The Palestine Within
Exploring Diasporic Identity, Emotional Struggle, and Social Media's Role in Shaping Resistance and Belonging

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Abstract

The Palestine Within, an auto-ethnography, explores the complex relationship between the way in which individuals of Palestinian descent living in the West perceive their cultural and ethnic identity and how the ongoing genocide in Palestine is portrayed on social media. As an individual of Palestinian descent myself, over the course of a week-long data collection process I compiled and analyzed media content from the social media applications of Instagram and TikTok, journaling emotional reactions, themes, and concepts evoked by each post in the process. The research aimed to explore how the cultural identity of individuals apart of diasporic communities are shaped by the representation of Palestine within social media content, which amplified feelings of guilt, alienation, and moral conflict. Three key findings were revealed following a thematic analysis: (1) an internal conflict between Canadian/Western identity and Palestinian ethnicity, (2) the emotional struggle of questioning one's legitimacy in expressing Palestinian identity amidst the genocide, and (3) the privilege and responsibility of Palestinians in the West to engage in resistance and activism. Using the words written in the journals during the data collection process to inform a poetic literary response, I crafted a poem to express the nuanced emotions and reflections that arose from the data collection process. The project culminated in a visual body art-in-motion performance that embodied the key findings, combining interpretive art with poetry to convey the emotional complexity of the diaspora experience during a crisis. This study illustrates the difficulties diaspora communities encounter in balancing their lived experiences in the West with their ancestral ties by examining the emotional and social effects of media consumption on identity formation. The findings underscore the power of social media in shaping identity and activism, highlighting the role of diaspora communities in global resistance movements, even from afar.

Keywords

Auto-ethnography, Palestine, social media representation, poetry, art-in-motion, Western identity, Palestinian identity

Link to the final piece: https://youtu.be/tITz2LR8C1M

Introduction

Growing up as an individual of Palestinian descent, my grandfather had taught us many words to describe the state of our ancestral homeland. Intolerance. Segregation. Colonialism. Displacement. Apartheid. These words, the words that described the barriers placed upon my family, were words that I had always understood as being extreme. I believed that these words reflected the worst circumstances that any group of people in this world could face in the 21st century. Today, like every other day before that for the past two years, I have woken up to new words being used to describe the state of our ancestral homeland. Expulsion. Famine. Siege. War Crimes. Genocide. The word "genocide" was a word that I could never have imagined being used to describe the state of Palestine. However, according to the United Nations, since October 7th, 2023, more than 45,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza (United Nations, 2024). For nearly two years, the people of Palestine have suffered a devastating humanitarian crisis and widespread destruction by Israeli military operations, resulting in the death of hundreds of Palestinian civilians every day (Türk, 2024). Furthermore, since 2023, media content pertaining to the ongoing genocide in Palestine has been dominating social media platforms, creating distinct polarization between pro-Palestine and pro-Israel users. Social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, have served as key tools to inform, spread news, and share the voices and the personal experiences of individuals and families affected by the genocide. These platforms have become spaces where diverse and often conflicting narratives about the Palestinian genocide circulate. This overwhelming mix of content, including activism, denial, and dehumanization, has left individuals of Palestinian descent questioning what it means to be Palestinian in a world where being Palestinian is so ambivalent. This brings me to the research question I would like to explore in this project, which is "How does the way in which social media portrays the ongoing genocide in Palestine influence the perception of the identities of individuals of Palestinian descent?".

As an individual of Palestinian descent living in the West myself, I have a personal connection to this research question. Prior to completing this project, I noticed the way in which the media I was consuming pertaining to the genocide in Palestine was able to enact varying emotional reactions within

me. Whether they were positive or negative, I saw that the different perspectives within the pieces of social media content regarding the genocide in Palestine brought to light new issues of this matter and had an influence on the way I perceived my identity. I wanted to explore whether the way social media frames issues like the genocide in Palestine can have profound effects on how Palestinians perceived within the global community and how this effects the way in which Palestinians living in the West perceive their cultural identities. By researching this topic, my aim was to better understand these dynamics and explore the impact media narratives have on identity formation and self-perception of Palestinians living in the West. Though this topic encompasses a personal experience I face, the academic inquiry into this topic hopes to resonate with the experiences and challenges faced by other members of diaspora communities living in the West.

Review of Literature

Since the end of 2023, news and stories about the genocide in Palestine have circulated widely on social media, leading to increasingly polarized perspectives on the issue, particularly across social media platforms. Naturally, this has led to a rise in bias and misinformation within the coverage on the genocide in Palestine, most notably using media framing to portray Palestinian culture in a negative way that allows for misrepresentation to occur. According to Meeks (2019), framing is a technique that emphasizes only certain parts of reality by using or omitting certain words, phrases, images, sources, or statements that shape how information is understood. Though the means of framing is varied within social media platforms, studies have shown that this technique has been used across various forms of contemporary and traditional media to construct a specific image and message of how audiences should be engaging with and perceiving the middle eastern, and consequently, Palestinian culture (Naji & Iwar, 2013).

The use of media framing to misrepresent the Palestinian narrative can first be explored in the context of the representation of Muslims and individuals of Arab descent in traditional forms of media in Western societies. It is understood that Western media outlets use methods of meaning-making—through the construction of news by continually presenting specific pictures and words while highlighting these Middle Eastern cultures and religions— and framing to associate Muslims and individuals of Arab descent

with certain stereotypes to portray these cultures in a way that entails society to perceive them as "other", alien, and distant outsiders. This allows Western audiences to frame these misrepresented cultures as 'us' vs 'them', which consequently entails Western societies to dissociate and dehumanize Muslims and individuals of Arab descent (Naji & Iwar, 2013; Hall, 2024).

Furthermore, when considering the impact of framing on Palestinian communities, the concept can be illustrated through the portrayal of Israeli-Palestinians by Israeli media outlets, a community that disproportionately suffers from high levels of violence, alienation, and overall discrimination within this region, in a violent and criminally-charged context. This use of media framing has led Israeli-Palestinians to view themselves negatively and feel doubt in their Palestinian identities (Shomrom & Schejter, 2021).

This raises concerns about whether entrenched political, cultural and institutional bias makes these organizations compliant and hypocritical instruments of power instead of reliable news sources and showcases the biases and double-standards Western media outlets hold against Arab populations in the Middle East (Hall, 2024). However, when it comes to information regarding global conflict, individuals may not rely on traditional and social media to inform themselves. The idea of digital diplomacy on public reception showcases that during times of crisis, individuals tend to rely on information from governments, emphasizing the role governments play within the top-down dissemination of information within the media (Atad et al., 2023).

Though Palestinians may be subject to framing within traditional forms of media, current social media forums offer Palestinians a new form of contemporary expression. Amid the ongoing genocide, these platforms have allowed the Palestinian community to share their culture with global audiences. This has allowed for cultural symbols–specifically the thobe and keffiyeh–to be widely recognized as representations of the Palestinian identity (Abu-Ayyash, 2024). Social media has thus allowed the Palestinian community to create their own cultural narrative, which has allowed Palestinians to challenge colonization, and preserve their national cultural identity (Abu-Ayyash, 2024). Finally, the education system of Palestine is shaped by the West, Israel, and the nation of Palestine simultaneously, highlighting the challenge Palestinian students' face in the context of defining their perceived individual identities (Nasser, 2019).

In terms of creative work, this project aligns with the tradition of poetic, visual, and performative art used as activism. Works that combine poetry and visual storytelling, like those by Shirin Neshat and Mahmoud Darwish, served as inspiration for the production of this piece. A significant influence on Neshat's work has been her use of photography and video to convey themes of identity and exile, especially in her use of visual media to address emotional displacement and political violence. Inspiration was mainly drawn from her series of photographic work, Women of Allah (1997), that feature images of Iranian women with words taken from religious texts written on their portraits. Further, Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian poet, was another source of inspiration for the development of the poetic aspect for this piece. His work, such as Awrāq al-zaytūn (Leaves of the Olive Tree) (Darwish, M., 2013), is deeply tied to the experience of exile, loss, and the complexities of Palestinian identity. Like Darwish, poetry was used as a tool in this piece to address the emotional struggles faced by Palestinians in diaspora and the role they can play in resistance, even when geographically removed from the Violence.

Through the exploration of this research, it is evident there is an understanding of the way in which Palestinians are represented within the media, how Palestinians express their culture within the digital sphere, and factors that play a role in shaping the identities of Palestinian individuals. A knowledge gap that can be observed throughout every article presented is how these concepts change in response to the current ongoing genocide. The analysis of these articles exhibits a lack of exploration into how forms of contemporary media convey information regarding the ongoing genocide and how this directly influences the perceived identity of ethnically Palestinian individuals.

Method

Research Methodology

According to Ellis et al. (2011), autoethnography is a method for research and writing that aims to understand cultural experience by describing and methodologically analyzing personal experience. Autoethnography builds from individuals' personal experiences by turning them into an analysis and interpretation of an entire culture (Snyder, 2015). This approach to conducting research aims to challenge

standard ways of completing research, such as through deductive, empirical, and strictly scientific methods, by allowing the process of conducting research to be inductive, interpretive, and deeply personal to allow for more thorough and diverse contributions

of knowledge to be made within the social sciences (Ellis et al., 2011). As this research centers individuals of Palestinian descent living in the West, this autoethnographic study offers unique insights into how social media influences diaspora Palestinians' perceptions of the genocide in our ancestral homeland, viewed through my own perspective as a member of this community. Furthermore, in addition to employing autoethnography as a research method, data is collected through the systematic journaling of personal emotions and recurring themes, followed by a critical analysis of these entries to support the development of the autoethnographic narrative.

Previous research has demonstrated that personal journal entries can serve as a valuable source of rich qualitative data across a range of research methodologies beyond autoethnography. For instance, according to Friedemann et al. (2011), due to the width, breadth, and depth of the information they offer, the use of study participants' journals has been recognized as a valuable approach for gathering qualitative data. In their research study, reflexive personal journal entries written by interviewers during semi-qualitative interviews were used as methods of data collection. The collection of personal journal entries as primary qualitative data granted researchers the ability to analyze intimate, introspective, and emotionally charged perspectives of sensitive topics in healthcare from research participants that may have been difficult to obtain through interviews alone (Friedemann et al., 2011). Additionally, research completed by Akinreni et al. (2024) has assessed the efficacy of personal journals and diaries for qualitative research studies, describing personal journals as effective qualitative research tools. This study was able to evaluate the use of journals and diaries across other literature, determining that this is a viable method of primary data collection. Their primary strength lies in its ability to grant participants with more time and privacy for self-reflection and the processing of their experiences, enhancing the research participants' ability to achieve deeper self-expression and meaningful personal insight.

Therefore, this research methodology best suits this research project as it enables for a reflexive, embodied understanding of how cultural identity, collective memory, and intergenerational struggle is shaped by social media and perceived and emotionally processed by diaspora Palestinians. This research offers a voice that showcases this issue from the direct perspective of a Palestinian individual living in the West who is actively consuming this Western media pertaining to the genocide. This contributes to research by providing an analysis that seeks to offer a personal account of the knowledge gap at hand which differs greatly from the research typically completed on this issue, as it traditionally seems to come from individuals with no personal involvement to the issue, that don't benefit from understanding the notion of the connection to identity that this research proposes.

Data Collection

To collect data, purposive sampling was implemented, as content that met certain criteria was intentionally selected rather than randomly sampled. Every day over the course of one week, I saved and compiled the first 10 pieces of media content pertaining to the genocide in Palestine that I came across on the social media platforms of Instagram and TikTok each day. This means that by the end of the week, I had collected seventy pieces of content for analysis. At the same time as I completed this process of data collection, I journaled the emotions, common themes, and concepts understood and revealed to me within each individual piece of content and attached these pieces of reflection next to the piece of content I reflected on. Additionally, I created a summary of the commonalities I found between all 10 pieces of content, 5 pieces of content for each platform, at the end of every day. Additionally, I also changed the key words I wrote in the search bar to input every day so that I could receive more diverse and well-rounded content.

My goal was to not select any specific units of content, as I wanted to ensure that I maintained the non-directional nature of social media feeds in order to make sure that the content I received was as unbiased —from those in support, against, and who have neutral perspectives— and diverse as possible. I wanted to ensure that the content I received was as broad as possible so that the content consumed on my

feed could emulate popular content that most other individuals who are searching up the same keywords may receive on their feeds within the broader context of social media.

Thematic Analysis

In order to successfully answer this research question and evaluate the way in which I, as an individual of Palestinian descent living in the West, perceive my Palestinian identity during a time where individuals living in Palestine are currently affected by an ongoing genocide that has been dominating content within social media platforms, I completed a thematic analysis. This thematic analysis entailed a few analysis steps so that I could really dive deep into the various themes present within the journals I completed during the data collection process.

Firstly, I read every journal entry piece I wrote regarding each piece of content I came across within the week I completed this research. I wrote down the main themes I noticed within each of these entries and assigned each of them a colour. Afterwards, I re-read each journal entry piece I wrote and highlighted each of the different major themes I recognized in their respective colours. This first thematic analysis step allowed me to fully analyze and reflect on the common themes, emotions, and concepts understood and revealed to me within the content I interpreted and consumed over the research period.

Secondly, to create a thematic analysis for the common themes I understood throughout my interpretation of the content I came across during the data collection process, I created a word cloud. As part of my final project requires me to write a piece of poetry regarding the way I perceive my Palestinian identity, I thought a word cloud would allow me to effectively organize and compile the common themes, concepts, and emotions extracted from the social media content within the written journal pieces in order to conduct a literary thematic analysis of the data. Using this word cloud and the words within them, I was able to construct a piece of poetic literature that effectively encompassed the language I used within the journal entries to convey the way I perceived the social media content pertaining to the ongoing genocide in Palestine.

Results

  To showcase the findings, I discovered throughout this project that I wanted to create a visual body art-in-motion performance piece accompanied by poetry. I wanted to incorporate a written piece within my project to convey the exact language I used within the journal entries I wrote to convey my perception of the media content I consumed in a direct way, while still creating an interpretive visual piece.

  The choice of a visual body-canvas performance and poetry served as a medium to convey both the visible and invisible dimensions of identity. The body canvas art-in-motion performance piece allowed me to embody the fluctuating waves of varying emotional moments of personal reflection that emerged during the data collection and thematic analysis processes. Rather than producing static images, live art was used to express the way in which the themes highlighted within these findings transformed, changed, and fluctuated the more the data was analyzed.

  Through the fluidity and tension of the body, this piece embodied the emotional and psychological spaces explored, channeling these reflections directly into the movements within this performance. My movements and actions aimed to evoke the tension of being caught between one's Palestinian ethnicity and Western nationality. Through gestures of sudden tension, pauses, transitions, and using paint to create a visual for these identities, the emotional experience of diasporic individuals was embodied. The painted body served as a visual metaphor, layering physical marks that represented moments of connection, disconnection, strength, and vulnerability. This art-in-motion performance mirrored the shifting, fragmented nature of identity, reflecting the emotional turmoil and internal conflict I felt throughout my research process.

  Poetry, as the second component of this piece, was crucial in expressing the emotional weight of the findings. Through poetry, a raw, introspective look at the struggle of identity expression, the tension between the Canadian nationality and Palestinian ethnicity, and the internal battle of privilege and guilt was able to be provided. The spoken word aspect allowed for the emotion and personal narrative within the findings to be compellingly conveyed, creating a performance that would invite others to experience these emotions alongside the visual piece. The act of vocally performing the poem added an element of

vulnerability and authenticity to the experience, making it clear that this project was both personal and universal in its themes.

The link below holds the final version of my final arts-based research project. Here, I perform the art-in-motion piece, recite the poem I wrote—which can also be found below—and thoroughly explain the significance of the elements within the project. This video mostly focuses on the 3 main findings that I came across, as well as presenting the emotions that arose within me, throughout the data collection and thematic analysis process of this project. These main findings were a) the conflict I discovered that I have between my Canadian nationality and my Palestinian ethnicity, b) the struggle I have with comparing my lived experiences as an individual of Palestinian living in the West with individuals of Palestinian descent living in Palestine during the genocide and how this makes me question if I have the right to express my Palestinian identity, and c) the privilege and opportunity that comes with being an individual of Palestinian descent living in the West that can be used for the better. Additionally, in this video, I present the arts-based portion of this research project and how the elements within this piece connect to and represent the findings I uncovered within the data analysis of this project themselves.

The Palestine Within

I'm not sure why I'm feeling such immense chagrin,

I just can't help thinking about where Palestine lies within.

My body is not broken, there's no rubble at my feet,

I've never had to starve to death while the IDF eats meat.

I've never had to face the miseries of genocide,

Yet I exclaim my tormented identity into the world with pride.

Am I really one in the same as the people of Palestine?

We may share blood and skin and race, but not these desperate

times.

We are the same in nature, but not one of the same.

I roam a world of peace, while they roam a world of pain.

I feel I am not worthy of saying we're akin.

I feel as though I want to rip my body from my skin.

As they scream at night in terror, while I watch from a screen,

I grieve and mourn and ache, while I'm complicit in this scene.

I reside in a nation, in which my race is dehumanized,

Where the leaders and the government fund my ancestry's demise.

The country I grew up in has destroyed my family's land.

My ethnicity is being eradicated, and my nation is at hand.

I can't call myself Canadian, as my nation is in oblivion.

But I haven't gone through the same experiences as other

Palestinians.

My ancestry and nationality are left to riot, strife, and brawl,

While my soul is left to grapple with the madness of it all.

Though we are vocal, we are loud, and our struggle has gathered

crowds

Our presence is rejected; our voices remain ploughed.

Our protests may serve to no avail, but still, we will prevail.

Though they may destroy Palestine, they left out one small detail.

Despite us living in the West, we still share DNA.

Even if they exterminate the rest of us in a land far, far away.

The nature of our presence is a form of resistance in the least.

We can resist colonization in places other than the Middle East.

Those of us with families who were displaced long, long ago,

We hold a kind of privilege our kinfolk will never know.

Though we still face discrimination from some in our society,

We are not hateful people; that's just the nature of our ethnicity.

We may be racialized across the world from land to sea,

However, we'll make sure we are not just a memory.

Oceans, language, and borders may separate us all

But we'll always fight for resistance, even if we have to crawl.

Those who lack simple empathy, who choose to uphold this

prejudice

Will not ignore the lives they've hurt once we have sought our

justice.

Palestinians are dying, while people watch, and the world just spins

Children who look just like me lay mangled, their bodies piled in

bins.

Racism and ashes seem to be akin,

While everyone I see online continues to bear grins.

Though I am connected to this Western sin,

I just don't seem to understand how the world isn't also worn thin.

 I now know why I'm feeling such immense chagrin,

Yet I still can't help but wonder where Palestine lies within.

Discussion

     As this project allowed me to dive into the emotional, psychological, and sociopolitical implications of living as an individual of Palestinian descent in the West during a time where this ethnic community is facing increased violence and genocide in Palestine, the findings I was able to discover within the social media content I analyzed were complex and multifaceted. The data I collected and analyzed brought to light themes of identity, belonging, privilege, and the complexities of navigating cultural, ethnic, and national conflicts.

One key observation I made pertaining to the actual content regarding the ongoing genocide in Palestine within the social media platforms of TikTok and Instagram was the high degree of media fragmentation. The results and varying perspectives towards the genocide varied highly depending on the words I input into the search bar. For example, when I input the word "Palestine" or "Genocide" into the search bar, the algorithm often generated pieces of media content that showcased support for Palestinians and recognition that the actions committed by Israel against Palestine were of genocidal nature.

This observation can be seen in the journal entry where I wrote:

> *"Francesca Albanese compared the current ongoing genocide in Palestine to the genocides in Europe against individuals of Jewish descent, in Rwanda against individuals a part of the Tutsi Ethnic group and the genocide committed against the Bosnians". For context, I came across this video on my feed on the social media platform of TikTok when the search bar input was "Palestine Genocide".*

On the other hand, when inputting the word "Israel" or "Conflict" into the search bar, the algorithm generated pieces of content that were in support of or justified Israel's implementation of the genocide upon Palestinians and who believed that the genocide was truly a war, despite Palestinians not having the resources to fight back.

This observation can be noted in my journal entry, which reads as follows:

> *"Watching videos like this one is what makes me lose hope and feel anger towards the West and my Western identity. This article, that is coming from a Western news outlet, is framing Palestinians in a*

way that aims at dehumanizing Palestinian civilians and upholds

the gruesome actions committed by the government of Israel. Not

only do they say that the government of Israel is fighting in their

"own territory", but also, they focus on Hamas rather than the

civilians of Palestine, and they are calling this a war when really it

is a genocide. They also fail to recognize the fact that Israel has

been forcefully occupying and discriminating against the people of

Palestine since 1948."

I believe that this finding speaks to the impact that social media content has within shaping our perceptions of global sociopolitical issues, and that the fragmented nature of social media platforms may present itself as a widespread issue, as it frames these issues in ways that aim to uphold the social media users' internal biases. If I hadn't changed the key words I input into the search bar, I would have only reflected on media content that upheld my internal biases of supporting Palestine, thus limiting the varying perspectives of this issue that I would have consumed. This would have impacted the range of elements that I would have come across and would have limited the amount of popular media content I would have consumed, changing the unbiased, non-directional facet of social media platforms that I wanted to recreate.

One of the principal findings that I discovered in this project was the internal conflict between my Canadian identity and my Palestinian ethnicity. This conflict was significant as it reflected a broader internal struggle faced by many diaspora communities, particularly those whose native countries are in zones of conflict. It allowed me to uncover the tension between ancestral identities and the identity that comes with the individual's current nationality, which often manifests feelings of confusion, shame, guilt, and isolation. This finding emphasizes the way not only individuals of Palestinian descent, but also of other individuals from diaspora communities living in the West, face emotional complexities pertaining to their identities as they feel torn between their ancestry and the privileges they receive as North American citizens. Further, this also presented itself as a conflict because through this research process, I

understood that the country I currently live in supports the dehumanization and genocide of people who share my ethnic background, which made me question my connection to both of my identities.

This finding connects to the research question as it shows that the way that Palestinian suffering and violence is portrayed within social media can evoke conflicting emotions for those of Palestinian descent in the West, confronting them with images of violence and displacement that challenge the privileges they enjoy in more stable countries. This media content allowed feelings of guilt, alienation, and a sense of being torn between solidarity with my ancestral land and the comfort of life in the West to be amplified. This shows the way in which social media plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals of Palestinian descent in the West perceive not only their Palestinian identities, but also their Western identities amid the ongoing genocide, as it allowed me to further understand the conflict between my nationality and my ethnicity regarding the expression of my individual identity.

Secondly, another finding I uncovered was the struggle of whether I have the right to express my Palestinian identity as an individual of Palestinian descent but doesn't have the same lived experiences as other Palestinians during this genocide. This finding showed the way in which members of diasporic communities may feel disconnected from the struggles their families are facing, causing them to question their validity as true representatives of that identity. This can be seen as throughout the journal entries I wrote, there were many points where I questioned whether I was "Palestinian enough" because I felt immense guilt and shame due to me not experiencing this genocide in the same way that other Palestinians are. This finding allowed me to analyze the pressure individuals in diaspora communities may feel to prove their connection to their ethnicity during times of crisis. This internal conflict is captured in one journal entry where I wrote: "Thinking about the individuals trapped underneath the rubble, the children who have lost their lives, and those who have been torn apart from their families, makes me question my ability to even express my embodiment of the Palestinian identity, when I have such a different lived experience as a Palestinian living in the West, than as a Palestinian living in Palestine."

This reflection illustrates the internal struggle experienced by individuals of Palestinian descent, where they find themselves questioning their membership within the Palestinian community while battling

feelings of empathy and guilt, ultimately shedding light on the pressures they face to assert their connection to their ethnicity during times of crisis.

To connect this finding to the research question, this shows that social media plays a significant role in expanding this emotional complexity, as the constant stream of graphic images and narratives from individuals living in Palestine often amplifies the pressure individuals living in the West feel to prove their connection to their ethnic roots during a time where their community faces a crisis. This dynamic reveals how social media not only shapes the broader narrative around Palestinian suffering but also influences the ways individuals in the diaspora perceive their own identities, navigating feelings of guilt, responsibility, and solidarity.

The third key finding uncovered within this research project was the privilege individuals of Palestinian descent living in the West possess and the responsibility it carries in the form of resistance beyond boundaries in the context of the ongoing genocide in Palestine. While social media exposes the horrific realities of this genocide, those of Palestinian descent in the West may struggle with feelings of guilt and hopelessness for not directly experiencing the violence their families face. Though this awareness of unequal privilege evokes feelings of anger and confusion, it also opens up a space for agency. Having the opportunity to live in the West provides us with access to platforms and opportunities that may be used to amplify Palestinian voices and advocate for justice. Though social media often reflects a narrative of victim blaming or victimhood, it also allows individuals in the diaspora to use their privileged position as a tool for resistance and solidarity. This shifts the conversation from guilt to action, highlighting that resistance is not confined to those living within the geographic boundaries of Palestine. Instead, it emphasizes the idea that Palestinians living in the West can—and must—continue to resist colonization and fight for justice, even from afar. This relates back to the research question as it shows that during times of crisis, social media can play a significant role in shaping individuals' apprehension of the role and responsibility that comes with their identity. Further, this shows the way that social media can become a powerful means of connecting global solidarity movements, enabling diaspora communities to actively engage in activism, challenge dominant narratives, and assert their identities in the face of crisis.

Conclusion

The emotional response I had after consuming social media content depicting the ongoing genocide in Palestine speaks to a broader truth about the impact that media content can have on individuals and communities that are directly or culturally connected to this genocide. I believe that the feelings of chagrin, anger, shame, confusion, guilt, and helplessness I describe and portray within the arts-based portion of this project reflect the struggle of being emotionally connected to a distant but deeply personal crisis. This issue is crucial because it emphasizes the emotional burden faced by people who experience tragedies through a filtered perspective. It demonstrates how the digital world can make distant suffering seem more immediate, while simultaneously producing emotional overload and a sense of helplessness.

This project explores the complexities of Palestinian identity in the West, challenging the traditional view of diaspora communities as disconnected from their homeland or advocacy bridges. Social media plays a pivotal role in this process, both as a platform for activism and a space for emotional and psychological stress. The portrayal of suffering on social media amplifies feelings of guilt, alienation, and moral responsibility for those living in the West. This project highlights the power of the diaspora to engage in activism even from afar, while also framing geopolitical conflicts and influencing emotional responses.

<div align="center">**References**</div>

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