The discourse on identity in Palestinian refugee camps. The role of textual genres and representations

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Abstract—Identity is an issue of primary importance within the Palestinian refugee camps in host countries. In fact, it allows the preservation of cohesion and memory of communities that, most of the times, endure harsh life conditions. In Lebanon, many Palestinian associations that are concerned with educating children about "identity", specifically "Palestinian identity", not only to preserve the historical memory of their community, but also to educate them as responsible citizens aware of the issues concerning life in the refugee camp. The present work aims at presenting the work of three Palestinian associations operating in Lebanon (Beit Atfal Assoumud/al Houle, al Jana, Najdeh) through the perspective of discourse analysis, in order to understand the role of language in developing identity and transmitting knowledge. — *Discourse analysis, Palestine, identity, refugee camps, narrative.*

Resumen—La cuestión de la identidad es un tema de importancia primordial dentro de los campos de refugiados palestinos en los países de acogida. De hecho, permite preservar la cohesión y la memoria de comunidades que, la mayoría de las veces, soportan duras condiciones de vida. En el Líbano, son muchas las asociaciones palestinas que se preocupan por educar a los niños en la "identidad", concretamente en la "identidad palestina", no sólo para preservar la memoria histórica de su comunidad, sino también para educarlos como ciudadanos responsables y conscientes de las cuestiones que atañen a la vida en el campo de refugiados. El presente artículo pretende presentar el trabajo de tres asociaciones palestinas que operan en Líbano (Beit Atfal Assoumud/al Houle, al Jana, Najdeh) a través de la perspectiva del análisis del discurso, con el fin de comprender el papel del lenguaje en el desarrollo de la identidad y la transmisión del conocimiento. — *Análisis del discurso, Palestina, identidad, campos para refugiados, narrativa.*

Identity has, especially recently, been a transdisciplinary subject whose study benefited from contributions from different fields, such as anthropology, sociology, philosophy, linguistics.

In fact, the perception of identity is the fundamental cohesive force behind the existence of social groups. Groups define themselves on the ground of being different from the Other, "them", and recognize common features that trace back to a unique identity. Ideological groups perform this in terms of common goals, values, instruments, attitudes (van Van Dijk 2000). National and ethnic groups frequently rely on a common geographical and historical origin, and naturalize identity as essential and a-historical (Barth 1969).

The latest reflections on the question of identity, however, suggests a very different picture from that of a

monolithic and fixed category. Social constructivism has been fundamental to provide the perspective under which identity has been recently framed: as not essentialist nor monolithic, rather multi-dimensional and historically situated. Thus, the present study considers the following assumptions on identity as:

- An historically situated process;
- Negotiated and situated in interaction;
- Multi-dimensional, and different kinds of identity might be activated according to context;
- Informed by global identities which are socially constituted;
- Relational;
- Constructed through discourse;
- Strongly intertwined in domination dynamics and relations. (De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg 2006: 1-3; Georgakopoulou 2006; Ribeiro 2006; Restrepo 2007: 25-32)

As previously mentioned, identity is strongly connected with the representation of the Other: the connection between narration, representation and power emerges especially in post-colonial studies. Constructing the image of the native in opposition to the European colonizers served the purposes of colonization for a long time. The colonial representation of the native seeks to create a figure which is posed in total opposition to the European colonizer: it is portrayed as less rational, civilized, organized (Said 1989), somehow less "human", in order to delegitimize him and deny him the right to his own narrative (222; Sartre, 2004 [1961]). Whoever holds power, is able to fully express his/her voice and, at the same time, to deny the same right to others. Thus, detaining power also means controlling narratives and representations. The settler colonialism system[1] performed by Israel on Palestine uses the same techniques, such as imposing its perspective on the global narrative and trying to conceal and deny Palestinian identity.

THE SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Palestinian refugees first arrived in Lebanon in 1948. At present time, the refugees live in the camps which they built upon their arrival and most of them are registered at the UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and

Work Agency. Many refugees that arrived later are not registered, and live in "gatherings", urban settlements not registered within UNRWA. UNRWA manages basic services, such as education and health.

Since 1989, the Lebanese state has withdrawn its authority over the camps, which are currently under the Palestinian Authority and local authorities.

Upon their arrival, Palestinian refugees met with very different conditions. For example, people from the city found it easier to settle in urban environments (Sayigh 1981: 6-7).

It is fundamental to take into consideration the social context met by the refugees upon their arrival. In the case of Lebanon, the sectarian establishment is an unescapable condition, where its demographic balance is strictly connected to political and social balance. Palestinians, being a majority of Sunni, were considered as a possible threat for the demographic balance, for adding to the number of Muslim Sunni in the Lebanese population. For this reason, they were never given the citizenship of the host country, and endure severe legal limitations.

Some examples of these limitations can be taken by labour and property: Palestinians can't practice a list of 23 free professions, cannot be owners of houses and cannot transmit them as inheritance.

THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY

The state of the art concerning research on Palestinian identity displays three main currents: the first is the challenge of tropes, such as the negation of a Palestinian identity before the Nakba[2] or a total denial of its existence; secondly, explaining how Palestinian identity is represented and narrated. The third current is concerned with researching the Palestinian identity in a diasporic context (Hanafī and Long 2010; Hanafī 2010; Sayigh 1977, 1981; Bjawi-Levine 2009; Pérez 2011; Hālidī 2010).

Rashid Khalidi (2010: 193-194) challenges the myth of the non-existent of Palestinian identity before the Nakba by providing a detailed history and insisting on its continuity. He identifies the following phases:

a. Before the First World War: this was the era of nationalism and pan-nationalisms. The urban elites were expanding and the middle class was rising; Palestinian identity would overlap with Ottoman identity and Arab identity. These representations of identity

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1 Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism which seeks to exploit the territory and finally expel or repress local population, naturalising its presence in the colony as that of a native inhabitant, thus severing (identity) ties with the land(s) of origin. For more information on this field of study, consult Veracini (2006, 2007, 2011) and Wolfe (2006).

2 The Nakba, which in Arabic translates to "catastrophe", is the day after the declaration of birth of the State of Israel. In fact, right afterwards, Israeli armies rallied Palestinian cities and villages, compelling them to leave them and, for many of them, to become refugees in host countries.

would, in turn, overlap with loyalties of sectarian and the familiar nature.

b. Years of the British mandate: the concept of Palestinian identity got stronger under the perspective of opposing British presence and arising presence of Zionism. There was an increase in the alphabetization and education levels and the educational system contributed to building a unitary sense of identity.

c. After 1948. The trauma of dispossession, displacement and occupation is indeed a new factor of identity cohesion, and refugee Palestinian are born outside Palestine.

Many different identity layers overlap. This is not true only for Palestinians, but other Arabs shared similar conditions, with the exception of the Nakba on their land.

Khalidi (2010) explains how 1948 was the basis for the creation of a common Palestinian and resistance discourse, which included symbols that would be transmitted up to present day discourses. After 1967, the P.L.O. re-organized and operated as armed; many other Palestinian movements were born subsequently.

Palestine intended as a territorial unit and administrative unit can be traced back to Ottoman documents of the first years of the 20th Century: in an article published by the review *Thamarat al Funun*, Najib 'Azuri recommends an expansion of the *sanjak* of Jerusalem as the "progress of Palestine depend on this". The *sanjak* was an administrative division of Ottoman empire and the Jerusalem *sanjak* in the XIX century included Bethlehem, al Khalil, Beersheba, Gaza, Jaffa, and for a brief period of time it was the capital of the *vilayet* called "Falastin", Palestine. Religion contributed to the feeling of unity: in fact, the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Greek church and the protestant Episcopate of Jerusalem regarded "Falastin" as a united and sacred territory, regardless of Ottoman administrative divisions (151).

Elias Sanbar (2005: 12-15) researches Palestinian identity applying a perspective which considers identity as a multiplicity of strata, to interpret in relation to the present moment. According to his approach, different identity figures, which have been built through time, co-exist. He explicitly rejects the necessity to find a "point zero in time", an origin in order to constitute Palestinian identity, as the factors of cohesion prove to be variegated and complex. His perspective on identity escapes a monolithic representation in favour of a multi-dimensional and dynamic representation.

Moreover, both authors insist on the importance of putting the discussion in context.

For what concerns the studies on the identity in Pales-

tinian refugee camps, the work of Rosemary Sayigh (1977) must be mentioned. This study was led in 1975 in Beirut Camps and highlighted the different nuances of identity as they were perceived and expressed by the camp residents. According to Sayigh, the most frequent descriptors of Palestinians, according to camp residents, were features concerning intellectual and social capabilities, such as being generous and being educated, which can be read also as a reaction to the hostile atmosphere that the Palestinian refugees would endure, at the time, in Lebanon, whereas they would be easily discriminated and subjected to ill stereotypes (15). The author contextualizes the results of the research in the social and normative context met by refugees in Lebanon, and how this would influence the perception of identity. Moreover, the identity of "refugee", at the time, as connected to a state of passivity, was disregarded as a "false condition" and replaced by the "Palestinian, fighter, revolutionary" (12).

Recent studies are concerned with the perceptions of Palestinian children of their identity. The studies of Hart (2002) and Bjawi-Levine (2009), for example, show the way Palestinian children learn and elaborate their national loyalties as being Palestinian, and perceive the Jordanian citizenship and documents as something external which is not "felt" in such an intimate way.

The refugee camps in Lebanon constitute a particular case, as shown by Hanafī (2010: 58-59). In fact, the nature of closed camps, in contrast with the open camps in Jordan and Syria, is the cause of economic conditions and labour issues which are more comparable to those undergone in the Gaza Strip camps than in camps in other host countries.

A note on Palestinian cultural associations in Lebanon

Lebanon hosts many foreign NGOs concerned with refugees. However, Palestinian cultural associations exist and operate efficiently on the territory. The associations that contributed to the present work are Najdeh, al Jana (Beirut, but operating on the whole territory), and Beit Atfal Assoumoud through the association al Houleh in Burj al Shamali camp (Tyre). Al Houle, in Burj al Shamali. Al Jana conducted, in the early 1990s, a project concerned with oral history and memory, which engaged children in many activities, such as interviews with the elders who had lived the Nakba and dramatizations. They produced, together with other association, the book "I wish I were a bird" / "ṣawt ṣuwwarnā" ("The voice of our images") in English and Arabic, which collected pictures, drawings, interviews and reports produced by the children. Al

Najdeh recently conducted the project "Hawiyya", "Identity", whose results were presented during the Day of the Refugee in 2017. The project was articulated in activities dedicated to kindergarten children, school children and teenagers, and addressed issues concerning the work of UNRWA[3], access to health services, education, radicalization, memory. Al Houleh, together with Beit Atfal Assoumoud, provides a service of after-school activities for children which include music and dance courses, recycling, storytelling and reading; the children of al Houleh have recently been involved in an exchange program with an Italian elementary school in Rome and produced "Ma che bella storia!" (What a beautiful tale!), a short-stories book published in 2017. Regarding the associations in Burj al Shamali, the contact was provided by the Italian association Ulaia, that has been their partner for several years.

METHODOLOGY

The present work falls within the field of Discourse Studies, and focuses on how identity emerges in texts; the research has been performed with a qualitative analysis of narrative, categorization and positioning[4]. For "categorization", De Fina refers to a "discursive process which is central in constitution and negotiation of categories" and "(how) members of a culture organize experience" (De Fina 2018: 354-355). Telling about oneself becomes, in this perspective, a social practice. The act of positioning is relevant for identity studies whenever correlated to socially shared representations.

Finally, narrative is another relevant level of analysis, because it is one of the salient genres in the corpus (fiction, life stories, reports). For this reason, the narrative roles and schemas are the considered analytical categories.

Corpus

The corpus has been selected among the material collected in Lebanon. The present analysis considers:

- A book: "I wish I were a bird / ṣawt ṣuwwarnā" (2010), which is the result of a series of workshops followed by the children with the associations al Jana and Najdeh;
- The video "I am from there and I have memories"

(Najdeh Association);
- Transcripts of interviews conducted by children during the project "Identity" (2013-2017) (Najdeh Association);
- Drawings and texts produced by the children during the researcher's visits to the library (Sohail Sabbagh Library, al Houlah Association, Burj al Shamali camp).

ANALYSIS

Learning about Palestine

Although the present study is concerned with the work of cultural associations, children do not learn about identity only through this channel. According to educators in Burj al Shamali and el Buss, although such projects were not present when they were children, they, obviously, talked about Palestine in the family. Children are exposed to a lot of images and symbols which refer to Palestine and are visible all over the camp. For example, when Burj al Shamali was founded, the first refugees settled in groups according to the village of origin and, at present day, the camp is indeed organized in areas which recall this historical event: camp areas can be individuated by a map of Palestine painted on the walls, coloured in red, with the village of reference signed on the map accompanied by the caption: "I will return to…" and the name of the village. Maps, flags, images of al Aqsa and other symbols of Palestine can be seen all over the camp and also in the environments attended by the children. During the celebration of the Nakba, for example, they perform activities concerned with Palestine, its history, its geography, and the history of the camp, with maps of Palestine and of traditional costumes hanging from the walls. Thus, children learn from an early age about Palestine and the village of origin of their family.

Associations seem to intervene in this context by providing new ways to reflect about identity and being a Palestinian living in the camp. For example, al Houlah engages children in activities concerned with education, culture and arts, but also practices of social responsibility, such as the recycling project[5]. Al Jana provided the children with instruments for narrating the daily life in the camp and the life conditions, but also to collect information that will be useful in order to preserve the Palestinian memory and history. "Identity" project of al Najdeh employed concepts taken by social psychology, such as "self-identity" and "personal identity" in order to reflect on stable and changing elements of identity, other

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3 "United Nations Relief and Work Agency", created specifically for the Palestinian refugees. UNRWA was designed to take care of basic needs concerning education, health, nurture.

4 To learn more about the use of "positioning" in determining identity narratives, see De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg (2006) and De Fina (2018)

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5 The Project about recycling was conducted together with the Italian association Ulaia.

than prompt children to actively inquire and tell on the camp issues, such as health and education.

Genres

The texts include many different genres. For example, "I wish I were a bird" is a photographic journalistic reportage, and children present themselves as young journalists. In fact, they use most of the instrument of journalism such as interviews, pictures, brief reports, collecting of witnesses. Interviews are also a very frequent activity in the *Identity* project, where children interviewed health workers and teachers of UNRWA.

On the other hand, works of the children of Burj el Shemali, made doing the activities at the library, were collected in a different context. In fact, they are not planned texts, but they are produces contextually to the activity. In this context, the role of image is fundamental, and text and image work as one.

Information acquired by the children about Palestine are processed into new texts which privilege a narrative structure which start from the main narrative line, the daily life of the camp refugee, especially the child refugee, and extends to micro-stories (Georgakopoulou 2006) concerned with moments, dreams, self-expression of different kinds, and life stories of camp resident collected through interviews by the children. There are also products of fictional narrative ("the story of Mona", *I wish I were a bird*, p. 17), letters, drawings, the outcomes of thematic activities ("Activity: we express what we want to change", *I wish I were a bird*, p. 101).

The video *I am from there and I have memories*, for instance, is a mix of fictional narrative and documentary. The protagonist, Umm Khaled, is about to leave abroad; while preparing her luggage, she recounts episodes from her life regarding her family experiencing difficult moments, all concerned with the legal limitations to Palestinians in the camps, that made it difficult from them to benefit from basic services. In the end, her grandson joins her and convinces her to stay. This brief video deals with the themes of health rights, right to return, estrangement from native land, and memory.

Narrators and protagonists

The chosen textual genre have, as an outcome, that children often assume both the roles of narrator and protagonist. When they are journalists and video makers, they are *narrators*, which has the consequence to make them play an *agentive* role within the discourse and social practice: they do not only learn, but they "take the stage" and report everything in their own words.

Moreover, they often talk about children, which makes them the *protagonists* of the narration.

In pictures and drawings, children are frequently portrayed in the foreground. The camp is the second protagonist, portrayed both as the background or on its own, the environment where the activity of the narrator-protagonist develops, and a character itself.

Categories

The child-narrator identifies himself as a Palestinian and also assumes all of these identity nuances. Clearly, these categories are not exclusive; in discourse, they may overlap or emerge unevenly.

Refugee, life in the camp (lāg'iy and nāziḥ)

The category of "refugee" is certainly one of the most frequently assumed categories. The children identify themselves in this category in a general sense and, at the same time, create oppositions with other categories of non-Palestinian refugees:

> The term lāg'iy is used only for Palestinians; for Syrians we use nāzīhin[6] (Interviews with health workers, Najdeh association)

Another category of differentiation is built on the basis of accessibility to basic services:

> Why does not a specialized hospital for Palestinian doctors exist?
> (Interviews with health workers, Najdeh association)

The collective identity of "camp residents" is another relevant category. The camp is not only the place where one lives its daily life but is also constitutes the community of its inhabitants. In the following example, taken from *I wish I were a bird*, a child interviews his father about the civil war in Lebanon, and asks him: "How did the camp survive during the war?". The whole community is thus expressed through a metonymy, the camp, that is metaphorically represented as a subject and sentient being; as previously mentioned, a character in the narration.

A second evidence of this perception emerges in the children's drawings at Sohail Sabbagh, where the camp recurs as the background of all activities. When children draw playing scenes or events relevant to their life (for

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6 While the *lāgi'y* is the refugee, whose status has been recognized, the *nazīh* is the immigrant. This distribution of categories is not exclusive of the Palestinian perspective, but can be found as well in Lebanese political discourse and media discourse.

example the coming of the ice-cream seller), the physical boundaries of the camp, like barbed wire, are represented and naturalized in the scenario.

Palestinian

Children do not have direct experience of Palestine. Nonetheless, any narration of Palestine is performed in first person, even when concerning historical facts that the child could not have possibly lived directly. The Nakba, for example, is narrated by using a first-person plural: "the Israelis have expelled us", "I am from (name of village)", "I am from Palestine and I want to go back".

A good example is the caption under a drawing of the Dome of the Rock made by a child during Nakba commemoration in Burj al Shamali, that reads: "I am a Palestinian girl. I love my country, Palestine, and I am from Na'me in the Safad district. I hope I will go back to my beloved country, Palestine".

The children very often reproduce in their drawings a series of symbols which are connected to Palestine such as the al Aqsa mosque, the flag, and refer to the state of dispossession and resistance by the means of symbols, such as Handala[7] and the *kuffiyyah*, the traditional peasant headwear that became the symbol of Arab national struggle first, and, in its checked version, of the Palestinian struggle. Children that attended the library Sohail Sabbagh would sometimes reproduce this symbols without any kind of prompt concerning Palestine, during activities just concerned with leisure drawing.

Being Palestinian is often associated with the volitional and psycho emotional sphere. Memories are also very important with being Palestinian. In *I am from there and I have memories*, memories are the focus of the whole narration. The video opens with "here lives Umm Khaled, alone with her memories, and with the stories of her grandparents". The theme of return and estrangement from home is put into words by the protagonist: "(Umm Khaled) I am sad. I am not from here, I am from there, I dream of going back".

The theme of the return to Palestine evokes a contrast between the hoped and desired life in the homeland and actual life in the camp; it opens and closes the narration of the video, with the following exchange with the nephew:

> Umm Khaled: I will stay here and I will not leave.
> Grandson: Why, grandma?

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7 Handala is a character created by the artist Naji Ali (1938-1987), and represents a child walking away from the viewerwith his hands behind his back. The character's face is never shown, as Handala is supposed to turn to the viewer only when Palestine is liberated.

> Umm Khaled: Because we are based in Acca district. From here, Palestine will be closer when we return.
> Grandson: Will we come back, grandmother?
> Umm Khaled: Sure. It is our right to come back.

Furthermore, references to Palestine are very often focused on the local. The formulation found in the previous examples, which includes the village of origin and district, is very frequent in the productions of children, who always know the place of origin of their family.

1. Positioning

The activities of children, especially when oriented to a journalistic approach, reveal a series of acts of "positioning" with respect to the following objects:

- Institutions: the child expresses distrust. In the interviews, for example, there are frequent questions regarding critical points of basic services, such as access limitations.
- Rights. Children express their vision of rights. These concern primarily the problems of the camp (child - refugee), such as unemployment. Another frequent theme is children's rights and the right of return for all the Palestinian refugees.

2. Belonging

The term "belonging" (*intima'*) occurs frequently in the texts, and is often also linked to the emotional sphere ("(the sense of) belonging is the desire to return", Intisar, 9/06/2017).

The feeling of belonging, of being affiliated to a community, is often realized in terms of remaining in the camp and resist its difficult conditions. This emerges in the story narrated in *I come from there and I have memories* and in other texts, in which personal character features related to the resistance and resilience are promoted.

DISCUSSION

Identity and education of the individual

The concept of identity is explicitly addressed during the projects, and is treated as a subject to be discussed and developed. The activities of the Palestinian associations address the issue with two main objectives: first of all, to fill an educational gap where the curricula of UNRWA schools do not prove adequate in teaching history and geography of Palestine in their programs; secondly, to open up a space for cultural and social education, in order

to prompt the growth of children into responsible adults, aware of the camp problems.

According to Intisar, one of the coordinator of Najdeh's *Identity* project, the feeling of belonging is fundamental for the growth of the child and adolescent; for example, an integral part of "practicing identity" becomes the act of seeking information on the problems of the camp and divulge them through the language of journalism, thus assuming an agentive role. In the *Identity* project, for examples, are included initiatives concerned with radicalization and extremism, aimed at teenagers.

In the book *I wish I were a bird*, child labour and issues related to youth unemployment are some of the issues that emerge from interviews or from autobiographical narration of the children. Within the Sohail Sabbagh library, cultural activities (music, reading, etc.) are also based on an education of the individual "whose weapons are culture" (quoting the library coordinator). It is therefore an instrument of social resistance and resilience.

PROPOSED CATEGORIES

In general, identity is articulated according to various categories of belonging. A type of belonging concerns the cohesion of a community sharing a geographical origin (Palestine), history (Nakba, expulsion from Palestine) and cultural heritage (food, customs, literature, music, etc.). This clearly emerged during the activities organized for the recurrence of the Nakba in Burj al Shamali: the history of Palestine and its geography become the object of social and educational activities. For example, children were taught the geographical features of Palestine, storytelling on the Nakba, creating bracelets with the colour of the Palestinian flag. So, in the first phase of their lives, children learn and reproduce the Palestinian identity in its national aspect, concerning a community that shares a common national background, land, and history.

In the case of the other projects, this first type of identity articulation is reconciled with another variation of "belonging", where the volitional and mnemonic spheres prevail: the desire to return, to be on the Palestinian land, the desire for freedom, the desire to see rights respected, are defining features of Palestinian identity; moreover, the feeling of belonging is also transmitted along the stories and memories of the elders who lived the Nakba.

The camp is the common denominator of these two articulations. First of all, it is the focus in almost all the texts (the children of the camp, the life of the camp); from a graphic point of view, in the video and the book,

it is a constant background presence.

TIPICALIZATION

The identity represented by the children performs a function of "tipicalization", providing a picture of the typical life of the camp through the descriptions of the children and episodes presented as emblematic of certain situations.

In relation to the data collected, the process of building and tipicalizing the identity of the Palestinian refugee child seems to develop along the following steps:

1. Learning: history, geography and symbols of Palestine and resistance through stories and explanations received in the family, exposure to the symbols present in the camp and in places frequented by children (schools, associations' venues), participation to public events, participation to activities organized by the associations.

2. Reproduction: children reproduce the symbols and narratives they have learned.

3. Identification in history and historical trauma: children reproduce the narratives learned about the Palestinian people and the history of their family in the first person.

4. Reflection on identity as a concept: contributions provided by the field of psychology (personal identity and identity of the self). In this phase, the previous elaborations on identity are integrated with other categories and are subject to comparison with other refugees in Lebanon, other Palestinian refugees in other camps, Lebanese population. They also integrate national, individual and social identity.

5. Agentivity: in a context in which the Palestinian refugee community is marginalized in the host country, children take the stage by leading the narration, then reelaborate and contribute to the construction of meaning concerning the areas of reflection on identity and life in the camp. This is the result of activities that make the child protagonist/narrator through the selection of specific textual genres that allow the collection of information and their reproduction for divulging purposes (reports, videos, interviews, collection of oral memories, photographic reports).

6. Social responsibility: the child learns that being aware of his identity means learning and acting within his – her own context to improve his condition and others'.

CONCLUSION

The present study highlights different dimensions of identity in which the child initially learns about Palestine in

different phases. First, this happens through the family and school, and the visual stimuli present in the field space. The meeting with the associations promotes the elaboration on identity that develops in a knowledge of the Palestinian historical and geographical context and performs a function of compensation with respect to what is proposed by school. First of all, the associations propose an explanation of the theme of identity and a follow up with an active reflection that leads the child to assume a role of agent and individual socially responsible in its daily life context. It is certainly of interest to observe how the selection of some specific communicative genres, such as journalism and photojournalism, favours the empowering process of the child who can raise his own voice in the narration of his context and, at the same time, assume a role of social responsibility. Reflecting on Sayigh's work in 1977, when the figure of the refugee was disregarded as weak, it is possible to notice a renovated focus on the same figure, which is no longer a condition of "weakness" but is revisited as an active role, where the child is encouraged to learn and act. Moreover, the discourse concerning Palestine and the struggle as an expression of the "typical Palestinian", which in the interviews conducted by Sayigh seems to emerge only in part of the interviews (Sayigh 1977: 13) seems much more widespread and generalized; the role of education and teachers, maintains its crucial function.

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