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Organizations of Women: Towards an Equal Future in Palestine

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ORGANIZATIONS OF WOMEN:
TOWARDS AN EQUAL FUTURE IN PALESTINE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Social Sciences

by
Beatrice Longshore-Cook
June 2015

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ABSTRACT

The development and struggle for nationalism in Palestine, as seen through an historical lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demonstrates the complexity of gendered spaces and narratives inherent in any conflict. Women's roles have often been confined to specific, gendered spaces within their society. However, through the utilization of these roles, women are circumnavigating the gendered spaces of their society in order to effectively alter the political and social systems of Palestine. Through a discussion of two specific women's organizations – the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) – this work will demonstrate the significance of Palestinian women's agency in shaping the political and social atmosphere in Palestine. These two organizations focus on achieving women's rights, utilizing feminist ideology and terminology, but to varying degrees and affect. Although feminism is not explicitly proposed by each organization, the work of each nonetheless addresses the inequalities of the state in order to afford women an equal standing within the society and the eventually, fully recognized State of Palestine. These organizations clearly demonstrate the ability of women in Palestine to act upon their own intentions, desires, and motivations, through the maximization of the gendered spaces, in order to achieve gender, political, social, and national change.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“No, give me a moment of sincere resistance, sincere resistance
so we can hold on to the bit of dignity we have left,
so we can hold on to the bit of dignity we have left.”

Rafeef Ziadah¹

The political and social agency of women in Palestine provides an interesting backdrop from which to study the theory of feminism. Within the overall framework of a nationalist discourse, women are creating agency for themselves in order to further their own political and social roles and rights. In some instances, they are working to ensure future rights, but in some, they are attempting to create viable legal avenues under the occupation.² The key is to see how women are interacting within the current social and political systems of Palestine and from this to determine the future possibilities for women not only in their own Palestinian societies (be that of a village, city, or institution), but within the overarching peace process and wider state building. It should not simply be a discussion of Palestinian women’s rights, what has been denied them, or what

¹ Ziadah, R. (2011). We teach life, sir. Retrieved from http://www.rafeefziadah.net/pages/rafeef_ziadahvideo-page/

² The term “occupation” is applied in this instance as defined by Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations: “territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation extends only to the territory where such authority has been established and can be exercised.”

human rights abuses may or may not be occurring, but rather a discussion of their specific role in creating the dialogue for social and political change and moving for change.

Research Focus

The specific research question that guides this work has undergone some expansion, reworking, and shifting. The inclusion of other and new research ideas and the discovery of new forms of comparison all work to shift and alter the completed work. Thus, the changing ebb and flow of the research question will be briefly outlined here, in order to aid in a fuller understanding of the research approach taken and the overall end product. The overall research question of this study was originally: what affect does postcolonial feminist theory, and the process of globalization which introduced such a theory into the region, have on the peaceful and nonviolent struggles of Palestinian women engaged in the larger nationalist struggle? However, as this research has advanced, a counter query developed which questions the significance of the nationalist discourse in the feminist dialogue. While the nationalist discourse is a significant aspect of any group or individuals within Palestine, this may not be the main concern for various organizations within Palestine. The research question is somewhat of an amalgamation of three specific questions, each of which is addressed throughout this research. However, at the core of them is the question: can women's rights be understood independently or must they be continuously bound with the larger

political atmosphere and nationalist tendencies of a given society? The questions that follow are: is the main focus for women's groups in Palestine purely women's rights, regardless of from whom they are receiving these rights? Following this, does the political atmosphere affect the overall message and designs of these two groups? Finally, how do the chosen organizations (the Jerusalem Center for Women and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling) differ in regards to terminology (i.e. feminism) and how does this in turn affect their goals and actions towards women's rights?

Gender Studies

Frances Hasso (2001) has purported that "the impact of political participations is to some extent independent of the biographical criteria that lead some and not others to participate in such historical moments of opportunity in the first place" (p. 588). Therefore, women can be seen to organize in response to numerous issues and may participate in order to stop inequality or subordination. However, all of their interactions occur across gendered borders. Women's organizations and unions participate within the gendered spaces of the society they exist within, and in Palestine, the women have taken the gendered narratives assumed of them and have maximized the available space in order to achieve gender, political, social, and national change. Gendered narratives may often try to contain women, framing their participation in terms of societal norms or practices. This ignores their direct determination in their own decisions and actions. It is in this regard that research on feminism, women's rights, and

women's movements must incorporate the active voices of the women engaged in the change and movements. By looking at organizations run by Palestinian women for Palestinian women – in this research, the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) – a more accurate understanding of their motivations and desires can be determined. In the case of Palestine, the violations against women, whether they are institutional or domestic violence, or oppression and suppression of rights by a system or state, must be viewed in the complex historical, social, and political context within which they exist.

History of the Conflict

Nationalist Struggle

It is important to understand the historical context within which the current discussion is situated. In order to better place the work and motivation of the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), the historical context that has led to the current situation of societal inequality and political conflict must be recognized. There is a significant proportion of women's participation throughout the struggle for political status and statehood in Palestine, but there is still significant disparity in regards to the cultural and legal rights of women.

The conflict over historic Palestine is due in large part to the interferences of European states. They parceled out the territories of the Middle East, which

had previously existed within the Ottoman Empire, to various peoples and groups with the intention of state formations (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). As the territories of the Transjordan (now modern day Israel, Jordan, and Palestine) were created, systems of governance emerged which were authoritative and demanded controls over a single, shared territory. This situation created a disparity as a single location – the physical site related to geographical coordinates – came into direct conflict with the place – “imagined” area that is operated within – from which has developed the modern day Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Thrift, 2009). There is a further complication as a place space may have significance for religious or sacred reasons creating a sacred space (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993). In Israel and Palestine, the physical site – specifically Jerusalem – is occupied (as in lived within) by two distinct ethnic groups and the sacred space of Jerusalem (holy to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) must be shared. This creates conflict over control and access to the place and sacred space.

With the division of the territory of Palestine in the early twentieth century, the population distribution shifted from being a majority indigenous Arab population of eight to one in 1922, to a minority Arab population within the Israeli state by 1948 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). Conflicting nationalist discourses existed as modern political Zionism sought a Jewish state in the same land as Palestinian nationalism, which sought a state and a leadership based within the broader and overarching Arab nationalism. Due to complexities inherent in

competing partition plans forwarded by European powers – the most notable being the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the Balfour Declaration (1917) – the territories of the Middle East were afforded to various nationalist groups, with some overlap and ambiguity (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). The Mandate for Palestine was officially yielded to England in 1920 following the San Remo Conference and Hebrew was recognized as the official language, ignoring much of the history and existence of the native inhabitants (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). In order to resolve some of the dissension that was developing within the Mandate, Britain issued a White Paper in 1922 (the first of many) that stated that although a Hebrew state was developing, no nationalist identity would be forced upon all of the inhabitants of Palestine. The White Paper of 1939 determined that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine would not be supported by England. This specific paper, however, would lose its validity in response to the atrocity of the Holocaust during World War II (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009).

Nationalism. Prior to the British Mandate in 1917, urban women demonstrated alongside much of the population against the Balfour Declaration and in 1920, participated as members of a Palestinian delegation who met with the British High Commissioner Sir Herbert Louis Samuel (Gluck, 1995; Fleischmann, 2000). The British High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope even noted in October of 1933 that “the prominent part taken by women of good family as well as others” in the demonstrations in Jaffa and Jerusalem was “disquieting” (Fleishmann, 2000, p. 16). Their specific contributions to the nationalist

movement in the earliest onset of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, framed within the context of a Palestinian women's movement, include hosting the Palestine Arab Women's Congress (the inaugural meeting occurring on October 26, 1929), and formation of an Arab Women's Executive Committee (AWE), the Arab Women's Association (AWA), and the Arab Women's Union (AWU). Further, they regularly – usually through these various unions and organizations – addressed the British government, the press and public, and even the League of Nations and the United Nations through letters and speeches (Fleischmann, 2000). This organization of women continued in 1965 with the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), which unified smaller women's organizations in the Middle East (Gluck, 1995). There is also a startling amount of research on women's participation in violent actions including serving as suicide bombers/martyrs who, according to Hasso (2005), carry out attacks for the intertwined reasons of the “sacred, strategic, and secular” (p. 27). In both legal and less than legal arrangements, women have been highly involved in the nationalist struggle.

Intifada. Clashes have occurred between the conflicting nationalisms in Palestine/Israel with the two most significant being the First Palestinian *intifada* which occurred from 1987 to 1993 and the Second Palestinian *intifada* (*intifada* being Arabic for “shaking off”) (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). The first *intifada* began on December 9, 1987 in Gaza and contained a fourteen-point program that had been determined by Palestinians and their leadership of the time, the

Unified National Leadership (UNL) (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). The second *intifada*, however, was far less organized, lacking any specific demands or a listed program of action. Both *intifadas* attempted to end occupation and create a viable Palestinian state, and within those aims the boundaries between various segments of society were distorted; individuals could participate within the created space regardless of political, class, religious, or gendered boundaries. The women involved “felt that they had a stake in a future Palestinian state” (Gluck, 1995, p. 9). However, in much the same way that the second *intifada* was ill-organized, it also suffered in direct participation of women who were “seemingly invisible” in the public sphere (Johnson & Kuttub, 2001, p. 24). While Fleischmann (2000) argues that the first *intifada* was key in understanding the role that women hold in Palestine outside of the bourgeoisie, the second had a much more understated presence of women as it was mostly men and boys participating in it (Johnson & Kuttub, 2001). While the *public* activities of women may have been less pronounced during the second *intifada*, it was within that context, the exclusion of women by much of the national leadership of the time, that they were able to act more independently, shifting towards the type of work illustrated within this research. The *intifadas* stand as but two examples of women, and in fact, all segments of Palestinian society, working across societal boundaries in order to further their own desires and claims.

Legal Rights for Women

While the nation is often correlated to femininity, nationalism in Palestine is often a concept associated with masculinity. In Palestine, this is evidenced through the language that is utilized, with the land being related to a woman and the fighters and protectors being represented as male. The past political rhetoric of Palestinian leadership, although seeking to provide rights to women, has been laced with gendered analogies of the land and actors of the conflict. From communiqués published during the *intifada* to the *Palestinian Declaration of Independence* (1988; although much of this language has since been edited), gendered spaces are created and reinforced in Palestine (Massad, 1995). These documents often relate women as “guardian[s] of sustenance and life” without recognizing them as integral to the society, politics, and the nationalist struggle. The land is often equated to a woman (the *mother-land*), with the struggle for Palestine being likened to a rape of the land, the Palestinians to the children of that land, and with Palestine itself being portrayed as a mother as seen in the *Palestinian Nationalist Charter* (Massad, 1995). The *Palestinian Draft Constitution* (2003) attempted to draw away from the gendered bias, affording women legal rights and independence, but within that still equates a woman’s role within the family first and foremost: “taking part in building the family and society.”

However, Palestine has a record of attempted progressive and liberal political stances on women’s rights, especially when viewing them in the context

of the larger Middle East and North African (MENA) region. Although the initial and past laws were limiting and often used strongly gendered terms, the current systems of governance see women afforded a purported equality under the law. Based on the Palestinian *Basic Law* (2003), all people are equal under the law and judiciary system without discrimination based on sex and have the ability to hold public offices as held within the principle of equal opportunity (Articles 9 and 26, respectively). Similar privileges appear in the *Constitution of the State of Palestine* (2003), which in Article 8 emphasizes the rights of all citizens by providing the right to political participation without discrimination; this includes the right to vote and to participate through candidacy for political positions. The *Constitution* in Articles 22 and 23 provides women specifically with the right to contribute in social, political, cultural, and economic life while also specifying that all previous restraints on the full participation of women shall be abolished. However, all of this is not to suggest that there are not huge disparities in the rights and practices of those rights by women in Palestinian society.

There are still failings in their protection and the implementation of these so-called rights. Further, women are still hugely disadvantaged within the society itself with fifty percent of Palestinian women suffering physical abuse at least once a year (HRA, 2003). The inability of the Palestinian political system to adequately protect and provide for women is due in part to the internecine

conflict and occupation by Israel.³ And it is precisely within that convoluted political atmosphere that organizations such as the Jerusalem Center for Women and Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling work in order to close the gap between what is provided, *de jure*, for women and the *de facto* rights.

Certain theorists, including Tarrow (2007), and Hill and Rothchild (1992), have argued that groups and individuals move or act based on past patterns of movement or action. Political novices, as Hill and Rothchild (1992) define them, who have witnessed or learned of past political conflict or protest are triggered into action that can be directed. Tarrow (2007) suggests that these contentious histories are remembered and reenacted, as seems to be the case in Palestine. Palestinians know how to protest or mobilize because they have before and because they are constantly reflecting upon their own perceived, dissatisfactory history (Hill & Rothchild, 1992). Based on the history of the situation in historic Palestine, as well as women's involvement throughout that process, it is possible that the current organizations, especially those being researched, are looking at the history of women's involvement and attempting, though through different methods, to follow a similar pattern of movement, action, and hopefully, change.

³ UN Women suggests that the devastating consequences of conflict are felt most keenly by women who generally hold fewer resources for protection and regularly make up the majority of displaced persons and refugees. For more information on the work of UN Women especially in regards to conflict visit unwomen.org.

Research Overview

The feminist movement is significant for the protection of women's rights and the creation of equal rights in Palestine. Regardless of the specific inclusion or exclusion of the "feminist" name upon a group, the overarching ideas of the movement are evident in the overall work and writings of both groups. Although the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW), as mentioned above, does not include feminism in their most recent literature, they do operate on many of the principles forwarded by feminism. The Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) specifies the significance of not only addressing the lack of women's rights or the rights abuses against women in a Palestinian society, but also their treatment in relation to the occupation and its various checkpoints, searches, and violations. The inclusion of both abuses is why these types of organizations are important for research on women's rights.

Further noted is that nationalism is not explicitly proposed within each organization's agenda, but the work of each furthers the nationalist cause as they strengthen the rights and abilities of specific segments of the Palestinian population, mainly women. Both organizations note that many of the issues for women, many of the violations that assault them each day, are due to the occupation. Violations of personhood and property, and the inability to move easily between areas of Palestine and Israel, complicate family relations and place strain upon women. Thus, it is important for each to be concerned with the peace process, as it would allow for an easier forum within which women could

fight for and maintain their rights. They further respond to the abuses incurred from their own leadership, due in some regards to the fragmentation of the government and also its inability to commit to the ideals of equality.

These organizations clearly demonstrate the ability of women in Palestine to act upon their own intentions, desires, and motivations through the maximization of the gendered spaces, in order to achieve gender, political, social, and national change. It is important not to generalize the topic by assuming or suggesting that women are only involved in limited terms. Further, it must be stressed that these organizations view themselves as first and foremost, a women's organization for equal rights, however, the eventual aim is for those rights to be afforded and protected under a fully legitimized Palestinian state. It is paramount that women's groups be analyzed for the work that they do to protect women from daily oppression and possible institutionalized violence against them or their families. With this in mind, the discussion is best produced with the inclusion of the studied individuals and their own opinions and voices about the conflict. It is with this aim that Palestinian run and coordinated groups are selected as the research focus and case studies of this project in order that their own voices not be lost in the discussion. Rather than filling the already overwhelming intellectual dialogue with "Muslim's women's rights" as Abu-Lughob (2010) suggests scholars are want to do, these groups exist in a specific effort "with an awareness of the larger political context within which they and the women for whom they advocate live and work" because these organizations are

run by the very people whom they seek to serve (p. 17). The WCLAC incorporates the specific stories of women of the conflict, not seeking to overshadow the suffering of women with the “inescapable realities of occupation and militarization,” but understanding that it is within this conflict that the majority of rights violations against women are occurring (Abu-Lughob, 2010, p. 18). The JCW and WCLAC work to expose the stories of oppression by the Palestinian culture and system as well as by the oppressive system of the occupying state.

Definitions

In order for the discussion to be furthered, there must be an elaboration of some significant and interconnected terminologies. A brief explanation of such terminologies as feminism, agency, gendered space, contentious politics, social movements, and collective action frames will provide a better framework from which to advance the current discussion.

Feminism

Ultimately, feminism is an advocacy for women’s rights and equality in a political, social, cultural, and economic setting. However, there are variations of feminism including postcolonial feminism and transnational feminism. Both of these are necessary to understand in the context of Palestine. Postcolonial feminism explores the intersections of identities including gender, nation, race, and class, understanding that there cannot be one overarching or monolithic understanding of “woman” as the specificities of race, nation, class, and religion

all intersect with gender in the specific locations of study (Rajan & Park, 2005). The complex intersections of oppressing and exclusionary mechanisms are necessary in order to make a relevant feminism for women within marginalized and oppressed societies. Transnational feminism is also significant as it looks to the blurring of borders due to the globalized era. While borders are a significant area of contention in Palestine, the ability of ideas to transfer between states and across *borders* demonstrates the significance of the transnational feminist dialogue where women are interacting with the global feminist discourse and applying it in the local context (Mendez & Wolf, 2001).

Agency

Agency is the ability of a person or group of people to act upon their own intentions, desires, motivations, and thoughts; it is the ability of individuals to shape life circumstances (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). It is a sociological concept that relates to the ability of individuals to act of their own volition within the world. This concept is germane to the discussion of the nationalist struggle in Palestine and women's actions within that struggle. It is often assumed in academia and media alike that women are only *affected* by the conflict and do not in turn *affect* the conflict for their own purposes. By addressing Palestinian women's rights through an organization that is run by and serves Palestinian women, their agency can clearly be determined and demonstrated. Agency is best established by an analysis of the researched parties' own words or actions. Through these, the interplay of all aspects of agency (including routine, purpose,

and judgment) within “different structural contexts of action” is presented (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963).

Gendered Spaces

Gender, being in many regards a socially constructed concept, has become divided within society, with segments of society being bisected. Society is segmented, with each gender fulfilling certain roles, potentially withheld from holding certain jobs or positions within a society based solely on their gender, and their lives allocated to specific gender spaces. These spaces are the gendered areas within which women must or are expected to exist and act. As Michael Kimmel (2008) has stated, “gender organizes and constitutes the field in which most individuals move” with the “institutions of our lives... themselves gendered institutions, [being] organized to reproduce the differences and the inequalities between” the genders (p. 97). It is these segments that have become significant areas of inequality. The spaces can be literal in that they exist within a geographical place or, and this is the more common occurrence in the modern time, in a sociological sense that simply creates imagined space that attempts to contain a segment or group of society within a certain, expected sphere of behavior. In the case of Palestine, women have in many ways subverted the gendered narrative by conceiving of their work in political and legal terms, thus working from within those spaces, to escape those very narratives (Fleischmann, 2000).

Contentious Politics

The politics of Palestine, especially those related to women's rights, fall under the term of contentious politics. It is related to the actions of ordinary people who "join forces in confront[ing]... elites, authorities, and opponents" with the use of action frames that are enacted by persons without the usual avenues for action "in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities" (Tarrow, 2007, 2-3).

Contentious politics utilize and transform cultural systems, creating challenges to the current order and it is through the action frames that individuals are mobilized (Tarrow, 2007). The authorities or opponents in the case of Palestine are the social constraints of Palestinian society and both the governing forces of Palestine and the occupying government of Israel. From this, the women's organizations are engaging in a movement for women's rights first and foremost.

Social Movements

Sidney Tarrow (2007) suggests that social movements are "those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (p. 2). While the concept of social movement is most often associated with active protests and resistance, it can be argued, as Tarrow suggests, that the actions based on contentious politics are equal to a movement. The women of the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

interact in a contentious form as they are in constant conflict with the government and current institutions, both political and cultural, that restrain or deny them certain rights.

Collective Action Frames

Action frames serve as a way for an organization, group, or movement to frame the ideas of the group in order to create public interest. Like a picture frame, “attention is focused on what is relevant and important and away from extraneous items in the field of view” (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 2). In this case study, the use of contentious action frames is apparent as they challenge current power structures, create solidarities within the group, and have a specific meaning to the given group or culture and within the specific situation (Tarrow, 2007). The variations of action frames will be elaborated upon in the upcoming chapter in the context of the various authors who have forwarded competing framing theories.

Women’s Organizations in Palestine

This research will focus on a comparative case study approach examining two women’s organizations. The case studies will focus on their work towards a more equitable future for women and all segments of society within Palestine. This approach was selected in an attempt to address the research question related to the ability to understand women’s rights independently of the larger political atmosphere and national tendencies of a selected society (for this

research, Palestine). The research, specifically that related to their collective action frames, will be dissected by analyzing their webpages, pamphlets, and other presented literature. Overall, the basic design of each organization is the same, however, there is one significant difference between them, their relationship to feminism. The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) explicitly states their commitment to feminism and the feminist movement. However, the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) is committed to much of the same ideology, without aligning with feminism in their most recent publications. This significant difference between these organizations (including feminism) will be elaborated upon in future chapters in relation to the variations it causes in their framing. The differences determine the effectiveness of their work and the implementation of their goals for women's rights. Overall, these organizations operate in the context of conflict, seeking for the protection of women, both against social constraints and injustice and institutionalized violence due to the ongoing conflict for state.

The Jerusalem Center for Women

The Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) is a Palestinian women's organization that was founded between 1989 and 1991. The sole focus of the organization since its inception was to "[empower] Palestinian women's position in civil society, politics, and within the peace process" (JCW, n.d.). The JCW provided opportunities to women where they could be trained in "public speaking, advocacy, and other activism skills" that would ultimately aid them in their own

lives while also furthering the peace and state-building process. The JCW viewed the “struggle for women’s rights [as] crucial” in order to “achieve human rights for all Palestinians” (JCW, n.d.). Although the JCW changed their stance in regards to the term feminism, shifting in the last few years of their publications to avoid that direct terminology, their overall agenda of female empowerment and equality within theirs and every society demonstrates an implicit commitment to the same ideals of the feminist and women’s movement.

The Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

Similarly, the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)⁴ was established in 1991 for the development of a society of equality and social justice, both in the current conflicted political situation and in any future state. There has been a significant focus on “addressing gender-based violence in Palestinian society,” which demonstrates their focus on not only political but also cultural processes of oppression for any and all segments of society, especially women. For the WCLAC, they are “bridg[ing] the need to address discrimination and violence against women within Palestinian society, and the need to support the national struggle for freedom and independence from Israeli occupation”

⁴ Although not the reason for the inclusion of the WCLAC within this research, it is of note that the WCLAC has been included in research on similar and related topics most notably that by Lila Abu-Lughob (2010). Abu-Lughob only briefly touches upon this organization, but that and other various articles are invaluable in the overall understanding of the WCLAC, its impact, motivations and work opportunities, as well as the broader understanding of the relationship between feminism, women’s rights, and nationalism, especially in the Palestinian context. Through its inclusion in other research studies, the impact of their global approach to women’s rights in Palestine clearly demonstrates the importance of grassroots organizations operating in their own specific cultural context, but also within the more global understanding of a given movement or ideology. Further, this inclusion provides ballast for the approach of this research, which can lean on previous works in order to more fully explain the work and affect of the WCLAC.

(WCLAC, n.d.). The WCLAC specifically states their commitment to feminism as a route by which they can achieve their goals of women's empowerment, human rights furtherance, and a free society for all in Palestine.

Organization of Chapters

The proceeding chapters will follow in this discussion beginning with Chapter 2, Literature Review that will address much of the previous and current research that is relevant to the discussion moving forward; discussion of the research on feminism, Palestine, women's rights, social agency, and framing. Chapter 3 will be Methods wherein an elaboration upon the overall description of the research and methods utilized to conduct this research will be occur. Chapter 4, Case Studies will include the most significant portion of this thesis, as it will be the detailed accounts of the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), with specific attention paid to document analysis in order to expound their framing and its potential effectiveness. Finally, Chapter 5 will provide the Findings and Conclusion with an in-depth discussion of the research, what it all means, and its significance in regards to Palestine and women's rights in that specific country as well as the region of the Middle East.

Conclusion

From the history of Palestine, it is plain to see that women have both been oppressed and motivated within the various systems of governance in their region. Their rights may be suppressed by their culture, the government systems, or institutionalized violence, but they continue to move for their own needs, wants, and desires. The Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) stand as but two examples of women exerting agency in an attempt to change the systems and societies within which they live. In order for women to believe in their value and to fight for equality within the current tumultuous system and the desired future of peace for their state, they must be aware of the *value* of a woman's participation. Through grassroots women's organizations, women simultaneously create and provide a space from within which they can exercise their agency.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“When the Tree rises up, the branches
shall flourish green and fresh in the sun
the laughter of the Tree shall leaf beneath the sun
and the birds shall return
Undoubtedly, the birds shall return.”

Fadwa Tuqan⁵

Within the given discussion of women’s organizations and women’s rights, especially as related to Palestine, it is important to understand the underlying and core theory of the subject and also the research that has been conducted in regards to those theories. Most significant perhaps, will be the concept of framing as purported by Erving Goffman (1974) and Robert Benford and David Snow (1992). Likewise, the research on feminism and nationalism will be relevant as various groups utilize frames in order to further their ideologies and intentions. However, as Abu-Lughob (2010) would suggest, scholars are often concerned more with their own purported concepts of what is happening, rather than what the individuals or groups might be saying of their own situation. By looking at the specific frames and ideas of a group, it becomes apparent the

⁵ Tuqan, F. (2003). The deluge and the tree.

significance of such concepts as feminism, women's rights, and nationalism. Similarly, they (the groups) may form frames to encourage individuals to engage in their perceived ideas of feminism, rights, or nationalism.

Literature on the specific topic of women in Palestine and the utilization of feminism is limited as few researchers have focused on those women's organizations that operate in Palestine. Thus, the implications of nationalist construction in the agendas of these organizations must be elucidated from the limited publications that are available. The most significant work that has been conducted in this vein is by F.S. Hasso (2001) who produced works on the relationship of gender, feminism, militarization, and social movements including a study of Palestine. For the sake of the research of this project, her work on gender, feminism, and social movements from 1998 and 2000 will be utilized. The work produced by J. Massad (1995) focuses on the gendered concept of nationalism and the masculine constructs inherent in the colonial model that shaped the Palestinian nationalist agenda. Other significant researchers in this field include S.B. Gluck (1995) who focuses on gender, politics, and nationalism, E.L. Fleischmann (2000) who writes on the historic emergence of the women's movement during the early years of state building in historic Palestine through the creation of the State of Israel, and D. Moore (2000) whose work incorporates a discussion and analysis of the variations in nationalist and political motivations in relation to ethnicity and religious commitment. These works will be incorporated into the discussion of the gendered spaces of nationalism and the

nationalist struggle, from within which women's organizations must operate in order to achieve their desired social and political change.

This chapter will be organized beginning with the theoretical work on framing, a theory which is central to the implementation of feminist and nationalist dialogues; from there the literature related to feminism and nationalism – especially as related to Palestine – will be discussed. This review of literature will provide a framework from which to continue the discussion of the research topic as it relates to the specific organizations of the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC).

Body of Literature

Framing

Johnston and Noakes (2005) describe the process of framing as a “subjective component [or] the element of perception or consciousness” (p. 2). It can be likened to a picture frame as it draws attention to the relevant and important information or ideas, while also being a “collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction... mediat[ing] between opportunity and action” (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996 as cite in Johnston and Noakes, 2005, p. 2).

The theory of framing is most comprehensively understood with the inclusion of work by William Gamson, Robert Benford, David Snow, and Sidney

Tarrow. For these researchers, the work of Erving Goffman is vital as it was from his work that the terminology “frame” is attributed to denote “‘schemata of interpretation’ that enable individuals ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986, p. 464). Though each has perceived of the theory and its implementation in a different manner, the concepts are nevertheless complimentary and significant to the elucidation of social movements and women’s organizations in Palestine. Variations on the components of framing exist based on the varying authors and promoters of the theory. From the theorizing of Benford and Snow (especially their work in 1988), three main concepts must be included within the discussion of framing: frame alignment, frame resonance, and master frames. Framing is significant for its ability to provide coherence and understanding to a variety of images, arguments, symbols, and ideas and provide the overarching, essential idea, including what is ultimately at stake (Ryan & Gamson, 2006, p. 14). In Gamson’s discussions of framing, the components of identity, agency, and injustice are paramount to the ability to frame, especially when a group seeks to reframe an issue by making the frame “less abstract and more personal” (Ryan & Gamson, 2006, p. 14). However, Gamson clearly argues that it is not merely the frame that matters in any instance of social movement or group goals, rather the individual and the field or area in which the frame is implemented play active roles in social movements.

Benford and Snow (1988) purport that framing is an active process through which individuals and/or groups exert agency through their construction of reality and their actions based upon those constructions. For them, there are three basic goals or tasks of framing: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational; each of these is focused on the work of the framers and *what* and *how* they communicate (Johnston & Noakes, 2005). Collective action frames are action-oriented with the purpose of legitimizing and inspiring the work of social movements and organizations. Framing must elucidate a supposed problem, define the change necessary, denote blame (these three being components of diagnostic framing), determine a solution or alternative situation (prognostic framing), and finally, mobilize people in support of this framing (motivational framing).

However, for Gamson, the subject of framing is approached from the “less strategic aspects of framing, including the construction of meaning by those on the receiving end of framing strategies” regardless of who has implemented the frames (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 6). Rather than looking at the processes of framing, as Benford and Snow do, he addresses the components necessary for framing. For Gamson, the basic components are identity, agency, and injustice. The identity component “specifies the aggrieved group,” those with shared values, interests, and concerns, the “we” and the “them” (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 6). The agency component is what addresses the “grievous condition” and suggests that it can be changed, while also encouraging the “we” to “become

agents of their own history” (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 6). Finally, the injustice component “places blame for the grievances” on “them,” sparking a response from the “we” (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 6). This understanding of frames presents a more implementable breakdown of framing as it provides for the agency of those who must receive and interpret the proposed frames.

Feminism (especially in Palestine)

In anthropology, the discussion and significance of feminism occurred particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. By utilizing aspects of postcolonial feminism and transnational feminism, the intersections of identities related to gender including nation, race, and class are addressed as well as the border crossing of the feminist ideology as it is implemented locally. “Feminist politics” developed as “contemporary agitations of women”⁶ were led by the “politicalization of the social” as the “distinction between public and private” dissolved “not in terms of the encroachment on the private by a unified public space, but in terms of a proliferation of radically new and different political spaces” (de Alwis, 2007, p. 122; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 81). In the specific context of Palestine, new political spaces may include those areas of politics or legality that women were previously unable to access including legal representation, protections under the law, and the opportunity to be directly involved in politics. The politicalization of the social explains why women and women’s rights have become a focal point in

⁶ The cited authors are aware that the agitations of women might also apply to other marginalized groups including racial and sexual minorities, but for the sake of this research, their concerns with women specifically are addressed.

the political debates and social movements of Palestine. Social concerns guide the political affairs of a state with the rights provided in the home or workplace needing to be protected in the state.

The research questions presented by de Alwis (2007) amounts to a study of the political spaces that are created as the politicalization of social and cultural roles and spaces occurs. Does engagement within these spaces necessarily constitute feminism and feminist politics? For de Alwis (2007), there is an argument to be made for both the mother as mere actor and as decisive agent, as motherhood can empower or essentialize, and produce agents or victims. Most significant from her work is the understanding of the layering of space as gendered space may simultaneously confine further to a specific class or religious space. This is related to the intersectional framework of postcolonial feminism. The intersections or layering of the space of women's roles in struggles for freedom (as in the Palestinian case) include the social roles, the symbolism of femininity (related to the "mother"), and association of women from different classes or religions; this layering must look at the variations and reshaping caused by colonial influences as well as the current iterations forming after colonialism (Sa'ar, 2005).

The work of Hasso is often focused on the specifics of Palestinian women and their past and present participations in social and political movements. She suggests that from their past involvements specifically have developed what she terms a "feminist generation." This is a generation of women with "egalitarian

gender ideology and a sense of self-efficacy” (2001, p. 587). The significance of Hasso’s approach to gendered studies in regards to Palestine is that she avoids the false dichotomy of Palestinian women as either wholly different from or similar to “Western” women as well as assuming them to be either victims or heroes of their gendered narratives. Hasso focused significantly on the correlation between feminism and nationalism in Palestine as will be seen in the following discussion of nationalism. However, she clearly defends the creation and maintenance of “dignity, self-definition, self-reliance, and independence” by women and women groups within Palestine (p. 589-90). By addressing the specificities and intersections of culture, politics, and identity, she avoids comparing Palestine too closely with other instances, particularly in the West, of feminism, and focuses instead on the distinct instance and articulation of feminist discourse as implemented by Palestinians.

Nationalism (especially in Palestine)

Iveković (1993) suggests that nationalism and even radical nationalism cannot be easily defined as the concept is ever changing, covering complex, unfixed realities and processes. The concept of nation is the determination of a collection of people connected by shared residence within a territory or with similar sociocultural characteristics. This consideration has significant connotations politically and socially as it has led to conflicts over territories such

as those of the modern State of Israel and the State of Palestine.⁷ There is a contested overlap of territory with both claiming the same capital, yet there is a division of sociocultural characteristics including ethnicity, language, and religion. Calhoun (1993) argues that nationalism and ethnicity, while not mutually exclusive, do vary as ethnicity draws individuals and populations together in an attempt at solidarity whereas nationalism generally motivates movements towards self-determination. However, ethnicity is significantly intertwined with nationalism as many nationalist movements are aligned along ethnic lines.

Palestinian nationalism is often associated with gendered concepts. Hasso (1998) argues that women are valorized in Palestinian nationalist narratives as related to the reproduction of the nation. They are further associated with the occupation as the land is equated with the appropriation and violation of Palestinian women's bodies. Women's own agency is disregarded for the sake of the nationalist struggle. Massad (1995) purports that the colonial model, which largely formed the nationalist discourse in Palestine, is to blame for the masculinity of the nationalist discourse. This suggests nationalism in Palestine is illustrated in masculine terms with the male discourse dominating the feminine conception of the land itself, but not necessarily in relation to the "traditions" of Palestinian culture which has not always held this dominance of one over the other.

⁷ The official name attributed to Palestine by the Palestinian Authority (the government of Palestine) is the State of Palestine. Although Palestine does not exist in the fully conventional understanding of a "state," it has nonetheless received recognition from the United Nations as an observer state utilizing the name the State of Palestine.

Hierarchies of identity, as presented by Moore (2000), demonstrate the significant complexity of understanding the roles of gender, nationalism, and an overarching propensity for engaging in social and political action. The significant research questions proposed by Moore are related to the salience of gender identity and the possibility that this may either lead to an increase or a decrease in social actions. Further, the author analyzes the possible interplay between salience in regards to political affiliation and religiosity. Moore (2000) asserts that social identity is constructed (or implanted) by membership within a collectivity that holds unique cultural values, principles, and ideology, which encourages individuals (agents) to act in a specific social context of action. Individuals classify themselves within and without numerous social identities, with significant overlay and salience between the various categories.

Conclusion

It should now be apparent that framing is the major component necessary for understanding the operations of various groups and individuals (agents) in the historical setting of Palestine. Without the significant contributions of William Gamson, Robert Benford, David Snow, and Sidney Tarrow on the subject, the ability of groups to align themselves in relation to a given cause or motivation would be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Feminism and nationalism, when addressed within the discourse on framing, are more clearly understood as women are agents operating with a certain concept or understanding of women's

rights and the nation, and the frames created by them can be applied to larger audiences with the intent of affecting change or sparking a social movement. By correlating women's rights to the political, social, and cultural existence in Palestine, women in Palestine are able to align themselves with or create frames for their own empowerment and betterment within the society and political system. From the historical processes of women's rights in Palestine, as addressed by Hasso, it is clear that the current era of women is able to do much the same, with the opportunity to create a more equitable future within their society and state.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Here, where the hills slope before the sunset and the chasm of time
near gardens whose shades have been cast aside, we do what prisoners do
we do what the jobless do, we sow hope.

Mahmoud Darwish⁸

By utilizing the historical presence of women and the women's movement in Palestine and linking it to two specific comparative case studies, this research addresses a wide range of political and social foci. It focuses especially on those related to the incorporation of feminism within the Palestinian society and the following dynamics between that and nationalism. This research was conducted through ethnographic, comparative case studies. The method most employed was document analysis in order to ascertain the frames, motivations, and agendas of these two case study "sites." Each organization, based on its goals and objectives, will be analyzed for the works they have done, the publications they have produced, and the people they have served.

⁸ Darwish, M. (2002). A state of siege.

Subjects

In determining research subjects it is vital to take into account those organizations that fit within the research approach as well as those that will likely provide answers to the research question. However, it is likewise important that those subjects be capable of expanding and shifting the research as they stretch the researcher to consider all possibilities, not simply those assumed at the beginning of study (Thomas, 2011). For these reasons, the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) were selected. They each fit the intentions of the research as they are both women's organizations working towards women's rights (largely focused on legal and social rights) in Palestine, but as a deeper reading and inquiry into their work occurred, it was determined that they excelled at developing the research in ways that were not the initial intention of the researcher. These organizations, although selected for their connections to feminism, were found to hold greater significance as the political atmosphere created unique iterations of feminism and nationalism even within the timeframe of each organization's work.

The JCW and the WCLAC were selected for several reasons. Both are women's organizations, formed at about the same time, focused on women's rights and empowerment in Palestine. However, the significant difference and hence why they have both been selected for a comparative case analysis, is their alignment with feminism. The WCLAC is a significant source for its commitment to feminism and the more global aspects of that ideology. They engage with the

global community including the United Nations (UN) specifically in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and interact with numerous other women's based organizations for a more complete coordination with the global feminist discourse in general. Within ECOSOC, the WCLAC holds consultative status, which allows them access to the committee and other related segments of the UN as well as linking them to 4,045 other NGOs who hold the same status. The JCW, conversely, did not purport direct feminist ties during their final years (2008-2014). They utilized and espoused much of the same language and ideas of feminism, but refrained from encompassing the full ideology and labeling themselves as feminist. Their work is more internally focused, which affects their overall commitments and goals.

Further, these two organizations were chosen due to accessibility of the information. There was no need for significant translation assistance as they both produced documents in both Arabic and English. Although this might seem to be cause for concern, selection of these sites for their Internet presence should not be viewed as opportunistic or a decision of convenience, but is rather based on these organizations' fit within the research question, and their availability to be researched. Within case studies, it is important to select a subject or subjects that are interesting and will assist in better understanding the research question. These two case studies stand as examples of a *key case* and a *deviant case* (as the research later demonstrated) (Thomas, 2011). As Thomas (2011) argues, subjects, and thus the results, need not be generalizable

as the cases might represent a *deviant* case. In relation to the selection of these organizations, they also provide a significant wealth of information on their webpages, producing *Annual Reports* every year and various Director's messages making knowledge of their work accessible and thus researchable.

These two groups overlap in their work to some degree, both in time frame and in actions. However, their overall messages and approaches vary. They were selected from amongst a pool of other similar organizations because of the easy access to their work (via their webpages) and the amount of available resources (from them as well as other studies, which incorporated these two organizations). This is not to suggest that other similar organizations such as the Palestinian Women's Association for Development or Union of Palestinian Women's Committees would not benefit the overall discussion, but the JCW and WCLAC highlight the specific purpose of this research which is how women are becoming agents and utilizing the available gender space in order to change the dynamics within their society.

Research Question Development

This study was conducted in response to specific research questions. There was one initial, overarching question, which guided the selection of the case studies, but it expanded and was reworked once the initial phase of research occurred. Further, in response to new research ideas and comparisons that were made, the work altered before its completion. The progression of the

research question must be addressed within this methods section in order to provide an accurate understanding of the exact approach taken, the logic behind it, and overall end conclusion of the research project. Originally, the research question was focused more closely on nationalism, with the inclusion of women and their actions in that discourse, specifically “what affect does feminist theory, and the process of globalization which introduced such a theory into the region, have on the peaceful and nonviolent struggles of Palestinian women engaged in the larger nationalist struggle?” However, the significance of the nationalist discourse came into question, understanding that although it is an ever-present concern for those living constantly under occupation, it is not, perhaps, the main motivation for women’s rights activists. Rather, is it possible that the main focus for feminists and women associated with that movement is concern purely over women’s rights, regardless of the current political environment? Understanding that women do indeed suffer most acutely under occupation, meaning that a state is a necessary and desirable outcome, this research will purport that women’s rights must be protected now, under occupation, through state development, and in the peace process as a whole, and that this is the agency women are creating for themselves in Palestine. Finally, the correlation between the organizations’ feminist or non-feminist ties, their global interactions, and their ultimate determination of what women’s rights should include is explored.

Research Approach

Ethnography

Ethnographic research focuses on a specific situation, culture, or group from which can be extrapolated theories about their realities. The primary research methods included observations, interviews, and “reading” of cultural artifacts with the ethnographer, as Geertz (2014) suggests, serving as a literary critic. For this research, the primary research methods within an ethnography are observation and “reading” of cultural artifacts. While observations occurred from a distance, by interpreting the publications, documents, and websites of the studied organizations (the JCW and the WCLAC), cultural artifacts are viewed as those documents and historical inclinations of the population of Palestine as a whole. This includes such documents as the Palestinian Constitution and Basic Law. Overall, this research approach, when coupled with a specific case study comparison and frame analysis, will provide a comprehensive understanding and analytical framework from which to conclude on feminism in Palestine as understood in this specific non-governmental organization (NGO) context.

Although no individual or direct interviews were conducted, a basic outline of questions was determined in order to create a format from which to analyze each organization. The questions are as follows:

- How is the occupation viewed?
- How is statehood viewed? What is its significance for the operations and intentions of the NGO?

- What should women's roles be? Does this vary between leadership and membership?
- What are the determined "women's rights" that each organization supports?

These questions provide a frame of reference in order to best analyze and compare the ideologies, actions, and motivations of each organization. Although these questions are not directly answered in the Case Study or Conclusion chapters of this research, they can be considered within the larger commentaries on globalization, nationalism, feminism, and rights.

Case Studies

A case study is a "a description of an individual, community, or organization's behavior, history, and response to an event" or set of events (Cargan, 2007). Within ethnography, especially in this instance where the researcher is separated by significant space and distance from the research location, case study sites were selected based on accessibility. Case studies often employ the comparison of two locations, analyzing the actions of individuals and groups. In this case, the sites were selected in an attempt to understand the agency and spaces women have created for themselves in the context of Palestinian women's rights and nationalism.

Frames

Literature and language analysis are utilized within the theory of frames. This is conducted by looking at the specific instances of thematic inclusions in

their work; looking for the “we” and “them” juxtaposition within any literature, publications, or communications by these organizations. As these were analyzed, they are broken down in reference to framing, giving examples of the frame maker, receiver, and the schema and contents. Overall, as is the approach of Johnston and Noakes (2005), framing strategies can be analyzed to determine the overall mobilization success (assuming that the frame was received and acted upon) as seen through altered political opportunities (See Table 1).

Table 1. Frame Components

Makers of a frame – movement entrepreneurs	Receivers of a frame – the target audience	Frame qualities – a frame schema’s contents
<p>Credibility of the promoters – their organizational and professional credentials and expertise</p> <p>Charismatic authority – rare and unique personal qualities of a movement leader</p> <p>Strategic/marketing orientation (or cynicism)</p>	<p>Ideological orientations (the target of frame bridging)</p> <p>Demographic, attitudinal, moral orientations (the intent of frame extension and frame transformation)</p>	<p>Cultural compatibility – the frame’s valuational centrality, its narrative fidelity, and slogans (amplification)</p> <p>Frame consistency, do its components synchronize?</p> <p>Relevance – including empirical credibility and experiential commensurability</p>

The frames are analyzed through use of textual analysis, breaking down instances of “we” and “them” dialogue as utilized by the frame makers (both JCW and WCLAC). By indicating the use of framing terminology, this research will demonstrate each organizations alignment with feminism, even if they disregard that specific term. There is a clear flow from framing strategy to the end goal of political change and this is demonstrated when viewing the documentation and work of the JCW and WCLAC towards social and political change. Table 1 demonstrates the variables affecting a frame’s resonance. This was applied to both organizations to demonstrate the variations in effectiveness due to such variables as the credibility of promoters (the frame makers) and ideological orientations of the target audience (this being one of the most significant variables for this research) (Johnston & Noakes, 2005).

Comparison

The case study approach utilized in this research, which focuses on the operations of two specific organizations, is comparable to the work conducted by Jennifer Bickham Mendez (2002) on a similar organization in Nicaragua and its relation to the larger feminist movement (termed “transnational feminism”). As Mendez (2002) suggests, through a specific case study “the ways in which place-centered, locally constituted political identities articulate with transnational flows of ideas, organizations, practices and discourse shape actors’ collective practices” can be explored and ascertained (p. 196). Through study of grassroots organizations, the relationship between individuals and the collective

is demonstrated clearly. By incorporating a comparison between two like-minded, but ultimately different organizations, an analysis of the local forms of identity, including political and social identities, is demonstrated

Credibility and Limitations

The limitations of this study are many. A more in-depth understanding of feminism, its implementation and significance, and nationalism in Palestine might require direct interactions with the Palestinian people. Direct questioning or interviews would be beneficial in this regard as well as perhaps volunteering with a women specific group or organization in Palestine. Looking at the work of these groups might also be better assessed if it were possible to interact with them directly. Also, the research might be better served by researching more organizations in order to make a more accurate claim about feminism in Palestine, however, these two organizations provide a beneficial contrast to one another as one is explicitly feminist and the other not, ensuring that the overall research is not biased towards only feminist or non-feminist organizations in Palestine and that the research can more accurately approach the overall subject. With all these possible limitations addressed, these two organizations are especially beneficial to the body of this research as they themselves utilize both Arabic and English language resources on their webpages. This ensures that as far as the researcher is concerned, there is little translation error as the groups have translated for themselves

Conclusion

As Mendez and Wolf (2002) describe, there is a current gap between feminist theory and feminist practice. However, “serious analysis of the processes and outcomes that are recreated in transnational, international, and local feminist development organizations constitute an important political step towards bridging [these] existing gaps between feminist theory and practice” (Mendez & Wolf, 2002, p. 196). Theory often exists without regards to the unique power dynamics and axis against or within which women’s organizations exist in the world. By analyzing two organizations in an often-presumed “anti-feminist” or worse, anti-women region, the true situation of the women’s movement and feminism, for that area, can be realized. Each location will be a unique space for the interactions of theory and practice, and by studying two organizations with direct language usage ties to feminist theory, the variations of its implementation will be better elucidated. A more comprehensive feminism can be understood as more research occurs in a similar vein in order to understand the unique instances of its existence in an increasingly globalized world.

CHAPTER FOUR
CASE STUDIES OF
THE JERUSALEM CENTER FOR WOMEN AND
THE WOMEN'S CENTRE FOR LEGAL AID AND COUNSELLING

“I am an Arab woman of color
And we come in all shades of anger.”

Rafeef Ziadah⁹

This chapter will be set within the context of the global feminist discourse as affected by processes of globalization and its impact on the spread of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Globalization can be viewed as having a significant impact on the overall development of feminist organizations and for providing a platform from which women in various states may call for and even demand equal rights. This is clearly seen in the women's movement in Palestine. Women have been active throughout the development of Palestine, but their activities have gained a more solid trajectory due to the ability of women to engage in the global women's discourse. The flow of discourse and ideas has allowed for the formation of various identities within Palestine, providing women with the agency needed to fully actualize their social and political abilities. As the work of Mendez (2002) suggests, there is a “complex inter-articulation” as the

⁹ Rafeef Ziadah. (2011). *Shades of anger*. Retrieved from http://www.rafeefziadah.net/pages/rafeef_ziadahvideo-page/

transnational flows of ideas interact with the identities and cultural practices of a given area, thus creating a unique scenario from which to understand the alterations that occur within the women's movement when understood in a particular social and cultural context (p. 198).

From within the social contexts and strata of Palestine (and in some cases, the larger Middle East), women began generating "feminist" discourses, not explicitly, but implicitly, by committing themselves to change even in the gendered context. This discourse was "both a critique of being held back from accessing the benefits of modernity as freely as their counterparts *because they were female* and a legitimization of their moves forward" (Badran, 1986, as cited in Mendez, 2002, p. 7). The State of Palestine has often relegated women to certain spheres of existence, assuming them to be merely the mothers of a nation. Although much of the strongly gendered terminology of the earliest versions of the *Constitution of the State of Palestine* and the *Basic Law* has been altered, there is still a lack of women and venues wherein women can express their wants and desires within their strongly patriarchal society.

The following chapter will be organized following topical segments which will be elaborated upon in the context of each organization (the JCW and the WCLAC). First, the relationship between NGOs and social movements is addressed. Second, the case study is broken down in terms of globalization and nationalism with each organization addressed specifically in regards to those categories. Third, the overall approaches and practices will be reviewed

providing the framework for an elucidation of their frames, which are the fourth topic to be addressed.

Non-Government Organizations and Social Movements

Within research of global institutions, the variations between a Non-governmental Organization (NGO) and social movements are few, but vary in regards to the approach of the researcher. Social movement research “concentrates on the mobilization of individuals to form a shared identity and to support radical challenge to the status quo” (Willetts, 2011, p. 23). While this description is accurate in many ways, the use of the terminology “radical challenge” is problematic. As can be seen by the work of the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), there is not necessarily a need for “radical” change, but simply a challenging of norms or practices of a society or political situation, in this case, Palestine. It is from this that the work of Sydney Tarrow (1994) more accurately represents the truth of a social movement: “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elite opponents and authorities” (p. 3-4). However, Willetts (2011) presents some key questioning of the understandings of just what constitutes a *movement*. Does it take a certain amount of participants? Must they be involved in a certain type of action? Ultimately, Willetts (2001) asserts, “NGOs... cannot be contrasted and separated from social movements” (p. 25). This makes the work of both an interconnected

topic, wherein the NGOs and their work can be viewed as a form of social movement. Anthropology critiques this, suggesting that although NGOs may be incorporated into or utilized by a social movement, they are not in and of themselves a social movement and it often criticizes conflating NGOs and social movements (Schuller & Lewis, 2014). However, this critique should not hinder the discussion of the work that NGOs do or their participation in relation to social movements.

In the current discussion, it is understood that NGOs, specifically the JCW and the WCLAC, represent a vital component of social movements. Without the inclusion of organized grouping, no collective action could occur. As Tarrow (1994) indicates, “[a]lthough it is individuals who decide whether or not to take up collective action, it is in their face-to-face groups, their social networks and their institutions that collective action is most often activated and sustained” (p. 21). Elaborating upon this, Willetts (2011) discusses what comprises a social movement, indicating the network of groups and individuals:

A social movement consists of a network of NGO employees and activists, who articulate a set of common values and common policies that challenge the dominant social norms and/or official policy in a particular issue-area, *plus* the members or active supporters of those NGOs, *plus* members of the general public who to some extent identify with those NGOs and take some form of personal action to generate social change. (Willetts, 2011, p. 25)

This understanding of social movement demonstrates the significance of the inclusion of the JCW and the WCLAC in one common discussion. Both organizations operate in the social movement for women's rights; however, only the WCLAC considers itself within the feminist movement. These two organizations demonstrate exactly the sort of complications involved in discussing social movements; social movements may include NGOs, but as their specific approaches and connection with the larger movements differ, there will be complexities in determining the overall affect of a social movement in a specific country.

By addressing two groups, so involved in the women's movement, with yet more connection to the feminist movement – even in instances when the group avoids strict terminology – the “serious analysis of the processes and outcomes that are recreated in transnational, international, and local feminist development organizations constitute an important political step towards bridging existing gaps between feminist theory and practice” (Mendez & Wolf, 2001, p. 723). When understanding the situational reality of specific places it provides a further elaboration of the practice of feminism in a local and global context, aiding in a more complete relational understanding of feminist theory and practice.

Economic and Social Council

The Charter of the United Nations allows for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to consult with non-governmental organizations especially those “concerned with matters within [ECOSOC's] competence;” this may be

expanded to include international organizations and “where appropriate... national organizations” after consulting with the concerned Member State (United Nations Charter, Chapter X, Article 71). These “consultative arrangements” are made to enable ECOSOC “to secure expert information or advice from organizations having special competence in subjects for which consultative arrangements are made” as well as “to enable international, regional, sub-regional and national organizations that represent important elements of public opinion to express their views” (E/Res/1996/31, part II, paragraph 20). It is the intention of ECOSOC to allow participation by consultative NGOs that they would:

provide expert analysis on issues directly from... experience in the field; serve as an early warning agent; help monitor and implement international agreements; help raise public awareness of relevant issues; play a major role in advancing United Nations goals and objectives; [and] contribute with essential information at organization events. (ECOSOC, 2011, p. 7)

The ability of non-governmental organizations to serve in this capacity at the global level is a benefit to the work of smaller, grassroots organizations such as the WCLAC, which may raise awareness for the current social and political situations of Palestine while also providing the organization with support and credibility in their operations.

Case Study

A full understanding of the role and operations of women is necessary in order to afford a complete and accurate picture of a society as a whole. In this regard, case studies have always provided an excellent exhibit from which to observe all segments of a society. Jennifer Beckham Mendez (2002) and her work with the Working and Unemployed Women's Movement, "Maria Elena Cuadra," (MEC) stands as an appropriate correlate for this research with the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC). That organization was focused on women with a goal of "making visible the role of women at all levels of society" (Mendez, 2002, p. 196). In both of these instances in Palestine, the influence of feminist discourse is apparent, as the processes of globalization have allowed the flow of ideas across transnational boundaries. According to Thayer, "practices inspired by a given discourse are not inextricably bound up with it in a seamless package; the two are semi-autonomous with respect to one another, change at different rhythms, and are capable of mutual influence" (2000, p. 208). This flow of ideas occurs due to globalization (to be expanded upon below), but in no way limits the altering of practices by which these ideas have been employed in the past instances and locations. Rather, new groups are accepting the rhetoric and reshaping the practice for their own varied implementations.

Globalization

There is an understanding of the term “globalization” that relies heavily upon the current construction of the neo-liberal and largely economic system. However, globalization should really be viewed as “global interconnectedness” and a system that can “take other forms, on different terms... embodying different kinds of power relations” (Massey, 2000 as cited in Vargas, 2003, p. 903). Rather than looking to the economics of the world, to the flow of capital and goods, this research interprets the flow of ideas and creation or incorporation of social movements across national boundaries and significant space. The impact of globalization, and the significance to this particular case study, is apparent when understanding that “politics is no longer... existing only in formal spaces [but] expands towards spaces increasingly important for both male and female citizens, with daily life on one side and the globalized systems on the other” (Vargas, 2003, p. 906-7). However, for women, especially in societies where they are largely marginalized, the impacts of globalization are vast. As women in Palestine, for example, are introduced to the concept of feminism, there are varying degrees of its implementation. For the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), this ideology is explicitly implemented, relying on the connections of this ideology to broader systems in order to provide those they serve with a broader base of assistance through organizational support including the United Nations. However, the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) includes terminology and concepts clearly from the feminist

movement, but implements it sans the official title in their documents after 2007. This is in an attempt to reach the largest portion of the Palestinian people, in both conservative and liberal areas. However, both organizations are able to access assorted segments of the Palestinian society to varying degrees and to varying effect.

As Vargas (2003) argued, there has been a significant impact on feminism, and subjects related to it, due to globalization. In Palestine, this is so clearly illustrated by the varying degrees of feminism in the women's rights dialogue. For Jelin (2001), a shared framework must be created amongst the various communities and movements in order to address "their fears, nationalisms, and traditional identities" as they may be recast in a new regional context. The current dynamics of a globalized era, with the spread of ideologies such as feminism, create a unique focus for research. Although the global feminist discourse may create the initial framework for women in Palestine, as Vargas (2003) argues, there is no "global feminist sisterhood," no overarching, hegemonic form of female existence or work. However, by outlining this shift in global dynamics, with the spread of ideas through the globalized arena, a background is created against which the situation of Palestine can be analyzed and understood.

In Palestine, there is a space for feminism, as the women's movement has had a significant role in the overall processes of politics and social change in the country to varying degrees. In the current era of globalization, these women's

spaces are available for the dissemination of feminist ideologies. The WCLAC “acts... to reverse historical negligence, negative cultural legacies, and discriminatory social attitudes towards Palestinian women” and further, “to address discrimination and violence against women within Palestinian society, and [understands] the need to support the national struggle for freedom and independence” (WCLAC, 2013). This approach views the struggles for women’s rights as being bound up in the overall nationalist struggle as, due to a prolonged conflict, women’s rights are often ignored or marginalized for the sake of the larger nationalist cause. If women’s rights can begin to be addressed while still under occupation, then with the movement towards a free state, those rights will likely be encouraged and supported following full state formation. The JCW, while never explicitly stating feminist allegiances in its most recent publications, was still clearly focused on the goals and practices of the movement, as they understand and believe that “empowering women, and advocating for respect for human rights, and democratic principles is crucial to ending occupation and creating a foundation for a just and lasting peace” (JCW, 2013). These principles correspond to the ideals of the women’s movement and feminism. It is clear that “feminist ideas, strategies, and practices... ‘are dispersed into varied local sites where they are picked up, [and] fashioned as they resonate in contextualized ways” (Desai, 2002, p. 15 as cited in Mendez, 2002, p. 197). Each location and research site will have a unique context from which groups are practicing and implementing larger ideals. There is no stagnant existence of an ideal or

movement as each location alters the global construction within their own contexts.

Jerusalem Center for Women. The JCW failed in many regards to enact a truly global parameter to their work. Their most recent Annual Report (2012) included numerous references to their intentions to interact in a more globalized manner, citing such work as their online and media components as their global outreach. Over 2012, they “pursued connecting with UN agencies and like-minded local NGOs” through “networking activities with women’s organizations... as JCW [now] knows the relevant players” (JCW, Annual Report, 2012, p. 17).

In their earlier annual reports, mainly 2000 and 2001, the organization mentioned more significant interactions with the international community as they attempted to enact networks within the women’s and feminist movement, however, it seems that other than attending a few international meetings and conferences and receiving funding from several international rights groups or nation specific funds, their global outreach was limited. As stated above, the organization seemed most focused on the population of Palestinians, how they could empower women “on the ground” and implement clinics and workshops that would inform women of their unique rights – these rights being largely based on the international understandings as presented under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) – and abilities while also encouraging advocacy within their families and communities. They were, however, aware that visibility and alliances with international bodies

and communities could assist in their work and thus, sought “increased... presence in international women’s networks” and amongst their constituents, “promoted alliances with international women’s organizations” (JCW, 2011, p. 11).

A significant example of perhaps why this organization lacked a truly global process is stated clearly in their *2007 Annual Report* in which they indicated the hesitancy of women to engage the global community as they viewed their continued denial of rights and a true nation as the failure of the global community to provide for them and to truly represent the Palestinian people and women. This is due perhaps in part from the community still having a sense of reeling from the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004 and the significant impact that had upon the overall functions of the Palestinian leadership. In 2007, the JCW related the overall inefficacy of the international community as viewed by Palestinian women who felt “unsure about their rights and [felt] let down by the international community” all while feeling continuously “anxious, frustrated and frightened for their futures and those of their children” (JCW, 2007, p. 15).

However, even within the uncertainty of their constituency about the effectiveness of the international community, the JCW clearly aligned itself with the positions of the international system, regularly sighting such documents and agreements as the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) and Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), both which support the full inclusion and the significance of women in peace

building. UN Women views the CEDAW as a Bill of Rights for women, an overall assessment of the rights and privileges that states as well as the international community should provide to women. However, within this discussion it is important to note that Israel, although signed to the Convention, holds reservations and withholds acceptance of Article 29, paragraph 1 which would allow two contending states on any of the provided protections to seek arbitration or referral of the conflict to the International Court of Justice. This is not surprising given the constant contention between Israel and Palestine. Further, since the State of Palestine ratified the Convention in 2014, Israel, as the occupier, would not desire a mitigated claim wherein Palestine sought redress for violations committed against the women within its population. The JCW incorporated these conventions into their work by informing women of the rights afforded (or at least purportedly afforded) to women through them. Holding workshops regularly that informed women, and provided answers to any questions Palestinian women might have “pertaining to their rights under international and national law” (JCW, 2007, p. 15).

In regards to their more recent work and their connection with the international community, the JCW was highly active online, posting regular updates of their work, campaigns, and actions. These updates were not only posted on the organization’s webpage, but also on the group’s official Facebook and Twitter accounts.¹⁰ However, these updates abruptly ended in 2014 with no

¹⁰ [facebook.com/JerusalemCenterforWomen](https://www.facebook.com/JerusalemCenterforWomen) and twitter.com/JCW – @JCW_Palestine

discernable explanation. Regardless of the cause behind this sudden lapse in activity, this organization still stands as a relevant and exemplary case for women's empowerment and agency in Palestine. This advocacy for women spanned many persons in Jerusalem (al-Quds) and surrounding villages, where their work was perhaps most needed. Through their online advocacy, although lacking in terms of overall effectiveness in bringing about significant focus to the situation of women in that specific region of Palestine, they did manage to increase the overall activity of their webpage and to encourage some international assistance including from several Canadian aid organizations and a documentary filmmaker (JCW, 2007). Their online campaigns and a few tours of local sites to aid personal and foreign diplomats demonstrates the overall significance of a global approach to conflict resolution and that the obtainment of women's rights requires not only the work of grassroots organizations, but a global approach in order to provide for the rights and protections of everyone within the global community.

Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling. The WCLAC clearly places themselves in articulation with the global system. They understand that there is an overwhelming need for a comprehensive system that will, at least on paper, afford rights and privileges to all participants within the global system. However, they do understand the implicit difficulties in this, and understand the constituency's dissatisfaction with the lack of real, visible change. It is quite likely that if available, documentation and *Annual Reports* prior to their acceptance into

ECOSOC would provide another layer of analysis as to their global outreach, however, their online publications begin in 2005, the year they were admitted. From that point forward, they were and are clearly engaged in the international system, filing reports and appeals to various bodies within the United Nations in an attempt to apprise the world of the situation of Palestine, and receive support for the Palestinian people during the incessant strife of their everyday lives.

In much the same vein as the JCW, the leadership of the WCLAC views the differences between international policy and action as, in many cases, two separate things. As the Director and Founder Maha Abu-Dayyeh (now deceased) stated in 2014, “I cannot but feel hopeful on reading the principles contained in these legal instruments [the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Security Resolution 1325 and CEDAW, among others], but somewhat baffled at the gulf between the written word and what I see on the ground” (WCLAC, 2013, 3). Discussions – or the peace process – continue on “assiduously avoid[ing]” anything that would hold the occupiers accountable as is the legal obligation, and the WCLAC views every attempt as simply another in a long line of failed attempts precisely because of avoiding the legal ramifications for the failures of the occupier (WCLAC, 2013, 3). However, as it relates to the negotiations that occurred in 2013, the WCLAC remained positive, desiring that something beneficial should come of it all, and that the shift in the opinion of the global community would stand as a benefit to the Palestinian people overall.

The WCLAC views the global flow of ideas as a permeable border through which ideas have clearly crossed in both directions. The former Director Maha Abu-Dayyeh clearly stated this in numerous “Director’s Messages” whether speaking in regards to the Arab Spring or the political elevation of Palestine within the United Nations. It is clear that they believe the global processes make their work possible, as well as their work inspiring the women’s movement in other areas; “[the Arab Spring] made history and marked a crucial milestone in the global women’s movement, setting a standard for women’s activism for freedom and justice” as Arab women “flex[ed] the power of women’s influence in shaping mass movements” (WCLAC, 2012). This organization further committed to engagement at the “local, regional, and international levels to guarantee that [they] remain relevant and able to continue providing vital resources to [their] direct constituents” (WCLAC, 2013). Perhaps most importantly, they vow “to work in solidarity with the global women’s and human right’s movements” understanding that “in this globalized world, what happens to one community in one part of the world impacts another elsewhere in the world. Therefore, the struggle for equality, justice, and human rights must remain connected regionally and globally, as well as locally” (WCLAC, 2013).

With access to ECOSOC and its various committees, the WCLAC is able to participate within the global discussion of women empowerment and equality as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) which seeks to “remov[e] all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private

life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision making.” These connections and commitments allow the WCLAC to embrace feminist ideology, as they are not only seeking to serve and disseminate their ideas and agendas to the Palestinian peoples, but also within the global community of which they are a part. In admitting to feminist ideology, this organization already constitutes a more globally focused ideology and agenda. Women in Palestine are aligning themselves with an often so-called “western” ideology; understanding its direct relation to them and their desire for equal rights. In so doing, they have opened the door to global systems from which they can receive further assistance and support in their cause. Through analyzing their ideologies, however, it is apparent that although they are connected with the feminist movement, it is not a stationary flow of ideas beginning in the West and flowing into the developing world to be implemented in the precise manner it had existed before. These women have taken up an ideology (transnational feminism) and shaped it within the context of their long history, using it as a mechanism by which they can achieve equality for their own people.

Nationalism

Nationalism is “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent... In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). The nation is “an imagined political

community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2006, 6). There is a specific link between ethnicity and the state, creating situations of tension and conflict as spaces are inhabited by numerous ethnicities who may not fit within the Western nation-state system. It is this that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict most apparently represents; a direct “us” and “other” conflict over a territory hardly large enough to house these disparate communities.

In the situation of Palestine, there is a complex web of otherness, as the Palestinian community and political leadership must be held accountable for their actions regarding women’s rights and gender equality. However, there is the added layer of the occupation, which in many ways hinders any true and full development of women’s rights in Palestine. Both the JCW and the WCLAC are also committed to the development of a democratic Palestinian state, although they understand that protecting women’s rights *now* is the paramount concern.

Women’s organizations, or women who create agency for themselves, act on behalf of the shift in politicization of the private. The private is political; women are political. In a traditionally patriarchal society, where women’s lives are often confined to specific *spaces*, it is no more apparent that “social relations structure private relations” (Willetts, 2011, p. 26). Further, they “vie... to gain influence over the norms of social behavior and decisions on public policy” (Willetts, 2011, p. 26). While it is often argued that individuals can only affect change through larger organizations or NGOs, the opposite is also true, if not more so. NGOs and social movements are only effective with the people’s

approval; they must maintain frame resonance in order to be effective for their cause.

Jerusalem Center for Women. The JCW was directly committed to the nationalist struggle, although it seems that as time passed, they began to focus more entirely on women, and the oppression faced not only due to the occupation, but within their own state as well. The occupation creates a system of oppression where houses are regularly demolished within Jerusalem and the surrounding area, with familial strains due to a lack of access to jobs and education, and an overall exacerbation of supposed cultural restraints upon women due to a fragmented political and judicial system. However, in their first *Annual Report* they clearly addressed their commitment to the Palestinian state, but also the duality of this struggle: “the national political struggle for independence and the right to self-determination and the struggle to create a democratic civil society based on a respect for the law, equality and for political, ideological and religious pluralism” (2000, p. 1).

This shift from a wholly nationalist framework is likely due to the circumstances of the early 2000s in Palestine. Camp David II had recently begun and concluded in June 2000; however, concessions made by both parties left both sides dissatisfied (Cleveland & Bunton, 2005). The second Palestinian *intifada* (“shaking off”) began in the wake of these accords, when Ariel Sharon pragmatically displayed, as many suggest, a claim to the Haram al-Sharif (for the Jews, the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem as he visited the site with 1,000 security

force personnel (Cleveland & Bunton, 2005). These political shiftings and the general discontent and violence likely led the JCW to focus its work during these early years on the nationalist struggle and peaceful resolutions to the conflict. In many ways, their own attempts at bridging the gap between Israel and Palestine mirror those of the larger politics; there were the significant attempts at peace between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership in much the same way that the JCW allied with Bat Shalom, a correlate Jewish organization, only to have all examples reach inconclusive means and an end to negotiations.

Beginning in the very following year, JCW shifted from an almost entirely democracy and advocacy position, towards one for the individuals. Perhaps, in the turmoil of the second *intifada* the organization realized the need to address women's rights regardless of the larger political atmosphere; "the struggle for collective political rights should not obstruct the struggle for individual and collective social rights" (JCW, 2001, p. 2). It was within this context, and the inconsolable difference of opinion on the second *intifada* that the relations between the JCW and Bat Shalom were halted; JCW clearly framed their support of the *intifada* as "necessary" with Bat Shalom "look[ing] at it as a violent attack on Israelis who seek peace through negotiations" (JCW, 2001, p. 2). Clearly, the JCW disagreed with the position taken by Bat Shalom, and thus, their work together was largely halted although they did admit to continued "dialogue" between "members... of the two organizations" (JCW, 2001, p. 2). The organization does concede that towards the end of 2001, dialogue was able to

resume as the groups were able to outline the significant difficulties between them which might hinder their work, but clearly explaining – and framing – that “trust-building measures had to come from the Israeli side” in order to work towards or continue joint activities (JCW, 2001, p. 2).

In 2007, a shift began within the framework and overall techniques of the organization. Their work began to focus inwardly, looking to the empowerment of everyday women, their struggles and their needs such as providing legal assistance and encouraging healthy dialogue amongst women. Advocacy improvement was for women in every day situations, not simply political spheres; rather, the organization decided to prepare women to stand up for their own rights in their relationships and families, in any area of their lives where they needed rights and protection. In 2008, a new board was voted in effectively shifting the focus towards women individually. Interestingly, beginning in 2008, the organization abruptly stopped using the term “feminist.” Although there is no clear explanation for this, it is possible that this shift in usage occurred do to the change in their overall objectives. In focusing on the local women, those in Jerusalem and surrounding villages, rather than on the international community and attempts to bridge their work with other NGOs, they perhaps realized the need to use less obviously “Western” terminology in order to forward their agenda with local women. This is also likely due in part to the instance, as discussed in terms of globalization, where the organization addressed the

population's growing dissatisfaction with international means and organizations as ineffectual.

The overall shift from the nationalist agenda towards individual and collective women's rights (protecting women's rights first and foremost) is effectively viewed when reviewing the forms and terms of framing. There begins to be a steady increase in the overall disparaging of not only the Israeli forces (as occupiers, forces, military), but the Palestinian leadership (a shift from constant nationalist terminology related to nation-building, national unity, popular, and legitimate towards traditional and social limitations, oppression, gendered division, and patriarchal). This framing of not only Israel as an instigator and perpetrator of conflict, but also the Palestinian leadership and cultural constructs as such, shows the decline in confidence in the leadership of Palestine to effectively implement change and to protect the specific rights of women. Overall, the JCW made a significant shift away from nationalist discourse in order to forward the individual needs and rights of women within a political and social perspective.

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling. The removal of Palestinian women from the overall peace process and the denial of the appropriate legal protections and rights is due, according to the WCLAC, to the lack of global implementation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and other agreed upon conventions within the global community and to the fragmentation of the Palestinian society itself and its largely patriarchal

system. The former Director, Maha Abu-Dayyeh, asserted this connection between the global and the local, or national, and the “similarities between the domestic and international legal order and their limitations if not supported with integrity” (WCLAC, 2013, p. 3). These limitations of both the domestic (national) and international legal order leave women without a direct protection of self as they are often forced to conform to the desires of the tribal or family network. The uncertainty about the Palestinian Authority (PA) and their abilities, motivations, and reforms have waxed and waned with support and reform occurring in some instances, and backtracking at others. In 2005, the WCLAC was highly concerned by the political shift that occurred as the country had lost Yasser Arafat in 2004, and a new leadership was entering office; as they stated, “uncertainty loom[ed] large” (WCLAC, 2005, p. 5). However, in later years such as 2011, the organization was hopeful that new reforms would benefit women and allow the WCLAC to impact even more women, especially rural women, and move for more reforms that would protect women and their rights.

Within Palestine, the internal political atmosphere has shifted towards becoming more equal on a gender basis. In 2003, amendments were made, although not necessarily implemented, to the *Constitution of the State of Palestine* and the *Basic Law*; these amendments altered the highly gendered language of both documents and afforded women new and equal rights in regards to voting and political office. From 2011-2013, many reforms and leadership changes allowed for women to enter and retain positions of leadership

including Rahiba Diab as Minister for Women's Affairs and the implementation of a National Gender Strategy (WCLAC, 2013). These changes demonstrate "the Palestinian Authority's (PA) efforts to reform attitudes and policy surrounding gender," however this exists still within a society saturated with patriarchal norms, which ultimately hinder women's abilities to enter the political sphere and continue the change that has occurred (WCLAC, 2013, p. 5). Further, the overall fragmentation of the PA's authority, as highlighted above, hinders any significant move towards an equal future and holds women in an unequal standing before the law with little real chance at significant change in the future.

However, overall, the WCLAC still holds a highly anxious opinion of the future, as the situation of the State of Palestine remains largely out of the control of the Palestinian leadership. As stated by former Director Abu-Dayyed in the *2013 Annual Report*,

There is one thing I am quite certain of, and that is, those who believe that peace with justice can be achieved without regard to well established legal principles or representative participation in the process, are deluding themselves. It may be that due to unequal bargaining power between the parties a temporary arrangement may be imposed, but under well-established legal principles such a deal can be rendered null and void. (WCLAC, 2013, p. 4).

The issue remains that even if the nation attempted to provide for the people and ultimately, come to a peace in the region, it would likely be a one-sided

agreement with Israel still maintaining significantly more power and would thus, not a binding or fully committed situation. It is in this tumultuous atmosphere that the WCLAC attempts to provide what legal aid and counseling is possible within a highly fragmented society living under occupation.

Approaches and Practices

The approaches of each organization varies, largely due to their framing of the issues and their understanding of globalization and nationalism. Also, the overall scope and size of an organization will affect its actions and program implementation. Between these two organizations, there is significant difference in approach in most regards, but with a few similarities. In terms of workshops, both organizations have a certain affinity for that form of work, but it is to whom and for what reason they conduct such workshops that their overall actions vary. This will be extrapolated below in regards to each organization's specific works.

Jerusalem Center for Women. The JCW held to two distinct "tracks" or approaches to Palestinian women's issues. As purported by Powers (2003), these were the national track and the Jerusalem track. The national track was clearly focused on the continued occupation, specifically utilizing (in some cases, attempting to utilize) dialogue with Israelis; this could be seen by the attempted and failed Jerusalem Link. The Jerusalem track focused on empowering women within Jerusalem, by providing them with programs, trainings, and services that would ultimately prepare them for their own foray into the women's issues dialogue.

The Jerusalem Link was such an attempt at dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. It was organized in conjunction with Bat Shalom, a Jewish women's rights group. Together these organizations sought to increase dialogue between both sides of the conflict, understanding that peace can only be achieved when all segments of the society are working towards it. This network, however, was dissolved in 2008 due to, as the head of the JCW, Amneh Badran stated, the need for "trust and transparency to work at building relations based on equality... As it is now, there is asymmetry: occupied and occupier... We need to restore dialogue on the question of refugees and create a network of women for peace" (as cited in Powers, 2003, p. 27). Their relationship was most strenuously affected by the violent situation in Gaza in 2008, leading the JCW to determine that its work must be focused entirely on the situation of Palestinians, but suggesting that the "two organizations maintain close cooperation [but] they operate independently" (JCW, 2008, p. 3).

The specific objectives of the JCW and the rights they intended for women were significantly focused on women's lives, both privately and publically, desiring that they should "hold productive roles in society through political participation, leadership and integration" (2012, 8). Some of the specific rights incorporated in the work of the JCW included marriage rights, property and inheritance rights, protection from home demolition and eviction, as well as from domestic abuse, and the right to divorce, and custodial law. The JCW varied from perhaps other organizations such as the WCLAC in that, with the

progression of time, they came to represent specific rights and advocacy for individual women through workshops and voice-therapy sessions (Dialogue Tent) wherein women were encouraged to speak in a comfortable location about the affects of various abuses and rights violations in their own lives.

The rights most protected vary based on the year and overall organizational efforts at that time. During the earliest publications of the JCW's *Annual Report*, as the organization itself was more fully focused on the occupation and creating women for advocacy and diplomacy wherein they could be incorporated into the peace process and the political sphere of Palestine, the rights most focused on by the group were those which encouraged women to be active participants within politics. Sighting such national documents as the *Palestinian Declaration of Independence* (2003) and the *Common Law* (2003), the JCW encouraged training in democracy, human rights on a national and international level, advocacy, and life skills which they saw as a means to "advance women's status and role in the decision-making process, as well as to protect human rights and democratic principles and build a just peace" (JCW, 2000, p. 1). However, with the passage of time and due to the shifts in global and national focus of the organization, those rights also became much more specific to the needs of individual women. This included providing advocacy training, not desiring that every women should become a political leader or facilitator, but that each woman might become an advocate for herself, standing up for her rights within her family and local community; understanding her rights

and value and thus advocating for herself in order to shift the balance of the currently, largely patriarchal society.

The JCW sought to provide women with empowerment most seen through their workshops and clinics provided to Jerusalem and surrounding villages' women. This included legal clinics with up to 135 participating women; Palestinian women are affected by the patriarchal society, which oppresses them and the violence perpetrated by states, individuals, and society. The most outright expression of specific women's rights was seen in the JCW's legal clinics and psychosocial support trainings. These clinics and workshops were aimed at providing women with a direct understanding of the laws and rights of Israel and Palestine, which govern their lives. Understanding that the denial of these rights is common from both Israel and Palestine, these clinics were aimed at a better understanding of the legal system so that women might become advocates for themselves especially in cases of marriage, custody, inheritance, labor, or sexual abuse. These clinics also provided women with a safe space within which they could receive the legal, emotion, and psychological support necessary, which ultimately demonstrates the unique approach of the JCW.

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling. Not to suggest that all cultural gender norms or standards are the epitome of gender rights, but in the context of conflict, a violent shift of these roles leaves a society fragmented and hurting. Although the WCLAC, and the women's movement more broadly, desires for an equality of gender within Palestine, they do not suggest an

immediate overhaul of cultural roles and gender identities. Rather, their work is aimed at providing women the ability to protect themselves legally and alter their futures *if they so desire*. This is an important note to make before engaging in a discussion of rights and what rights should be afforded. Ultimately, women should be allowed to work, they should have a space to practice politics, they should have the ability to provide for the futures and safety of their families, however, they should not be required to or forced to work or provide for the entirety of their families simply because the ongoing conflict demands that of them. In the words of the WCLAC,

women must take on the role of breadwinner and financial provider as well as continuing to fulfill their traditional roles in childcare and homemaking. This reflects how the occupation has partially deconstructed traditional roles and has a profound influence on women's status in the Palestinian society. (WCLAC, 2013, p. 6)

Overall, the work of the WCLAC is clearly focused on the rights of women and ensuring their full position within the society and the political spheres of Palestine, understanding the implicit difficulties of protecting their culture, but also ensuring that archaic patriarchal forms are not reinforced.

The years from 2013-2015 are included within a three year strategy entitled "Moving forward despite a precarious existence," an all too appropriate title for the tumultuous situation within which this organization attempts to operate for the betterment and furtherance of women within the Palestinian society, and

tied to that, the Palestinian society itself. The outlined strategic goals of that (or, this) period are: 1) contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence; 2) promote women's rights and combat negative practices against women; and 3) develop institutional and human capacity in order to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of WCLAC (2013). These three goals demonstrate the commitment of the WCLAC to the improvement of Palestinian society, their leadership, and the interstate conflict.

Through grassroots methods, the WCLAC aims to inform the local community members of current laws and systems; they shifted the focus of the work "from lobbying on the legislative, decision-making level to the grassroots [level] and [to] effecting attitudinal change on the ground" (WCLAC, 2013, p. 10). This demonstrates the commitment and overall focus of the WCLAC, which is ultimately on the local women, affording equal rights and protections under the law for every women within the Palestinian society, but through local, national, and global means. One such example is their work within the Shari'a court where they attempted to install a free help desk for women; this initial attempt was refused by the Supreme Judge Department as it was considered to conflict with the paid services of the institution, however, the WCLAC has since contracted three lawyers to provide legal consultations for women in both Shari'a and civil courts (WCLAC, 2014).

Overall, the WCLAC is committed to advocacy that provides effective change for all segments of the Palestinian society, but mainly women. They accomplish this with a well-rounded approach that incorporates the local populations and cultural norms, the national system including the Palestinian Authority and its various committees, and the international community as the WCLAC presents regular reports on the status of the situation of Palestine for women and the nation to international bodies such as ECOSOC. The WCLAC works towards legislative reform, as that is a significant hindrance to women's rights within Palestine. Although there have been political changes and reforms, the WCLAC believes that more is necessary as many of the implemented reforms have as yet not been effectively implemented for women. This includes continued cases of femicide, domestic violence (which should be held to the standards of TAKAMOL¹¹), and lack of accurate advice and counseling from state service providers.

Comparison. Both organizations have one feature that is quite similar, that of interviews with women affected by various abuses and discriminations. While the WCLAC uses the interviews with Palestinian women first, as an empowerment for women, and second, as an incorporated tool for their actions in the international human rights system, the JCW utilizes women's own voices as a healing process for that specific segment of society in the hopes that it will

¹¹ TAKAMOL is the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence by which violence that occurs in the police, health, or social affairs sectors may be provided standardized procedures. The cabinet of Palestine adopted it in December 2013 and its protocols are to have been implemented and followed from that point forward.

expand into the larger society. As Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Khshuiboun (2009) argue, often, women – and any segment of a violated community in reality – lose faith in non-governmental and humanitarian organizations and the overall international human rights system when it appears that no change occurs. This is where the two groups differ. The JCW began to utilize its grassroots position in the Palestinian society to empower the individuals, for the individuals and the society including through their psychosocial support groups through which women “practiced how to maintain effective family relationships while asserting their gender equality” (JCW, 2012, p. 13). Whereas the WCLAC empowers women, by meeting with them in the Dialogue Tent, “a place where people are obliged to respect each other’s opinions, listen carefully, speak out, and negotiate debatable social issues” (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2001, p. 139). The WCLAC in conjunction with this, conducts interviews with the larger intention of imploring the international community – mainly the human rights committees of the United Nations – to intercede on behalf of Palestinian women specifically and Palestine as a whole. This, however, should not be construed as the WCLAC *using* the voices of violated Palestinian women for their own means, but rather utilizing a practice, but for two distinct needs. They encourage women for their own psychological health, but with the added intention of protecting them legally through the institutions of the international system. The practices of these two organizations are in many regards similar, but as each has its own goals and agenda, the exact use of these practices varies between them.

Frames

Frames are the ideologies and tactics that encourage and assist individuals in understanding the world, by compartmentalizing it into categories including the “world out there” and one’s own environment (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 3). Frames are further used as collective action frames which encourage people to participate in particular actions where they “must be convinced an injustice has occurred, persuaded that collective action is called for, and motivated to act if a social movement is to occur” (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 2). As women’s rights organizations, the JCW and the WCLAC must frame rights in order to encourage women to agree and participate for change within Palestine. The JCW frames rights within the daily lives of women while the WCLAC produces a frame that looks towards women’s rights from the larger perspective of the global rights community (mainly, the United Nations). By looking at some of the overall framings and the work of these two organizations, the resonance becomes apparent and demonstrates why perhaps one of these two organizations has been more effective in encouraging participation from larger segments of Palestinian society.

The below table is constructed from the work of Johnston and Noakes (2005, p. 13) and demonstrates the variables involved in a frame’s resonance and thus, will elaborate upon the ability of each organization to be effective in its use of framing. By viewing the components including in Table 1, the following

discussion of each organization's overall process of framing is more clearly articulated and demonstrated.

Table 1. Frame Components

Makers of a frame – movement entrepreneurs	Receivers of a frame – the target audience	Frame qualities – a frame schema's contents
<p>Credibility of the promoters – their organizational and professional credentials and expertise</p> <p>Charismatic authority – rare and unique personal qualities of a movement leader</p> <p>Strategic/marketing orientation (or cynicism)</p>	<p>Ideological orientations (the target of frame bridging)</p> <p>Demographic, attitudinal, moral orientations (the intent of frame extension and frame transformation)</p>	<p>Cultural compatibility – the frame's valuational centrality, its narrative fidelity, and slogans (amplification)</p> <p>Frame consistency, do its components synchronize?</p> <p>Relevance – including empirical credibility and experiential commensurability</p>

Jerusalem Center for Women. Clearly, the movement entrepreneurs were the people involved in the running of the JCW. In 2011, they selected a new board who altered significantly the frames and thus the overall work of the organizations, shifting away from the larger feminist movement as well as shifting towards a more locally focused system for women in Palestine, not concerned with engaging women's groups in other states or the international system, but focusing largely on Palestinian women. This constituted a reframing of women's

rights from an international framework to a local framework. The board was made up of individuals with varying backgrounds including law, political science, and economics, which assisted the organization and provided credibility to the framers as they had significant education and work experience in relevant fields. The JCW in large part attempted to inform to create advocates, a less effective method as the pressure was placed on the community and people for which the work was aimed at assisting, rather than the burden remaining with the legal advocates and organization which could have the power and ability to cause and implement change.

Due to the ineffectiveness of some of their earlier work, and the selection of new board members, the qualities of the frame changed for the JCW in order to encourage potential constituents to “embrace a frame that draws on beliefs and values that make up part of the target group’s cultural tool kit” (Johnston & Noakes, 2005, p. 14). These two frame components are perhaps the most interconnected as can be seen from the JCW. The organization worked with women in a very specific space, those residing in Jerusalem and the surrounding villages. This was significant as it shaped the frames forwarded by the JCW. Initially, the organization aggrandized much of their work, encouraging women to become advocates to the society and governance; however, this ignored the constituent base with which they were working. Village women and even those in Jerusalem were more concerned with the everyday ordeals and hardships they were facing including house demolition and violence. Their work began to focus

on providing women “legal and psychosocial empowerment” through legal clinics and workshops “acting as a platform for women empowerment both in their private an [*sic*] public realms and giving special emphasis to the psychosocial empowerment as the main tool for increasing women self esteem and sense of self growth” (JCW, 2012, p. 7). The JCW created a frame that did not dismiss cultural or religious values (such as wearing a veil), but rather highlighted the freedoms that should be provided (divorce rights, freedom of movement, etc.) within that cultural and historic setting. By framing the women’s rights in this way, the JCW could provide legal support that would lead to empowerment and opportunities for women to voice their concerns and opinions safely which provided psychosocial empowerment.

Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling. The frames of the WCLAC are aimed at: “revers[ing] historical negligence,” combating “negative cultural legacies,” discriminatory social attitudes towards Palestinian women,” and “the needs of women victimized by Israel’s violent actions in the occupied Palestinian territories” (oPt) (WCLAC, n.d.). The WCLAC seeks to release frames through legal aid, social counseling, and protection services, as suggested by their official name and their website documentation. The WCLAC frames much of their work in terms of the individual women who might be helped through their work which includes workshops, legal advice as provided at the Shari’a courts, and psychological and social counseling.

Their work is more effective¹² because it informs the community (target audience) about laws and practices; it is focused on awareness raising within a community rather than creating immediate advocates. The WCLAC is able to draw from the created base of support, those women who have received assistance, guidance, or support when the time arises politically for new measures to be voted on or for political alternatives to be implemented. Further, they take into account the particular audience whenever conducting workshops, understanding that young university students are more likely to willingly join an advocacy group or movement, but local women are more likely in need of the legal and social support in order to advocate for themselves in their daily lives and struggles.

Conclusion

Although the feminist movement may not be said to be on the rise so to speak in Palestine, in that there is no explicit feminist movement with rallies or projects, the ideology is none the less beginning to permeate the very foundations of Palestinian society even to the point of combining and altering the nationalist agenda. That is ultimately what the framers (the JCW and the WCLAC) intend. Women have adopted an agency for themselves, creating a social force for their own protections and rights while also aiding in a, hopefully,

¹² Although interviews are most commonly used to determine effectiveness or viability of a frame amongst the constituents, they were not conducted during this research. However, effectiveness was determined based on the number of participants recorded by each organization, visibility of the organization to various audiences including the local and global communities, and the longevity of the organization and its work.

peaceful transition for the state. This moves beyond a simple end to conflict between Israel and Palestine; there must be direct change for the women who have so actively worked towards their own rights. As Peter Wallensteen (2012) suggests, for peace to occur and continue to exist there must be “an increasing commitment to reconciliation, peacebuilding, democracy, equal rights, gender issues and the protection of populations that might be harmed” (p. 245). Without an assurance of these protections and providence, the women of Palestine will not succeed. It is precisely for this reason that they rally now, garnering the attention and support that they need to ensure that their rights are afforded and protected now during any peace process as it may occur and in the event of the full recognition of the State of Palestine.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

“Your spirit – like Spring – will always be free
Your spirit – our spirit – like Spring – will always be free.”

Rafeef Ziadah¹³

The women’s movement in Palestine exists within a complex political and social atmosphere. Overall, this research attempted to answer questions related to women’s groups within Palestine, their role in the nationalist discourse, and their goals and motivations. Those questions were specifically: 1) Is the main focus for women’s groups in Palestine purely women’s rights? 2) Does the political atmosphere affect the overall message and designs of these two groups? And 3) How do these organizations differ in regards to terminology (i.e. feminism) and how does this in turn affect their goals and actions towards women’s rights? By looking at the *Annual Reports* of both the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) and the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) and their overall achievements and projects with women in Palestine, it is clear that answers to these and other similar questions are possible, but further research and elaboration is needed to fully understand the conclusions drawn here.

¹³ Ziadah, R. (2012). Cultivate hope a poem for Hana Shalabi. Retrieved from http://www.rafeefziadah.net/pages/rafeef_ziadahvideo-page/

The varied beginnings and approaches of these two women's groups demonstrate the unique perspectives and activities that entities may implement in order to achieve a similar goal. Though "women's empowerment" is the key to each organizations agenda, their overall approaches and end goals are distinct providing a unique lens from which to look at the ongoing conflict in Palestine, the patriarchal system that has developed there, and the women's movement and its intentions within that given arena.

Addressing Research Question 1

Is the main focus for women's groups in Palestine purely women's rights? Due to the situation of Palestine, there is a significant place in any dialogue for the nationalist discourse. In many ways, that dialogue takes precedence over any other concerns or goals, as it is felt most acutely by all Palestinians. However, this often entails the dismissal of smaller needs, claims, or ideas which could be dealt with later in the process. This is evidenced, in regards to the women's movement, when looking at the overall nationalist dialogue. The nationalist dialogue regularly places women's concerns and women's rights in a sub-category to the peace process or nation development. Initially women were involved through national channels such as the Palestinian Women's Union, and their assistance and support was required during early interactions within the British Mandate. However, this approach through unified channels became largely redundant as their work (the women's) was overshadowed by the larger

organization (comprised predominantly of men) of which they were a part (Fleishmann, 2000).

This is where the current groups provide an essential service to Palestinian women and why they serve as an important analysis of the women's movement in Palestine. Each forwards a slightly different agenda, but with the overarching principle of women's empowerment and women's equality in Palestine in spite of the gendered spaces within that society. This equality is demanded of not only the occupying state and the Palestinian state, but also the patriarchal system of Palestine, demonstrating the JCW's and the WCLAC's commitment to women *specifically*. These organizations demonstrate the "series of social forms [that have] emerged to contest, interrogate, and reverse these [political] developments and to create forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilization that proceed independently of the actions of corporate capital and the nation-state system" (Appadurai, 2000, p. 3). In many ways, the JCW and WCLAC must act outside of the state system, as the Palestinian State is not fully and legally legitimized and the other involved state oppresses many of the political and legal processes in Palestine. It is within such a convoluted political context that each organization strives to achieve some form of equality for its constituents and supporters including rights and protections socially and a movement towards future political rights and equality.

Jerusalem Center for Women

The JCW began their work with a significant focus on the political and national discourse in Palestine. They directly stated their commitment as a “politically oriented” organization, towards the “empowerment of women for political participation” (JCW, 2001, p. 2). This is more explicitly outlined in their earlier *Annual Report of 2001* in that the JCW

envisions Palestinian women empowered and involved in the process of nation and state building and all aspects of Palestinian and civil society developments... in order to advance women’s status and role in the decision-making process, as well as to protect human rights and democratic principles and build a just peace. (JCW, 2000, p. 1)

However, they seem to make a distinction between social and political rights, working towards an equitable *social* justice for women, even if the political rights are continuously denied due to the political turmoil of the state. This demonstrates precisely how this organization responded to the first research query: they were committed to women’s rights, first and foremost. If the state fails to provide those rights either due to their own intolerance or the forced ineptitude due to the occupation, then the JCW was committed to improving the livelihoods of women socially until such a time as their political rights under the State of Palestine could also be fully realized.

However, there is a distinction that must be made when reviewing the work of the JCW. While it was committed to women’s rights and women’s

empowerment, a significant portion of their work went towards empowering women in order for them to affect the social and political atmosphere in Palestine. This can be seen through several of the steps taken at various stages of their work including “that women must be involved at all levels (from grassroots to policymaking framework) of the socio-political discourse of peace” (JCW, 2001, p. 3). Ultimately, their work was focused on the creation of advocates;

the aim of... sessions was to inform Palestinian women of their rights under international law and to suggest methods for them to address breaches of those rights such as launching lobbying and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness among decision makers. (JCW, 2000, p. 2)

As can be seen, the impetus was upon the women themselves to affect change on a much larger scale than simply within their own lives. Perhaps, this is why the work of the JCW never seemed to reach the levels or standards of other similar organizations (such as the WCLAC), because instead of advocating for the women or assisting the women in advocating for their own personal lives, they were attempting to train some rural women to be advocates for all women rather than focusing on more achievable and likely goals. This did begin to change in tandem with the organization’s shift away from the more global discourse, but it is worth noting that for the largest portion of the organization’s existence they were largely focused on women as advocates. Their final years

of focus on individuals and social rights were perhaps too little too late, with the organization suffering from the lack of true cohesive agenda.

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

The WCLAC is focused on women's rights, understanding that those rights ought to be protected under all liable states, occupier or otherwise. In this mindset, they work for a full understanding by Palestinian women of the truth of their existence in any form they choose, whether they be advocates, working women, or housewives. The WCLAC aims to eradicate gender-based violence including femicide, domestic violence, and even violence against children. In many instances, these forms of violence occur due to cultural misunderstandings and patriarchal constructions, as well as political disparities and the overall occupation. Further than combating violence, both physical and institutionalized, the WCLAC seeks political and social rights and empowerment for women. They accomplish this through workshops and conferences wherein they approach subjects including international human rights and laws, marriage, divorce, alimony and custody rights, and cultural values. Through their work with local advocates and "politically and socially active" women, they enhance the abilities of individual women to apply pressure on the political systems in order to spread the organizations agenda of female empowerment (WCLAC, 2014, p. 20).

Ultimately, the WCLAC seeks to work with all segments of society, local, national, and international: "[our work] seeks to promote solidarity with the Palestinian people among members of parliament, members of congress,

international policy makers, academics, students, faith leaders, journalist and activists; in addition to lobby international organizations” (WCLAC, 2014, p. 30). Their work is well rounded, addressing all available avenues to garner support and create a lasting change for women in Palestine. They adequately address the rights of women through legal and social means at the local, national, and global levels.

Addressing Research Question 2

Does the political atmosphere affect the overall message and designs of these two groups? The political atmosphere of Palestine and Israel greatly affects the abilities of women’s groups, or any group for that matter, to meet, work, and operate. If the occupier is being particularly stringent in granting the ability to move between certain villages, towns, or cities, then the work of any group is impeded. Further, the variety of leadership in Palestine, whether they be elected officials or the government seeking reconciliation with other parties (which occurred in 2014 between the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, al-Fatah, and Hamas), the legislation and laws pertaining to women may change for the better. However, as will be addressed below, in many instances these potentially beneficial laws and amendments never see fruition in action by the leadership, the legal system, and the Palestinian community as a whole.

Jerusalem Center for Women

The JCW regularly cited their inability to interact with their former partners and even to gather with their own constituents due to the occupation and the hindrances of movement by Palestinian persons. On numerous occasions, Palestinian representatives were unable to attend conferences and meetings due to restrictions on their movements, most commonly being denied passage through certain checkpoints. Other than the simple practical aspects that the political atmosphere may have upon the JCW, “it [was] necessary to assess its [the JCW] regular work and make modifications to cope with the changes in the political reality and the new needs of its target groups” (JCW, 2000, p. 2). The physical constraints led the JCW to become solely focused on the city of Jerusalem and a few surrounding villages for practical reasons – to ensure that they were able to provide their services completely to those they intended to serve. This had a manifold purpose as it allowed the organization to be more specific in its outreach, but also allowed them to focus on the specific difficulties of those living in one of the most contested areas of Palestine and Israel.

For the JCW, there was another level of complexity involved in the political tension and atmosphere of Palestine and Israel, that of their partnership with a Jewish women’s organization, Bat Shalom. This particular relationship underwent difficulties even prior to the dissolution of their partnership through the Jerusalem Link. Apart from the physical difficulties of Palestinian representatives often times being unable to enter certain regions of Palestine/Israel for meetings

and conferences, these two groups differed on several key topics as “the two groups faced increased difficulties in agreeing on certain issues pertaining to the conflict” especially given certain political events which occurred during their partnership, mainly the second Palestinian *intifada* and the War in Gaza (JCW, 2000, p. 2; JCW, 2008).

Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

As was clearly demonstrated through the research on the JCW, the WCLAC, likewise, had to surmount significant challenges in the face of political and social shifts and conflicts. However, they “believe that maintaining pace with new developments and shedding light on details pertaining to women’s welfare in the laws applied in Palestine is an important component of raising women’s awareness with regards to their rights” (WCLAC, 2014, p. 20). It is clear that with any change in rights or laws pertaining to women in Palestine, there will be an effect on the women in Palestine and on the organizations, like the WCLAC, who work for those women in Palestine.

The WCLAC has been affective in achieving some changes within the political sphere of Palestine, to varying degrees. In many instances, the necessary parties may approve the work that is furthered by the WCLAC, but it remains to be seen whether any significant implementation of those methods or protocols will take affect. For example, the National System for Women Victims of Violence (TAKAMOL) was developed in conjunction with Juzoor for Health and Social Development and in December 2013 the ministerial cabinet adopted it,

however, “provision of health, legal and social services to women victims of violence have not met the standards of the protocols of the system” (WCLAC, 2014, p. 24). It is an ever-changing platform of politics upon which these women’s organizations must work in order to achieve their goals for gender equality.

Addressing Research Question 3

How do these organizations differ in regards to terminology (i.e. feminism) and how does this in turn affect their goals and actions towards women’s rights? These two organizations were chosen in part for their unique utilizations of feminist language and their work as a part of the global women’s movement. However, it is their differences that make them a truly interesting comparison; for the JCW, the term feminism was dropped completely from all publications and their website in 2008, likely due to the shift in their overall agenda and focus as well as a shift in the political atmosphere (as outlined above) of Palestine. For the WCLAC, they latch on to the term, using it to allow them access in many ways to the larger feminist movement, which in turn affords them a particularly salient position from which to operate and receive assistance and aid for their constituents.

Jerusalem Center for Women

This particular research question was clearly addressed in the preceding chapter; however, it stands to reason that it should be briefly readdressed in this

concluding chapter in order to provide a sufficient understanding of it in the context of this specific research question. As a shift began to occur, away from women as advocates for and to the state, the use of feminist terminology simmered. The JCW ceased to align itself with feminism specifically in 2008 in an attempt to reach the broadest base of their constituency, understanding the hesitancy of women to engage in a seemingly Western ideology and one which had thus far, failed them in regards to their individual rights and to their national rights and protections.

The JCW began as a feminist organization, utilizing the terminology to encourage a specific set of responses from their constituents. However, as the organization began to shift towards a smaller constituency, looking to serve those in the immediate area of Jerusalem and nearby villages, and the services they provided began to focus more holistically on the individuals they served, they shifted away from direct feminist terminology. The ideas of the feminist and women's movement were still clearly present, but overall, the organization shied away from the specific terminology. In many ways, this allowed them to reach the constituents they had specifically set out to protect. Since they were working in Jerusalem and surrounding villages, areas that can be decidedly more conservative, in avoiding contested and polarizing terminology, they were able to reach all of their constituents.

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

The WCLAC, conversely, has never wavered in its use of the term feminism and all the related language and actions. They wholeheartedly work with the global feminist movement, intending to assist through any possible means “in order to maintain, and build upon, the achievements of the feminist movement and increase the rate of progress on a broad range of issues relating to equality, social justice and the strengthening of women’s role in society” (WCLAC, 2011, p. 4). Through their study of the laws and regulations that affect and govern women’s lives, the WCLAC created a feminist vision in line with transnational feminism. While the JCW suffered from an initial misunderstanding of their constituency, the WCLAC carefully considers the ideals of their constituents and simply uses feminism as a means by which they can dispel their ideology and goals. As an example, they conducted courses with university students, who were willing to learn about feminism and debate its implementation in Palestine. Clearly, the WCLAC demonstrates an allegiance with both postcolonial and transnational feminism as they incorporate the ideology within the specific cultural, historic, and political atmosphere of Palestine.

Conclusions

Jerusalem Center for Women

The JCW does not necessarily view their work as creating a space; they rather assume that the only space, the one they have been denied, is within the

social and political spheres of Palestine. However, as has been discussed and clearly demonstrated through an analysis of their work, they are creating a space for women and allowing them to operate within it; “capacity development by itself will not contribute to create a social change if women are not provided a space to develop their capacity” (JCW, 2011, p. 15). The very act of advocating for themselves is an example of their use of a gendered space within the patriarchal society to create change for themselves and for future generations. Political and social change must begin somewhere and these women actively seek out that change, using the space that society has granted them, and expanding it towards a more equitable future where perhaps, there will no longer be an oppressive gendered space.

Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling

The WCLAC has thus far maintained its goals and improved upon them by expanding their work to larger and more diverse segments of Palestinian society and the global community. By engaging with the international system, they are taking advantage of the space for NGOs, where they can bring forth documentation of the limits on Palestinian livelihoods due to occupation while also encouraging the Palestinian leadership to improve its treatment and protections of women. Overall, they have managed to improve upon the social and political standing of women by affording legal protections and advocating for improvement in the language and dialogue about women in the political sphere

and in the local by improving women's own understandings of their rights and abilities.

Collective Conclusions

In closing, it is clear to see that women have been able to actively engage in their own discourse of change. Through the transnational flow of an ideology such as feminism, where a "serious analysis of the processes and outcomes that are recreated in transnational, international, and local feminist development organizations constitute an important political step towards bridging existing gaps between feminist theory and practice" (Mendez & Wolf, 2001, p. 723).

Researching groups in a conflicted region like Palestine, and a region where most people assume a discriminatory and oppressive atmosphere for women, provides a more complete understanding of the variations that a single concept or ideology can take when manifested in a new space or situation. In Palestine, women have been operating within the political and social constructs, marching for the nation in the early 20th century and continuing their struggle for their own rights and role within their state by engaging the political leaders, the international community, and standing for their own role in the home and community.

For Palestinians in the occupied territories, the reality of the lack of a homeland is clear. It is an ever-present reality as they are daily denied the rights associated with citizenship and state-ship. And in this condition, Palestine exists as an anomaly; it automatically exists in the transnational as it is in a fractured

and dispersed state of the nation. The WCLAC and the JCW represent this as they utilize cross-border transfers to engage with the national and global community in order to continue their work for women. Through their collective works, these two organizations represent the agency of women, their ability to act of their own volition, and to change the dynamics of the society and political system they live in. They will be able change their own position, shaping the space they exist in, until they have equality and can advocate for an equality of their own state as well. Women have clearly been and will continue to be active agents in the future of Palestine. And by understanding the effectiveness of various frame implementations, the ability of organizations to cause change may be altered, hopefully for the better. Feminism in regards to women's rights activism is only effective if individuals are convinced of a need for change (causing mobilization). Through the utilization of frames by the JCW and the WCLAC, women are mobilizing for their own needs and altering a system of oppression and suppression. Through analyzing these two organizations and the effectiveness of their frames, it becomes clear that not only are women able to take up a concept or idea like feminism and implement it in a cultural context, but they are capable of changing the system that they live in for the betterment of themselves and ultimately, their society and future state.

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