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Collective Memory: A Universal Phenomenon the Palestinian Collective Memory as a Case Study

Abstract: This paper discusses the issue of collective memory as a phenomenon experienced by different human civilisations and nations. It attempts to explain the historical events that influenced the collective memory of different human populations over the course of history. It describes some of the examples of the deportation and exoduses of people, and the impacts they had on those people's collective memories. Furthermore, the paper discusses the relationship between collective memory and globalisation. It then presents the Palestinian collective memory as a case study, and shows how the Palestinian culture and heritage has been affected by the 1948 Exodus. The paper attempts also to explain the channels and methods through which Palestinian collective memory is passed down the generations, and how this process is reinforced. Finally, it provides a number of recommendations and methods through which collective memory in general, and the Palestinian one in particular, can be protected and maintained across the various generations.

Key words: collective memory, globalization, exodus, deportation, nakba, oral narration

In light of the dramatic changes and unprecedented transformations the world has gone through over the last decade which included technological advancement, urbanization and globalization, many countries have become concerned about the identity, culture and traditions of their own people. As the world has become some sort of a small village, more and more people, along with their cultures, have mixed. Though in some way positive, cultural exchange and mixing has resulted in some countries' cultures being imposed on others', while other cultures have disappeared or merged into larger, more dominant cultures. In this article, one aspect of social life that has been largely affected by those changes and transformations is the issue of collective memory. The reason why this specific topic has been chosen for this article is that collective memory is crucial to a country's existence. In a quote from her article "Collective Memories",

Karen Sternheimer states that: "Memories seem like one of the most personal aspects of who we are. What we remember, what triggers memories, and how we remember things help define our identities. But memories are more than just personal. They can be something we share collectively too." (Sternheimer, 2012, p. 48). Collective memory defines a society's personality, guarantees its immortality, and serves as the backbone for its culture, traditions, customs and values. A nation's culture is born out of uniqueness and distinction; its own defining features help set it apart from the cultures of other nations (*ibidem*).

Furthermore, collective memory is a universal concept that exists in all corners of the globe and spans the entire history of mankind. For thousands of years, people all over the world have gathered and maintained their own sets of values, traditions and cultures and passed them down to the next generations. However, a fairly recent phenomenon known as "Globalization" swept across the globe destroying many cultures in its way and dominating others. Globalization has been criticized by many as being responsible for dissolving many cultures and collective memories around the world, and on this Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder state in their article titled "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory" that: "Critics of globalization consider it as something that dissolves collective memory and sets up inauthentic and rootless substitutes in its stead" (Ritzer, 1993, p. 26). This meant that whoever owns the power shall have its own culture as the dominant one. Thus, many less developed countries that were invaded by the more developed ones eventually lost some or all of their identities and cultures. However, many nations attempted to fight back to protect what was left of their identities and save them from eternal loss (Levy, Sznajder, 2002, p. 87).

Among those are the Palestinian people who have had their share of suffering, agony and loss. Due to the violent history of their cause, the Palestinians have been threatened in their identity, culture, tradition and collective memory. Therefore, this article will address their collective memory as an example, alongside discussing collective memory as a universal concept.

Despite its relation to social issues, collective memory has been largely associated with political changes, crises and wars across history. Wars are waged mainly due to political reasons such as the interest of developed countries to seize control of other less developed nations. In connection to the above, the interest in the issue of collective memory has also emerged as a result of several global changes at various levels. Such changes in-

cluded the collapse of communism, and the emergence of the unipolar system, the so called “The New World Order” which seeks to impose a new system of international relationships that are mainly based on the imposition of cultural and economic dominance and control over other countries and people in the Third World. In this regard, Edward Said says: “The interest in memory and its study, or more specifically with a desired past that can be restored, is a fraught phenomenon filled with emotions that emerged at the end of the Twentieth Century when unimaginably confusing changes occurred in large societies that included widespread human groups and competing nationalities” (Said, 2002, p. 70–71).

Collective memory has strong connection with political events and global changes that happened and still happen all over the world, and has been subject or a victim of many wars and conflicts over the course of history, including World War I, World War II and many civil wars. For example, during World War I, many Europeans were turned into refugees due to the battles that have been fought between the countries involved. In his article titled “Europe on the Move: Refugees and World War One”, Professor Peter Gatrell talks about the European refugee crisis that took place during World War I and says: “The First World War uprooted millions of European civilians, most of whom were innocent bystanders. The resulting crisis had profound consequences, not only for the individuals directly affected but also for officials and relief workers who attempted to relieve their suffering and for communities that hosted refugees” (Gatrell, 1999, p. 113).

Moreover, Gatrell provides several examples of the Europeans who fled their countries as a result of the war and says: “In August 1914 the Russian occupation of East Prussia caused around one million Germans to flee their homes. Before long, Germany’s occupation of Belgium and northern France, Poland and Lithuania provoked a mass movement of refugees. Austria’s invasion of Serbia resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe as soldiers and civilians sought to escape the occupation regime. In the Russian Empire, non-Russian minorities such as Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Jews were disproportionately concentrated in the western borderlands and thus particularly vulnerable when Germany and Austria invaded. In addition, Tsarist military commanders accused these minorities – falsely – of aiding and abetting the enemy, and deported them to the Russian interior” (*ibidem*).

Furthermore, Gatrell explains that European refugee crisis has been a direct result of two incidents. “Thus the refugee crisis had two main

causes. The first was enemy occupation that persuaded civilians to flee along with retreating troops. (Of course, not all civilians did so.) The second cause was the state's use of force against its own people – in other words, organized deportation” (*ibidem*).

Europeans were not the only people to have experienced exodus and deportation. “In the Ottoman Empire, meanwhile, Turkish troops uprooted Armenians who had lived side by side with their Turkish and Kurdish neighbours for generations, but who were now regarded as the enemy within” (*ibidem*). Other examples of deportation and exodus in the human history include the expulsion of Germans in World War II. “In Romania, from the autumn of 1944, tens of thousands of the Swabian Germans of the Banat, and more from the ancient Saxon communities of Transylvania – long-established outposts of German peasant and mercantile life – loaded their wagons and hitched their horses for the long trek to their ancestral homeland”, says Bernard Wasserstein in his Article “European Refugee Movements After World War Two” (Wasserstein, 2011, p. 67). He adds: “Even before the end of the war the greater part of the German population of East Prussia had fled westwards – although thousands drowned en route, in overloaded ships that sank in the Baltic Sea” (*ibidem*).

Other forms of conflict have also been responsible for the deportation of different people, especially in recent years. Among those were the Libyans who fled the civil war that erupted in Libya in 2011. In this respect, Kristoffer Sorbo explains the situation of the Libyan refugees in his article entitled “Tunisia: UNHCR Helps Tunisia With Refugees in Wake of Libyan Civil War” by stating that: “Despite continued sporadic clashes, the crisis in Libya seems to be slowly coming to a close. However, the aftermath has left thousands of people still stranded – many of them migrant workers that fled when the war started.” Moreover, he gives example on this crisis and says: “One notable example is the refugee camp in Choucha, Tunisia. During the height of the 2011 Libyan civil war, Tunisia absorbed over a million people seeking sanctuary – Choucha alone received upwards of to 18,000 people a day” (Sorbo, 2013, p. 92).

Furthermore, the Syrian people have been a central issue in recent years as their crisis has been unprecedented in terms of the numbers of refugees and victims of the war that is still taking place in Syria. “Nearly 4 million Syrian refugees have fled violence in the country over four years of a civil war that has killed at least 220,000 people,” says Amy Nordrum

in her Article “Syrian Civil War: Number Of Refugees Nears 4 Million, UN Estimates” (Nordrum, 2015). She adds: “An official tally by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees states that there are currently 3.9 million registered Syrian refugees, which is up from about 2.7 million a year ago. Another 7.6 million Syrians remain in the country but are displaced from their homes and 5.5. million Syrian children have been affected by the battles, according to USAID. Many have stopped attending school. The vast majority of Syrian refugees are now in Turkey and Lebanon, though some have also made their way to Jordan, Iraq and North Africa” (*ibidem*).

As it turns out from what have been mentioned above, wars and conflicts have played a major role in the displacement and exodus of people over the course of history. Each of the nations and people that were mentioned earlier as examples in this article had their own distinctive culture, collective memory, tradition, customs and history that have been greatly affected by the conflicts. However, among the aspects of human life that has been substantially affected by wars and conflicts was the issue of collective memory.

Collective memory helps a nation protect its identity and history, its tradition and culture in the face of destruction. On the importance of collective memory as a guardian of a society’s or country’s identity, Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski states in his book “Citizenship and Collective Identity in Europe”: “Collective memory is a social construction that is expected to generate the feeling of continuity and therefore identity in political communities. First, it is based on a narrative interpretation of the past, whose task is to provide a coherent framework for the collective memory. Second, collective memory is constructed among other things through the ‘invention of traditions’, which are remembered collectively in a repetitive and commemorative manner” (Karolewski, 2009, p. 78).

A social group’s identity is constructed with narratives and traditions that are created to give its members a sense of community. The social group may be a small, cohesive unit (like a family) whose members are all known, or it may be an Andersonian “imaginary community” that is based on nationalism. Regardless of the size and complexity of the social group, the group needs to construct and maintain an identity that unites its members. The term ‘collective memory’ is used to describe the stories, artifacts, food and drink, symbols, traditions, images, and music that form the ties that bind members together.

In this article, the Palestinian collective memory will be presented as an example of the concept of collective memory that has been discussed

above. Additionally, global and Palestinian studies that have been conducted on this concept will be addressed here, the role that collective memory has played in reviving the memory among the younger generations, and the mechanisms through which collective memory can be transferred from one generation to another.

What is collective memory?

Collective memory as a concept has been defined and discussed through the works of many scholars and writers. It began with the work of Emile Durkheim. Although never using the term “collective memory”, E. Durkheim noted that societies require continuity and connection with the past to preserve social unity and cohesion. His study of traditional religious traditions suggested that rituals transmitted traditional beliefs, values and norms and that shared rituals provided a sense of “collective effervescence”, a transcendence of the individual and the profane into a united sacred group. E. Durkheim stated that collective thought required individuals to physically join together to create a common experience that was shared by the group. Since the collective effervescence experience required the physical gathering of the community, it was important for groups to devise methods of extending that unity when the group disbanded. He believed that totems, natural items that have been deemed sacred, held immense power and suggested that they provided individuals with a device to individually remember the unity of the effervescent group experience. Although E. Durkheim claimed that the collective effervescence provided the transmittal of the past to the present, his emphasis on collective thought was based upon individual memory and the celebrations and totems that triggered those memories (Durkheim, 1995, p. 16).

Maurice Halbwachs, a student of E. Durkheim, is the first sociologist to use the term “collective memory” and his work is considered the foundational framework for the study of societal remembrance. M. Halbwachs suggested that all individual memory was constructed within social structures and institutions. He claimed that individual private memory is understood only through a group context; these groups may include families, organizations, and nation-states. Halbwachs argued that the only individual memories that are not constructed through the group context are images from dreams. He believed that dreams are different from virtually every other human thought because they lack structure and organization.

Individuals organize and understand events and concepts within a social context, thus they then remember them in a way that “rationally” orders and organizes them through that same social construction. M. Halbwachs stated that every collective memory depends upon specific groups that are delineated by space and time; the group constructs the memory and the individuals do the work of remembering (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 35).

M. Halbwachs further developed the Durkheimian concept of maintenance of effervescence during periods of group isolation and social calm. E. Durkheim stated that totems provided a continual reminder of effervescence to members of the group. M. Halbwachs expanded the idea of totems to include commemorative events that serve as reminders of a collective memory. M. Halbwachs suggested commemorative events were important to reinforce autobiographical memories that he believed faded with time without periodic memory reinforcement. The annual anniversary commemorations of September 11th, gatherings of the survivors, bereaved and other people who did not directly experience the attacks, provide continued memory reinforcement with the roll call of the dead, bagpipes, recitations and floral offerings (*ibidem*).

Finally, M. Halbwachs departed from a Durkheimian approach by adopting an instrumental presentist approach to collective memory. A presentist approach states that social constructions of memory are influenced by the needs of the present. M. Halbwachs stated that collective memory is shaped by present issues and understandings (*ibidem*). Groups select different memories to explain current issues and concerns. In order to explain the present, leaders of a group reconstruct a past using rationalization to choose which events are remembered those that are eliminated, and rearrange events to conform to the social narrative.

Pierre Nora expanded upon M. Halbwachs’ instrumental presentism by stating that collective memory is used by groups to interpret a past, and yet these memories become detached from the past. Nora further claimed that groups select certain dates and people to commemorate, deliberately eliminate others from representation (collective amnesia), and invent traditions to support the collective memory. He noted that the representations of collective memory are those that have been selected by those in power; collective memory is both a tool and an object of power. Nora claimed that as modernity emerged, traditions lost social meaning and significance. As a consequence, elites in the society produced “simulations of natural memory” that supported emerging nation-states (Nora, 1996 p. 114).

Eric Hobsbawm's "invention of tradition" is an expansion upon P. Nora's interpretation of collective memory in modernity. Hobsbawm's suggests that the social changes that occurred as a result of modernity destroyed customs and required the establishment and modification of new traditions for the purpose of establishing authority, social control and solidarity. These invented traditions imprint certain values, beliefs and norms that suggest a continuity of a nonexistent past and create social identity and the rituals and symbols are used to unite and energize modern society (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 157).

Both, M. Halbwachs and P. Nora suggest that the "collective memory" of any group is actually a manipulated construction of those who maintain the power and status to define those memories. David Lowenthal suggests that national histories are constructed to address present interests and cites the development and commodification of a heritage and nostalgia industry in the British heritage sites as examples of this social construction.

John Bodnar states that public memory is not an accurate representation of the past, but is focused upon the needs of both the present and the anticipated future. The inclusion of the future to the present/past debate substantiates the premise of memory as a contested social construction that protects the power of the status quo. J. Bodnar differentiates between vernacular and official representation. Vernacular memories originate from the people and are used to explain those events that most immediately impact the masses. Official memory is created for a purpose of stabilizing the status quo. The sanctification of the official memory suggests that a memory has been selected by some group that has obtained the power to represent and interpret these memories (Bodnar, 1993, p. 182).

Studies and research work on collective memory

The concept of collective memory has become a very common field among researchers who addressed it through their studies and research work. Studies have pointed out that the more isolated an ethnic group is, the stronger its collective memory would be. This fact was supported through a study conducted by Donald Miller and Lorna Touryan. The study aimed to measure the degree of transfer of the collective memory of the Armenian generations who have been expelled by the Turkish to the different parts of the world during the beginning of the last century. The two researchers attribute the strong collective memory of the Armenians

to the fact that they have never mixed with other ethnicities and never exchanged visits with others. All this has reinforced their collective memory and enabled the transfer of the Armenian history whole (Miller, Touyan, 1991, p. 30–37).

In the same context, a study by Liza Malki on the refugees of the Hutu tribes in Tanzania who escaped the genocide by the Tutsi tribe in 1994, showed that there is great difference with respect to the collective identity between the refugees living in the Mi-Shamo camp that was established in an isolated area and the refugees living in the camp who have formulated very strong and very pure concepts about their collective identity.

The Holocaust memory's fate was somehow different from that of other memories that are connected to genocide in modern history. This is because the Holocaust memory owned a number of means and methods that helped it occupy a central place in the collective mind of the Israelis. This was pointed out through a study by Howard Schuman entitled "Keeping the Past Alive: A Study of the Israeli Memory". Among the study's main results was the fact that two of the most important and most memorable events that the Israelis always have in their minds is the Holocaust and the establishment of the Israeli State. Concerning the Holocaust, the study has concluded that there are no differences attributed to some independent variables such as gender, degree of education regarding the knowledge, remembrance and description of the event. The researcher attributed the interest in the Holocaust to the centrality of this issue in the educational institutions, religious schools, and the extracurricular activities that students take which include visiting the genocide centers and the celebration of this event on an annual basis (Schuman, 2003, p. 109).

Among the other global studies that addressed the issue of collective memory was Gross's study which aimed to recognize the mechanism through which people living in the tropical areas manage to preserve their cultural and religious identity across the various generations. The results of the study have shown that those people depend on a group of methods such as folklore and the narration of folk tales in preserving their identity. Regarding the religious aspect of their identity, those people were concerned with building temples and religious institutions in addition to organizing festivals (Gross, 2002, p. 242–250).

As the previous parts of this article have, so far, addressed the issue of collective memory on a global scale, and described the experiences of other nations and people with respect to the wars and conflicts they have seen which ultimately influenced their heritage and culture, the next parts

will focus on the Palestinian collective memory in particular as addressed in some of the Palestinian studies.

Despite the interest of people in this type of studies, the Palestinian social science has suffered from a shortage of research work in this field. Work on this issue has been confined to interviews, autobiographies and descriptive writing that addressed the Palestinians' life before and after the 1948 exodus. Nonetheless, it is necessary to mention that there are some serious studies whose authors have tried to record the Palestinian collective memory through oral vision of the refugees whether inside Palestine or in the Diaspora.

Nafeth Nazzal's study entitled "The Palestinian Exodus from the Galilee" was among the pioneering Palestinian studies that have been conducted on the issue of collective memory. Nazzal's study attempted to recognize the real reasons that forced the Palestinians in the Galilee to leave their villages and cities in response to the Israeli story which claim that the Arab leaders are the ones who ordered the Palestinians to leave their home, (Nazzal, 1978, p. 61). Therefore, Nazzal's study recorded the memory related to the moment of expulsion that the Palestinians have gone through as well as the conditions, changes and forces that led to the expulsion of the people from their country.

In the same context, it is important to mention the series of brochures that have been issued by the research center at Birzeit University as part of the Destroyed Palestinian Villages Documentation project which is supervised by Sharif Kana'neh. Those brochures included 24 destroyed villages and their content is considered as raw materials presented by narrators from these villages. The narrations have been written down, categorized and linked to each other in such a way that enables the coming generations to get a live and clear image of the lifestyle in the Palestinian villages during the first half of the 20th century (Kana'neh, Al-Ka'bi, 1991, p. 7).

These brochures sought to orally document the destroyed villages, and in this context Kana'neh and Mahamid point out that few years from now, the few people who left their country as adults after the 1948 Exodus will be difficult to find and with their disappearance, much of the valuable information about these villages will become mere names on the ancient maps" (Kana'neh, Mahamid, 1987, p. 3).

When the Palestinians began to write their history, the issue of massacres inevitably became one of the relevant factors in accounting for the mass exodus. Saleh 'Abd el-Jawad carried out the most detailed study

to date on this issue, inventorying nearly 70 cases of massacre ('Abd el-Jawad', 2007, p. 59). Eschewing the debate on Israeli intentions, he sought to remain in the field of empirical demonstration, though he did interpret a significant number of massacres as instruments of terror, which contributed to empty the land of its Arab inhabitants. After focusing on the definition of a massacre as the murder of civilians or prisoner combatants, perpetrated without military necessity by the agents of a state or a quasi-state, he lists different occurrences of this phenomenon, before and after May 15, 1948 (*ibidem*, p. 98–107).

In the same context, the monumental work of 'Aref al-'Aref gives a village-by-village account of the tragedies of war and exodus (Aref, 1960). The ten-volume opus of Mustafa Murad Dabbagh is a genuine encyclopedia of the lost country, and the history of the manuscript itself – thrown overboard ship by a sailor from Jaffa in the debacle of abrupt flight, then patiently reconstituted in exile – constitutes a genuine metaphor of the Palestinians' shared fate (Dabbagh, 1976, p. 10).

Additionally, there are some serious contributions to this field introduced by Rosemary Sayigh through her studies on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, especially the study which she made on a sample of Palestinian refugees in refugee camps in Lebanon in 1980 entitled "The Palestinian Farmers: From Removal to Revolution" or "Women in the Palestinian Refugee Camps: Narrators of History".

Rosemary Sayigh concluded that it is possible to consider the writing of the history of the village, city and camp as an attempt to reclaim those places that have actually disappeared because of destruction or forgetfulness. This attempt has provided a place where the experience of asylum has been preserved and protected it from being totally eliminated. Women play a major role in the narration of history and they are considered a major element in the national history; eliminating the role of women would leave our history incomplete and helpless (Sayigh, 1998, p. 42–58).

A recent study was made by Abdel Fattah Al-Qalqili entitled "Land in the Memory of the Palestinians: Depending on the Oral History in Jenin Camp". In this study the researcher tried to record the folk memory of the Palestinian land as a compound concept based on the memory of the narrators themselves who have been interviewed as part of the Oral Documentation Program-Jenin Camp Project (Al-Qalqili, 2004).

Those were some of the studies that have been conducted specifically on the Palestinian collective memory. As the studies suggested, this collective memory has been greatly affected by the historical events that took

place after the 1948 Exodus. People had a certain collection of heritage, culture, tradition and customs that have been recorded in their collective memory and remained so after their deportation. Since then, they have been trying to protect and guard this memory against loss and intentional destruction by the Israelis.

Before delving more into the Palestinian example, it is important to discuss some of the roles that collective memory can play in the human life along with giving examples from different cultures and societies.

Collective memory brings together members of the society under the umbrella of a shared culture, heritage, tradition and values. It is more about the whole than the part, more about the group than the individual, and is also more about the overall identity of a society than that of a single man or woman.

Karen Sternheimer expands on her definition of collective memory that is mentioned above by stating that past events that are stored in people's collective memory can be used as a tool to deal with present or future situations. "Events that become part of collective memory generally reflect major struggles or concerns within any given society." Moreover, Sternheimer adds that collective memory can contain information that help societies survive in the face of human-made or natural disasters: "Other collective memories are about survival. As engineer and disaster researcher José Holguín-Veras recently wrote in the 'Los Angeles Times', residents of a fishing village in Japan largely escaped the deadly 2011 tsunami thanks to collective memory of an event around a thousand years earlier" (Sternheimer, 2012, p. 54).

Of course, collective memory is not only confined to large social groups as families too can have their own special collective memories that they pass to their children and grandchildren. "Families can have collective memories too. In my family – and likely millions of others – we grew up hearing immigrant stories, particularly of my grandmother's family's escape from ethnic violence" (*ibidem*).

Collective memory contributes to the formulation and shaping of both the present and the future, and plays a major role in protecting and maintaining the national identity of any country. If a given group of people loses its collective memory it will lose its identity and will eventually melt into other cultures or societies forever. Nations' present and future is shaped by collective memory. Jo McCormack reflects on this in his book „*Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War (1954–1962)*“ by stating that: "Benjamin Stora, in particular has studied French collective

memory of the Algerian War, firstly in his work *La gangrène et l'oubli* (The Gangrene and the Forgetting) published in the early 1990s. All of these works analyze the way history is represented in the present, the use of selective aspects of the past in the present, and the respective place of remembering and forgetting, individually or collectively, with particular attention given to the role of memory and history in the construction of the Nation" (McCormack, 2010, p. 81).

The Palestinian collective memory as a case study

There were many other examples of the deportation of people from their homelands as discussed in the first part of this article, but the Palestinian collective memory serves as a case study and a representative of the world's collective memories.

Due to the 1948 Exodus of the Palestinian people and the subsequent loss of their lands, houses, villages and towns, the collective memory of the Palestinians was in great danger. Although older Palestinian generations had the collective memory stored in their minds in the form of stories, images, proverbs, tales... etc, which they passed down to their children, the fact that the coming generations are becoming less attached to such memory meant its existence is seriously threatened.

There is a famous saying attributed to Ben-Gurion, primary founder and the first Prime Minister of Israel, which states that "The old will die, and the young will forget". What the young will forget? They will forget their original homeland, their past, their heritage and their culture, their traditions and values, which we refer to as "the collective memory". But for the Palestinians this was not the case. The fathers might have died, but the younger generations will not and shall not forget. Older generations have passed down stories and details about the Palestinian life before the 1948 NAKBA to their children through the use of oral narration which included stories and folktales. Likewise, they used other channels to transfer their collective memory to younger Palestinians including visits to original villages from which the older generation was expelled. They took their Sons and Grandsons on these visits to familiarize them with the villages, the family's lands and the places where their houses used to exist, in addition to introducing them to some of the archeological sites there. This is a very important channel as it strengthens the ties between the younger generation and its history, though it has become a rarely

used method due to the Israeli practices that limit the Palestinians' access to these places.

There are other channels through which the collective memory is indirectly transferred to the younger generations. In this channel, the older generations maintains some of the old village traditions, meaning they transferred the traditions to the modern day. This is evident in the fact that all of the older Palestinians are still wearing the old traditional village outfit. Also, a large number of them still keep some of the copper pots and pottery that were used in the past in their houses, in addition to some folk embroidery which they use to decorate the walls of their houses in the refugee camps. Additionally, they still keep some identification documents, especially those that prove their ownership of the land which they guard very carefully and pass down to their children and grandchildren just like any other property. Moreover, some of the older Palestinians still keep the keys of their original houses tens of years after the NAKBA in hope they would one day return to their land, or at least pass these keys down to the coming generations.

This process of transferring the Palestinian collective memory from older to younger generations through the channels mentioned above have contributed to the preservation of many aspects of the Palestinian culture and heritage. However, more effort is needed in this arena as the Israeli occupation works hard to try to destroy what is left of the Palestinian collective memory. Also, the younger generations are becoming increasingly detached from their heritage due to the influence of modernism and globalization. For example, only older Palestinians actually wear the Palestinian traditional outfit, whereas younger Palestinians prefer modern clothing. In the past, young Palestinians used to be attracted to the stories their fathers and grandfathers used to tell them about the history of their country and cause. Unfortunately today, life has become heavily dominated by technology with its different types such as TV, cinema, the Internet...etc which have attracted younger generations away from their past and tradition. However, despite the negative side of technology, it can actually be used as a channel for transferring the Palestinian collective memory or the collective memory in general.

To explain more, the TV is a very influential piece of technology that can change thoughts and instill ideas in the minds of the public, especially younger ones. Therefore, governments can utilize this to try to create TV programs or series that address themes and topics that are related to the Palestinian history, collective memory, heritage, tradition, values...etc.

Such programs and series can help the younger generations learn more about their cultural identity and collective memory and strengthen their feeling of belonging to the country instead of being taken away from it. A good example of TV series that are centered on the Palestinian history and Exodus is the “al-Taghreba al-Falastenya” (The Palestinian Alienation), which was produced by “Syrian Art Production International”, a Syrian production company, and was aired in Ramadan, 2004.

Furthermore, the Internet is an equally effective channel in familiarizing the younger generations of Palestinians with their tradition, culture and heritage through the establishment of websites that are dedicated to the Palestinian collective memory and culture. Among these websites are: “Palestine Remembered” and “Palestine Facts”. Through such websites young Palestinians can read and learn more about the different topics that fall under the “Palestinian Collective Memory” title. As a result, they will be more aware of their own identity, and will be motivated to create their own websites or centers that serve as information beacons for other Palestinians.

Moreover, younger generations can benefit from the social media networking revolution that has brought with it new capabilities and provided unlimited opportunities for people to communicate and spread knowledge. Through such websites as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr... etc, Palestinians now can spread knowledge about their cause and collective memory by establishing official pages on these websites that are dedicated to such topics. Due to the interconnectivity that these websites enjoy, people can access and share information with others easily and quickly, meaning that more Palestinians will be able to learn about their culture and heritage.

Collective memory is universal, meaning that the methods used to transfer it from one generation to the other, and the tools that can be used to protect it are actually common among all human societies. Therefore, the Palestinian example can be applied to other nations and people around the world. As mentioned earlier in this article, there are many people who have experienced exodus and deportation, and whose collective memory was and maybe still is in the process of erosion, including the Syrians, the Armenians, the Hutu Tribe among others. But, through using the methods explained in the Palestinian example, those people will be able to protect their collective memory and identity against loss or destruction. Their children and grandchildren must be equipped with knowledge about their culture. They should be taught how to appreciate and value their heritage and history so that their cultural identity could live on.

To sum up what has been discussed in this article, it is crucial to point out that the world's governments in general, and the Palestinian government in particular need to exert more efforts in defending and supporting the collective memory of their respective people so that their history and culture will never be forgotten. This can be done by increasing awareness among younger generations regarding the different cultural, social, economic and artistic aspects of their culture and heritage. The Internet, TV and academic curricula can be very effective tools in spreading knowledge and information about the collective memory of the people, especially among younger generations who are considered the leaders of the futures.

Finally, school students must be given particular attention with respect to teaching the history and culture of their respective homeland. Study curricula must be designed in such a way that reinforces the students' connection with their past and motivates them to assume the responsibility of protecting their own cultural identity in the face of globalization. For example, the Palestinian study curricula need to be more oriented toward the teaching of the Palestinian tradition, history, archeology, customs and values so that by the time students reach university study level they will have acquired all the necessary knowledge about their culture they need to have. Likewise, academic studies and research on collective memory are required and must be intensified in order to increase the stock of references and resources to be available for the coming generations of researchers and academics.

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Pamięć zbiorowa: zjawisko uniwersalne. Pamięć zbiorowa Palestyńczyków jako studium przypadku

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia zagadnienie pamięci zbiorowej, potraktowanej jako zjawisko występujące w różnych cywilizacjach i doświadczanej przez różne narody. Próbuje wyjaśnić jakie wydarzenia historyczne wpływały na kształtowanie się pamięci zbiorowej różnych populacji w historii. W artykule opisano niektóre przykłady deportacji i exodusów a także to, jaki wpływ wywierały na pamięć zbiorową ludzi, którzy ich doświadczyli. Artykuł analizuje także związek pomiędzy pamięcią zbiorową i globalizacją. Następnie, w ramach studium przypadku przedstawia pamięć zbiorową Palestyńczyków, ukazując w jaki sposób Exodus z 1948 roku wpłynął na palestyńską kulturę i dziedzictwo. W artykule przedstawiono także próbę wyjaśnienia jakimi kanałami i metodami palestyńska pamięć zbiorowa jest przekazywana z pokolenia na pokolenie i w jaki sposób można ten proces wzmacnić. W konkluzjach przedstawiono zalecenia i metody służące ochronie i ocaleniu dla przyszłych pokoleń pamięci zbiorowej w ogóle, a palestyńskiej w szczególności.

Slowa kluczowe: pamięć zbiorowa, globalizacja, exodus, deportacja, al-Nakba, narracja ustna