COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY ENACTMENTS IN PALESTINE: ROOTS AND CURRENT MANIFESTATIONS

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This article describes enactments of community-centered work and a master's program at Birzeit University as manifestations of community psychology in Palestine. The early roots of community psychology may be traced back to the community organizing and grassroots activism evident during the first Intifada in 1987. These early enactments affirmed community voice and supported national liberation receded in the post-1993 Oslo Agreement era when international donor funding and institutional arrangements privileged the establishment of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and research on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), focusing on Palestinian victims of military violence. These enactments tended towards unreflexive individualized modalities of community psychology. In contrast, the Birzeit program is positioned as an attempt to continue and develop the spirit and substance of the critical enactments contained in the first Intifada. This article embodies a case for the development of critical community psychology in Palestine given its history of prolonged colonial occupation and disenfranchisement. © 2014 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

In this article, I describe the multiple enactments of community psychology in Palestine. Of all the branches of academic Western-mainstream psychology taught in Arab and Palestinian universities, community psychology as a subdiscipline tends to be marginalized and underrecognized. In the Arab world and Palestine, just as in other situations where the legacy of European colonialism continues to dominate, academic institutions persist in importing and uncritically applying Western constructions of knowledge, including psychology (Abouchedid, 2006). Arab scholars influenced by Western epistemology and

mainstream psychology, which they teach, research, and survey, often uncritically celebrate that "Egypt was the main gateway through which modern psychology was introduced and practiced in the Arab countries" (Soueif & Ahmed, 2001, p. 216).

Likewise, Western scholars based in the American University of Beirut have attributed the emergence and development of psychology in the Arab regions to British, French, and American influences (Prothro & Melikian, 1955). In contrast, the challenges impeding the supposed development of psychological knowledge in Arab States is ascribed to the "Arab concept of mind and behavior and Arab perception of psychology" (Melikian, 1984, p. 65). This line of argument that locates the obstacles facing the transmission of psychological knowledge within the culture and collective mentality of Arabs, rather than the discipline itself and the legacies of colonialism, illustrates the hegemony of Western and mainstream intellectual thought despite the political independence of Arab countries postcolonialism (see Abouchedid, 2006; Habashi, 2005; Nasser & Abouchedid, 2007). This form of modern mainstream psychology, when found in other similar colonial circumstances, is simply referred to as colonial psychology (see Fanon, 1963; Bulhan, 1985).

Alongside the uncritical adoption of Western psychological thought, there is a tendency among some Arab psychologists to claim that the theoretical roots of contemporary psychology in the Arab world may be traced back to prediscipinary intellectual legacies of great Arab-Islamic philosophers, such as Al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina, Ibn-Roshd, Ibn-Al-Heitham and Ibn-Kaldoun. These philosophers are often cited as the great Arab-Islamic thinkers and as the founding fathers of Arab psychology (Soueif & Ahmed, 2001). However, I suggest that such claims lack evidence of how classic ideas have shaped or may inform current developments and critical transformations in the discipline of psychology. Classic Arab-Islamic writings and ideas are seldom developed further by contemporary Arab psychologists. Thus, we witness a dichotomous approach to psychology in the Arab region. The dichotomy, represented by an unreflexive focus on the ancient roots of Arab psychology as supposedly shaped by Arab-Islamic philosophy on the one hand and the uncritical importation and application of contemporary Western mainstream theories of psychology on the other hand, represents an impediment to the development of emancipatory psychology for the oppressed majorities in this part of the world.

The dichotomous approach also overlooks more recent contributions of anti-colonial psychologists like Franz Fanon (1963). Even though the intellectual legacy of Franz Fanon (1963) has been revived in parts of the West and various colonial contexts, his work receive little attention among psychologists in the Arab World. It is Arab Nationalist Marxists (Samara, 2011) who bring Fanon's ideas into contemporary liberatory discourse and not Arab psychologists (see Bulhan, 1985). Likewise, there is little reference in Arab psychological research and academic teaching to the paradigms of liberation and decolonizing psychology that have emerged from colonial contexts of Latin America (Montero, 2008) and South Africa (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011).

This article is premised on the idea that despite the many problematic historical and contemporary global enactments (Makkawi, 2009; Soueif & Ahmed, 2001) and the particular challenges arising from the intellectual hegemony of colonial knowledge, the unreflexive focus on the classical roots of Arab psychology, and the failure to consider liberatory work emerging from other constrained contexts, critical community psychology has a formative opportunity to begin contributing to the emancipation and liberation of marginalized communities in Palestine.

Accordingly, I now turn to focus on the formative opportunities arising from some of the early manifestations of community psychology that in the first place can be traced back to community grassroots organizing and community action evident in the Palestinian

anticolonial struggle for self-determination, the post-Oslo Accord period, and the newly established master's program in community psychology at Birzeit University. The Birzeit program, described in the penultimate section, evolved from and was inspired by earlier forms of community grassroots action evident during the first Palestinian Intifada in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1987. Specifically, I begin by describing the condition of Zionist colonialism as a way of locating these enactments in contexts that assumed differing epistemological and social values. Thereafter, I describe the earlier roots of critical community psychology enactments, which were manifested in community organizing and grassroots activism before and during the first Palestinian Intifada in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1987.

Then I review the shift from the bottom-up form of community grassroots action-oriented community psychology to a problematic community psychology related to the work of an expanding network of Western-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and reductionist research focusing on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Palestinian victims of military violence, to following the Oslo political agreement of 1993. I argue that the work of the NGOs and the PTSD research fraternity is problematic and poses serious challenges to the enactments of critical community psychology committed to people's liberation and social justice. In the penultimate section, I focus on the emerging master's program in community psychology at Birzeit University, highlighting efforts to build on enactments of community psychology during the first Intifada. In conclusion, I reiterate the significance of enacting liberatory community psychology in Palestine.

THE COLONIAL CONDITION AND COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE

The Zionist Movement formally established the state of Israel in 1948 after a systematic settler-colonial process. The settler-colonial process entailed an ethnic cleansing campaign that led to the mass expulsion of more than two thirds of the indigenous Palestinian population, and that created a fragile minority (Morris, 1989; Rouhana, 2011). In 1967, the remaining territories of historical Palestine, namely, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, were occupied by the Israeli invading army, heralding another level of colonial expansion. Since then, two fragmented populations of Palestinian people who remained in historic Palestine have been divided by the virtual "green line," living under two contradictory sociopolitical conditions; one as Israeli citizens, albeit second-class citizens in a regime identical to the Apartheid system of South Africa (for a comparison of both Apartheid systems, see Will & Ryan, 1990), and the other living under direct military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. More than half of the Palestinian people are exiled as refugees, particularly throughout the Arab region.

This colonial condition continues to characterise the lives of Palestinian communities fragmented and divided by violent Israeli colonial practices enacted since 1948. The decimation of historic Palestine is an illustration of how colonialism as an ideological and materialistic process manifests as violent contact between the colonizer and the colonized (see Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1970; Bulhan, 1985). For Palestinians the violence of Zionist colonialism echoes Jinadu's (1976) argument that the violent contact "occurs in such a way that the numerically inferior alien race is actually the sociologically (i.e., politically and economically) superior race. This is so because of its access to, and monopolistic control of, socioeconomic and political sources of power. This control is made possible and facilitated by the sheer weight of military superiority and material wealth of the alien race (Jinadu, 1976, p. 604).

The relationship between the Israeli colonizer and the Palestinian colonized infiltrates all spheres of Palestinian life. For decades, Israeli colonial practices in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip included cheap labour exploitation, fragmentation of Palestinian lands through the creation of settlements on strategic locations, restrictions on people's movement, consistent political harassment and militarily intervention, and the meticulous control of the Palestinians' formal education. It should be remembered that modern universities in the Arab World were established during the era of European colonialism more than a century ago or shortly after some of the Arab states gained their independence (Abouchedid, 2006). As such, Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are defined as hubs of learning and symbols of resistance to the military occupation (Kurd & Herrscher, 1995).

Notwithstanding their anticolonial inception and constant targeting by the Israeli military occupation (Bruhn, 2006), Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip resemble many of their sister institutions throughout the Arab world in their "failure to emancipate education from its colonial past" (Abouchedid, 2006, p. 1). Colonial education and Western epistemologies continue to dominate Arab academic institutions despite Arab nationalists' endeavors to create "counter-colonial model(s) of education capable of healing the masses from their woes resulting from colonial subjugation" (Abouchedid, 2006, p. 5). In the majority of the social sciences, especially in psychology, universities continue to teach mainstream, classic, Western individualistic theories of psychology.

Even social psychology, which enjoys extensive currency in Arab psychological scholarship (Soueif & Ahmed, 2001), and lends itself to critical applications and theory (see Hwang, 2005; Martin-Baro, 1994; Reyes-Cruz & Sonn, 2011), continues to apply Western mainstream theories and concepts uncritically in Palestine, ignoring local real world social problems. Following a concise review of Ahmed and Gielen's (1998) edited volume *Psychology in the Arab Countries*, another critically minded scholar Farraj (2001) writes that "Arab psychologists rarely conduct studies on topics they have identified as being of special importance to people living in the Arab world. Instead of that, they are more likely to design studies around already existing instruments for examining certain constructs" (Farraj 2001, p. 281).

According to Shaheen (2004), Palestinian universities shaped by the conditions of colonial occupation lack the academic culture of scientific inquiry, suffer from the absence of epistemological awareness, implement traditional ways of assessment, encourage the brain-drain of the most qualified faculty members, rely on traditional "banking" teaching methods (see Freire, 1970), and fail to place the development of higher education within its historical context. Scholars like Fasheh (1990) have therefore suggested that graduates of Palestinian university may be like the Israeli hen (referring of course to the farm raised hen) whose survival depend on continues external support. This is in contrast to the indigenous Palestinian hen that had developed over the years certain qualities and internal strength that help it feel at home in its environment.

EARLY CRITICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY IN PALESTINE

During the first two decades of collective resistance to the Israeli occupation (1967–1987), Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip established an extraordinary network of grassroots organizations, including student unions, women's and workers' groups, and a wide variety of professional and community organizations. These community

organizations obtained significant momentum through a public spirit of collective responsibility and volunteerism, and ideas about public good. This bottom-up community organizing was initiated and maintained by community members who had no intellectual or political assistance from academic psychologists. During the first Intifada that erupted in 1987, the network of grassroots organizations and community groups provided social and psychological support to victims of political and military violence (Hiltermann, 1991). For instance, Palestinian women's organizations ran kindergartens and child care centers, conducted literacy and skills classes, helped to create and support agricultural and food processing cooperatives, and maintained a wide variety of discussion and support activities that women activists in Western countries may define as consciousness raising (Sosebee, 1990). The work of women's groups resembled enactments of community psychology concerned with vulnerability, psychosocial support, and social consciousness in conditions of massive colonial violence.

Grassroots organizations working in education during the first Palestinian Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip embodied another similar enactment of community psychology during a period of prolonged closures of schools and universities by the Israeli military authorities. Palestinian teachers and students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip represented a supporting force in the establishment of uninstitutionalized educational activities resonant with the extensive popular resistance (Mazawi, 1994). Popular education or "community schools," as they were known, that assumed the role of the formal schools were closed by military edicts. Although declared illegal by the Israeli army, neighborhood committees of Intifada activists continued to organize and conduct popular education activities informally where they focused on authentic and interactive teaching and learning that integrated local community needs with the national struggle for self determination (Hussein, 2005).

These education-related enactments and activities centered on mass demonstrations, community building, alternative economics, psychological sense of community, solidarity, and social support, and echoed the orientations of critical community psychology in their emphasis on social justice, contextual relevance, and social appropriateness and resistance to oppression. It is noteworthy that Palestinian universities, which were also closed by military order at that time, struggled to offer responsive enactments supportive of grassroots manifestations of critical community psychology. In the context of Israeli military intervention, mainstream academic psychology taught at the Palestinian universities failed to read, understand, and support grassroots manifestations of critical community psychology.

PROBLEMATIC MANIFESTATIONS

Compared to the critical enactments during the first Intifada (1987), during the second Intifada (2000), NGOs constituting a network of Western-funded projects misleadingly referred to as civil society, engaged in enactments that represented problematic manifestations of community psychology. In the context of the second Intifada, which was highly militarized and that led to many casualties and victims of military violence, the network of NGOs provided mental health services and attended to the problems that stemmed from the brutal Israeli repression and military violence. In the Arab world, the number of such Western-funded NGOs increased from 20,000 in the mid-1960s to 70,000 in the late 1980s. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip alone the number of NGOs jumped from 272 on the eve of first Intifada in 1987 to 444 soon after the Oslo political agreement of 1993 (Qassoum, 2002). In 2004, a total number of 57 NGOs were identified as providing psychosocial

and mental health care services to a broad variety of groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, and victims of military violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Giacaman, 2004).

Whereas the signing of the Oslo political agreement between the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the government of Israel in 1993 embodied a constraining point that restricted the development of Palestinian national movement and grassroots organizations, it also enabled the introduction of overseas development aid from Western capitalist countries for the establishment of NGOs. Gradually grassroots voluntary organizations disappeared from the landscape as the space to develop their own social and economic infrastructures was diminished. Many of the leaders of these grassroots voluntary organizations became paid administrators in the new NGO network (Bakeer, 2012).

Many of these NGOs provide overlapping services sometimes to the same population. These NGO projects are sporadic, ill defined, inadequately evaluated, and unrelated to any strategic plan or a clearly defined coordinated movement to enhance community mental health among the oppressed communities. Despite the fact that many of these mental health NGOs operate centers within the community, their framework for intervention is individualistic in nature and they largely apply individualistic approaches to counseling and psychotherapy. These NGOs are also all dependent on the availability of external funding, which is typically conditional upon the political situation in the occupied territories. The staff and administrators of these mental health NGOs work within a vicious circle: writing proposals for project funding, receiving the funds, implementing a funded project, writing a report to the funder, and moving on to writing the next proposal.

It is imperative to differentiate between the networks of NGOs active today in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the grassroots organizations and community groups that were in place decades before and during the first Intifada in 1987 (Samara, 2001). While grassroots organizations were established from the bottom up with a broad base of supporters, typically linked to political parties and inspired by self-sufficiency logic, NGOs tend to be established by a few individuals with links to Western funding organizations and with no popular base (Samara, 2003). Some writers have argued that Western-funded NGOs be understood within the wider strategy of co-option and entrapment of the Arab and Palestinian intelligentsia, seeking to depoliticize, distract, and distance radical and organic intellectuals from involvement with the struggle for justice and self-determination (see Qassoum, 2002). Universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are repeatedly approached by such organizations, all eager to recruit psychology students for participation in training projects and workshops for which they had already received funds and were obliged to meet deadlines defined by the funder.

Parallel to the expanding network of mental health services and training projects, there has been a growing body of empirical research on the exposure of Palestinian children and young people to political violence and trauma arising from Israeli occupation. The NGO work and trauma-related research tend to be individualistic, nonparticipatory and noncritical, and represent problematic knowledge claims. Even though mental health problems and related psychological distress among the Palestinian people may be traced back to their encounter with Israeli colonization and displacement from their homeland in 1948, research on mental health and war began obtaining attention only recently, particularly since the eruption of the first Intifada in 1987. Further and significant momentum for research on mental health and war was obtained during the second Intifada in 2000.

However, the research has given inordinate attention to the consequences of individual exposure to military violence and trauma, and has tended to ignore the importance of community-level work conducted by indigenous mental health practitioners who provide services to Palestinian victims of military violence. Haj-Yahia (2007) has critiqued this body of empirical research on trauma for its methodological and other flaws. The overwhelming majority of the studies use traditional quantitative research methods and there is a near absence of qualitative research methodology that can offer qualitative insights into the collective well-being and coping strategies of young people and their families exposed to military violence. The majority of the research has been conducted in the Gaza Strip where political violence and hardships are greater than in the West Bank. There is a lack of studies examining how forms and variations in exposure to military violence may shape trauma and resilience responses among youth for instance. Exposure to military violence and traumatic events, as experienced at the individual level, is measured on dichotomous scales, using yes/no response categories.

Many of the measurement scales used in these trauma studies were developed mainly in North America and Western Europe and are merely translated into Arabic. No attention is accorded to their cultural relevance. In these critiques, Haj-Yahia (2007) hints at the problematic issues and gaps that arise when studies focus on measuring psychological constructs and coping mechanisms at the *individual* level of abstraction, without due regard for collective experiences and context. One illustration of such work is perhaps research conducted by those affiliated to the Gaza Community Mental Health Program (GCMHP). Even though the community mental health research conducted by the GCMHP aims to sensitize the Gaza community to issues of health and human rights (see Qouta & El-Sarraj (2002), there is no explicit articulation of the simplest form of praxis, that is, the dialectical interconnection between scholarship and practice, as well as the link between collective identity and variations in responses to trauma.

Fundamental to the collective experience is the concept of collective/national identity. For instance, research with Palestinian students attending Israeli universities has indicated that involvement in the Palestinian Student Movement fosters the process of national identity development, which in turn enhances activists' psychological adjustment within hostile and discriminating political environments (Makkawi, 2004). The relationship between ethnic identity development and personal self-esteem (Phinney, 1995; Phinney & Chavira, 1992) and collective national identity and coping responses to military violence have also been reflected on elsewhere in the international literature (Phinney, 1995). Individuals displaying higher stages of ethnic–racial identity development tend to be actively involved in cultural and political activities related to their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1995).

Here, I make a case for research as praxis (Lather, 1986), which is both decolonizing (Smith, 1999) and transformative, and reiterate the importance of rigorous qualitative research methods that resonate with the basic values and spirit of community psychology (Banyard & Miller, 1998) and enable scholarly enactments in support of the collective welfare of vulnerable populations and the restoration of social justice.

CRITICAL COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY ENACTMENTS AT BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

The community psychology program at Birzeit University was established within a critical community psychology and interdisciplinary paradigm, consistent with the ethos of grassroots community action that marked the first Intifada, emphasizing context specificity

(see Fryer & Laing, 2008), indigenous contributions to knowledge construction (Smith, 1999), and support for improving the acute community mental health situation in the West Bank. The management of the community mental health system in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, shaped by the prolonged legacy of colonial oppression, was transferred to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) by the Israeli state after the Oslo accord in 1993. After Oslo 1993 the PNA assumed responsibility for education (Mazawi, 2011) and general health, as well as the mental health system.

The embryonic mental health system called attention to a vast number of risk factors affecting the community mental health at large and underresourced services (Giacaman, 2004). The few available documents highlight a strained mental health delivery system. There are two psychiatric hospitals in Palestine: one in the West Bank and one in Gaza Strip; a total of 15 outpatient governmental community center/clinics; and more than 20 clinics managed by NGOs and the private sector (WHO, 2006, p. 9). In this context of limited means, school counselors are also viewed as mental health resources and so almost anyone with an undergraduate degree in fields related to mental health, such as psychology, educational psychology, mental health, educational counseling, social work, and sociology, can be employed as a school counselor (unpublished draft of proposed law concerning community mental health workers, Ministry of Planning). Thus, the Birzeit program had to address matters of boundary definition to obtain distinctiveness especially when engaging with NGOs that affixed the word "community" to their work.

Recognizing that there are several community psychologies (see Fryer & Lane, 2008), the Birzeit program drew inspiration from examples of critical community psychology developed in Latin America (Montero, 2008) and postapartheid South Africa (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011), that like Palestine have undergone prolonged oppression. The program accordingly placed an accent on the local production of knowledge in an academic environment that is "alienated from indigenous epistemology" (Abouchedid, 2006, p. 1), and continues to import and uncritically apply "colonial knowledge."

The quest for a critical community psychology program in occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip was derived from the assumption that the individual's psychological well-being is to a large extent an outcome of ongoing occupation, oppression, repression, and exploitation. The program therefore aimed to train students to examine how the ongoing occupation, military violence, the creation of the colonialist separation wall, checkpoints, economic embargo, poverty, imprisonment and torture, assassination and killing, school closures, and the systematic destruction of Palestinian community's infrastructure produced a psychosocial dynamic and contextual background affecting Palestinian people's mental health. The program wanted to understand the social determinants of delinquency, child labor, aggression, domestic violence, school violence, substance abuse, and high-risk behaviors. The program, emphasizing critical conscientization, aimed to skill graduates to work with groups and communities within this oppressive colonialist context (see Freire, 1970), and is by and in itself a process of psychological liberation and mental health promotion.

Following these aims from the earlier stages of the community psychology program, we emphasized both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and epistemologies, as well as community participatory action research. Our students were required to participate in a year-long practicum in community based organizations. They were also encouraged to conduct their thesis research in conjunction with the practicum. They were expected to engage in a number of community-level intervention projects, gather data in a participatory manner involving community members, and develop and implement community level intervention programs. The program covered topics that

provided an overview of community intervention theory, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, culture, and mental health in Palestinian society, child and adolescent development in war environments, applied social psychology, individual and small group interventions, professional ethics, educational community psychology, psychology and gender differences, and ethnopsychology.

Realizing that empirical research about colonial policies, military violence, oppression, and community mental health in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been dominated by positivistic, reductionist, mainstream quantitative research methodologies with predetermined categories and hypothesis testing (Haj-Yahia, 2007), the Birzeit program opted for a critical methodological and research orientation, consistent with indigenous methodologies (Smith, 1999), and a grounded theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that allows for inductive exploration of social phenomenon. We defined our students as indigenous researchers who understood the local community's culture and aspirations (Kanaaneh, 1997). The question of collective national identity, which has been traditionally neglected in the trauma research in Palestine, was foregrounded in a number of student research projects.

In this section, I briefly present five successfully completed master's thesis projects conducted by our students in the community psychology program during the formative years of the program's development. In the main, these projects explore collective identity and community through the utilization of inductive grounded theory research methodologies.

Amani Abu-Soboh (2011) used Social Identity Theory (SIT) to conduct an in-depth qualitative study on the trauma experiences of Palestinian activists who were victims of Israeli military violence during the second Intifada in 2000. Her study findings were noteworthy in four respects: First, collective national identity was perceived as a motivating factor to participate in the Intifada activities, served as a coping mechanism, and helped produce psychological resilience following the trauma and injury. Second, Palestinian families and the community at large were influential in providing support and comfort to victims of military violence. Third, belief systems, both religious and political, and political party membership were important for the process of recovery postexposure to military violence. Fourth, the development of resilience and perseverance marked the adaptive behaviours of activists postexposure to military violence and injury.

Rana Bakeer (2012) retrospectively investigated the manifestation of PSOC among the Palestinian activists living in the West Bank during the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987. She was interested in understanding how sense of community was shaped by the repressive Israeli occupation and inspired by the national liberation movement. This qualitative study, which defined volunteerism and community participation as markers of PSOC, also examined its decline in the current political atmosphere. The activists in Bakeer's (2012) study reported experiencing a strong PSOC during the first Intifada and highlighted how PSOC contributed to positive community mental health and resilience at that time. They also reported a steady erosion of PSOC in the period after the first Intifada. Bakeer's (2012) findings seek to explain how Western-funded NGOs' lack of a feasible solution to the national Palestinian question may have contributed to the decline of PSOC after the first Intifada.

Fida' Jarban (2012) examined Palestinian university students' experiences of racism and racial repression across two university contexts. She compared the experiences of students who are officially Israeli citizens and attend the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, with those of Palestinian university students living in the West Bank under Israeli occupation and who attend Birzeit University. Her study included a small group of Palestinian

students who are Israeli citizens and attend Birzeit University. Jarban (2012) also wanted to understand the mediating influence of collective identity on students' reactions to institutional and colonial racism. Across the two groups, students reported similar psychological reactions to colonial repression and racism. The West Bank students reported engaging in political defiance and resilient behaviours after direct confrontation with the Israeli occupation army. A collective sense of national identity appeared to have a mediating influence against colonial oppression and racial discrimination among members of both groups of students.

Rona Nasser (2013) explored the relationship between collective national identity and colonial experiences among Palestinian youth from East Jerusalem who work in the Israeli job market in West Jerusalem. The study found that although Palestinian youth who work in West Jerusalem struggle with economic issues and especially with the need for employment, their sense of national identity and emotional attachment to their collective group was a mediating influence that helped in coping with discriminatory work-related conditions. Many of the study participants expressed a sense of confusion and "in-betweenity": Although they enjoyed some privileges attached to their residency status in Israel they did not enjoy all the rights and status accorded to Israeli citizens. Youth participants in this study expressed a consistent tension arising from their job-related efforts in West Jerusalem to fulfill their subsistence needs and their need for national belonging and identity.

Ibaa' Fteiha (2013) explored the effect of Israeli initiated home demolitions on community resilience and life adjustments in the village of Silwan in East Jerusalem. In her qualitative study, she learned that families faced many major economic burdens after their homes were demolished, and that religion and belief systems helped affected families to develop adaptive and resiliency responses. Social support from the larger community strengthened the resilience of affected families and promoted PSOC. Local institutions and local media were important in organizing community, and the knowledge that individual family struggles were inherent to the larger collective national quest for independence provided affected families with a sense of hope and coping that in turn inspired resilience.

CONCLUSION

The early manifestations of critical community psychology, which is still in its formative stage in Palestine, may be traced back to the work of the grassroots movement established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip prior to and during the first Intifada in 1987. Similar to Latin America, in Palestine "community psychology emerged from the efforts of community organizers, activists, and community members pushing to be heard … and the need for academics to respond to social justice issues affecting the community" (Gokani, p. 113). Palestinian academic psychology at that time failed to support community grassroots action during the 1980s and the Oslo political agreement introduced funding and institutional arrangements as encouragement of a NGO network in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that also limited the development of academic community psychology in Palestine.

Notwithstanding the challenges arising from the unreflexive work of the NGO sector, resource limitations, the dominance of Western knowledge claims and epistemologies, and colonial occupation, the Birzeit University program in community psychology represents a critical enactment that draws inspiration from the grassroots community action

of the first Intifada, with a focus on scholarship dealing with decolonization, indigenous knowledge and liberatory work, as conducted in Latin America and South Africa. The Birzeit program, emerging under entrenched settler-colonial conditions, is inherent to national Palestinian attempts to develop and implement academic initiatives that train younger generations of Palestinian students for future job opportunities and to contribute to community survival, resilience, nation building, and self-determination. The Birzeit program recognizes that the social determinants of mental health arise from Israeli colonialism and colonial practices.

The illustrative graduate student projects, located within a critical enactment of community psychology, collectively stimulated research on group national identity, PSOC, and community resilience within a prolonged colonial situation. Despite the challenges related to resources, an underdeveloped mental health system in the West Bank and Gaza, and the privileging of NGOs, the Birzeit program offers one platform to grow and develop enactments of critical community psychology that are relevant and appropriate for the Palestinian condition. The Birzeit program is a formative critical enactment that can be leveraged to contribute to social change, social justice, community transformation, emancipation, and collective well-being.

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