect on what she has gone through. Nadine, for instance, speaks heavily of being ethnically cleansed as a significant part of her identity, and often views this as a crucial part of exploring more and more about her identity. Concepts such as female participation in society and women's resistance are regularly brought up in the conversation, and exploring such concepts allows her to feel more connected to her current job and current interests.

Nadine speaks with pride about how her heritage and historical circumstances have shaped her in the way she has become today. Nadine states "I am very diligent at work and there is nothing I wouldn't do for my clients...the feeling of being not from here and being out of place", and asserts that being a Palestinian never leaves her mind and has played a major role in her work ethic and work behavior.

Nadine is very vocal about her identity as has been witnessed in the conversation, and continuously reiterates how her heritage, history of colonialism, displacement and resistance still feed in her current job as a case worker and how her drive and passion are ultimately locked in a cycle with her Palestinian identity.

## *Hadi*

I interviewed Hadi in his make shift office/library that he created just outside his home. Hadi (OAM) is a 72 year old freelancer journalist that spent the majority of his professional life as a Legal Researcher for the Supreme Court of NSW. He is currently semi-retired and writes newspaper articles for El-Telegraph, the largest Arabic newspaper in Australia, publishing 5 times per week across the country.

As soon as Hadi began to introduce himself, an unexpected guest entered his office, Hadi's close friend Jameel. Hadi introduced Jameel and the conversation continued to flow. Reluctant to pause the conversation, I allowed them continue. Hadi explained the research to Jameel and he insisted to give his opinion. Jameel spoke of spirit at work and its significance as he said "when it comes to work and spirit, I think people need to get their hands dirty and the only way you can do it is by removing your ego and getting down and dirty to be able to lift those around you...this is the only way we can be connected as human being and I think people don't like to do that". This is especially relevant to the concept of transcendence in spirituality, in which a person transcends themselves to achieve something beyond the physical and material self, but rather the deeper metaphysical needs which can be achieved by interconnecting with others. Jameel also spoke heavily of the Palestinian connectedness to the land and that this connection is a major contributor to how hard they work. The spiritual, historical and practical connection to the land symbolizes hard work that Palestinians often credit to their success.

Jameel left and the conversation continued between myself and Hadi. Hadi did not tell me his life story in a chronological manner but rather went back in time to important historical events that he believes shaped his life. Through the conversation I was able to connect the dots, and when in doubt, I asked for further clarification.

Hadi was born in Yaffa in 1945 in present day Israel, but as Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from Northern Coastal Palestine, many were forced to migrate. Hadi's family migrated to Gaza in 1948 and he subsequently spent his childhood in Gaza before moving to neighboring Egypt in 1962 where he continued his education. He later moved to Kuwait in 1969 where he only resided for 9 months. The feeling of lack of belonging and desperation to belong anywhere led him to apply for immigration to Australia, in which he was granted and moved in 1971. Hadi reminded me that after he completed his education, he had nowhere to go. The war had broken out in 1967, and consequently was not able to return to Gaza. Hadi spoke of his ordeal of being homeless, having to sleep on the streets of Cairo with no shelter, no money and no support. It was a particularly tough time for Hadi. His facial expressions revealed a whole different side to him, the confident and outspoken man I had met at the beginning of the interview was now frail and completely immersed memories that highlighted his struggle as a young man. Hadi, desperate for a place to "call home" traveled to Syria where he eventually met PLO representatives that provided him with travel documents to allow him to travel. From there he traveled both legally and illegally across Jordan and then to Eastern Europe. He was 27 when he personally met the Egyptian ambassador in Belgrade, Serbia, and this particular meeting had a huge impact on him. As he explained his situation to the ambassador, he recalls, the ambassador replied "take a boat to Israel", and Hadi replied "How is that possible? I need to live". This was just the start of a whirlwind of events that led him to settle temporarily in Kuwait. His life in Kuwait was not one destined to be permanent, according to Hadi, as he recalls feeling out of place and disconnected. Hadi reminds me of the hardship he faced unable to settle in one location "nobody wanted us...I was very sick at the night...my nerves broke down...I was always at the top of class in university and now this? I had to regain my dignity back...". This was the straw that broke the camels back as Hadi reached the level of desperation, confused about his sense of belonging, his sense of identity, his pride, and his nationalism. Hadi recalls that he "wasn't a citizen of anywhere" and so desperately longed for this feeling of stability. He often compared himself to other Palestinians that lived in more stable countries such as Jordan, and speaks of how hard he had to work just to catch up with his Palestinian counterparts.

Hadi was awarded the OAM, a prestigious award of chivalry in Australia for his journalistic efforts in the Arabic speaking community of Australia, and holds this achievement near and dear to his heart. He is one of the few Arabs to have been awarded this prestigious award. Hadi speaks greatly of this

achievement particularly after it was earned after years of rejection and not being able to belong anywhere. Hadi teases the idea of being seen as an ideal person but people often do not know the difficulties one goes through, which are often the drivers to a person's sense of work ethic. Hadi says that the cycle of rejection, the desperation for belonging and the need to express his identity was what played a major role in developing his sense of work ethic.

Ironically, the more the rejection, the more the hardship, the stronger his identity grew as he felt the yearning for his homeland. Interestingly, he took his identity for granted when he was in his early adolescence years, whether it is his nationalistic identity, or his Christian identity or even his identity as a journalist. Perhaps it was this pattern of displacement that not only initiated his hunt for his identity but what instilled it so greatly in him.

Hadi speaks of what drives his work values, and he credits that to the idea of being able to express himself with no restrictions on his identity in Australia after the whirlwind of events that brought him to Australia. Hadi did often struggle with his two identities as a Palestinian and Australian, but still credits his Palestinian values as the drivers of his identity. Although Hadi worked for 25 years as a Legal Researcher, he always felt "out of place" in his previous job because unfortunately he wasn't appreciated for his knowledge or his identity. Being connected to his job and his environment is something Hadi values greatly, but did not feel this spiritual connection with his previous job. In his current job, at 72, he feels alive, happy, able to express his identity and feels appreciated for his effort and hard work. Hadi states "I feel I fit a lot more in my current job, despite it being part time, its my culture, im a lot happier, its my environment, even though I was at my previous job for 25 years, I feel I can use my identity more. Before that, I felt like I was denied my effort and hard work, that's why I felt lost. I did not feel the diversity I was bringing in was being appreciated. I now feel a lot more spiritual and a lot more connected to my job". Was his identity holding him back? Was the secret to his spiritual connection to his current job is the ability to express his identity? Perhaps if we understood the hardship and history of displaced people, we can unlock the secret to their work ethic, their spiritual connection and their expression of self at the workplace.

## *Zaina*

Zaina's family moved from Nablus, Palestine to Kuwait in the early 1950s. The aftermath of the Nakba left the economic situation in Palestine in a dire condition. Her father was working in the agriculture sector, and managed to receive permission to work in Kuwait with the assistance of the British Embassy in Palestine since Kuwait (known as Koot) at the time, was also under the Mandate of Britain.

Zaina was born in Kuwait in 1969 and spent the majority of her life in Kuwait before moving to Australia in 1992. Zaina's childhood was a pleasant one having lived amongst one of the dominant communities in Kuwait: the Palestinians. However, despite the fact that Palestinians in Kuwait enjoyed privileges other communities perhaps did not, Zaina recalls that it was more of a "waiting game". Sometimes there was hope of returning to Palestine as her father so dearly yearned for, and sometimes that hope seems to diminish. Zaina recounts that life was hard because the hopelessness of returning was beginning to be embedded in every Palestinian's life. Zaina recalls that the need to work hard was instilled in their lives as early as she could possibly remember and she explains why. According to Zaina's accounts, Palestinians had nowhere to go so there was a pressure to prove themselves in everything – whether this was in school, in university or in work, Palestinians felt like they had to exert more effort than their other migrant counterparts just to prove that they are worthy of staying. Palestinians, according to Zaina, had a great sense of pride in their identity however, if they left their "temporary" home, they had nowhere to go and no tools to allow them to flourish elsewhere. This is why education is so deeply engrained in Palestinian culture from the very moment a child can speak. Education was and still is seen as the only tool (or weapon as many Palestinians refer to it) that can be carried with a person no matter where they are exiled. On the political spectrum, Palestinians suffered greatly through the outbreak of wars and the consequences of even more dispersal, so education was seen as the only way Palestinians can prove their competency. "Unless you are educated, you are doomed", Zaina recalls, and academic excellence is not a matter of choice, but rather expected at a very young age. Perhaps the concept of academic excellence can be seen in other minority groups as well, however, in Palestinian culture, it carries a different meaning. Since the majority of Palestinians can not return to their homeland, having an education was seen as a compensation for being "stateless", and the only way Palestinians can demonstrate their capability of starting a new life anywhere.

It is quite evident from the conversation with Zaina that she holds her father in great regards. Whenever she is asked about the values of work ethic, she immediately references her father who worked multiple jobs to provide for his family in Kuwait and his family back in Palestine. Zaina recalls that "hardwork" and "the sense of responsibility" are very much deeply embedded in her household, and remembers the seriousness of work at home. The significance of academic achievement, hard work and responsibility have affected the "seriousness" of the household she grew up in, in which little time was wasted doing something that does not yield value to their work. Interestingly, Zaina grew up with the sense of connectedness to her immediate community as she recalls that "he [her father] had a lot of responsibility. We grew up thinking we can't just think of ourselves but think of the family that was left behind", which has left a lasting impact on her especially after she migrated to Australia with her family. The need to be involved in the community, and the need to transcend the material world still holds a special value for her today.

Zaina recounts that Palestinians had an expectation to live up to. This is particularly due to the fact that the only way Palestinians would be able to succeed after years of displacement is to work extra hard in every aspect of their life. It has, to an extent, become so deeply embedded in their identity. Zaina recalls that working hard was not an option for her, because "I did not want people pointing at me saying 'she's Palestinian, she can't be like this'". It is almost as if there is a burden of responsibility that Palestinians are expected to live up to and any swaying from this responsibility is often seen as a let down, not only for the family or community but for the Palestinian cause itself. Zaina recalls that she always wanted to be the "ideal" hard working person because that is what was expected of her and that it required a lot of effort just to maintain it.

Although Zaina does feel she lived up to that expectation, this also drove her to discover her own sense of identity. She was and still is very proud of being Palestinian, but the burden to live up to a certain expectation often left her wondering what else constitutes her identity. During her university years, she was very active in her community, but was not politically active, which is quite strange given the fact that politics is a topic very widely discussed in many Palestinian homes. “I did not want anyone to control the way I think or label me”, Zaina recalls as she speaks about her years as a university student. She always felt that, perhaps due to the history of her community, she felt a sense of restriction on the expression of other constituents of identity. “Exploring myself was not an option as I always had to do the right thing...I always felt a sense of responsibility”, Zaina recounts on the need to always be disciplined. She did however pour the energy she had so longed for in her work at the time as an IT Consultant, which she had a great deal of passion for. She worked very hard and was always intrigued by any challenge that passes her way. Zaina also recalls that being a hard working female in a male dominated field that earned more than her male counterparts, including her husband, was not easy as she always felt the need to prove herself. Zaina recalls an incident that occurred in her past job in Kuwait during the invasion that has left a lasting impact not only on her personal life but also her professional life as well. Zaina was working for the government at the time and during the Iraqi invasion, she took the responsibility of protecting the government’s IT server, taking the risk with her 2 children, passing Iraqi check points, to carry the server from her work to her home. She felt the sense of responsibility in protecting the government’s documents. She was left devastated that she was rewarded a 2 month salary as she felt monetary rewards were never a priority to her, and it was at this point that she felt she did not feel part of the organization, perhaps due to her identity. She felt if her identity was not a factor, she would have been recognized for her work rather than being rewarded financially. This left a lasting impact on her as was evident in the later part of her conversation, as she valued the sense of identity expression without the added burden and was very much driven by non-material rewards.

Interestingly, the notion of working extra hard to prove oneself as a Palestinian was later highlighted in a major incident that made her question her stay in Kuwait. At the time of the invasion, Palestinians were in a political turmoil as their President Yasin Arafat, supported Sadaam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, and subsequently, Palestinians were ostracized, alienated and felt threatened in their personal and professional lives. Zaina recalls how her position as an IT Consultant for the government was left in danger as she was asked by her then supervisor for an addition of 2 Kuwaitis that can assist in the face of client discussions. Zaina felt the cultural sensitivity surrounding Palestinians, and the fact that she was an outspoken female in a male dominant environment, made it even more difficult. She was required to hire 2 Kuwaitis for a job she can easily do on her own. But her pragmatic nature left her forced to understand that this “was expected” and that she was “expected to understand” why this happened. However, as the decision to hire went through and she oversaw the process, she immediately started applying for migration to Australia because she finally wanted to be treated fairly and not as a second class resident due to her identity.

Her move to Australia did in fact bring about a sense of belonging she long yearned for. She did leave Kuwait voluntarily and knew that she wanted a sense of security that not only herself had experienced, but her community as a whole since the Nakba dispersed and displaced Palestinians worldwide. Moving to Australia was not an easy decision for Zaina but she knew she needed a sense of belonging and security she was not able to feel else where. But the need to work extra hard to prove herself was also evident in Australia as she still felt different in an Anglo dominated environment. Between work, studying, 3 kids and traveling for work, she was determined to prove herself in the face of challenge. Zaina recalls that it was her identity as a Palestinian and the hard work embedded in her culture was what drove her to success in a new environment in Australia. “I started studying at night, I was very focused, I wanted to be recognized the same as everyone else, I did not want anything to stop me”. She did not let her identity get in the way of her success, in fact, Zaina recalls that it was quite the contrary. “I used my accent to break the silence with my clients to break the ice” and once they understood her history, she felt a great deal of respect from them and made her feel good about what she had achieved.

Zaina did struggle in passing down the values she had learnt from her father and the struggle of her community to her children, as they were faced with both Palestinian and Australian set of values. The

need to “stand out”, “prove oneself”, “excel”, “be a step ahead”, and “the need for competitiveness” that she had long lived with was now replaced by what Zaina calls the “no worries mate approach”. Perhaps the burden of being displaced did not influence her children as they grew up in an environment where they were just like everyone else.

Zaina reminded me that, in her opinion, Palestinians were viewed differently from the rest of Arabs. “The concept that Arabs are hard-working people is true but it’s more difficult with Palestinians because of our situation because we are all over the world and we don’t have a country...and to be able to make it, you have to distinguish yourself so that no one rejects you...especially your academic qualifications...I think it reflects a lot about yourself and your country and if you are in a position of power, you are able to help others...that’s what Israelis do, it’s their long term strategy but it works...we learn from our enemy...they have the power and the money....we only have individual work...the individualism of the person is what makes a difference...that’s the personal motivation for me...like for me at work, I always feel like I’m on my tip toes...I do this for my cause [Palestinian cause]...it is a 24/7 job for me...I multitask for my self, family and country simultaneously....that cycle gives me a sense of meaning and purpose at work...I work extra hard to take the glory not just for myself but for my company and for my society and for my country too”. When asked about how spiritually connected she feels to her work Zaina states “I am so spiritually connected to my work and so passionate about it” and has learnt being a Palestinian and a woman the importance of standing up for herself which resulted in more assertiveness, more stubbornness and more motivation. Zaina concludes by saying “we need to be different...if not, no one will remember our case and your behavior at work can really reflect a lot about your heritage”. Perhaps Zahra’s sense of responsibility and work ethic is so deeply intertwined with her history as she states “the sense of responsibility is huge towards displaying my country to the point it alters my actions...I think it gets the best of me...it makes me control my emotions at work”. Zaina’s conversation shows just how much her displaced Palestinian identity has played a crucial role in the expression of her identity at work, and how it particularly played a role in the way she understands her sense of work ethic and spirituality.



## *Fadwa*

Fadwa's parents migrated from a small town just outside of Akka known as Alma which was completely destroyed during the 1948 war, to the Nahr El Bared refugee camp in Lebanon. Her parents met and married in the refugee camp and moved to Baghdad, Iraq for her father's work before Fadwa was born. Fadwa was born in 1979, and moved to Australia in 1983. She had then spent a small segment of her childhood in Baghdad before moving to Australia, which was during the peak of the Lebanese Civil War. Her father, an Electrical Engineer, continued his education in UTS, Sydney while her mother was a typical Palestinian stay-at-home mother of 7 kids.

Fadwa recalls hearing stories of their displacement from her father with a particular attention to the misinformation that they were fed. Fadwa's father spoke of the "propaganda" they were fed back in Palestine. Her father explained how Israeli settlers used propaganda to tell Palestinians to flee as they were wiping out their villages, and in return many feared for their lives and fled. However, according to her father's narrative, this style of propaganda was used by settlers to drive Palestinians out and kill the remaining Palestinians left behind insuring that Palestinians either left or were subsequently killed. This is how Fadwa recalls the history of her village that was left to rubble during the Nakba.

When asked about her life in the camps, Fadwa spoke highly of her father, and that he excelled academically at a very young age and was always distinguished amongst his class mates. Life in Lebanese camps was particularly difficult for Palestinians as they were treated as second class residents who did not have the right to a nationality amongst other human rights violations. Fadwa does not recall much of her childhood in Iraq but remembers that excelling academically was never a choice for her, and that teachers were disappointed that the "smartest kids in school" were leaving to Australia. It was interesting when Fadwa mentioned that her mother continuously pushed to speak English in Iraq, perhaps to ensure that they do well in their professional lives later on, but regretted this when they moved to Australia, as she desperately wanted them to read and write Arabic. Fadwa, a proud and vocal Palestinian felt embarrassed to admit to me that she cannot read or write in Arabic, and feels this has pushed her to explore her identity even more.

Moving to Australia was not an easy decision for Fadwa's family as her father felt the urge to work extra hard to provide for the family. Fadwa holds a great deal of respect for her father as she tells me stories of her father working 5 days a week as a social worker (no longer an engineer), and as an electrician on Friday nights, Saturday and Sunday. She witnessed just how hard her father and mother worked, especially how her mother raised 7 kids practically alone. Her father took work very seriously and raised his children to be frugal and appreciative of what they have. Perhaps the hardship they witnessed in the refugee camps as a result of their displacement made her father appreciate the value of hard work and frugality. Fadwa accounts that her father showed a great sense of community in Australia, and this has left a lasting impact on Fadwa as she also values this sense of connectedness with her community.

Fadwa grew up in an Anglo dominant area of Sydney where she was one of the few Arabs in her neighborhood and school. She was introverted and spent most of her time either at school or home. She speaks of the sense of responsibility bestowed upon her as a child due to the hardship of migrating to a "new home". She did not participate in any school activities because although she never complained, it was the sense of guilt that her "parents were doing it hard and there was a certain work ethic" she had to stick to. Fadwa's values were not talked about in her household but rather her father insisted that he display them through his actions, which Fadwa agrees was the best way for them to learn her work ethic from her parents.

Fadwa currently works as an Occupational Therapist and during our conversation, she explained to me the nature of her job with a great deal of enthusiasm. She explains to me how working full time with children has been a struggle, and this struggle was topped with extra pressure to start her own business due to the initiation of the NDIS, the National Disability Insurance Scheme which would mean she would lose her job over the next few years until the scheme commences. She talks with a great deal of passion about her work "I love helping people and giving them their life back...that's what gives me

meaning at work. I love seeing my clients excel and do things. I really feel this was meant to be although me being an OT was all by pure chance. This is not a job...this is not work...you are a carer and there is a difference. I keep remembering how much my people suffered and I know how it feels. My dream is to go to Palestine and do everything I do here because of how much they suffered psychologically, physically and I know they need a lot of help with their self esteem". Perhaps Fadwa parallels her experience as an OT with her experience as a Palestinian refugee and finds a common denominator between them, and this in return, has influenced her scheme of actions at work. For a person such as Fadwa, who is very much vocal about her identity, it is hard to imagine her work and identity being separate but rather intertwined.

Fadwa makes it a point to always deliver herself as a "hard working, sincere, knowledgeable" person. Could this be related to the pressure Palestinians feel to prove themselves? Could years of displacement force them to act and behave in a certain manner, that even generations after the Nakba still feel the need to show this? Has the Nakba and its consequences dictated for generations to come how Palestinians should act? Should Palestinians feel guilty otherwise?

Fadwa demonstrated in this interview just how much the Nakba has left a lasting impact on her. Fadwa recalls "It is part of my everyday life...the injustice of it all...the bureaucratic bundle of it all....it makes me angry...I think about it all the time and it is at the forefront of my identity...but you know? It is compassion fatigue...you get tired of being angry and frustrated and I'm not naturally angry person". Her frustration is quite evident in her demeanor, but nonetheless, still maintains her pride in her identity and history and how it has affected her personal and professional life.

When asked if she had ever told this story before, she replied "I feel exposed in telling my details but I have pride in that..."

Fadwa, who is a parent to first generation Palestinian Australian still maintains that her identity is an integral part of her make up, and it has evidently affected her on both a personal and professional level.

## *Mary*

Mary was born in Gaza in 1951, however, her parents had forcefully migrated just a few years before her birth from their home town in Yaffa during the 1948 war. It was quite common at the time for those who were forced to leave their home towns in Northern Coastal Palestine to migrate to Gaza and make it their new home as Northern Coastal Palestine was at the time to become part of the official State of Israel.

Mary is a prominent visual artist in the Arab community in Sydney and is particularly well known amongst the Palestinian community. She has been an active community artist ever since she migrated to Australia in the late 1970s. She has held several exhibitions both locally and internationally.

When asked about her childhood, Mary remembers it as a pleasant one, being one in 3 girls with 3 other boys. She was particularly close to her father and admits that she has learnt a great deal from him. Her father ran a shoes factory in Gaza and recalls spending days on end observing customers and asking inquisitive questions. Perhaps this is what sparked her creative career, as she recalls observing her father, whom she refers to as “creative” and a “perfectionist”. She recalls that she was always very curious as a child as to where they came from and why they were dispersed from her home town of Yaffa. Mary, sadly, admits that her father’s death from a heart attack was directly related to the hardship and suffering caused by the Nakba. She always questioned and was very curious about her identity although she never struggled with admitting she is a Palestinian. She explained to me that she often felt sorry for her relatives that migrated to Lebanon and completely lost their identity, and became too immersed in the Lebanese culture. Mary had lived for short period of time in Egypt where she was completing her education and in Kuwait with her family after marriage, but these places never felt like home to her. She was always yearning for place where she didn’t feel dispersed, and where she experienced unity with her community. She was often advised as many other Palestinians had experienced not to reveal her Palestinian identity and refer to herself as a Jordanian, but Mary never imagined herself not admitting the main constituent of her identity.

Mary migrated to Australia looking for a “new life”, but she was determined that no matter what field she follows, to continue her fight to maintain her Palestinian identity and remind people of the Nakba that displaced people all over the world. She had first considered starting a tourism company that conducted tours in Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities, but accepted a job at Concord Hospital to focus on her artistic work. This was her longest job as she worked there for just about 12 years, raising 4 kids and conducting exhibitions and writing articles in local multi language newspapers.

Mary, told me with her utmost pride and sincerity, that she believes she worked harder than other people in her work. She always felt like other people at work were “spoiled” and “laid back”. She often considered others not as workaholic as she is, and that a lot of time was wasted in the workplace. Perhaps, just like other Palestinians, Mary felt the need to prove herself by over working. Palestinians are often known for being too serious, and this can also be reflected in the workplace. It is almost like the burden of Palestinian history and displacement rests on every Palestinian’s shoulder. Mary does reflect on the discrimination she felt moving to Australia, although she does highlight that Australians are rewarded for being high achievers despite their backgrounds. Mary reflected on the hardship faced by many migrants and she particularly felt age discrimination as she witnessed many Anglo-Saxon co-workers much younger than herself being promoted at much faster rates. Mary jokingly refers to those who “have a beer at lunch” while she continuously worked through the day to prove she is capable and competent.

Mary rarely found meaning or purpose in her administrative work at Concord Hospital but it did give her the chance to focus on her art work where she primarily displays themes of family, career, culture and most importantly, Palestinian identity and nationalism. Mary recalls “I found myself as a Palestinian in my art, not working in administration. I always love talking about my roots and my identity and this is heavily reflected in my art”. She often credit the success of her exhibitions to the emotions she displays about the story and the anguish of the Palestinian people and most importantly about the struggle of the Palestinian family.

The narration of identity is clearly observed in her art work, as she showed me sample of her work and presented me with her 1998 work titled “Shifting Waves”. In her work, she features notable Arabs that have contributed to the Arab community of Sydney, with individual hand painted portraits by Mary herself and concludes with a some poetry revolving around the struggle of Palestinians in her own words. As evident in her artwork and poetry, her exposition emphasized the traditional values brought by Palestinians to Australia as well as the contemporary values of the people of Australia with a particular focus on women. Themes such as feminism, liberation, career, motherhood and romance, all intertwined with the Palestinian identity are all reflected in her work. Mary found meaning and purpose in her art and was deeply and spiritually connected to her work, and this is what she credits to giving her the will to move forward and the drive to work hard. Mary refers to migrants as “migratory birds” and specifically mentions that Palestinians are well known for being high achievers because they still carry the spirit of the cause with them no matter where they reside.

Mary reflected that she believes that her generation are a lot more serious in work and have stronger work ethics than the younger generation. Could this be true for Palestinians? Are those that have experienced the Nakba more hard working than those that have not? Do values cease at one generation and do not pass to the next? Mary does struggle with passing these values and lessons of the Nakba to her children and admits that the struggle is real and often finds herself writing article in English just to be able to connect with the younger generation.

Mary highlights that what gives her the sense of meaning and purpose in her work is the ability to reflect on herself and it is something she values greatly. Repetitive work, although with monetary value, does not give her a sense of meaningfulness. She does also reflect that her Christian faith and her devotion to her Christian spirituality also plays a part in her workplace spirituality as she often sees it as a driver of her work and that Christian aspects of her identity are depicted in her work. Interestingly, Mary has wondered whether her level of enthusiasm towards her self-identity and spirituality would have been different had she not been Palestinian, or does the Nakba present differently for Palestinians? Perhaps it is the combination of continuous statelessness, lack of belonging, lack of security and the need to work hard and continuously prove oneself makes that experience a different one.

## *Rosemary*

Rosemary was born in 1957 in a small Christian town of Beirzeit, just on the outskirts of Ramalah. Her grandparents were forced to leave their original home city of A Ramle, on the Northern Coast of Palestine. Rosemary recalls the stories told by her grandfather about the hardship of forced migration and recalls how her grandfather was never allowed to celebrate the building of his house in Al Ramle, as the Zionist forced took control of it.

As soon as the conversation had begun with Rosemary she told me how intense nationalism was instilled with her as a young girl as she listened to the stories narrated by her grandparents and it was these stories that established the fight for freedom and the “right of return”. Rosemary also adds that along with the fight for freedom and the “right of return”, these stories also intensified her resistance to the occupation and has made her more vocal about her identity and her presence as a Palestinian. She firmly and proudly asserts “I am not worried to speak out”.

Although Rosemary did not witness the hardship of the Nakba, she did however witness the difficulties of the 1967 war when she was only 10. Rosemary explained to me the harassment, the torture and the bullying she witnessed by the Zionist forces. Rosemary has always been a bright girl at school and graduated at the early age of 16, and recalls that she has always been much younger than her fellow classmates. Rosemary profoundly remembers that growing up in a war zone “makes you grow a lot older, and it is like you are 11 in your body but your mind is like an older person...it teaches you not only to survive but how to fight”. Although Rosemary was quite young at the outbreak of the war, she did however illustrate through our conversation that her sense of identity has always been strong ever since she can remember. For instance, Rosemary recalls that she did not want to speak Arabic to the soldiers because she always felt like they were outsiders and they attempted to “strip away our identity but it gave me even a stronger sense of identity”. Interestingly, although Rosemary had revealed that she was often named “an angel or a saint” for being extremely polite and humble, the sense of resistance had always been embedded in her. Perhaps this may show that resistance can be presented in different forms, and the witnessing of such horrific events may bring about different forms of resistance amongst different people.

Rosemary migrated to Australia at the age of 16, and continued her education shortly after she arrived. She also married at a very young age. Interestingly, Rosemary was confronted with inequality of men and women in Australia that she had not witnessed in Palestine, and in fact, Rosemary recalls “I was confronted with being a woman and I grew up in an environment where my dad never differentiated between us...sometimes you think [Palestine] is a masculine society but I always saw myself as equal but it felt different here in Australia when I came”.

Rosemary was actually surprised at how life was like in Australia, and it was not what she had expected. Education was not popular according to Rosemary and she states that it was shocking because “Palestinians value education as a part of their identity”. Could it be that exile, displacement, and dispersal as a result of a catastrophic event in the home town drives people to achieve the highest level of education available? My experience has shown that this has been the case for many Palestinians world wide because being stateless was not going to get them anywhere but a versatile education was the only hope forward. Rosemary was surprised by the naivety of her co-workers in Australia, as many did not know where Palestine is, despite the fact that the 70s had been prolific years for Palestinian politics. Rosemary was surprised at the fact that many Australians did not know that there are in fact 22 Arab countries but what unites them is 1 common language: Arabic. Rosemary felt an immense pain as her co-workers would often wonder how she could possibly be promoted to supervisor and head positions because of her identity and her inability to speak English, although Rosemary confirmed that her English was decent due to the fact she studied English at a very young age in Palestine. She knew she was different but this difference in fact gave her the confidence to become a better achiever. Rosemary jokingly says that her ability to overcome such issues of racism, discrimination and differentiation have been hurdled, and that the only issue we currently face is the occupation!

Rosemary voluntarily stresses without being questioned that the occupation is so deeply engrained in her. Despite the fact that she has started to feel like she has roots in Australia, Rosemary says with pride “I always felt Palestinian and I never felt anything less” and often credits throughout the interview that this is due to her involvement in Palestinian human rights activities here in Australia. Rosemary also feels an immense connection to the indigenous owners of Australian land and those who respected these rights. While the Palestinian identity makes up “90%” of Rosemary’s identity according to her own accounts, she also credits an addition to her identity which includes the values “current Australians not old Australians the took the rights away from the indigenous and these are the Australians I started to identify with”.

When asked about the values she had learnt growing up as a Palestinian-Australian, Rosemary was quick to talk about what she values the most: freedom. Having witnessed the atrocities and the struggle of her own people, Rosemary managed to “stand up for herself and say the truth...these were the values I learnt from my family”. Rosemary did also credit that she understood the difference between being individualistic and being selfish, as she did come from a very collective society. It was the understanding of these new values coupled with her history that allowed Rosemary to value freedom and dislike restrictions. Perhaps the yearning for freedom that she and her family were denied were reflected in her professional life in Australia.

Rosemary spoke with confidence about the concept of resistance which is directly related to her witnessing the harassment, the brutality and the cruelty of an occupier. “Resistance is something I really believe in...resistance in general...in every aspect of my life...I didn’t change my principles at work but I think as a Palestinian, it made me confront people and change people’s attitudes. I think it is a part of us [Palestinians] growing up. We are so bombarded in the media...it always makes me want to defend”, Rosemary says with pride as she explains to me why Palestinians value resistance.

Rosemary has stated in various parts of our conversation that being a Palestinian in the workplace has affected her values, “although I am a human at work, it made me more of a human. I saw the suffering...we are all migrants and I don’t want to build anger or hatred but I always want to use this energy positively”. Perhaps it is the ability of a person to transcend oneself and understand the suffering of others that can make them more emotionally intelligent and capable of understanding others in the workplace.

It is quite evident through the interview that Rosemary speaks with pride about her identity as she states “sometimes you are so entrenched in your identity that it makes it hard to imagine anything else....it gave me a lot of courage, a lot of resistance, and to be able to stand up to policies I don’t agree with”.

Rosemary’s current job is the Director of Internship Australia, an organization she has owned and directed for the past 15 years. Years of struggle have allowed her to overcome the initial racism she had encountered and has given her a better understanding of what it is like to be an individual in an individualistic society in Australia. She does reflect on the fact that her organization is very diverse and each member reflects on the values of their own rich backgrounds. Rosemary has admitted that she does find meaning and purpose in her work in helping youngsters as she reflected on her own struggles growing up in areas of conflict. Rosemary has also admitted when asked that her sense of spirituality at work is not guided or gathered from religion, but rather an energy she has collected over the years.

## *Yasin*

Yasin was born in Kuwait in 1961. Both of his parents were born in the West Bank village of Arrabeh, Jenin, but his father migrated to Kuwait in 1951 in search of a “new life” as Yasin states. Yasin’s father migrated illegally to Kuwait in desperation to support his brothers and sisters as Yasin’s grandfather passed away at a very young age.

Yasin recalls that the oil boom in the Gulf Region, and in particular in Kuwait, was the major reason Palestinians began traveling to the small desert country. When I asked Yasin what else he remembers from his father’s stories about moving to Kuwait, he explained to me that Kuwait was a dream for them, and they thought they would travel and live in Kuwait for a few years, save money and come back to Palestine with better financial security. But unfortunately, that was not the case for many Palestinians at the time, including Yasin’s family. Little did Yasin’s father know that only 5 years after his move to Kuwait, the 1956 Suez Crisis also known as the Tripartite Aggression would commence which would only less than a decade later be followed by the 1967 Six Day War, making the return to Palestine more difficult than ever.

Kuwait was not an easy move for many Palestinians for a variety of reasons that Yasin points out. Leaving behind family to travel to a whole new country was difficult coupled with a totally different environment and a new culture, Yasin explains, made the move challenging. Palestinians enjoyed a 4 season year in a country with various geographical features such as plains, valleys, mountains, cliffs and deserts in comparison to just one landform in Kuwait: a flat scorching hot desert. The weather was also completely different in Kuwait, as Palestine enjoyed rain, snow, hail, sunshine with varying temperatures while Kuwait had one very long scorching summer and a very cold desert in the winter, with minimal rain and minimal agricultural opportunities in comparison to the Mediterranean Palestinian land. The culture was also profusely different, where Palestinians enjoyed a history of civilization, modernization and exposure, the culture in Kuwait was remarkably different in its nature with Bedouin and tribal influences. It was after the 1956 and the 1967 wars that Palestinians in Kuwait started to come to terms with the fact that the return to Palestine was not promising. The economic situation in Palestine was dire and the occupation had suffocated the livelihood of the younger working generation, and Kuwait at the point, had started to become the idea of a “new home”.

Yasin reflects that he had a “pretty normal” childhood except for a major change in his life at the age of 6 when he was just on the verge of entering school. After the 1967 war, the influx of Palestinians to Kuwait had increased. As Yasin describes it, “families brought other family members and the trend continued”. Coincidentally, with the establishment of the PLO, many of its representatives had an important presence in Kuwait and so the families of these representatives also started migrating to Kuwait. It was just after the 1967 that the Kuwait government had proposed along with the PLO that the schools in Kuwait could not handle this influx of immigrants and so Palestinian students were forced to attend “afternoon” school, which ran from 3-9 pm. These “PLO schools” used Kuwaiti public schools as their premises but the staff and students were exclusively Palestinian and were overseen by the PLO and the Kuwaiti government. Yasin described to me what it was like attending such a school that was completely dominated by Palestinian students and staff, and where the Palestinian national anthem was sung before the Kuwaiti national anthem. “Many teachers worked for free as they had taught Kuwaiti students in the morning and were asked to teach Palestinian students in the afternoon. Many of these teachers worked very long shifts but they saw this as a sign of their patriotism and nationalism and they wanted to make sure that these students do not fall victims to the lack of resources in catering for them”, Yasin recalls as he remembers the feeling of being in an all Palestinian school, a privilege no other community in Kuwait had enjoyed. When asked what his school life was like, Yasin replied “you can imagine the level of competitiveness in our school. Palestinians were generally put in a position to prove themselves in any country they were exiled to or migrated to, so imagine what it is like to be in a school dominated by us”. The decision to advance with this proposal was often met with mixed reactions by the Palestinians in Kuwait but Yasin states the “our identity grew even more. It was very well known that our teachers were not only patriotic but they did the very best to teach us about hard work and standing out...because we had no other choice, either the Nakba destroys us or makes us better people”.

Yasin tells me of his experience as a Palestinian indoctrinated with the messages of always striving to be on top because as he argues “education was the only weapon we had...we had no country...no military...no unity and this was the only way for us to move forward and wherever we go”. When asked about his sense of identity growing up, Yasin replied “attending the PLO schools really changed our lives. Our Palestinian identity was stronger than ever. We did feel we were different from other nationalities but we had different circumstances. If the Egyptians didn’t like it, they can go back to Egypt and the same for every other nationality. But it was different for us. We had nowhere to go. And in Kuwait, we wanted to prove ourselves”. Yasin also explained to me how Palestinians enjoyed a great deal of freedom to express their efforts for liberation, freedom and the fight to return to Palestine and this was evident in the political freedom Palestinians were given in Kuwait. “I think the main reason why for a long time Kuwait felt like home to us is because we enjoyed the freedom of being who we are and we had no reason to not flaunt our identity”. In my opinion, the freedom Palestinians enjoyed in Kuwait until the outbreak of the 1990 Gulf War, not only gave them a leverage but a sense of unity and security they longed for. Such leverages also propelled Palestinians to become well known for the indoctrination of the concept of hard work at a very young age.

Yasin recalls that a university education was never an option for him and education was something his parents took very seriously, although both his parents were uneducated and his mother was in fact illiterate. Yasin told me how his father worked extra hard to be able to send his eldest son to the US to continue his education, and Yasin was adamant at making his father proud of his achievements. While in the US, Yasin was heavily involved with the Palestinian associations in collaboration with the PLO, and Yasin was in fact the President of the Youth Chapter in the US where he regularly participated in conferences, fund raisers, marches, rallies and more. Yasin explains “Palestine and Palestinian activism were so deeply engrained in me as a child that even the US, I was extremely active...in fact, even after I married my wife in 1983, she joined me as well”. Yasin felt the urge to continue his fight and support for his people even though he personally did not experience the Nakba and did not live in Palestine but only traveled for short visits a few times. The majority of Yasin’s college friends were not only Palestinian, but Palestinians from Kuwait and he explained that “in fact it was important for me to mingle with those who shared a great sense of identity like myself and it was hard for me to befriend those Palestinians who lost their sense of identity when they migrated to Lebanon, Syria or Jordan for example...it was something that contributed a lot to my personality”.

Yasin moved back to Kuwait in the mid-late 80s and began to search for a job as a fresh graduate with a Mechanical Engineering background. He was shortly hired by the Ministry of Water and Electricity, and would often work on night shifts at power stations and substations. Interestingly, although the PLO schools that Yasin attended as a child had dissolved by the late 70s, PLO involvement in Kuwait was still strong. “I remember paying a percentage of my salary to the PLO and so did my other Palestinian friends. Although we were fresh graduates with starting salaries, we had no problems contributing and playing a part”. The Gulf War was a devastating blow to Palestinians in Kuwait as up to 500,000 Palestinians were forced to leave directly or indirectly due to the support Palestinian President Yasin Arafat to the invasion of Kuwait by Sadaam Hussain. Yasin for instance does not completely agree with this and states “the main reason Palestinians were in one way or another forced to leave Kuwait was because the growing support Kuwait has been providing Palestinians and the thriving on the political and social Palestinian scene in Kuwait, not just a stupid decision made by our President”. Yasin did not leave Kuwait and considered that although he was a patriotic Palestinian, he was also devoted to his new home town Kuwait. Yasin continued working in the ministry although he does point out that life as a Palestinian was not easy after the invasion and the privileges they once enjoyed in Kuwait were beginning to change. “No matter what pressure I faced at work, I always made sure that I was vocal and upfront about my identity. This is a big part of who I am and no political situation will change that. We are hardworking, diligent and take our work very seriously. We came to Kuwait with nothing and we proved that with our hard work, anything is possible...I grew up with the determination that was engrained in me because the cause is a big part of my daily life and I will make sure to put every effort I can to do so”.



Yasin continued living in Kuwait working for one other organization until he migrated to Australia in 1995, where he continued his education and worked as an engineer in one of the construction firms in Sydney. He left Australia in 1998 and resided back in Kuwait but continuously visits Sydney where some of his kids reside.

On the values he has learnt being a Palestinian and an Australia, Yasin with great enthusiasm says “I’m very proud of my background as you can see but I’m also proud of being Australian as well. I think working and studying in Australia has taught me that the Nakba is a big part of my life and the values I have learnt growing up still determine my course of actions. Being a Palestinian is a part of my identity I never want to hide....it is the reason for my determination, my hard work, my diligent work, my spiritual connection to anything I do because it is a part of me that is so deeply engrained it can never be removed. I think through life I have learnt that I always have to prove myself and this has affected me in the workplace...I express myself with pride and my values are a major reflection of who I am. I would not have accomplished what I did today if it wasn’t for the ethic I learnt from being stateless, with no security and feeling the lack of belonging”.

## *Rabih*

Rabih's parents were born in Nablus, Palestine and his father migrated to Kuwait in the early 1950s in search for a better life for his wife and his kids. Rabih's parents lived in Kuwait for over 30 years until they decided to relocate to Jordan in fear of political pressure in the region. Rabih spent 8 years of his childhood in Kuwait but the majority of his life was spent in Jordan. Rabih has been living permanently in Australia for the past few years with his wife and kids.

Rabih recalls the stories narrated by his father about the life before Nakba, where Palestine was a major business, literary and arts hub, with a very strong sense of community amongst its many historic cities and villages. Although the Nakba had devastating effects on various areas of Palestine, and more than 450 villages were destroyed, his home city of Nablus was not affected as it belonged to the region of the West Bank. Rabih's father was young when the war broke out but in the early 1950s, he decided with the help of friends and family in Kuwait to relocate in search of better economic opportunities as other young Palestinian men had done at that time. The economic situation in Palestine was crumbling and because it was common for men to support not only their family (wife and children) but also the immediate family including the mother, father, brothers and sisters. In the case of Rabih's father, given that he was the eldest and was orphaned at a very young age, he was responsible not only for his family, and immediate family but also the extended family that included uncles, aunts and cousins. The financial pressure burdened him and his only choice was to seek employment elsewhere, and Kuwait, that has just experienced a massive oil boom was the optimum choice.

Rabih's father was nostalgic and found it difficult to adapt to Kuwait due to the difference in culture, climate, and often found himself sleeping on the streets because any money he saved was ultimately reserved for his family back home. It is easy to get a sense from Rabih that his father was a very hard working man, and like many Palestinians living in a very collective society, put the needs of others before himself. It is perhaps why Palestinians are often well known for being very serious at work given that the early generation that escaped the Nakba had very little room to think of themselves let alone spare any money. It was interesting to listen to Rabih's account of his father as a man "that matured quickly", because this concept is not entirely foreign to myself. I have often heard stories of boys as young as 12 or 13 working 2 or 3 jobs to support several members of the family during the first couple of years after the Nakba given that the economic situation was in a dire condition. The idea of migrating to the gulf was seen by Rabih's father along with other Palestinian men and their families as a temporary step, and that the hope of returning home was still present. Little did Rabih's father know that this hope began to diminish and the idea of returning home was seen as near impossible. It was after these changes in the "status of hope" as I understood it that Palestinians began to think of making a "home outside of home", and Kuwait at the time was the optimum location. The money was good, and the country was in dire need of infrastructure planning given the fact that it was a Bedouin dominated desert with no modern landmarks but it had one major privilege: liquid gold. Palestinians in Kuwait took advantage of the situation in Kuwait and began using their qualifications and experience in assisting of the building a new country from scratch. Palestinians have always valued education and a great influx of teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers etc entered Kuwait for that very reason. Kuwait was at the time beginning to look like a home away from home they always longed for.

Rabih tells me of his childhood and describes it as a "normal childhood with very strict parents". Rabih recalls that as a child, he did not see much of his father as he worked very long hours to provide for his family. When asked if his father ever spoke of stories of Palestine, he said "although my dad never used to tell us a lot of stories, he did lecture us a lot about education because he always linked it to hard work and persistence. My dad stressed that we use our energy when we are young to the maximum because we would never know where we will end up. This is the fate of us Palestinians. Not only do we have to work extra hard, we don't know where we will end up and we don't know if we will be accepted or not". The idea of being afraid of not being able to be accepted was common in the narrative of Palestinians because of the overwhelming political tension they faced. Many countries, particularly in the Arab world, refused to take on more Palestinians as there were demographic threats, political threats and instability. Palestinians often saw this as a sign to want to work hard in every situation they were thrown

in. Rabih explained to me how his father retired at a very young age “my father retired when he was 45 because he did not want to be in a situation where he may lose his residency or his job in a foreign country. So he worked extra hard and saved up money to feel the sense of security”.

Rabih was asked what he thought of his father and other members of the working class while he was growing up and he reflected by saying “Palestinians were treated very well in Kuwait. They were given their freedom as foreigners. And I think it was well known around the region that Palestinians deliver and they are extremely hardworking. We had this reputation. I think it is the insecurity that really pushed them. They didn’t get support from other countries. Palestinians take their work very seriously and I think they want to make a point to the international community and that eventually became their motive...”. Perhaps it is the combination of desperation, insecurity, rejection, instability and statelessness that drove Palestinians to over compensate for their losses and this was heavily reflected in their work ethic.

Rabih also reflected on the concept of being a foreigner everywhere he went and remembered his parents addressing this issue “my parents told me no matter what we would always be foreigners and that we can be deported at anytime...I think that’s why my dad sold his business because he just didn’t feel he belonged anymore...I think he started to feel the international pressure of politics and unfortunately paid the price”.

Rabih’s teenage years were dominated by academic competitiveness. He often felt that he wanted to prove to his fellow class mates and teachers that “our country was a lot more advanced than many countries in the Middle East and when the land was taken away from us, we wanted to show that we have the capacity, the competency, the ability to continue and survive...we simply are driven to make a point and the energy was directed in the stress of education”.

Displacement and the Nakba have always been at the forefront of Rabih’s upbringing although not in the most direct of ways. His fathers lectures on the need to distinguish himself, to create opportunities and to stand out were values his father instilled in him at a very young age and these were major drivers to why he believed he had to display a great sense of work ethic no matter where he worked. Rabih reminded me that “we needed to always compensate and even overcompensate...we always need to go that extra mile...we needed to always look for security and the only way we could achieve this is by working hard...and being displacement allowed me to be more exposed in the work place and in my professional life”.

Rabih’s self-identity evidently played a major role in his professional life. Rabih states “my history pushed me forward. We struggled a lot to make a good impression and regain the power and the glory before the nakba. I always want to give the impression that despite the struggle, Palestinians have channeled this energy in hard work, honest work by being very serious and sincere especially in my professional community. I think there’s a message I want to always deliver in my work about my heritage and history”.

Since his move to Sydney, Rabih did encounter some difficulties in finding himself and finding what gives him meaning and purpose in his consulting business. “I often find that the more I speak about my culture, the more people understand the struggle we went through and how that affected us in work and how that drives me to do better and stand out. Sometimes with the lack of the sense of belonging, it can be hard so I think we always try extra hard to belong and I think we are used to this type of life. I think the Palestinian case is different due to its complexity...the political, religious and cultural dimensions...”.

Rabih did at the end admit that his sense of identity has in fact changed over the past few years and that he credits his wife for boosting that sense of identity although it is quite evident from his life accounts that the struggle of Palestinians is deeply engrained in him, even in the most indirect ways.

## *Amir*

Amir is the youngest of all the participants in this study. Amir's grandparents migrated from the villages of Elar, Tulkarem (paternal) and Qalqeelya, Jenin (maternal) to Kuwait in the 1960s. His father moved to Kuwait as a child and his mother was born in Kuwait, and they and the extended family resided in Kuwait until the onset of the first Gulf War. They later relocated to Jordan, and after his parents married, they began to apply for migration to Australia. Amir was born in 1994 in Sydney, Australia but his family moved to the United Arab Emirates when Amir was just 3 years of age. He continued his education in the UAE, visited Australia frequently, but moved back in 2012 to complete his studies in Software Engineering at the University of Sydney and has been living here permanently since then.

Amir did not have much to say about his childhood, despite the fact that he is usually a talkative and social young man. But there is one striking factor he does recall about his childhood and it is the extreme academically focused household he grew up in. Amir did not have many interests as a child beside playing soccer with his friends and the reason is his parents dictated that any time is to be spent studying. His father, an engineer and his mother, a house wife, instilled the importance of education in Amir as a young child.

Amir admits that he had a very limited social circle growing up and admitted the he did not like mingling with a lot of people. A very social and outgoing young man had suddenly become shy and reserved during the interview, he did not do much of the talking unless probed with multiple questions. When asked about what he understood of his identity as a child, Amir had an interesting response, "I always identified as the Australian among my Arab friends and as the Arab amongst his Australian friends". He admittedly explained that he understood the concept of having "multiple identities" although that did create some confusion for him. He did have a sense of what it is like to be a Palestinian at quite a young age, 6 or 7 as he recalls, but he did not understand the burden of the history of the struggle. As a result of this confusion and due to the complexity of the nature of the identity itself, Amir subsequently did not feel a connection to any place. Although he always admitted that he is a Palestinian, depending on his social context, he always felt like he never belonged to either Palestine, Australia or the UAE where he spent the majority of his lifetime and where his mother, father and siblings currently reside. Amir feels that once he physically leaves a place, it becomes just a matter of memories in the back of his mind, and as soon as he lives in another country, new memories. Such comments made me wonder whether the burden of Palestinian history and the struggle is non-existent in the younger generation who were not directly impacted by the Nakba. Although this is the sense I get from interviewing Amir, he does however mention that he always gravitated towards Palestinian friends because "we had something in common which is we had a country that isn't ours anymore, but I didn't think it made a significant difference to who they were growing up and I don't think it is an important part of their identity nor for myself".

Amir did not shy away from revealing to me that the values he grew up with were not necessarily values he related to being Palestinian, but rather from being a Muslim, and he consequently applies these values in his current workplace as well. Value such as thinking of the less fortunate and being generous with those that cannot afford it are values he still follows in his workplace but does not credit his history or the struggle of Palestinians to it.

Amir currently works as a part time software engineering research assistant and takes pride in the fact that his current job involves assisting 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries in software development. Amir does not feel that being of a Palestinian background has affected him in the workplace and admits it is not something he thinks about and it is of very little significance to his professional life.

When asked about what motivates him or gives him a sense of meaning and purpose at work, he replied by saying "the idea of helping 3<sup>rd</sup> world people using technology they do not have access to. It helps 3<sup>rd</sup> world employees find better jobs". He does find his job a part of an exciting phase of his life but finds that the monetary benefits of his work is what he is aiming for and rarely thinks of "meaningful" work at the moment.

At the end of the conversation, seeing that Ahmeds answers were short and not very detailed, I asked him “who are you?”, he replied “I’m just a human being. I don’t really have a stable identity. It’s a bit fragmented. My different backgrounds affected who I am now. Being Palestinian is in the background. I can’t say it drives me significantly in anyway. I don’t have the sense of belonging especially because I didn’t experience it [Nakba/struggle] and didn’t go through it”. Interestingly, Amir compares himself to his older sister who he admits was brought up in the same manner who has a much stronger sense of belonging than himself, making me question whether the tendency to identify with one’s history can be different within the same family members? Amir also brings about a very significant point which is he believes that events that shape him in any way or form need to be experiences he has been through and not passed down through stories no matter how tragic or how traumatic. Amir also points out that he finds it difficult to relate to something he did not experience although he did admit that he has always wanted to know more. Amir further validates his points by highlighting that he did not “start from zero” and that the real struggle was faced by his parents and not himself and highlights that the sense of achievement passed on from his parents is actually parallel to his ideology. Amir’s ideology revolves around a more “laid back” approach to achievement and admits that this changed once he moved to Australia. Amir also admits that he is not one to disclose any information about his identity at work and believes everyone decides which part of their identity to reveal or conceal.

This interview with Amir, a striving young man towards the end of his engineering degree, was indeed an eye opener. It made me question to what extent can a historical and catastrophic event such as the Nakba affect individuals in various age ranges? It made me question whether values passed down from previous generations can pause at one generation and take on a different path? Does this hold true for all Palestinian-Australians of his generation? The concept of having a fragmented identity was so foreign to me and witnessing it first handedly from Amir’s revelations really opened my eyes to how different aspects of identity affect us in remarkably different ways. From my understanding of this conversation with Amir, he does not seem to regard his Palestinian history as a significant constituent of who he is, and this was evident in the way in which he responded to my questions.

## *Mike*

Mike Halaweh is 31 years old and was born in Saudi Arabia and spent the majority of his life (17 years) between the capital city, Riyadh, and one of the Islamic holy cities, Madina before moving to Jordan for 5 years living between Amman (the capital) and Irbid (the second largest in Jordan). He later moved to Dubai, UAE for just under 2 years and then finally migrated to Australia 3 and a half years ago. Mike's parents were born in Jordan, and his fathers origins hail from Nablus, and his mothers from Safad. His paternal grandmother is Turkish and his maternal grandmother is Syrian. As soon as he told me of his maternal side's story, he was quick to mention that his mothers family did not feel welcomed in Syria and subsequently moved to Amman, Jordan and have been there since. Mike also mentioned that his paternal grandparents were not heavily influenced by the Nakba as were other cities in the West Bank, but did of course feel the blow indirectly.

Mike spent the majority of his life in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and views it at as "good system" to live in but admits that it is not designed for foreigners to live there permanently, "ultimately you have to leave as an expat", he stated. Mikes father was a doctor and worked for the Police Academy in Riyadh while his mother was a teacher and both had currently retired. Mike did not seem to have experienced any form of direct or indirect racism in Saudi Arabia and attended a regular public school in one of Riyadh's compounds (generally only occupied by expats).

Mike grew up with a lack of the sense of belonging for a variety of reasons. His parents rarely spoke of stories that would have significantly contributed to the formation of his Palestinian identity, and his family is currently scattered between Australia, Jordan, Canada, Central Africa and KSA. He compared his father to his uncle who regularly spoke of Palestine and his memories of the homeland, the good, the bad and the ugly. Mike also mentions that his parents traveled to Palestine far less than his uncle counterparts and that affected their tendency to tell stories. They did however, particularly his father, often give their opinions on Palestinian political matters. Mike also grew up understanding that his mother did not necessarily identify as a Palestinian, given the fact that she is half Syrian and was born and raised in Amman, Jordan.

Mike seems to have a special understanding of what it means to be a Palestinian. "to be called a Palestinian, I feel you have to have a certain understanding of the conflict. Growing up outside of Palestine makes me "kind of Palestinian" but I wouldn't say completely. Palestine has always been a topic of conversation in school and it's a topic that stirs emotions and empathy. The real challenge was mainly in uni. I was at the Jordan University of Science and Technology where is was more tolerant [in comparison to other universities] and a lot more diverse. For example when I moved to Australia, I was faced with the Israeli narrative and I'm always on the defense to defend my narrative...my right to rebutle". Interestingly, perhaps the idea of not growing up in Palestine per se affected Mike's notion of what he understood as being a Palestinian. However, being a Jordanian citizen as well perhaps propelled him to refer to himself as a Jordanian in some situations. "In KSA, I was Jordanian. I tell people I'm Jordanian. I didn't really tell people I was originally Palestinian and I identified with people who had similar experiences to myself", he remembers, however, he did befriend friends who "maintained their heritage".

When asked about his academic life, Mike explains to me that he believes minorities are never average in their academic performance, but rather higher or lower. This struck a cord with me. Did it depend on the hardship faced by the minorities or is it the determination to prove ones competency? Mike did explain that although Palestinians are known for stressing high academic performance, it made a difference whether a person was stateless or holds a passport of some sort. For instance, Mike feels that although his country is technically stateless, he does hold a Jordanian passport and will soon become an Australian citizen. The safety net, according to Mike, alleviates some of that constant struggle to always achieve higher. When he compared himself to his brother in law, who does not belong to any state and only carries a basic travel document, he says the struggle is real as academic performance is not a matter of choice, but a deciding factor is receiving university acceptances, scholarships etc. I have personally met Palestinians from Gaza, refugees in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan that are stateless but only hold

temporary passports for the sole purpose of traveling. They have been denied the right to a nationality although it is clearly mentioned in the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Mike could not exactly pin point if his parents instilling the importance of academic performance is that of Palestinian pride or just pride in general, given that they are both university graduates but does state that the Palestinian struggle “did implicitly inspire us to do better”. He also admit that this thought never occurred to him.

Mike last city of residence was Dubai, UAE and has been living in Australia for just over 3 years. Mike admits that he is always on the move and does not feel a sense of belonging to any place he lives in. He clearly states that being an expat is a major part of his identity, and that his idea of belonging is less to a physical place but rather belonging to people. Mike also mentions that this has actually brought him closer to his scattered family, and that it empowered him although he is quick to admit that it does not compensate physical interaction at all. Mike does ponder at the idea of settling down in a place permanently, but recalls that Jordan, whom he spent a large part of life in, not a place for settling down due to the fact that he never really belonged there. Mike reflects “Jordan is a good place to grow up in as a refugee...but there is a bit that tells you that you don’t belong there. For a Palestinian, there is a glass ceiling. You can be treated equally and fairly to an extent but there is a price for leaving. The social, financial aspect. For some people, they just want the idea of having a passport that makes moving easier. Ironically, it is easier to go back to Palestine as an Australian rather than a Jordanian!”.

Mike explains his move to Australia in a rather interesting manner. He describes it in 2 phases: the blending in and blending out which caught my attention. “Blending in”, the first stage, is characterized by trying to fit in where he compromised on certain things that are important to him to be able to fit in and the “blending out”, the second stage, is highlighted by his ability to stand out and let people know who he is and what he stands for. I found this particularly interesting for a person of several layers to his identity. Perhaps the first concern for Mike moving to Australia and starting a professional career here was solely focused on trying to blend in and when he was able to achieve this, the true colors of his identity were not only revealed but embraced. Is this what it is like as a foreigner or a person of a minority background? Are certain identities concealed until the person has settled in and blended in? perhaps we should not underestimate the multiple intricate layers that makeup our identities and should not be ignored upon meeting a person.

Mike loves to pursue experiences and it is quite clear from my conversation with him, that this motivates him but does not necessarily give him a sense of meaning or purpose at work. Mike’s current job is not permanent and he does not believe it adds meaning to his life goals. He sees his current job as a financial vehicle or tool, and focuses on the experience of challenge rather than the importance of meaningful work. The idea of having a temporary contractual based job adds no meaning to his overall career, and believes that meaning is just one element of his work and does not define much about the job itself. Mike does admit that although he is not a risk taker, he does continually try to find “himself” and “what suits him” and where “he fits best” but gives very little regard to meaning itself as a significant driver in his work. It was interesting that Mike also does not reveal much about his identity at work, i.e. being a Palestinian, and in fact does not feel the urgency to mention it. Mike also mentions that he like to “control how he expresses his identity” and finds that he refers to himself as a Jordanian rather than a Palestinian at work because as he states “I did not live there I would not know what it is like”. Mike did also change his name legally from Tarek to Mike because he did want to have the ability to fit in and was in no way, according to him, motivated by his loss of identity. Mike stresses during the interview that he like to have the power to control his own narrative and perhaps as he views it, there are certain tools than can help him achieve that. Did the political burden of Palestinian history and struggle manifest its ways in Mike’s professional life? Was it too much to handle? Did it jeopardize his ability to express his identity?

My conversation with Mike did proceed to our discussion on work ethic and what he makes sense of it. Mike does consider himself a hard working person and that this is actually traced back to his years in school. Mike does credit his father and brother as setting examples for such behavior. Mike makes a very interesting point that not only is hard work a strong part of his work ethic, he in fact finds it very

difficult to work with those that do not have a sense of hard work. In fact, he claims that he did not find this “sense of hard work” in Australia. Perhaps this could be due to the laid back Australian culture which is often manifested in the professional setting as well. Or perhaps, minorities place heavier emphasis on hard work.

Mike has mentioned previously that he does not find meaning from his work particularly due to the fact that it is temporary and contractual in nature but looks to find meaning elsewhere. He admits “since I didn’t grow up in a democracy I didn’t really know the value of contributing back to society...and since moving here...I found that social activism gives me a lot of meaning. It is something I believe in. I get a lot of meaning from there, and from being a productive citizen. I love paying taxes. It makes me feel like I am a member of a community and a sense of connectedness is something I really value. Its not just the fact that my current work is temporary but it is also the fact that I do not like the culture here. I value persona contribution, recognition, team work, challenge, and these are very important to me. They drive who I choose to be...even the people I relate to...the people I choose to spend time in the pub with....but I find that activities outside of work really gives me meaning at work...participating in things I’m convinced in like the Palestinian cause or islamophobia give me a lot of drive at work. I don’t always connect the two, depending on my job. I do believe that the pursuit of happiness is the pursuit of meaning. They don’t really compensate each other. I just feel more in harmony and in sync at work”. This was a very revealing part of our conversation and it gave me a sense into how much temporary work destroys the sense of meaning at work, and how in Mike’s case, he looks outside the professional setting to bring back meaning to his work. It also highlighted how much Mike searches for an organizational culture that appreciates the individual effort exerted by the individual and how such culture is crucial for the wellbeing of the individual.

Mike concludes that “under the hood, being Palestinian is for me” and that he does not see an obvious relevance on the outside. He reveals that it is a part of him and affects him on a daily basis but it is not something that plays a role on a superficial and exposed level. Mike cannot speculate how his identity will affect him in the future but predicts that perhaps, if he can be in a place where he can express himself as a Palestinian, and where his sense of belonging can be heightened, he can be express more of himself.



## *Imad*

Ibrahim's maternal grandparents were forced to migrate from their home city of Haifa in Northern Palestine to Libya, where his mother was born, and Lebanon, where they spent the majority of their lifetime. His father on the other hand was born in the West Bank city of Bain Na'een, on the outskirts of Hebron.

Imad was born in 1979 in Beirut but does not recall much of his lifetime in Lebanon as he moved at the age of 3. Imad speaks of his childhood with a great deal of sadness in his eyes and he takes me on the difficult journey his family had to endure. Ibrahim's father's political activities took a major toll on his family and was the main reason he never felt stable in any country he lived in. Ibrahim's father was deported and exiled by the Israelis to Germany and various other locations such as Jordan, Iraq, and Tunisia. Both of Ibrahim's parents were involved with the PLO, and so the idea of political activeness was deeply engrained in his childhood as he witnessed his father enter and leave jail at various stages of his childhood. This left a huge impact on him as he witnessed the injustice of political imprisonment which is sometimes quite difficult to comprehend as a child. Imad admit that life as a child was confusing as most of the time, he could not conceptualize the idea of a parent being jailed and not present in his life. Imad states the "context of life was different...my dad was always exiled and jailed and it was not just the concept of moving...I was a bit aggressive in school...it sounded a bit like I was a bully...I was frustrated because of my dad...". Although there was a sense of confusion witnessing this ordeal as a child, it seems from what Imad says, that he was always aware of the situation and so he did not see it as a burden. He was indeed a social child as he states, and in fact the idea of traveling and the lack of settling made him much more outgoing due to the exposure in his life.

Imad did not experience any change in his life until his adolescent years where he grew tiresome of the traveling and the instability, and yearned for commitment and stability. But the pattern of moving did in fact continue through his early adolescent years as he started moved from Jordan to the American University of Beirut but ended up transferring to Cyprus and then to the US and then Beirzet (West Bank). His university days were enjoyable as he started to understand more about himself although Imad did admit that he never concealed his identity despite his father's history. One of the main reason Imad relocated to the US was the enormous cultural pressure he faced but he did mention that in the US, there was no interest where Imad was from nor what his heritage was. For a young man like Ibrahim, this could be both a blessing in terms of racism and discrimination but a could also have another side as it would not give him a chance to explore his identity. Although it was easy for Imad to move and adapt, he did desperately want to find himself although never grasped what it is he was looking for. I could sense his confusion and hesitation is saying so, and it was at that moment that I understood the burden Imad was carrying around his whole life and how the lack of stability was beginning to take a toll on him.

Ibrahim's father was exiled from Palestine until the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993, which granted his father the right to return to Palestine. When I asked Imad how his father felt returning to Palestine, he found it hard to find the words to convey his father's emotions. "He was ecstatic. It was what he had worked for his entire life", Imad told me as I could see the pain in his eyes as he said it. I began to understand why. The Palestine his father left was not the same when he had returned. "My father was very happy to be back because it is what he has been fighting for his whole life...but life in Palestine is very hard because of the occupation....people have very little vision and stability...everything is connected to the occupation in every single aspect...in Palestine you can't really separate work and life...they're embedded in each other. There was really no work life for him [father] and no professional life which is hard", Imad explained to me in sorrow and despair.

Imad worked for a few years in Palestine as he returned from finishing his university studies and explained to me what life was like as a professional by saying "it is different from anything I have ever experienced. I didn't compare it to other places but was always aware of the difference. It was a tough life. I was there for 3-4 years. I had zero motivation. It was an unhappy place. Work was very

unmeaningful. There was nothing beneficial. I didn't feel the drive. Nobody had sophisticated goals. I can fit in but I didn't enjoy it. So I left the organization and my father and I started thinking about starting a date company. That was very difficult. The Israelis make it difficult for Palestinians to start their own projects let alone grow. Even the Palestinian Authority was not helpful. It was a family business and we joined with other established families. We were frustrated. We were so spiritually connected to the project. I was really in favor of doing something as a family which we were never able to do. This job was a relief. I loved it. I loved seeing it successful. It gave me a sense of passion and I felt a sense of connection to the farming aspect, and a spiritual connection. I was sad we had to join with other families. I wanted this to be our project. It was suffocating.. we had no other options. We had lost the family identity aspect of the project". It was quite evident to see the sorrow and sadness in his tone. His return to Palestine was probably not what he had expected. An Israeli occupier on one side and another incompetent Palestinian regime on another side, this was not the Palestine of his dreams. The ability to find meaning, a spiritual connection and a sense of pride was so close in his family project but the tension of occupation could not make that possible, leaving him hopeless and with little positivity for the future.

His move to Australia was also not an easy one as it was tangled with family issues but he is determined to make the date business flourish. He stresses the importance of identity, connection and pride in his path to continue this project. Imad tells me that he has never felt more connected to a job that he does right now and so desperately wants to show that a Palestinian can make not despite of the difficulties but because of them. He finds a spiritual connection in a project that enables him to give back to the Palestinian community. although Imad does admit that it is hard for him to commit and having a stable vision is not always easy and that his history made it this hard, he is nonetheless a proud Palestinian. He finds it difficult to nominate a certain aspect that defines his belongingness whether it is religion or a country of residence, but there is one aspect he believes has never changed and it is growing up as a Palestinian.

## *Mazen*

Mazen's father migrated to Kuwait from the small village of Seelit-Al-Dhaher in 1952 leaving behind his wife and kids in search for better economic opportunities. Kuwait was the country of dreams for many Palestinians that had just witnessed the hardship of the Nakba. His mother joined his father in 1962 and subsequently they welcomed Mazen in 1963.

Mazen's childhood was a tough one financially. His father's ill-timed and ill-advised investment decisions left the family in poverty. In return, his father struggled in paying school fees but this left Mazen excelling school, and recalls "I was really good in school and I always was first...I recall appreciating the family situation and working really hard. Working hard was not really a choice. It was a tough life. A lot of competitiveness. For Palestinians, it was a big deal. Always standing out. Education was very important to us since it is what we have left after losing our land. It was our only hope. It was our main focus to compensate for other losses. They [family, community] motivated us to think that this was the only way".

The environment Mazen grew up had a lasting impact on him. Mazen explains to me how the struggle and the social mentality shaped him a lot, particularly as a young child, but was convoluted with the need for personal liberation from cultural pressures. Mazen does reflect that the values he grew up with were shaped by his society but he yearned for something deeper than that: the freedom to think or do what he wanted. He refers to an Arabic word, "Aib", which is commonly used in Arab culture to denote "inappropriate, socially not acceptable", which often haunted him as a child. The curiosity to know more and to step outside the cultural realm was something he had always dreamt of. Although Mazen attended a PLO funded school, a unique model I have not come across in any other country other than Kuwait, he felt that unless one visits and sees with their own eyes, Palestine is not something anyone can relate to directly or understand. According to Mazen, "I visited Palestine for the first time when I was 12...it hit me...although school wise it was all about Palestine because it was a PLO funded school and everyone was Palestinian. Although we lived in poverty, it wasn't like the struggle of our family in Palestine". However, Mazen did reflect that when his eldest brother returned from his studies in Algeria, he started to feel the sense of connection with Palestine, perhaps because his brother decided to join the PLO.

I asked Mazen what he could make of the term "displacement" and what did he understand with all its convoluted aspects. Mazen explained to me that he believes the discrimination helped them [Palestinians] in understanding that they did not belong. For instance, he recalls that although he excelled in school and was on the track to becoming a professional soccer player, he was denied the opportunity to join the local soccer clubs because the priority was granted to the locals, the Kuwaitis. This is when the idea of being a "guest" pondered his mind. The notion that he was not to be welcomed and treated just like everyone else coupled with the fact that Palestinians were denied returning to their homeland made Mazen wonder if he will ever fit in or ever feel the sense of belonging. Were Palestinians meant to never belong?

Mazen discovered more about himself as he started his university degree in the discipline of IT. He started to become politically active at Kuwait University where Palestinian students, to no surprise, made up a large segment of the student demographics. There were 3000 students and he was heavily engaged in politics, which drastically impacted his identity as he started to shift towards the secular left end of the spectrum. Mazen, during, and after the conversation proudly spoke of his communist, secular, leftist political and atheistic ideologies, which is not uncommon for a young Palestinian man who grew up in the 70s when this end of the spectrum dominated Palestinian ideology. Mazen recalls "I use those theories to analyze the world and my surroundings. I was really happy with the space I was given to explore my way of thinking and I was affected by that healthy environment".

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait took a massive blow on Mazen's personal and professional life as a Telecommunications Engineer. Many Palestinians lost their jobs as a result of their persecution by the Kuwaiti government as a response to the Palestinian leader's stance on the invasion, i.e., supporting it. This had affected many Palestinians living in Kuwait as some, denied Kuwaiti support for the Palestinian

cause and sided with who they called, a hero: Sadaam. Other Palestinians, perhaps the larger segment, saw this as a “political game” to drive Palestinians out of Kuwait as they began to establish a well educated, and well respected community. Mazen struggled financially, resorting to fixing ACs for a living in a situation very sensitive and unfavorable towards Palestinians. Mazen traveled from one country to another trying to settle down financially, particularly that he at that point had a family to take care of. Every gulf country he lived in backfired with even further racism, both implicit and explicit. The burden of the Nakba and displacement, at that point, had left him in a dire need to belong somewhere. The desperation left him feeling pessimistic and disappointed and he knew he had to search for a place he could raise his children in no fear of being persecuted.

Moving to Australia was not an easy move as he did not have any family here, but he was able to land a decent job not long after arriving in Australia. There was one incident that I believe, by his tone and description, left an impact on Mazen. An argument between himself and one of his ex supervisors left him shouting at him and then an epiphany hit him “I am equal to you”, Mazen thought, which is foreign to any thought he had ever had in the past. He never felt equal, or treated fairly, but rather a second citizen that is yet to find another home. His professional life in Australia was beginning to take its own shape, having landed jobs in organizations such as Cisco, he felt like he was “at the top of his game” and he took work very seriously. Mazen reflected that although he does not credit his hard work to being Palestinian, but he does admit that image was important to Palestinians and he was determined to make a note of that. Mazen reflects “I always like to keep the image that Palestinians are hardworking, responsible, and love their work they were mistreated by many people”. Mazen highlighted that the year 2000 Australian census revealed that Palestinians were 3x more professional in their occupations than other Australians and was quick to mention that he will never forget these statistics. He explained how he found these statistics on the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) website but that the statistics were later removed. He also compared Palestinians to their neighboring Lebanese Australians, who he states, had half the level of professional occupation as Australians. While I could not confirm nor deny these statistics, he explained that it is the pursuit of education as the only constant in Palestinian lives is what he believes contributed to these statistics and “the hardship you went through that defines you”.

Mazen worked for Cisco for roughly 3.5 years but moved to contracting as he values freedom and needed to leave “the pressure cycle at work”. The ability to work freely as a contractor gave him that sense of connection to his work he was missing from his previous job. The personal achievement, as he states, is a major aspect of his work and directly influences his drive at work. Mazen made an interesting point about individualism in Australia stating “the system here in Australia focuses on the individual level, I think hardship can create better individuals at work but when lost in system of chaos, it goes unrecognizable. But here, it creates better individuals...more specialization...less heroes and a more systems approach”. This particular statement made me ponder about the intersectionality of identity and an individualistic society. Perhaps the hardship endured by minorities that has affected their sense of belonging and security can be manifested positively in individualistic societies. Perhaps the embodiment of the Nakba or any other diasporic experience can reflect positively in a society built on individual efforts. How can attitudes like this affect the culture of an organization? Could it play a role in the expression of identity and spirituality? Could it contribute far greater than we thought?

Mazen also reflected that his Palestinian identity have also influenced his choice of business initiatives and that he prioritizes giving back to the public and charities whenever he is capable of doing so.

## *Isam*

During the time of the Nakba, Isam's grandfather was working for the British Government in what was at the time, Mandatory Palestine. By 1948, Isam's Jerusalemite's family was forced out of their hometown of Jerusalem, and were forced to migrate to Jericho, roughly 25 kilometers away. His father's work and political tension left them traveling between Jericho and Jerusalem, and subsequently moved to Amman, Jordan where Isam was born in 1958. However, Isam's family did move back to Jerusalem for a few years and he remained in Jerusalem until 1966, having attended a church school in Jabal El Tour. Isam spent the majority of his life in Jordan until 1976 when he traveled to Manchester to complete his education in civil engineering. He traveled extensively after his graduation to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, UAE but has been living on and off in Australia since 1991. He finally settled down in Sydney 16 years ago.

Isam took me on a journey of his childhood in Jordan and explained to me what his life was like in Amman, the capital. The very first aspect of his childhood he remembered was the lack of belonging in Jordan and he was quick to explain how he always felt different from his counterpart Jordanian nationals. He would often be questioned in the airport about his ethnic background. This question, however, signaled a trap, as he explained to me after the interview, and any response can provoke tension. If a person, of Palestinian origin claims they are "Jordanian", then a follow up question proceeds asking "No. where are you *originally* from?", pressuring the person to identify their original hometown. If the person states they are "Palestinian", then they might face further discrimination or minor harassment that may leave the person uncomfortable. Furthermore, this answer was seen as a display of treachery to the Kingdom that granted him/her the citizenship in a time of hardship for Palestinians. However, if the person continues to stress that they are "Jordanian", then this also poses room for further harassment as the person clearly denied their Palestinian identity, and often follows with more statements with an inferiority/superiority connotation.

Isam's household was full of stories of expulsion, hardship, diaspora and identity. He understood from a very early age the difference between being Palestinian and Jordanian although they grew up going to the same schools, living in the same neighborhoods and socializing in the same social circles. But there was something separating both communities, and it was mainly related to the political tension, the refugee status of many Palestinians and the demographic changes and threat posed by Palestinians in Jordan. However Isam did explain that relatively speaking, he did not struggle much as a Palestinian child in Jordan, and that it was mainly the Palestinians with temporary passports and those politically involved in the PLO that faced the most difficulties. Interestingly, Isam did recall how the establishment of the PLO in 1964, which focused on liberating Palestine through an armed struggle, played a crucial role in reigniting the Palestinian identity especially how by 1964, it had been 16 years since Palestinians had been forced to migrate, exiled or ethnically cleansed from their homeland.

Isam's parents, just like other Palestinian parents, held education with a great value. And in fact, in Jordan, Palestinians dominated universities because the majority of Jordanians (who trace their origins from tribal Bedouin backgrounds), were mainly farmers on the land they owned with their families. Isam recalls his father stating that "education was his only weapon" and that completing a university degree was never "an option" in his household.

Isam reflected on his time in England and recalled that he did not belong to any student unions but was very studious and extremely social and enjoyed living an independent life as a young man in England. He in fact did not wish to return to Jordan as he enjoyed the freedom. It was interesting to learn in hindsight, that Isam was not politically active, given his current status (more later).

Isam spent his professional life in various countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Qatar, UAE, Jordan and Australia. His life in Saudi Arabia, despite the obvious restrictions, was relatively easy and he and his family lived a privileged life in comparison to other Palestinians in Saudi Arabia that hold temporary passports or travel documents. However, as with many other communities in Saudi Arabia, Palestinians were never to allowed to discuss politics or the Palestinian cause in public. Any political discussion or activity was viewed as enticing tension in the strict Islamic Maysarchy. Palestinians in Saudi Arabia did

not enjoy the freedom as their neighboring country Kuwait, and any Palestinian activities such as rallies, fund raisers, lectures, conferences, public talks and much more were strictly forbidden. From my personal experience of living in Saudi Arabia, not much has changed in present day.

Working with the army at a young age assisted Isam in adjusting easily to work environments and in fact states that his experience was overall a positive one. Isam had the choice of working for the Jordanian army but refused because of Palestinian origin for several reasons such as a glass ceiling for Palestinians and the inability to fully express his identity to name a few. While discussing his past work experiences, I asked Isam if his jobs gave him meaning and he responded by saying “all my jobs were meaningful. They all played a role in building my career. Every job had a different direction but all played a role towards my career...”. However, the meaningfulness he received from his jobs lacked one major aspect: his desire to take control of his own work. Isam had always dreamed of starting his own business and achieving such a dream would be the epitome of meaningfulness in his professional life – the ability to be his own boss!

Isam spent all of his efforts trying to establish his business and admittedly, put his Palestinian social and political involvement on hold. However, it has been for a while his aim to be politically active because as he recalls “we are ambassadors of our country” and he was determined to make a change, even on an individual level. Isam credited the current Palestinian ambassador for enticing the idea of lobbying and Isam has been active with the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network for just over 6 years, and is currently the vice president. His responsibilities include policy lobbying and pressuring local Australian politicians to change their stance towards Palestine, starting with Australia’s lack of recognition for Palestine as a state.

Isam traveled back to Palestine 41 years after leaving and the instant memory of seeing his homeland occupied as an adult initiated a greater sense of responsibility as Isam spends a great deal of time outside his work hours in community activities which as he told me after the interview, keep his passion, drive and motivation at work alive.

Although Isam does identify as an Palestinian-Australian, the Palestinian aspect of his identity is remarkably evident. He explicitly stated that he would like to retire in his home city of Jerusalem, and it is where Isam feels the greatest connection. He interestingly also pointed out that he and his family would reminisce about Palestine and about the years he never lived there, posing a great question: is connection to the homeland intangible? Or does it necessarily have a physical presence?

## *Appendix C: Ethics Approval Letter*

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
(Research)

Research Office  
Research Hub, Building C5C East  
Macquarie University  
NSW 2109 Australia  
T: +61 (2) 9850 4459  
<http://www.research.mq.edu.au/>  
ABN 90 952 801 237



**MACQUARIE**  
University  
SYDNEY • AUSTRALIA

15 June 2016

Dear Professor Pullen

**Reference No:** 5201600374

**Title:** “An exploratory study of the displaced identities, spirituality and work ethic of Palestinian Australians”

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Your application was considered by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities)).

I am pleased to advise that ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by:

- Macquarie University

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the *National Statement*).

**Standard Conditions of Approval:**

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research>

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.

3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol and associated documents must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on 9850 4194 or by email [ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au)




The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how\\_to\\_obtain\\_ethics\\_approval/human\\_research\\_ethics](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics)

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karolyn White', written in a cursive style.

**Dr Karolyn White**

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity,

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice*.

**Details of this approval are as follows:**

**Approval Date:** 15 June 2016

The following documentation has been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities):

Documents reviewed	Version no.	Date
Macquarie University Ethics Application Form		Revised version received 14/06/2016
Response addressing the issues raised by the HREC		Received 07/06/2016 & 14/06/2016
Participant Information and Consent Form	2	06/06/2016
Interview Questions	1	14/06/2016

**\*If the document has no version date listed one will be created for you. Please ensure the footer of these documents are updated to include this version date to ensure ongoing version control.**

Phone: +61 9850 1811  
Fax: +61 9850 6140  
Email: [agnieszka.baginska@mq.edu.au](mailto:agnieszka.baginska@mq.edu.au) @ mq.edu.au

Chief Investigator: Professor Alison Pullen

### **Participant Information and Consent Form**

Name of Project:

***“An exploratory study of the displaced identities, spirituality and work ethic of Palestinian Australians”***

You are invited to participate in a study of the displaced identities, spirituality and work ethic of Palestinian-Australians. The purpose of the study is explore the ways in which Palestinians narrate and make sense of their displacement in relation to their self-identity and how this influences their work ethic.

The study is being conducted by Professor Alison Pullen from the faculty of Business and Economics (Department of Marketing and Management). Her contact details are (61-2) 9850 9034, and [alison.pullen@mq.edu.au](mailto:alison.pullen@mq.edu.au).

The project is being conducted to meet the requirements of a MRes degree for Farah Fayyad ([farah.fayyad@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:farah.fayyad@students.mq.edu.au), 0420506779) under the supervision of Professor Alison Pullen.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview expected to last between 1.5 – 2 hours. Audio recordings will be used for transcription processes. No pictures will be taken.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Only the chief investigator and the research student will have access to the data.

A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request, either in hardcopy or by email. The data may be used for future academic publications.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you feel any distress or discomfort, please do not hesitate to contact the chief supervisor. I am able to contact Life Line (13 11 14) or your local GP should you need any extra assistance or experience severe distress.

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)**