Beyond a Collective "Victimhood": Perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from the East Bank

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This project explores how proximity in identity to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects Jordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian perceptions of collective victimhood. The project therefore employs Collective Victimhood Theory (CVT), or the understanding of victimization's effects on a victimized group's collective relations, behaviors, and identity. The project critiques previous research on Collective Victimhood Theory and tendencies to extrapolate and assume victimhood identity beyond applicable populations. The project relies on six interviews of Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanian individuals living within Jordan's borders. Through thematic coding and analysis of interview transcripts, the project investigates interviewees' perceptions of the conflict and collective victimhood. This analysis demonstrated a tendency to determine proximity to Palestinian victimization situationally. However, that act of proximation did not manifest in a collective victimhood mentality but rather in understandings of specific collective grievances that people in Jordan experience. For this reason, this paper argues, a CVT framework seems to accurately describe dynamics related to a victimized group but not always the resultant social narratives, demanding an Appraisal Theory framework to avoid erroneously prescribing communal victimhood narratives to a novel population. As a global audience anxiously follows peace proceedings in the Gaza Strip, any day-after reckoning will have to contend with the broader ramifications to the past years and decades of violence in this conflict, not only in Israel-Palestine but across the region. These Jordanian perspectives therefore begin to reveal the proximate dynamics at play in grappling with protracted grievance throughout the Middle East.

Keywords: Collective Victimhood Theory; Jordan; Jordanian Identity; Palestinian Identity

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> The soothing or afflictive effect of the stories we tell is not in whether we select the right words but in our proximity to what the right words might be… the privilege of describing a thing vaguely, incompletely, dishonestly, is inseparable from the privilege of looking away. (Omar El Akkad, *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*, p. 68)

INTRODUCTION

I sat at a plastic dining table on a balcony overlooking the city of Amman, Jordan, in the summer of 2024 over a plate of reheated *mansaf* and sliced cucumbers. The sun was high overhead on an unseasonably moderate Saturday afternoon, and across me sat a friend describing her morning in a mix of Palestinian Amiyya, Modern Standard Arabic, and broken English to accommodate for my linguistic deficiencies. In her blended speech, I picked out fragments to piece together the morning's activities—*sūq* (market); *ṭabib* (doctor); *dawaʾ* (medicine)—soon realizing my friend had been diagnosed with anxiety in a medical checkup. This information was not a revelation; she frequently passed televisions with disapproving glares and quiet requests to turn off the daily deluge of news from across the border. Moreover, I knew my friend was Palestinian, having assembled a loose family history over a month of conversations, tracing migration from Jerusalem through the West Bank and into Jordan following wars in 1948 and 1967. What I did not comprehend were my friend's lasting ties to the territory. Asking if the anxiety came from her family's connection to Palestine, implying history, conflict, and escape, she answered with an unexpected presentism: "Yes, my sister is in Gaza City, and I fear for her every day."

Such stories in Jordan are not unique, tracing all the way back to early frictions between Jewish immigrants and Palestinian locals in the Ottoman-controlled territory comprising modern-day Israel-Palestine. In this period, a cycle of mounting tensions and sporadic violence emerged, continuing into the British Mandate's administration of the region following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. These tensions largely began with the onset of Jewish immigration from Europe under the nationalist ideology of Zionism seeking to establish a Jewish state free from the rampant and increasingly violent antisemitism in emerging European nation-states (Mahler, 2011, pp. 17-19). Jewish immigrants, however, would often purchase land from Ottoman landlords and later British officials, leaving many Palestinians blindsided and increasingly hostile to immigration (Avneri, 2017, pp. 75-76; Pappe, 2022, p. 91). Violent riots ensued with rising intensity as Arabs protested the precipitous rise in Jewish immigration following the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which asserted "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Barakat, 2016, pp. 8-9; Balfour, 1917). Thus, the period saw the hardening of Jewish and Palestinian identities into opposing claims over ter-

ritory and settlement. As a result, antagonism sowed the seeds for continued intergroup hostility and ensuing grievances.

These hostilities resulted in war on numerous occasions, with the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1948 and 1967 proving especially devastating for Palestinians. In both instances, Palestinians and allied Arab countries fought Israel, suffering major defeats and prompting episodes of mass exodus and forcible removal of Palestinians from the territory. The War of 1948, occurring in tandem with the end of British Mandate control over the region, resulted in an independent Israeli state and the dislocation of between 700,000 to 800,000 Palestinians from Palestine's pre-1948 borders, leading many to refer to the event as the Nakba, or "Catastrophe" in Arabic (Warf et al., 2020, p. 384). Likewise, the Six-Day War of 1967 between several Arab states and Israel resulted in major territorial gains for Israel as well as the displacement of a further 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians from the territory in an event labeled the Naksa, or "setback" (Bowker, 2003, p. 81). As of 2022, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates the total number of Palestinians living outside Palestine's pre-1948 borders is around 7.2 million, with many of these individuals tracing heritage to refugees from the Nakba and Naksa ("Palestinian Central Bureau," 2022, p. 1). These momentous developments in land control and population displacement occupy a significant space in Palestinian narratives of the conflict. Indeed, the shorthand titles for these events highlight Palestinian traumas in a collective manner, invoking significant shared experiences between the Palestinians still residing within the pre-1948 borders and the numerous Palestinians who suffered removal or fled from war.

Naturally, the latter group did not leave these traumas at the border, causing complicated relationships between identity and national belonging in the process, and nowhere is this dynamic more apparent than in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Palestinian refugees carried, and continue to carry, identification with the events of 1948 and 1967 across time and geography, and Jordan, a significant recipient of these refugees, has struggled to reconcile the resultant challenges to national identity. Jordan's relationship with Palestinians appears straightforward at a cursory glance given shared borders, culture, and even a de facto state after Jordan's controversial annexation of the West Bank in 1950 (Kumaraswamy, 2019, p. 4).[1] Jordan even became the only Arab state to extend citizenship to Palestinian refugees in Jordanian-controlled territory after 1948, leading to the country's present-day demographics, where Palestinian-Jordanians constitute around half of the total population (Gandalfo, 2012, p. 23). Cultural affinity, shared history, and the lack of state expectations for a "return" to Palestine generally allow for warm relations between the kingdom's Palestinian and Jordanian citizens, but some "East" Jordanians grew hostile toward the non-native population,

[1] De facto Jordanian rule ended in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967 when Israeli forces gained control of the territory, and Jordan officially relinquished claims to the West Bank in 1988 (Kumaraswamy, 2019, pp. 5, 20).

as seen in the continued salience of Jordanian identity politics today (Culcasi, 2016, p. 9). These dynamics pose a distinctive case of Palestinian identity, wherein Palestinian-Jordanians maintain a national identity linking the group with Palestinians in Palestine yet, unlike other countries in the region, constitute a prominent and generally accepted place in Jordanian society. Here, the community retains a unique and proximate position in relation to both Jordanian and Palestinian national identities, where proximity represents the dynamic process of perceiving self- and group-belonging in a broader identity milieu.

Against this backdrop on October 7, 2023, Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, launched an attack on Israel in response to Arab-Israeli political normalization, Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and Hamas' flagging support in Gaza. The attack's immediate consequences proved devastating, resulting in approximately 1,200 Israeli deaths and the seizure of 251 hostages ("The Israel-Hamas War's," 2025). The response has likewise been devastating, with regional tensions flaring into strikes on eight countries and an Israeli bombardment campaign that has killed over 70,000 Gazans in what both the United Nations and the International Association of Genocide Scholars have labelled a genocide (Cook, 2025; "IAGS Resolution," 2025; "Legal analysis," 2025). The scale of these events has clearly been traumatic for people living in Israel and Gaza, reigniting the longstanding conflict and accompanying senses of victimization. At the same time, widespread outrage over, or even identification with, this victimization erupted outside Israel-Palestine in the form of vigils, boycotts, protests, and counter-protests.

This international reaction was on full display in Jordan, where support for Gazans was immediate and overwhelming. Jordanians from all walks of life quickly took to the streets and social media to protest Israel's reaction to the October 7 attack in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. In the early stages of the genocide, mass protests and daily demonstrations took place throughout the kingdom, continuing weekly thereafter (Vidal, 2023; Adler, 2024). Anti-Israeli/American boycotts also proved widespread in Jordan, with over 83 percent of Jordanians reporting participation ("Survey of Jordanians' Perceptions," 2024, p. 13). Even compared to other countries in the Middle East, this level of engagement was substantial, with protests and participation abating earlier and peaking lower in other Arab states (Hammond, 2024; El Kurd, 2024). In this way, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict retains a uniquely central place in Jordanian society. Less clear is the nature and exact cause of this solidarity.

These dynamics raise the question of how Jordanian proximate identity affects resident Jordanian and Palestinian identification with Palestinian collective trauma and victimhood. In yet another moment of regional strife, the aftermath of the October 7 attack reintroduces the question of relationships between people throughout the region, with residents of Jordan occupying a liminal space between national independence and affinity for Palestinians.

To explore these dynamics, I interviewed English-speaking Jordanians and Palestinians living in Jordan during a ceasefire in January 2025. I then thematically coded interview transcripts, searching for themes related to identity while highlighting variation between participants. Through the lens of Collective Victimhood Theory (CVT), which seeks to elucidate the dynamics between group suffering and individual experience of trauma, I then analyzed the coded data to test the theory's applicability. Interviewees understood Palestinian victimization through a lens of layered proximate identities, a phenomenon compatible with CVT, yet these understandings did not indicate a sense of victimhood. This paper therefore argues that CVT provides a framework for understanding certain social dynamics within a victimized group but not necessarily the social narratives undergirding those dynamics. For this reason, different theoretical approaches like an Appraisal Theory framework better accommodate variation in social dynamics and narratives when studying novel populations' reactions to collectively traumatic events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collective Victimhood Theory

Collective Victimhood Theory (CVT) posits an explanation for individual and subjective experiences of violence against a particular group, investigating various levels of social influence to make sense of these perceptions. Specifically, CVT often scrutinizes the structural causes, communal context, and individual narratives contributing to widespread understandings of conflict and victimhood. At the broadest level, these narratives typically fall along Bar-Tal et al.'s (2009) description of collective victimhood as a belief in collective and unjust harm against an unprotected group. Moreover, Vollhardt (2020) explains in *The Social Psychology of Collective Victimhood* that the structural level of collective victimhood consists of victimization events wherein one group experiences violence at the hands of another group, such as colonization, war, or genocide. While the various forms of collective victimization can affect individual perceptions of victimhood, cultural narratives, religious ideologies, and social values can also shape individual perceptions at the communal or familial level (Vollhardt, 2020). Applying CVT to Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordan amid a traumatic period of intergroup violence in Israel-Palestine can help to explain how these individuals process the violence. Interviews of members from this population can likewise reveal communal victimhood dynamics, especially at the individual level, demonstrating which social narratives, traumas, and personal identities interviewees draw upon to express experiences of collective victimization and perceptions of collective victimhood.

Due to an emphasis on the relationship between individuals and groups, CVT also implies a link between individual claims to victimhood and group belonging. The theory often focuses simultaneously on themes of collective

victimhood identification and group identification to explore a potential causal relationship between the two identities. In Noor et al.'s (2017) review of trends in the collective victimhood literature, the authors found that "Ingroup identity strength predicts both higher endorsement of competitive victimhood and less positive attitudes toward adversary groups" (p. 126). Moreover, the content of this identity, such as ingroup chauvinism, can be predictive of hostility toward other groups. More constructively, individual identification with a broad regional identity can sometimes be predictive of an individual's willingness to forgive an outgroup from the same region, though this pattern has several exceptions (Noor et al., 2017, p. 126). A CVT lens therefore facilitates comparison of Palestinian and Jordanian group and regional identity. In a Jordanian context, the theory further helps distinguish between Jordanian and Palestinian preferences for and identification with collective victimhood, especially regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Prior collective victimhood scholarship has also begun to look at potential social effects of collective victimhood on outgroup perception but remains divided in viewing these effects as potentially constructive or generally destructive. In the constructive trend, several scholars have postulated benefits to collective victimhood, looking for possible ingroup cohesion or even the potential for peace, while other research forefronts predominantly negative effects of destructive, or competitive, victimhood. Exemplifying the former trend, some research has investigated victim groups for possible prosocial behavior (e.g., increased trust or solidarity) toward members of the collective victim ingroup as a consequence of victimization (Rotella et al., 2013; Nair & Vollhardt, 2019). Similarly, Vollhardt (2009) argued that, while competitive victimhood often deters conflict resolution, mutual recognition of suffering could serve as a steppingstone toward peace. However, other studies showcase a more pessimistic view of the phenomenon, demonstrating instances of collective victim group hostility toward members outside of the victim group (Bar-Tal & Antebi, 1992; De Guissmé & Licata, 2017). Jordanian and Palestinian perceptions of identified outgroups (e.g., Israelis, non-Jordanian Palestinians) likewise relates to collective victimhood's social implications. A case study investigating Palestinian and Jordanian attitudes toward outgroups can therefore clarify collective victimhood's effects on perceptions toward outgroups.

Adding complexity to notions of constructive or competitive victimhood, recent scholarship has begun to reject direct comparison between victim groups, challenging the comparative bias within the collective victimhood literature. Some scholars have argued that the tendency to search for similarities or sources of conflict in instances of collective victimhood lies in contrast with how victims perceive victimhood and intergroup relationships. For example, Twali (2019) challenges the comparative paradigm common in collective victimhood research, embracing a more fluid, temporal, and situational understanding of intergroup comparison not permanently fixed to

a victim-victim or victim-perpetrator dyad. However, recent studies have suggested a potential need to depart from the field's comparative tendencies altogether given individuals' frequent rejection of such comparison in favor of more dynamic understandings of both personal and group victimhood (Vollhardt et al., 2021; Vollhardt et al., 2023). A case study on Palestinian and Jordanian perceptions of a proximate victim group can likewise avoid the comparative tendencies in the collective victimhood literature. Instead of attempting to extrapolate findings on collective victimhood beyond a particular conflict, this project acknowledges the particularity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while maintaining the goal of extending the current literature beyond the directly conflicted populations.

CVT in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Indeed, studies of this conflict using CVT are numerous, as previous researchers have examined relationships between Israelis and Palestinians throughout the conflict's recent history, highlighting victim-perpetrator dyads. Through the lens of collective victimhood, social psychologists have studied these dyads in terms of grievance, investigating the effects on conflicted group relations. In Bar-Tal and Antebi's (1992) seminal work, the authors theorized a hostile Israeli "siege mentality" toward the world due to a long history of persecution (p. 633). Later work applied this theory to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a temporal level, layering Jewish Israeli siege mentality in terms of historical victimhood, general conflict victimhood, and conflict event victimhood (Schori-Eyal et al., 2014). Other research has centered on the individual level, studying how victim beliefs in the conflict could lead to either protracted fighting or peace (Vollhardt, 2009; Kljajić et al., 2025, pp. 28-29). This research project therefore focuses on Jordanian and Palestinian perspectives peripheral to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, investigating the relationship between proximal identity and perceptions of collective victimhood within Jordan's borders. Research on Israeli and Palestinian collective victimhood implicitly seeks to understand the relationship between the two groups but typically fails to adequately investigate implications of collective victimhood external to the directly conflicted area, so this project will begin to address the literature's current gap.

Past researchers have made preliminary attempts at such analysis, conducting research on potentially related communities. The occasional study, recognizing the international community's role in the conflict, seeks to capture feelings of Jewish and Arab diaspora communities through the lens of collective victimization. For example, multiple studies have centered on the effects of conflict narratives and collective victimhood on North American Jewish diaspora communities (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008; Ben Hagai et al., 2013; Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2019). Ben Hagai and Zurbriggen's (2019) study of the relationship between narratives, collective victimhood, and support for a two-state solution extended the studied population to both

Jewish and "Arab" Americans for comparison.[2] One study even investigated Palestinian refugee experiences of collective victimhood in Lebanon (van der Velde, 2013). This project will extend this trend to Palestinian and Jordanian populations in Jordan, applying the theoretical lens to new groups/subgroups outside Israel-Palestine. In this way, the research will explore a CVT framework's applicability to understudied populations associated with conflicted groups, challenging assumptions of collective victimhood identities among Arab or refugee communities.

Therefore, a study on Palestinian-Jordanian and Jordanian self-perception will continue with past research's focus on collective victimhood in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The project seeks to add to existing scholarship, providing a case study from the thoroughly investigated Israeli-Palestinian conflict while further exploring relationships between groups not directly involved in conflict. However, the project is unique in studying Jordanian populations. Though collective victimhood research has covered many facets of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most studies center around Jewish and/or Israeli perceptions with occasional inclusion of Arab and Palestinian voices, whereas Palestinians and Jordanians in Jordan, for whom a shared Palestinian and/or Arab identity is ostensibly salient, remain relatively absent from the literature. In addition to unique perspectives, this project is timely due to the tenuous ceasefire in Gaza. An implicit motivation undergirding collective victimhood literature goes beyond understanding the phenomenon itself and toward workable solutions to intergroup relations. With the unresolved conflict comes the possibility of heightened Palestinian grievance, which demands the greater engagement and understanding this project seeks to provide.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Interviews on identity and the ongoing conflict in Israel-Palestine from Palestinians, Jordanians, and Palestinian-Jordanians in Jordan serve as the primary data for this research project. Interview responses from members of these demographics are therefore the foundation for analysis of these individuals' relationships with Palestinian identity as well as perceptions of the conflict overall. To collect these perspectives, I recruited from personal and professional English-speaking contacts in Jordan for participation in semi-structured interviews, gathering six participants for the study (see Table 1). Here, it should be noted that conducting the project in English in prioritizing the language skills of the interviewer likely skewed results toward perspectives from Jordan's middle class. Nevertheless, the collection process resulted in varied perspectives derived from the population of study, capturing views from both men and women of different socioeconomic back-

[2] The "Arab sample" included Americans with Arab, Turkish, and Iranian heritage from Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Turkey, and Iran (Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2019, p. 183).

grounds with ages ranging from early twenties to mid-fifties. Still, such a sample should not be taken to be representative of perspectives in Jordan as a whole; rather, these views only begin to illuminate the contours of varied experiences within Jordanian society.

Name[3]	*National Self-Identification*[4]	*Identified Home City/Region*	*Age*
Ahmad	Palestinian / Jordanian	Amman (family from Nablus and Yaffa)	>40
Amal	Palestinian / Jordanian	Zarqa (family from Palestine)	<35
Mariam	Palestinian / Jordanian	Amman (family from Irbid and Palestine)	>40
Bilal	Jordanian	Wadi Musa	<35
Laila	Palestinian	Nablus	>40
Khadija	Palestinian / Jordanian	Jordan Valley	<35

Table 1: Interviewees

With the participants gathered, and after obtaining Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative certification and Institutional Review Board approval, I held the six single-hour Zoom interviews between January 25 and 29, 2025, during a ceasefire following 15 months of genocide in Gaza. The interview procedure contained three sections, including informed consent; demographic items; and questions exploring the interviewees' relationship to Palestinian identity and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict historically and in Gaza (see Appendix A). Both the demographic items and questions related to Palestinian identity aimed to establish participants' relationship to the Palestinian community, while questions on Israel and the conflict in Gaza then assessed interviewees' perceptions of the conflict and any potential identification with the victimization. Because prior research has seldom focused on perspectives of collective victimhood in Jordan, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed for data collection while mitigating interviewer bias.

I used thematic analysis to evaluate primary data from the interviews, beginning with transcription and initial coding to provide an organizational basis for later analysis identifying emergent themes within and across the interviewee responses. Like Twali's (2019) interviews exploring collective victimhood among the understudied community of South Sudanese refugees,

[3] To maintain both confidentiality and readability, the author has elected to replace each of the interviewees' names with relatively common names in Jordan belonging to the interviewees' respective genders.

[4] This list of "self-identification" is not necessarily a reflection of current or historical familial nationality in either Palestine or Jordan but a statement of how interviewees chose to self-identify through the course of their interview.

I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process for thematic analysis. I began by transcribing interviews using Otter.ai software before manual review and revision. As demonstrated in Table 2, I then organized the data based on the interview structure before further revising and defining thematic codes illustrative of Jordanian identity and collective victimhood. With raw data organized into broad thematic codes, I was able to revise for specificity and eliminate themes due to limited data or project relevance (see Table 2). The next phase, defining themes, involved analyzing the theme's significance to the research project, resulting in a detailed outline explaining the connection between the themes and the research question on identity and proximity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which I then used to write the Discussion section of this research paper. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process for this project therefore provided a replicable process for organizing and synthesizing primary interview data.

Initial Organization	*Broad Thematic Codes*	*Examples of Refined Codes*
Identity & Land	Identity in Jordan	Belonging; Division; Urban/Rural; Unity
	Land & Borders	Return; Sameness; Family; Connection
Relationship with the Conflict	Conflict Grievance	Pervasive; Solidarity; History; Borders
	Economic Impact	Boycott; Downturn; Scarcity
	Psychological Impact	Fear; Sadness; Well-Being; Suppression
	Resistance & Resolution	Youth; Education; Protest; Violence

Table 2: Relevant Thematic Codes

ANALYSIS

Proximity Influencing Conflict Identity

After a cursory analysis, some uniformity did exist among the interviewees, as each individual, irrespective of identity, remarked on the conflict's pervasiveness in Jordanian society, even before Hamas' October 7 attack. When describing early recollections related to the conflict, virtually every respondent reflected on the conflict's ubiquity in Jordanian life. For example, Ahmad explained, "For people living in Jordan, with a lot of them coming from the war in 1948, the Nakba, or 1967, [the issue in Palestine] is not a conflict; it's a being" (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Mariam reiterated this point, stating that the conflict "is not something that you remember… it's part of our culture, it's part of our daily life" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). All other interviewees reinforced Mariam's

point creating a sense of unavoidable encounter with the conflict at a young age (see Table 3). These descriptions reveal the conflict's indelible mark on Jordanian society. Through an intimate proximity, the violence's unending nearness forges a collective identification with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Name	*Reflection on the Question: "Do you have any particular memory when you first became aware of conflict with Israel?"*
Ahmad	"For people living in Jordan, with a lot of them coming from the war in 1948, the Nakba, or 1967, [the issue in Palestine] is not a conflict; it's a being."
Amal	"Actually, we were raised with this [idea] in schools: 'There's the Israeli occupation, and this is our land'… [There is] an Islamic theme here in Jordan, so we always talk about this stuff."
Mariam	"It's not something that you remember or you all of a sudden become aware of. It's daily. It's something you grow up knowing that it's there through the history of your family… It is not something that you remember… it's part of our culture; it's part of our daily life."
Bilal	"I think we're born with this… I think, since you're Jordanian and you live here in Jordan, you grew up with this idea, with the conflict and the issues in Palestine. You grow up with this news, with everything on social media, the people talking about it. There are a lot of Palestinians here as well, so that's why."
Laila	"Since we [my brothers and I] were born and we were abroad. It was normal that we have our lands in Palestine… We [were] familiar with, for example, the olive oil soup, the *kanāfa*, the sweet, the Turkish bath also."
Khadija	"I started to know about the conflict when I started in the first year actually at university, because it's like something you know, but you don't realize what is exactly happening. So, at the university, [it started] with some group of students talking about 'Palestine, Palestine, Palestine.' And then even in the classes, some professors [would mention] Palestine."

Table 3: Explanations of Conflict Pervasiveness

While widespread, this collective identification was not uniform. A difference in experience related to the conflict due to disparate demographics in geography arose among interviewees, with rural Jordanian communities seemingly less focused on Palestine than Jordanian cities with a large Palestinian presence. Where more Palestinian-heavy population centers (e.g., Amman or Zarqa) may foster collective consciousness of the conflict, such consciousness does not necessarily permeate into the more rural, predominantly Jordanian areas of the country. With family roots in a small town outside of Petra, a southern, mostly Jordanian part of the country, Bilal provided a diverging perspective on the conflict, saying, "If you live in Amman, you will hear more about [the conflict]; you will face a lot of people from Palestine… outside of Amman, you can find it there, but it's a bit rare" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Khadija, having grown up in the Jordan Valley, reiterated this point, explaining how awareness of Palestinians was present in the valley but far more pervasive at the University of Jordan in Amman, where Palestinians are greater in number (personal communication, January

29th, 2025). These perspectives challenge a universal conception of collective Jordanian conflict identity, but the effects of proximity on conflict consciousness are consistent. Where constant exposure to Palestinians and Palestinian narratives lead to a collective identification with the conflict, the inversion of this phenomenon also appears true among interviewees, where Palestinian remoteness leads to a weakened collective memory and lessened identification with the conflict, even in the Jordan Valley along the West Bank's border.

Aside from differences between areas with and without a large Palestinian presence, several interviewees noted a small faction in Jordanian society openly hostile toward Palestine and Palestinians due to national identity. Either through personal or political experience of such hostility, half of the interviewees mentioned lack of social consensus on Palestine within Jordanian society. Indeed, Amal reported direct experiences of racism and discrimination at the hands of "pure Jordanians" because of her Palestinian identity (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). Laila also raised the issue of some "Eastern Jordanians" belonging to a small but vocal faction overtly opposed to supporting Palestine and Palestinians in favor of a more self-serving Jordanian platform focused on the country's needs (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Bilal referenced this minority faction too, citing the group's increased profile in the wake of resource scarcity brought on by Jordanian humanitarian support for the besieged population in Gaza (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Through these descriptions, the conflict's proximity in the form of perceived foreign intrusion and resource scarcity on the part of certain "East Bank" Jordanians prompts a collective, albeit minority, identity based on grievance with Palestinians. When the conflict's proximity increases, such as an encounter with a Palestinian or heightened conflict tension, that proximity logically, if misguidedly, intensifies right-wing grievance and prompts mobilization.

Nevertheless, the interviewees' conflict consciousness manifested in assertions of solidarity or identification with Palestinians in Gaza. Interviewees' descriptions of personal or societal support for the Palestinians cast hostile Jordanians as a minority against an overwhelming camaraderie or even kinship. Bilal was most direct in this assertion, castigating Jordanians lacking support for Palestinians while stating, "Because I am Jordanian, I love Palestine; I love Palestinians… I'm really with them" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Ahmad described a society-wide sentiment similar to Bilal's feelings, explaining how the boycott movement "was extremely active in many places, but in Jordan, it was another level" (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Indeed, every interview contained mention of personal or Jordanian solidarity with Palestine and/or Palestinians, with Khadija explaining the impossibility of "seeing something like this happing" and "just stop[ping]" support for Palestinians (see Table 4). Converse to the purported occasional negative reaction from "East Bank" Jordanians toward conflict exposure, the interviewees' experience of the conflict's proximity, and especial-

ly the recent nearby Palestinian suffering, fostered an intense and collective cohesion in favor of Palestinians. In this way, the conflict's closeness once again acted as a determining factor in consolidating group identity, only this time in favor of mobilization toward supporting Palestinians.

Name	*Statement of Solidarity*
Ahmad	"this boycott movement, it was extremely active in many places, but in Jordan, it's another level."
Amal	"Every Friday, they pray for the people in Gaza, and I feel like we're still reminding ourselves that there are people suffering right there."
Mariam	"The conversations have shifted from, 'Oh, you're from the US? Welcome!'… to wanting to talk about politics, to talk about the genocide… about Palestine."
Bilal	"Because I am Jordanian, I love Palestine; I love Palestinians… I'm really with them."
Laila	[Speaking of a prominent Jordanian political view]: "They say, 'We have a big demographic population of original Palestinians, and we have to be inside the conflict and supporting the resolution… We are considered as one population from [the] same blood.'"
Khadija	"Seeing something like this happening, I don't think you can just stop and just see. Part of it is because most people in Jordan [are] actually Palestinian."

Table 4: Expression of Jordanian/Palestinian Solidarity

Conflict Identity Influencing Proximity

While the conflict's proximity to populations in Jordanian society demonstrated an acute ability to influence identification with the conflict, this process of identity formation often seemed dialogical, with interviewees invoking identities to make the conflict appear proximate to broad groups. Especially during discussions of violence, several interviewees explicitly drew on various national, ethnic, or religious identities to emphasize conflict ownership beyond the directly-besieged. As Table 5 shows, in discussing Palestinian identity in Jordan, Ahmad went so far as to equate an attack on Gaza to invading Amman itself before walking back the statement while reiterating a heightened sense of grievance among the Jordanian population when witnessing violence against Palestinians. Moreover, when considering Jordan's hypothetical military intervention with the violence, Bilal broadened this scope of solidarity with Palestinians to all Arabs. Concurring with this view, Khadija at times even extended concern over Palestine to include not only Arabs but all Muslims (see Table 5). This habit of extending group borders reveals the layered identities contributing to group solidarity and grievance, where Palestinians sit at the center of an ever-widening set of nearly concentric circles. Interviewees therefore tended to situate the self rel-

atively close to the conflict's Palestinian epicenter but "proximated" outer circles of identity in erasing intragroup divisions in favor of solidarity (see Figures 1 & 2).

Name	*Extending grievance to distant communities*
Ahmad	"If there is a war in Gaza now… it's personal for people [in Jordan]. They wait, not only to watch the news but to make sure their family members are okay... This is a being. It's literally like invading Amman. Okay, not the same level because it's not your own safety as a person, but it's your family."
Bilal	"This issue, it's ours as well. It's Arabs' because they [Palestinians] are our brothers."
Khadija	"As a Muslim first, you should not be seeing injustice and keep sitting and just watching… And especially if it was Palestine because it's a holy land for Muslims. And as Arabs in general [you should do the same] because we have this idea: 'We are Arab; we are united.'"

Table 5: Quotes "Proximating" Groups toward Palestinians

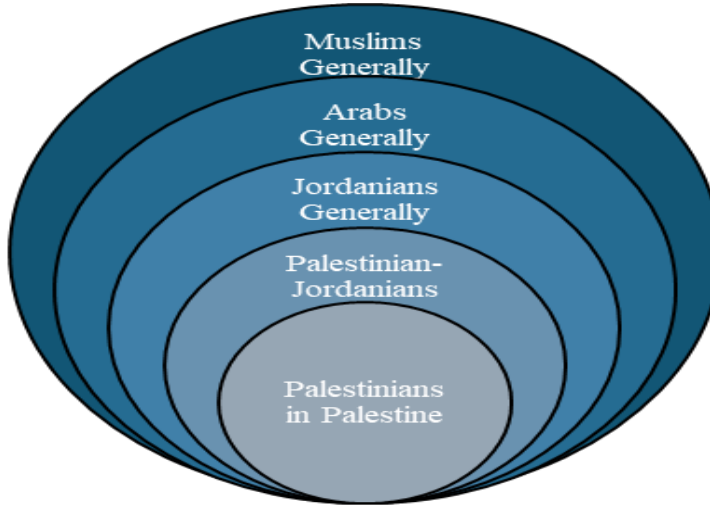


Figure 1: Hypothetical Stratified Identities

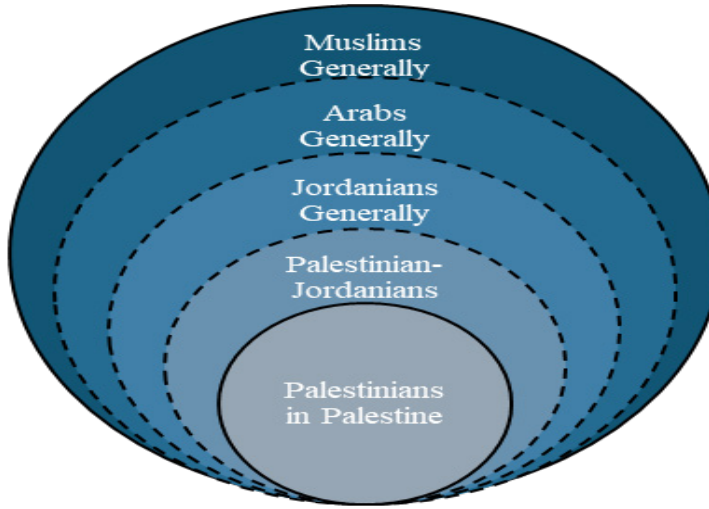


Figure 2: "Proximating" toward Palestinian Grievance

However, divisions within these appeals for broad unity are also clear through some interviewees' privileging of Jordan's proximity to the Palestinian issue over other Arab states. Multiple interviewees contrasted Jordan with states in the Arabian Peninsula, forming a cleavage in conflict identification within the Arab population. In speaking about Jordanian experience of the conflict as a unique sense of "being," Ahmad used Saudi Arabia and Yemen as foils, saying, "for them, it must be a cause," implying a political motive for support compared to the personal identification common in Jordan (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Khadija echoed this perspective, explaining that people in Arabian Gulf states, other than Kuwait, "don't even talk about Palestine" compared to countries with "Palestinian roots," including Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Herein lies another example of conflict identity proximation, though in these examples, interviewees distance other Arab groups from Palestinians to maintain a special relationship between the self and Palestine. In intragroup comparison void of direct threat to the Palestinian center, the interviewees instate borders to emphasize particularity in personal conflict proximity (see Figure 3). Thus, these interviewees negotiated relative intragroup proximity to the conflict situationally, preferring solidarity in instances of central Palestinian distress while favoring an approach of distancing other related identity groups when discussing grievance in Jordan.

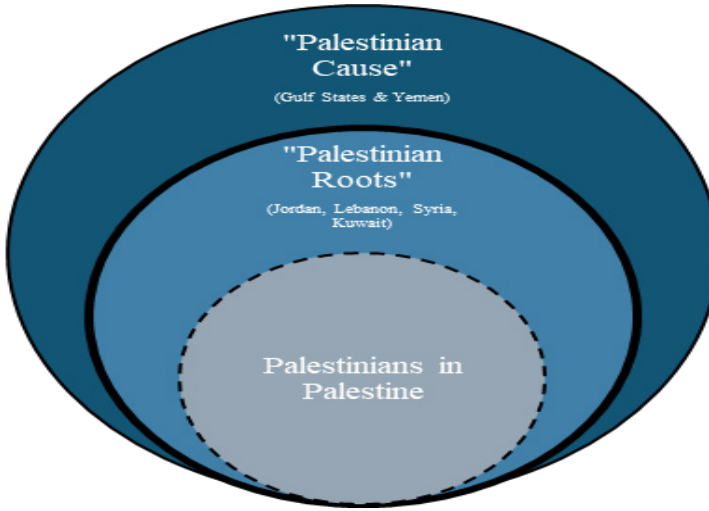


Figure 3: Distancing via Jordanian Grievance

Interviewees tended to implicitly construct a similar border between conflict experience in Jordan and Palestine as well. Despite general solidarity with Palestine and Palestinians, and the occasional inclination to place Jordanian experience close to Palestinian experience, interviewees drew a distinct border between Jordan and Palestine, signifying a tacit recognition of difference. In Table 6, for example, when discussing the somber mood in Jordan, Amal recounted feeling sad at the thought of suffering "right there" and guilt at the notion of joy "here" in Jordan. Similarly, Laila, who had lived in the West Bank prior to living in Jordan, explaining the temporary living situation of "here" in Jordan while expressing a longing to live in a specific home "there" in Palestine. In all, every interviewee used this construction, understandably defaulting to international borders to grapple with the proximity of "right there" yet the undeniable separation of "over there" (see Table 6). Even with the tendency to proximate personal suffering toward the Palestinian center of grievance, interviewees in Jordan recognized a firm separation between the two regions and by extension, the two conflict experiences (see Figure 4). This practice again demonstrates a stratified understanding of conflict grievance, forming an unspoken hierarchy between centralized and peripheral pain.

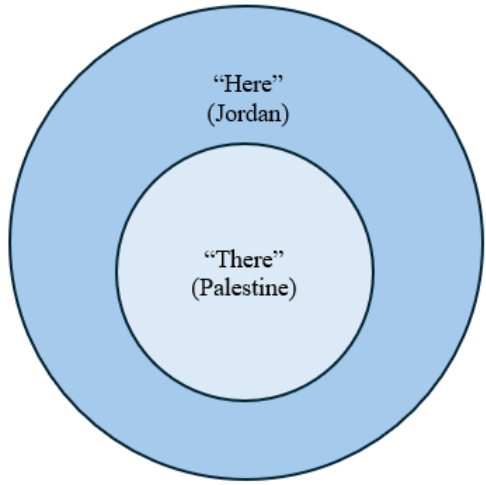


Figure 4: Default Grievance Identity

Name	*Jordan as "here" (italics added)*	*Palestine as "there" (italics added)*
Ahmad	"During the Arab Spring, there was this huge moment of… 'this should not happen *here*.'"	"He [my father] has a lot of relatives over *there* [in Palestine]."
Amal	"if I attend a party *here*, I'm not going to post about this."	"I feel like we're still reminding ourselves that there are people suffering right *there*."
Mariam	"Family names *here* say a lot about where people are from… because of how tribal the society is in Jordan."	"In the beginning, it was very hard… [my] organization was trying to understand what was going on *there*."
Bilal	"Since you're Jordanian and you live *here* in Jordan, you grew up with… the issues in Palestine."	"The scenes that you see of everything happening *there*, you can't forget it."
Laila	"Even my parents are living *here* [in Jordan]."	"but… we feel like Jordan is not our destination, and I still have my home *there* [in Palestine]."
Khadija	"The only thing I heard about [Palestinians] when I was growing up was, 'Palestinians are white people that came *here* with a lot of money.'"	"One of my relatives actually had a farm on the border, so if you want to go *there* [the West Bank], you have to do a lot of things."

Table 6: Distancing between Jordan and Palestine

The bifurcation was likewise inherent in discussions of "return," further acknowledging a fundamental separation between communities in Jordan and Palestine. This rhetoric reifies the border between "here" and "there" through a framework of prevented movement or facilitated displacement, adding a layer of grievance simultaneously connecting and separating people in Palestine and Jordan. For instance, Ahmad referenced "going back" to Palestine despite never having been, using the nomenclature of return to reveal the liminal—though not contradictory—space between displacement and belonging for the Palestinian-Jordanian interviewee (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Having lived in Palestine, Laila's notion of return was more concrete, citing continued ownership of a home in Ramallah as both reminder of separation and resolve for return (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). While one reading allows for "return" to represent a capitulation to an underlying and intrinsic difference in identity, conceptions of future return are also inherently transgressive for Palestinians in the diaspora, expressing desire and intention to break through the conflict identity's hard central border (see Figure 5). On the one hand, this final border is a metaphor for the harsh realities of Israeli violence and occupation, but transgression also signifies both rejection of physical separation and a desire for diffusing a shared experience of harm.

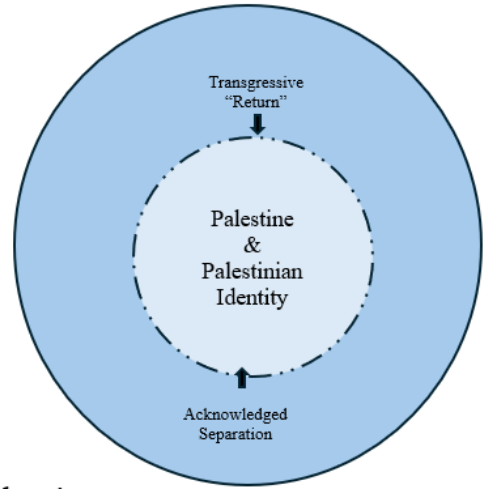


Figure 5: "Return" Grievance Identity

However, when confronting implicit acknowledgments of separation, several interviewees rejected the notion in favor of more universalistic interpretations. Like references to "going back" or "return," some interviewees recognized borders between Jordan and Palestine yet rebuffed their validity through direct challenges to prevailing social narratives. In the Jordan Val-

ley, Khadija explained, people do not easily accept the idea of "here" versus "there," describing even parts of the occupied West Bank as "Jordan" in a rejection of both international borders and illegal annexation (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Similarly, Bilal obfuscated the differences between Palestine and Jordan in a challenge to national and historical narratives, referencing an undefined and distant past where "all this area was one, not just Jordan [or] Palestine" (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). When asked, "Where are you from?" by Jordanian peers, Amal also rejected distinct national categorization, saying Jordan and Palestine "are both my country; they are the same to me" (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). In this way, interviewees made a clear and conscious effort to overcome distance between Jordanians and Palestinians. When speaking with intention, these interviewees chose a close and even homogenizing identification with Palestinians and the conflict, despite implicit prior acknowledgments of separation (see Figure 6).

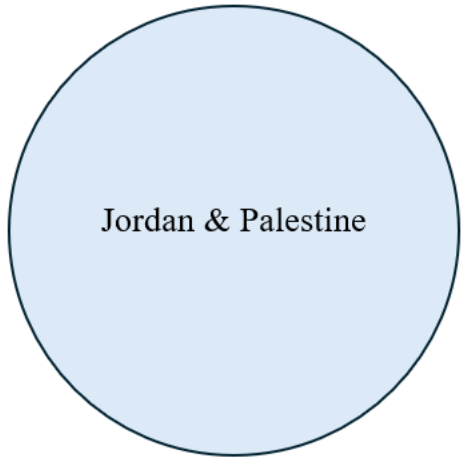


Figure 6: Rejected Narrative Identity

Collective Grievance

The conflict's geographic closeness and even presence in Jordanian society produced elements resembling a collective victimhood mentality, such as unique historical, psychological, and economic grievances in Jordan. But multiple interviewees directly opposed to a mentality of victimhood. While reasons for a self-perception of victimhood were present throughout these conversations, the interviewees typically avoided such framing or rejected the notion outright and unprompted. For example, Ahmad described frustration with prevailing coverage of regional conflict casting people, particularly youth, as either victims or perpetrators, never as peacemakers or part

of the solution (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Amal was far more direct in castigating this perception, explaining how she hates "when people here treat themselves as victims" because, she said, "I'm not a victim" (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). In contrast, other interviewees did not reject victimhood outright but also rarely discussed Israelis concretely, preferring to define experience in terms of grievance rather than in terms of victimizers. Though CVT argues that victimhood rejection is an exception to the rule, the loaded and somewhat helpless term of "victim" did not match the interviewees' self-perception. Instead, a concrete, multifaceted sense of "collective grievance" persisted over configurations of "victimhood." Understanding the cohort on its own terms, therefore, better evaluates shared grievance while avoiding any usurpation of agency.

This grievance phenomenon typically appeared in three specific and thematically overlapping grievances—psychological, economic, and historical—with the conflict's psychological ramifications featuring frequently among interviewees. Despite not physically experiencing the violence in the Gaza Strip or Palestine generally, most interviewees noted the conflict's intense psychological damage in Jordan specifically. For example, four of the six interviewees described widespread fears over Jordanian economic uncertainty and "fears on the level of transfer" (Laila, personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Likewise, four of the respondents mentioned sadness or depression as commonplace in Jordan during the genocide's first 15 months, with Khadija saying "I think they were depressed, all of us actually, seeing all that" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Of the eight accounts of collective fear and depression, only two were based on political or economic fears, with most interviewees linking collective psychological distress directly with Israeli violence against Palestinians. Therefore, conceptions of collective psychological trauma in Jordan tended toward an empathetic grievance revolving around Palestinian experience. This framework maps relatively easily onto traditional theorizations of collective victimhood, observing populations without direct exposure to violence still expressing secondary trauma by dint of shared group membership.

Beyond psychological grievance, a theme of collective economic strain emerged. Interviewees noted a worsening relationship between individuals and Jordan's economy, with widespread stress throughout the country following October 7. Several noted macroeconomic trends due to the war, such as Ahmad's remark that "The stress you see everywhere, even in business: the real estate industry immediately gets touched with anything happening in Palestine, specifically the war in Gaza" (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Others cited consumer behavior to explain economic downturn, with Mariam noting, "People are not happy, so they're not going out to have fun" while accounting for empty restaurants, malls, and cafes (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). Bilal, however, provided the most personal account of the war's economic toll, explaining how tourist scarcity

forced his language-exchange company to close in an environment rivaled only by the COVID-19 pandemic (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). This evidence raises the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's true borders, introducing a geographically layered component to collective grievance. Whereas psychological harms stem from witnessing proximate violence, economic harms are more personal and potentially unique to Israel-Palestine's neighbors.

The third and final theme of grievance arose from the lasting and historical injustice of displacement, specifically land access. While interviewees alluded to numerous moments in the conflict's history as sources of grievance, this theme was most clear in the physical presentism over loss of land. Amal discussed both awe and jealousy toward friends' visits to Palestine, explaining a personal longing to visit her grandfather's home (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). But she explained this connection beyond familial terms and into the physical, saying "I can feel it's my land… it can touch me." For Laila, identification with a physical land was even more apparent while explaining her family's habit of "keeping in our minds that we have a right in the land, we have our homes there, we have our families" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). This historical trauma links past and present, but loss of land further represents the nexus between psychological and economic grievance in Jordan (see Figure 7). This past instance of separation connects Palestinian grievance in both Jordan and Palestine, making physical harm in Palestine psychologically painful in Jordan while Palestinian-Jordanians continue to accrue geographically-specific economic trauma.

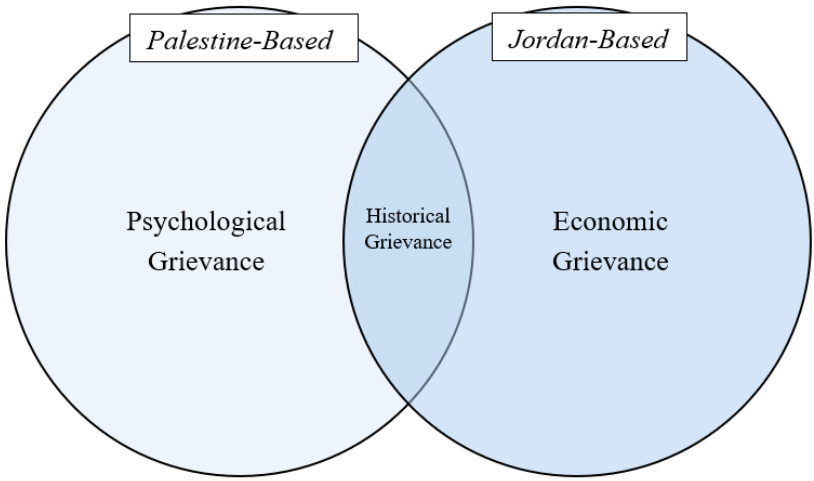


Figure 7: Geographic Basis for Grievance

Collective Resistance

Like conflict grievance in Jordan, three modes of resistance emerged, with the first—violence—rooted in psychological reasoning. Using justifications of psychological or even physical pain experienced in Jordan because of the genocide, some interviewees explained or even justified violent retribution. Laila, while disavowing this form of resistance, explained its reasoning, saying, "We have to expect that there will be a group [that] will have armed resistance… and anyone wanting to defend his land, his home, and his dignity would expect to find this kind of resistance" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). In a similar vein, both Bilal and Khadija mentioned jihad, an Arabic word generally meaning "struggle," or in these instances "holy war," as a reaction potentially in line with Islamic teaching given the need to defend Muslims anywhere but especially in Palestine.[5] Khadija further elaborated on the particular psychological nature of violent resistance as well, adding that most do not believe jihad will end Israeli violence; rather, the mindset is, "I have to do as is human, which is to at least make them scared" (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Considering Khadija's quote in particular, this tendency for retributive action seeks to reciprocate harms against the broader Palestinian group. Beyond the desire to cause violence like in Gaza, some people in Jordan also seek to reproduce the psychological fear Israel's genocide has created in Jordan.

However, condoning violence was by no means definitive of the interviewees, who were split over violence as a tolerable form of resistance. Moreover, most interviewees maintained a stalwart commitment to peaceful resistance or avoided endorsing violence, rejecting cycles of harm. Amal neglected to mention violence in recounting Jordanian resistance, which aligned with Ahmad's assertion that "violent expressions for extreme ideology" fall outside the mainstream (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). Ahmad's perspective resulted in work advocating for and pursuing peaceful solutions despite Israeli violence, and Laila professed the same commitment after recounting relatives' torture and murder at the hands of the Israel Defense Forces (Ahmad, personal communication, January 25th, 2025; Laila, personal communication, January 29th, 2025). Mariam showed similar commitment through a pre-war peacebuilding program at an Israeli university, and her emphasis on education's role in a peaceful solution persisted (personal communication, January 27th, 2025). This trend demonstrated a rejection of reciprocal treatment against Israelis, indicating that not all interviewees interpreted the conflict in terms of justified harm-to-harm exchange. Rather, peaceful means of resistance to the conflict show capacity to imagine conflict experience beyond the binary of receiving and distributing harms.

[5] The region is home to a long history of prophets in the Abrahamic tradition, including Islam, and Muslims generally consider Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) to be the third holiest site in Islam.

Commitment to peace did not represent resignation to the status quo, however, as several interviewees, whether against violence or not, advocated economic resistance to Israeli actions. In solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza especially, interviewees described widespread, grassroots boycotts of Jordanian and American products. Specifically, Amal explained the boycott's motive as support for "our brothers and Palestinians to make it easier for them" (personal communication, January 26th, 2025). Ahmad said the movement was so effective in Jordan, it forced some entities out of business entirely (personal communication, January 25th, 2025). So intuitive and ubiquitous was such resistance, even Khadija's three-year-old brother once scolded a supermarket employee after seeing a boycotted brand on the chain's shelves (personal communication, January 29th, 2025). However, while solidarity may have been the motivating factor behind the boycott, the economic effects mirrored harms Jordanians suffered. The boycott's intuitive appeal reflects a personal grasp of economic pain, seeking mirrored consequences on Israeli and American businesses.

Like economic resistance, emphasis on education—especially youth education—was common among interviewees. This theme pervaded discussions of the conflict's future, whether related to the work of conflict narrative perpetuation or unconscious recognition of such labor's fruits. Older interviewees in their 40s or 50s, such as Ahmad and Laila, described working professionally on such projects, viewing the next generation of youth in Jordan and Palestine as key to breaking cycles of violence and perceptions of helplessness. In contrast, Khadija, in her twenties, illustrated these efforts' effects, having learned about the conflict extensively at university and passing this knowledge to younger family members while espousing education as a critical component to resistance. Amal, also in her twenties, reflected on this method's success, noticing generational improvement in youth attitudes and outlooks on the conflict. While subtler, resistance through education reciprocally addresses historical grievance. Instead of casting Palestinians exclusively as victims of land dispossession and apartheid, the task of narrative dissemination is a subversive and future-oriented mode of understanding the past. In this way, interviewees asserted personal agency in determining a future, where such agency in historical grievance is often absent.

DISCUSSION

Interviewee Perceptions & CVT Utility

CVT's conception of group experiences of collective violence, regardless of personal exposure, readily explains interviewee experiences of collective violence against Palestinians. Indeed, this framework generally explains interviewee sentiments about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict considering the interviewees' typically indirect experience of Israeli violence. Vollhardt (2020) best outlines this phenomenon, demonstrating how prev-

alent social narratives, values, and ideologies can produce or reinforce intense identification with collective victimization, regardless of personal experience. Given the interviewee's universal identification with Palestinian victimization based at least in part on notions of ethnic and/or religious solidarity, such social factors seem to fit this component of Vollhardt's explanation of collective victimhood formation. Moreover, such narratives not only linked a history of shared grievance and suffering through ethnic cleansing between communities in Jordan and Palestine but also caused interviewees to identify psychological grievances due to the ongoing occupation in the West Bank and bombing campaign in the Gaza Strip. Thus, the theory likely applies to at least some segment of the Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanian populations, though the relationship between proximal identity and collective victimization may differ among broader categorical groups, like "Palestinians" or "Arabs." For example, the nature of Syrian, Egyptian, or Kuwaiti identification with Palestinian victimization may not match the Jordanian case, given distinct social narratives.

CVT's focus on victimization narratives and group belonging also clarifies solidarity with Palestinians among interviewees. In contexts where Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians frequently emphasize solidarity with Palestinians experiencing suffering, the relationship between victimization and group belonging arises. For example, Noor et al. (2017) noted this relationship between victimhood and group identity, focusing on how increased ingroup chauvinism correlates with increased hostility toward outgroups, whereas other authors have noted prosocial behavior, like solidarity, in the context of collective victimization (Rotella et al., 2013; Nair & Vollhardt, 2019). Along these lines, interviewees in this study occasionally condemned the perceived absence of Arab or Muslim solidarity among "East Bank" Jordanian nationalists in the face of Palestinian suffering. Similarly, some interviewees also seemed to construct a hierarchy based on proximal identity to the Palestinian conflict, with Jordanian society generally occupying a prestigious tier close to Palestinian victimization due in part to a general solidarity. Thus, this study's interviewees reflected ingroup dynamics similar to Noor et al.'s (2017) observations on intergroup relations, demonstrating how ingroup chauvinism related to ingroup victimization also correlates with hostility to non-compliant members of the ingroup. In this way, CVT clarifies these ingroup dynamics, though these dynamics are not necessarily generalizable, requiring further study of ingroup variation in identification with collective victimization.

Just as ingroup social dynamics vary in relation to victimization, conflict victimization itself also varies depending on chronological factors. Approaching the confounding aspects of victimization over the term of a protracted conflict requires a multifaceted conception of victimization over time. Schori-Eyal et al. (2014) advocate for this "layered" approach, understanding historical victimhood, general conflict victimhood, and conflict

event victimhood as three distinct, though interrelated, phenomena present in different scenarios within the Israeli-Arab conflict throughout time. Interviewees similarly identified numerous components of Palestinian victimization in different timeframes, referencing historical victimization often beginning with the Nakba and lasting through continued occupation and potentially into the future with another proposed displacement event. Simultaneously, interviewees referenced a contemporary genocide in Gaza and that violence's negative effects on the Jordanian economy, bifurcating historical and ongoing violence in interviewee conceptions of victimization. Though not perfectly reflective of Schori-Eyal et al.'s (2014) theoretical framing of collective victimhood, this study nevertheless demonstrates a similar distinction between types of victimization on the temporal level. At the same time, the confounding victimization of economic harm in Jordan complicates the idea of collective reconciliation with communal victimization, with the situationally interwoven phenomena organized on a chronological basis to distinguish between unique attributes of each instance of violence.

Beyond a Collective Victimhood Theory

The need for a more context-specific understanding of temporal harms matches prevailing critiques against comparing instances of collective victimhood, which advocate for particularized studies of each conflict, or even conflicted population, to ensure CVT's theoretical applicability. In this vein, recent CVT literature has begun to demand conflict specificity in theoretical findings, such as the specificities of Jordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian perceptions of collective victimization. Relying on consistent input from research subjects, multiple studies in the past five years aimed at understanding perceptions of victimhood comparisons have begun to outright reject tendencies toward comparing victimhood across conflicts (Vollhardt et al., 2021; Vollhardt et al., 2023). Twali's (2019) study of South Sudanese identity transformation came to similar conclusions, warning against intergroup victimhood comparison. Though the present study accepted this premise within the literature and did not attempt to compare victimhood between groups, interviewee tendencies to stratify intragroup relationships to collective victimization indicate a similar theoretical logic, rebuffing any singular conceptions of intragroup victimhood. The present findings therefore demand more variation in studying any particular group's victimhood because subgroups potentially diverge from a blanket diagnosis of "victimhood." In the current scenario, for example, a supposed Arab collective victimhood in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would require specific investigation not only of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip but of Palestinians in various diasporic communities, non-Palestinian Arabs in the Middle East, and other such variations in identity.

A similar problem arises with CVT's capability of diagnosing collective victimhood in isolation. The current theoretical framework, while able to

identify certain conflict and victimization attitudes, remains blind to alternative collective population feelings toward collective victimization. For example, survey-based work has at times defined collective victimhood broadly based on Bar-Tal et al.'s (2009) three-featured conception of collective victimhood—belief in (1) collective and (2) unjust harm against (3) an unprotected group—leaving discretion for projects to extend "victimhood" to hitherto unstudied populations (Ben Hagai et al., 2013; Ben Hagai & Zurbriggen, 2019). However, interviewees in this study exhibited belief in all three of these victimhood "features" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict yet sometimes rejected the label of victimhood while instead consistently asserting both agency and collective grievance. In this instance, Appraisal Theory, or observation of the "process by which individuals act to *give meaning* to, and *to alter*, their lived relation to the world," better accounts for group-level ability to assess instances of collective victimization and adopt a grief-based, fear-based, or victimhood-based narrative response depending on the situation (Leach, 2020, p. 193). Studies seeking to understand novel populations or unstudied subgroups within a population should therefore attempt to undertake survey work when possible, using Appraisal Theory to assess narratives for collective victimhood or other collective social responses. In this way, researchers can work toward mitigating personal bias in favor of observing CVT while concurrently avoiding application of CVT to a population not adhering to a sense of collective victimhood.

Indeed, an Appraisal Theory approach to researching collective violence allows for much greater latitude in allowing research subjects to explain personal or communal narratives. The theory itself aims to provide this space through an existentialist understanding of event experience and subsequent narrative creation. Roseman and Smith (2001) speak directly to this point in *Appraisal Processes in Emotion: Theories, Methods, Research*, stating that in the theory's simplest form, "its essence is the claim that emotions are elicited by evaluations *(appraisals)* of events and situations," placing the theory's "essence" in the perspective of the evaluator (p. 3). More recently, Ellsworth (2013) has even advocated studying emotions and appraisals as a process, enabling research subjects to express situational developments in ascribing meaning to an event (p. 130). Moreover, the theory explicitly accounts for differences among individuals and cultures, understanding such factors as part of the process through which people derive meaning from events (Moors et al., 2013, p. 121; Ellsworth, 1994). This theory is more versatile and therefore preferable to CVT in capturing the nuance of human experience after collective victimization. Arguably at times too flexible a theoretical framework for understanding collective victimization, Appraisal Theory nevertheless allows latitude for understanding social narratives on their own terms, necessarily exploring the particularities of a given society, or even the human individuals within that society, before offering any throughline of collective experience.

CONCLUSION

The Palestinian-Jordanian and Jordanian interviewees for this project did not portray self-perceptions of a collective victimhood but rather rational reactions to instances of collective victimization against Palestinians. Feelings such as sadness or fear were common in interviews, but these feelings did not constitute a narrative of victimization, instead demonstrating a close relationship with Palestinian suffering in Palestine while falling short of Collective Victimhood Theory's conception of group self-understanding. The interviewees often understood themselves as uniquely close to Palestinians in terms of history and shared suffering but also invoked Palestinian suffering to extend group solidarity to broader categories of Arabs and Muslims. This closeness and solidarity resulted in identification with Palestinians on a historical level, with the concomitant psychological grievances manifesting in collective depression or fear. However, interviewees also developed particularized Jordanian grievances related to the negative and harmful economic impact the war has had on the Jordanian economy. Nevertheless, the current study demonstrates the historical and emotional depths of suffering this conflict continues to wreak over three quarters of a century after the British Mandate's dissolution. Moreover, such suffering is not limited to individuals in Israel-Palestine bearing the brunt of the conflict's physical violence but emanates outward to proximate communities in ever-widening circles of frustration, fear, and grief.

The sample size for this project was limiting for an undertaking of this theoretical scope. Measuring Jordanian/Palestinian-Jordanian perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Jordan with only six participants at times hindered the pursuit of understanding relationships to a collective sense of victimhood. For example, a broader sample size may have revealed voices contrary to the ones in this project, either expressing a sense of victimhood due to the conflict or even a sense of Jordanian victimization at the hands of Palestinian refugees. Interviewees mentioned these perspectives' existence in Jordanian society, though the interviewees also tended to reject the perspectives, so this project failed to capture such sentiments or other potential variations. A different choice of interview language, location, and/or conductor could have all increased interview participation. Conducting interviews in Arabic, especially the local dialect, would have made the interview available for broader swaths of Jordanian society, while conducting the interviews in Jordan would have made the procedure more accessible in terms of scheduling. Likewise, selecting an interviewer without an identity from a potential perceived community carrying out the victimization (i.e., a non-American) may have also encouraged more interviewees to participate and speak freely throughout the interview process.

Future work in this same vein could seek to uncover attitudes from communities with "Palestinian roots," such as Lebanon, Egypt, or Kuwait, using

an Appraisal Theory approach. By extending the research, the project could build on the current study in understanding how communities proximate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict process instances or histories of collective victimization against Palestinians. Like the current study, this future project would rely on an interview-based research method, using a theoretical background of Appraisal Theory as well as the data collected in this project to inform questions designed to elicit conflict perceptions. Ideally, such interviews would occur in Arabic and potentially in-person, and analysis would follow a comparative framework to better understand how related communities interpret violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through this comparative framework, such a project could reveal potential ramifications of broad group attitudes on society and politics in communities hosting large portions of the Palestinian diaspora. The work would therefore seek to understand similar dynamics within the conflict, investigating how the protracted victimization draws the conflict's impacts beyond physical borders.

APPENDIX A

1. *What do you do for work?*
2. *Where do you live in Jordan?*
3. *Tell me about growing up in Jordan.*
4. *Have you traveled or lived outside of Jordan? Where to? Do you go there often?*
5. *Tell me about where your family is from.*
6. *Do you remember first hearing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?*
7. *Since then, were there any news stories you heard that you remember especially well? Why do you think it stuck out?*
8. *How do you feel about reporting over the conflict in general? How do you typically get news about the conflict?*
9. *Has Jordan been involved in the conflict at all? Do you see any scenario where Jordan would enter the conflict? How do you think Jordanians would have felt had Jordan entered the conflict?*
10. *Describe how Jordanians are impacted by or involved with the conflict. Do you or anyone you know fit those characteristics?*

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