How Palestinian students invoke the category 'human' to challenge negative treatment and media representations

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Abstract

Dehumanization of opponents in conflict has been shown to be a common and damaging feature in the media. What is not understood is how this dehumanization is challenged which is the novel contribution that this research will make. Drawing on focus groups (four focus groups each with four-six participants) conducted in the West Bank in 2015 that discussed media coverage of international conflict, this article demonstrates the ways in which young Palestinian participants attempt to rehumanize themselves in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Discursive analysis demonstrates how this was achieved in a number of ways: categorizing Palestinians as 'human being'; by directly and explicitly challenging the suggestion that Palestinians are less than human; by drawing the enemy into the category 'human'; and by embodying the 'human'. These findings, the first to address the talk of young Palestinians about the reporting of violent conflicts around the world, demonstrate the importance of categorization and how, in this case, the specifics of the use of the (human) category work to rehumanize Palestinians in the face of (claims of) dehumanization.

Introduction

The dehumanization of victims of conflict which permeates international news coverage has been discussed widely in literature. This includes research into increased representations of compassion in reports, as media providers try to increase their audiences and elicit responses by focusing on individual victims of war (Chouliaraki, 2006; Campbell, 2012; Moeller, 1999), to discussions on peace journalism in which the 'us-them' and 'dehumanization of them' narratives of war journalism are replaced with the 'humanization of all sides' and 'giving voice to all parties' (Galtung, 1998: 261). An emerging trend towards giving greater visibility and voice to the 'other' as victims in conflict (Kampft and Leibes, 2013) may contribute to replacing depersonalized and demonized representations (Steuter and Wills, 2010). This is indeed the case with the victims of the geo-politically sensitive Israeli-Palestinian conflict where humanized images with personalized reporting are being shown more and more (Balmas, Sheafer and Wolfsfeld, 2015; Kampt and Leibes, 2013). Yet they do not constitute a significant change away from portrayals which dehumanize Palestinians and render them the 'other'.

Coverage of the 2014 war in Gaza, in which over 2000 Palestinians were killed, does go some way to demonstrate these slight shifts in approach (Heywood, 2017) but it in no way fully humanizes the victims. This article provides an original analysis of this war in 2014 and draws on focus groups to discuss not only how Palestinians challenge dehumanized representations of themselves but equally significantly, the gap between dehumanized representations by the media and the Palestinians' understanding of their lived experience.

Dehumanization and 'Rehumanization'

A common feature of talk about conflict is the dehumanizing of the 'enemy', or the outgroup. Haslam refers to dehumanization as 'the denial of full humanness to others' (2006: 252) and goes on to suggest that there are two forms of dehumanization: animalistic, entailing disgust and contempt, and mechanistic, which includes indifference and a lack of empathy. Dehumanization is the process where human characteristics are removed from groups of people, so that they can be viewed as less than people, which can form the basis for the degrading treatment of people. Dehumanization was a prominent trope of Nazi propaganda, where Jewish people were represented as rats. The use of 'cockroaches' to refer to refugees by a columnist in the UK received widespread criticism for mirroring this kind of dehumanization[i]; equally the Israeli government's reference to 'mowing the grass' (Inbar and Shamir, 2014) to refer to addressing Palestinian people can be seen as a further example of dehumanizing. Empirical studies of dehumanization include opponents of asylum seeking suggesting that asylum seekers act like animals, through the use of animal breeding terms including 'siring' (e.g. Goodman, 2007) and that Roma are less than people who are dirty and, as with Nazi

propaganda, like rats (Tileaga, 2007). Ben Hagai, Whitlatch, and Zurbriggen measured the dehumanization of Palestinians through support of the following three questions: "The Palestinians are primitive people", "The Palestinians are violent by nature" and "The Palestinians have a culture that has still not reached levels common in the West" (2018: 4), demonstrating that support for these statements increased amongst participants following a 'Birthright Israel' visit to the country, in which young Jewish people from around the world can go on a free trip to Israel[ii]. This clearly demonstrates that dehumanization occurs towards Palestinians.

In direct response to this dehumanization exist efforts to 'rehumanize' people that may be dehumanized. Three examples of this work are Kirkwood (2017), Wroe (2018) and Lassen (2018). These examples refer to talk about refugees, an area where dehumanization is common (e.g. Goodman and Speer 2007), with Kirkwood (2017) showing how refugees were (temporarily) humanized by members of the British and Scottish parliaments after the publicity following the publication of photographs of a drowned three-year-old refugee. Wroe (2018) and Lassen (2018) both showed how refugees and people advocating for them attempt to humanize refugees in the face of hostility towards them. What is of interest in these examples is how speakers actively challenge the dehumanization of others.

There are also attempts to rehumanize Palestinians. Lloyd (2017) showed how during the 2014 conflict, described in more detail below, while many media outlets within and outside of Israel included death tolls for Palestinians, there was a concerted effort by some, such as 'Humanize Palestine', to *name*, as well as count, the dead. Humanize Palestine describe the project on their Facebook page: 'Humanize Palestine attempts to restore the humanity that is often stripped away when Palestinians are reduced to deceased bodies and numbers.' Lloyd shows that this naming of the dead worked to place the Palestinian dead as 'grievable', that is worthy of mourning, something only available to humanized individuals (as opposed to dehumanized 'others'). Lloyd goes on to argue that drawing on the category 'human' is a political action to challenge dehumanization. Kirkwood's (2017) analysis of the use of the category 'human' (and also 'human being') concludes by showing how talk about 'human beings' works to construct a shared humanity between different groups (including 'in' and 'out' groups) which means that it can go some way to overcoming 'us and them' distinctions while drawing everyone into a shared moral category, although Kirkwood also demonstrates that talk about humans can be used flexibly to achieve different ends in different contexts.

It has therefore been shown that dehumanization can be a feature of talk about conflict, and that attempts to rehumanize people that have (arguably) been dehumanized can be observed. One

way to attempt to rehumanize people is through the use of the category 'human' or 'human being'. However, what is not known is how attempts to rehumanize Palestinians, or how the category 'human' is used by Palestinians, which can help explain how the rehumanizing process works within a controversial conflict situation. Therefore, the research question in this paper is: how do Palestinians use the category human and what does this talk accomplish?

Background to data collection

The war of summer 2014 took place against a background of Israel's continued occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) and Hamas's firing of rockets into Israel. Israel had been blockading Gaza since 2007, seriously impacting on human rights and resulting in a dire situation economically (HRC, 2015). At the same time, the number of rocket attacks and tunnels being constructed from Gaza into Israel had risen sharply. The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) report stated that "the risk of a flare-up of the situation was evident" (2015: 17). Following the kidnap and murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank on 12 July 2014, the Israeli authorities conducted extensive search and arrest operations. The resulting escalation of tensions led to revenge attacks including the burning of a sixteen-year old Palestinian (Ihmoud, 2015). The Israeli Armed Forces launched the operation it labelled "Protective Edge" on 8 July 2014, asserting that its aim was to stop Hamas rocket attacks. It then conducted ground operations to "locate and neutralize additional cross-border assault tunnels" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015: 32). By the time an unconditional ceasefire was declared on 26 August 2014, at least 2,104 Palestinians (1,462 civilians, including 495 children) and 72 Israelis (six civilians) as well as one Thai national in Israel had lost their lives (BBC, 2014) and the Gazan civil infrastructure had been largely destroyed. Despite the huge imbalance in the humanitarian loss, the abovementioned HRC report stated that both sides may have committed war crimes (2015).

The timing of the focus groups, which form the core of this investigation, must also be noted. They were conducted at the start of August 2015 against a background of simmering tensions following the previous year's war but also sharply augmented by the arson attack on the Dawabsheh family in the West Bank town of Duma by Israeli settlers the very week before the interviews on 31 July 2015. This attack, which received global condemnation, resulted in the burning alive of a toddler and the subsequent deaths of his parents from severe burns (HRC, 2016) and was evidently salient for the focus group participants. A wave of stabbing attacks by Palestinians (particularly youths) then occurred from 2015 to 2016 attributed in part to the Duma attacks (AFP, 2016), revealing the heightened strength of feeling amongst the population against the Israeli occupation. It was therefore particularly relevant to be interviewing Palestinian youth at a time when leaderless and uncoordinated outbursts of anger by this

marginalised group were about to be triggered throughout the West Bank representing their seemingly only remaining avenue for political expression within an internally repressive, and occupied, society (Høigilt, 2015). Whilst too recent to be discussed in academic literature, the growing wave of violence prompted by the Palestinian youth received widespread coverage in the media (Baker and Sawafta, 2015; Guamieri, 2015; Donaghy, 2015).

Data collection

This article is informed by a larger international project which gathered information about the reactions of audiences in different countries to television news coverage of the 2014 Gaza war to ascertain what is considered acceptable levels of physical violence in this television news coverage in each country (anonymous author). This information contributes to assessing, on an international scale, the extent to which television foreign conflict reporting can shape the audience's understanding of events. Focus groups were conducted in France, the UK, Russia, and the West Bank in the OPT. Participants from the former three countries were asked about their general understanding of the 2014 Gaza war, and then all groups were probed about which aspects they considered to be covered in most detail in the coverage; the levels of (physical) violence; portrayals of victims; and also the involvement of other countries. For this article, four focus groups of six-eight participants were interviewed during hour-long sessions at the Arab American University Jenin (AAUJ) in the northern city of Jenin in the West Bank. This city was selected because, in contrast with the middle and southern part of the West Bank, it remains outside the westernised influence of the NGO and political bubble which has transformed, for example, Ramallah, the de facto administrative capital. As such, collating data from this more traditional part of the West Bank is important to the research community. Jenin is under the full civil and security control of the Palestinian Authority and is in Area A,[iii] with entry being forbidden to all Israeli citizens. The city has been subject to severe clashes with the Israeli military, notably in 2002, when it suffered extensive damage, particularly in the refugee camp. Access to the Gaza Strip was, and continues to be, severely restricted by both the Israeli authorities and by the ruling Hamas party. This study was therefore only conducted in the West Bank.

All the participants were MA students in various disciplines at Jenin's AAUJ. They were in their early twenties and were therefore old enough to have experienced both the invasion and destruction of much of their city in 2002 and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian wars. They were all Palestinian. Students came from a range of locations: some from the city of Jenin itself from both the refugee camp and other areas in the city; others travelled to Jenin daily, through checkpoints, from neighbouring towns in Israel, such as Nazareth – a city whose inhabitants are predominantly Arab citizens of Israel. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the

same facilitator, using the same open-ended questions, which had been trialled in advance, and used similar prompts. There was minimal intervention from the interviewer thus allowing respondents to discuss and raise additional issues. To support the questions, participants were shown the same still images and video clips taken from the news coverage. These showed increasing levels of bombardments of towns from varying viewpoints (aerial shots of villages being bombed, shots of explosions in the distance, close-ups of individual residential homes being blown up). They also showed victims of the conflict (close-ups of injured and distressed children, injured victims being pulled from rubble, hospital scenes, and dead bodies). Participants were warned about the graphic nature of the images. The focus groups were conducted identically in all the four countries with the exception of the Jenin group which, in addition to being shown extracts from the coverage of the Gaza war in 2014, were also shown images from events in Ukraine and Sudan in 2014 so that their perceptions of violence in reports of conflict involving the 'other' could be assessed rather than one in which they were directly involved. One limitation of the study resides in the use of the language by the respondents. The English used in the extracts was produced by the focus group members themselves, and was not subsequently translated from Arabic, which could have incurred inconsistent translations of terms. It must be acknowledged that the standard of English used varied in quality from little short of fluent English (many respondents had been to English-speaking schools in the West Bank) to basic. When necessary, terms were discussed and translated by common agreement by respondents and English-speaking participants informally took on the role of translator for those with limited English. In most cases, the translator's words are attributed to the original speaker, unless participants directly refer to each other using pronouns. This happens with 'she' in extracts three and four. Thus, data came from the participants themselves and was not affected by subsequent translation concerns. The data were then professionally transcribed, verbatim in a play-script format. Names and any identifying information have been removed.

Analytic Approach – Discursive Psychology

The analytic approach used for this analysis is Discursive Psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992) which focuses on what is accomplished by talk, rather than attempting to ascertain people's 'true' thoughts. This is achieved through in-depth analysis of interaction in a range of settings, addressing a range of different areas ranging from family mealtimes, courtroom interactions and areas of prejudice. One area that Discursive Psychology has been successfully applied to is in categorisation where social categories are shown to be constructed and debated through the ways in which they are described (e.g. Goodman and Speer, 2007; Tileaga, 2005). Importantly, social categories are shown to be far from neutral, and are imbued with detailed social meanings. For example, Stokoe (e.g. 2009) has showed how different social categories

such as 'mother' can be used to place blame or defend against accusations of wrongdoing. It is this approach that informed the findings on the use of dehumanization and rehumanization (Kirkwood, 2017; Tileaga, 2007; Wroe, 2018) where categories were used flexibly and debated so as to either de or re-humanise group members. This is therefore an ideal approach for understanding how talk is used flexibly to achieve different ends and has a good record of addressing issues of peace and conflict (see Gibson, in press), but to date has not been applied to the talk of Palestinians.

Data analysis

Data were therefore analysed using 'discourse analysis', which is the method associated with discursive psychology. The type of discourse analysis used is the approach Gibson (2009) describes as discursive social psychology which includes a detailed analysis of the talk alongside a more critical stance that is designed to identify "the social and political consequences of discursive patterning" (Wetherell 1998: 405) which, in this case, are likely to relate to the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The analysis involves searching the data for a range of strategies, or features of the talk, that share similar designs and functions. As preliminary analysis identified interesting talk about humanitarianism and humans, the discussion presented here features a more detailed examination of all the times that they were discussed. Extracts were therefore chosen for analysis because of their reference to these and are representative of features of the talk in these examples.

Analysis

The analysis demonstrates how participants draw on the category 'human' to criticise their treatment and how they are portrayed in the media.

1. The participants draw on the category 'human' as a positive quality and show how problematic their treatment is

In these first two examples, participants are seen to present themselves as human, which works to present them unfairly as the victims of another's aggression. Here, in addition to challenging others' aggression, the speakers construct what it is to be human as including being caring, which also works to demonstrate Palestinians' compassion for others.

Extract One

Prior to this first extract, the participants were shown an image of a little girl in a hospital setting with a severely bruised face. They had been told that this little girl will live but that she represents a small number of child victims who survived. She has lost her two elder

sisters, and her father now only has this one remaining child. Her father is interviewed in the report. The discussion focuses on the acceptability of showing such potentially upsetting images of children and whether children themselves should be exposed to such images.

Focus group 2

1. P2 It's not only about the same principle, it's about you have the right to know that

2.   you are not the centre of the world there are more things that are far more important

3.   than you and you have to care about the whole world then otherwise you

4.   won't be human, being human is about caring about other people, caring about their

5.   feelings about how they live, what I have is much too much more than what they

6.   have, what they dream about.

7. I   What do you want to say?

8. P2 It's not only about the occupation.

9. P2 So I think all the children need to show all the conflict in all the world, like in Sudan

10.   and everywhere because when I want to talking about our children's rights

11.   and talking with children then they need to know how other children live in the

12.   world and somebody killed, some dead.

13. [eight lines omitted]

14. P3   Everything can touch us because it can sometimes even to religion in Islam we

15.   are not even, we are not even allowed to cut a tree, touch an animal, an old lady,

16.   a young lady, a child, even a man who is not carrying a weapon and doesn't want to

17.   kill me, so when we see, we are forbidden to do such things, when we see all these

18.   cruel things happening to our people, so how will we feel about that?

P2 begins by drawing on the notion of selflessness to emphasise compassion for others. This is done by constructing what it is to be 'human' (4) as constituting caring for others (2-6), even an outgroup ('their' and 'they' lines 4 and 6). This construction of human qualities happens alongside the downplaying of the severity of the situation for Palestinians, by referring to other conflict areas in the world (9) and drawing on other problematic situations around the world,

where children are in danger (Moeller, 1999; Christie, 1996). The extract ends with a claim about the humanitarian nature of their religion which further works to present Palestinians as compassionate and caring people and also not the kind of people who would harm others using what Edwards (2006: 476) calls a 'generalized dispositional formulation' on behalf of all Palestinians. Overall this talk works to present the speakers as aware of the universalism of the harm caused by conflict whilst also being the victims of conflict and occupation themselves. By presenting themselves as positive 'humans', their occupation can be presented as particularly unfair, because their victim status is made all the more problematic through presenting them as non-violent and caring people who suffer cruelty (18). This cruelty is contrasted with their own talk of care of the 'other', so as to present it as particularly unwarranted, as emphasised through the rhetorical question (18) that ends the extract. In doing so, those who harm others can be presented as somehow less than human because they lack the human quality of caring for others. In the following extract, participants challenge the idea that they are less than 'human'.

Extract Two
This extract is taken from the start of the focus group when participants were asked about which themes they thought had dominated the coverage of the war in Gaza. At this point, no images had been shown. Participants started discussing what they presented as the imbalances in the international coverage of the war, inaccurate contextual information and superficial reporting.

Focus group 1
1.   P1 In one sentence, Israel is the victim not Gaza. It's always that the victims are in

2.   Israel not in Gaza. One victim in Israel equals one hundred victims in Gaza. This is

3.   a sentence they said in the news in Israel. I don't know who said that but one victim

4.   in Israel equal a hundred or a thousand victims in Gaza. What do you think, that

5.   we're not people and you are people? Or that we are animals and we're not people?

This extract begins with P1 commenting on Israel's representation of the Israel/Palestine conflict. This begins with a simple statement that 'Israel is the victim' (1) which is then upgraded with the extreme case formulation 'always' (1-2), through a footing (Goffman, 1979) of speaking as the Israeli media. Next the disparity in victimhood is laid out (2) with this unequal treatment of Israelis and Gazans being attributed to an unknown Israeli source (3). Again there is an upgrading of the statement from one hundred to 'a thousand' (4) victims. This work allows

P1 to effectively use rhetorical questions to allow the audience to come to the conclusion that this is problematic (4-5). This emphasises their isolation globally and is signalled through the challenge to Palestinians being dehumanized, through the reference to numbers and animals (we're not people; we are animals 5, also see Goodman, 2007 for more on how animal metaphors are used to dehumanise). This statement from P1 therefore works to challenge Israeli aggression on account of its lack of treating Palestinian lives (which are equated as being worth either a hundredth or a thousandth of an Israeli life) as sufficiently 'human'. This also challenges the Israeli representation of the Palestinians precisely through an attempt to re-humanize them in the face of alleged dehumanization by Israel. In this way Palestinians are able to be presented as the true victims, with a more moral outlook compared to Israelis.

2. Participants draw enemies into the shared 'human' category

Extract Three

Prior to this extract, the participants are shown an image of two masked Hamas fighters wearing black and white checked keffiyehs and holding automatic rifles. The discussion focuses on the participants' perceived hierarchy of victims. They are asked whether they consider it to be worse to see children, women and men who are injured or dead, or fighters and soldiers.

Focus group 2

1. I   So Israel didn't have any victims?

2. P2 No it had actually, some injuries, one dead.

3. P1 There was one killed

4. P2 She [another participant] says that if we don't value their feelings we will be shown

5.   as we don't have mercy on people, but actually we do care, after all they are human,

6.   are human beings, they don't have anything to do with their Government, taking

7.   their decisions, they don't agree with them, after all they want to live without being

8.   afraid of a rocket falling on their house even though they are not injured

9.   they will have that fear.

This extract begins with the interviewer asking about Israeli victims, which is met with agreement that there was one Israeli fatality (2 and 3). Instead of contrasting the harm done to Israel compared with Palestinians, P2 goes on to make a display of compassion for Israelis.

This is done by categorising Palestinians and Israelis together as "human" (5), despite the clear use of us and them distinctions (see Leudar, Marsland and Nekvapil, 2004) between Palestinians (we) and Israelis (them), and by distinguishing Israeli citizens from the government to suggest that citizens do not support the government. In addition to the category work around "human" there is an extension of the humanitarian argument based around sharing feelings and "mercy" (5). By making a show of compassion for the enemy, the Palestinian speakers are able to present themselves as caring people who are moral and opposed to the use of violence; again this works to position them as non-aggressive and as the passive victims of violence. This example is of interest because, while the previous extracts illustrate how participants present themselves as moral, but at the mercy of Israel, here they also show support for Israelis by using the high-level category of "human" to categorise both sides of the conflict together. This works to emphasise the participants' moral status. The process of humanising, in this case, therefore involves humanising both the self (Palestinians) and the 'other' (Israelis) simultaneously, but while also constructing an alternative other, the Israeli government. Humanising, in this case, is therefore based on a very specific recategorization of the 'other'.

3. Participants draw upon human bodies as a means to criticise violence and challenge dehumanization

Extract Four

Prior to this extract, the participants are shown a series of still images taken from footage of (bloodied) shrouded dead bodies, some being carried from the morgue, some lying on stretchers. Again, the acceptability of such images was discussed and participants debated whether it would be preferable to show images of the victims when alive rather than when dead.

Focus group 1

1. P2. No. But now we're over exaggerating very bad pictures. Dead bodies and, like…
2. we're not emotional anymore we're just taking pictures and showing it to people. Now
3. she's [another participant] talking about the conflicts in Gaza, the war between Gaza
4. and Israel. She said on the other side Israel doesn't show pictures of the victims' bodies.
5. They say there *is* a body but they won't show the bodies.

In this extract, P2 uses the graphic images of the aftermath of violence to make claims about the Palestinian character, to criticise Israel and to criticise the media more widely. In terms of character, the picture is used again to present Palestinians as serious victims of inhumane

treatment, to the extent that they are presented as hardened to images of violence ("we're not emotional anymore", 2). This reference to emotion (or in this case, the lack of it) is used specifically to highlight their plight and the commonplace of the violence directed towards them, demonstrating that talk about emotion is oriented to practical action (e.g. Edwards, 1999), which, in this case emphasises Palestinian's victim status Next, Israeli media is singled out for not showing Palestinian victims' bodies (4). Rather than this being viewed positively, this portrayal is presented as dehumanizing the victims because it shies away from showing the harm that is done by the Israeli army to Palestinians which therefore functions as a criticism. This builds upon the argument in the previous extract, where it is claimed that Palestinians are not presented as 'people', as here their complaint is that they are literally presented as not being human bodies.

In this final extract, dead bodies are discussed once more. This time they are shown to a different focus group and a debate results about the need to show such vivid and lurid images and whether they, in fact, serve to stop the imagination. The participants go on to discuss whether a verbal description of the victims would enable a fuller image of the victim to emerge the viewers' imaginations. In this case, unlike the earlier extract when these images are shown to Focus group 1, these dead bodies are contrasted with more positive constructions of what 'human' is. This contrast is used to emphasise the cost of conflict and violence.

Extract Five

Focus group 2

1. I. There are all necessary?
2. P1. It is a necessary. I feel sick inside, it's not that, I am
3.   used to such things and I feel sick, how about other people they
4.   will stop seeing, watching the news when they see such things,
5.   so why stopping them from watching we want them to see such
6.   pictures, we can't tell them and show them a little bit which will
7.   make them curious to know more about.
8. I. That is enough they have got total details.
9. P2. No this isn't human, this is a human picture and this picture.
10.   Why do they want to stop watching all these are humans, if they are human
11.   from the first place they will recognise what is going on is wrong and they
12.   don't have to see all these things to know what is going on is wrong, it's about
13.   human beings not about machines. It is just a small injury for
14.   you maybe, something that can't be healed for them, for

15.   us it is maybe just another dead body, but for them, other people, it's

16.   a big deal. Of course when someone is dead their life is ended and a lot of

17.   hopes that were upon him are just gone, so they will know this whenever they

18.   see a dead body they will realise that he or she has a family or had a family,

19.   they had dreams, they had even one hope for life.

In this discussion of the use of graphic images of the aftermath of violence, a contrast (see Atkinson, 1984) is made between what is and what is not 'human' so as to highlight the cost of violence, particularly (but not only) when it is directed towards Palestinians, and to criticise those who do not pay attention to the situation in Palestine. As the conversation moves towards a discussion of whether or not graphic images of the aftermath of violence are necessary, there is a disagreement amongst participants. The first speaker (P1) claims that the graphic pictures are necessary to draw attention to their plight, therefore preventing outsiders from seeing these images is presented as problematic, despite the pictures being unpleasant. The next speaker (P2) however, disagrees, which leads to the discussion over whether or not the photographs depict humans. P2 argues that they do by bringing together the dead victims and the living consumers of the images together into the one 'human' category and therefore draws on an imperative for the viewers to care for and support the victims. The events depicted are presented as self-evidently morally wrong, because they are directed to humans (rather than machines). The logic here is that while damaging machines can be tolerated, harming humans cannot be. The disagreement in this extract therefore focusses on whether or not showing the dead bodies works to humanise the situation. Where there is clear agreement is that the situation needs to be humanised because it is normalised 'humans', that are being killed in the conflict. The debate over humanisation is therefore used to argue against conflict because of the costs it has on human life.

Discussion

This article examined how Palestinian youth attempt to challenge the dehumanization of Palestinian people by attempting to rehumanize them. This is achieved in a number of ways: categorizing Palestinians as 'human being' (extract one); by directly and explicitly challenging the suggestion that Palestinians are less than human (extract two); by drawing the enemy into the category 'human' (extract three) and by embodying the 'human' (extracts four and five). This demonstrates that Palestinians are directly orienting to what they present as their dehumanizing by others. In doing this, they are able to challenge this dehumanization and offer an alternative representation of themselves. This demonstrates that they are orienting to their own categorization and are seeking to influence this. Where Tileaga (e.g. 2007) has shown how

specific categories can be used to morally exclude (as in the case of Roma people), in the cases identified in this analysis the superordinate category 'human' is used to morally include.

Much of the talk of the participants in these focus groups can therefore be seen as a continuation of the rehumanizing project of campaigns such as 'Humanize Palestine' suggesting that this type of campaign has had some success in influencing the way in which other Palestinians talk about the conflict and supports Lloyd's (2017) analysis. However, this humanizing is not simply a way of categorizing Palestinians, as it also applied to Israelis. This means that the opponents in the conflict are categorized together into the shared high-level category 'human'. By classifying their enemies in this way, participants are also able to present Palestinians as compassionate and not driven by hatred of an enemy. Palestinians can claim a positive and moral identity and in so doing can also challenge the negative representations of Palestinians as being uncivilised, as irrationally hating Israel/Israelis or being sympathetic to terrorism as well as being less than human.

Presenting participants as human, and not driven by a hatred of Israelis is all part of a wider concern to bring the interviewer 'on side' and to seek agreement that Palestinians are being mistreated by Israel. They use the opportunity to promote a positive identity for themselves (e.g. Kirkwood, 2017), not just as victims but as Palestinians, particularly in front of a Western interviewer, representing their 'other'. They challenged the negative representations of Palestinians in Western media which they contradicted (particularly in extract three) by presenting themselves as compassionate and caring, and as moral and passive victims of violence (extract one). Similarly, they challenged Western portrayals of the state of Israel, when they asserted that the latter is generally portrayed as the principal victim in this conflict. There is further condemnation of Israel for reinforcing (geographical) divisions between the Palestinian people. By criticising the Israeli government, they foregrounded their own suffering which contributed to the all-pervading denunciation of the Israeli government for its lack of humanitarianism. It is noteworthy that the Israeli government is distinguished from its citizens, who are therefore presented as sharing a common humanity with the Palestinians.

Participants' construction of the category 'human' includes both the psychological qualities of a human and an embodied component with references made to physical bodies (see Lloyd, 2017), often of the dead. This is perhaps to be expected given the context of the interviews, where media footage of the after effects of conflict was discussed. In extract four, a complaint is made due to the lack of showing dead Palestinians bodies precisely on the grounds that this dehumanizes the dead. In extract five, a more complex picture is created, where the dead bodies

are attributed psychological qualities so as to highlight the loss of (human) life. Here it is the dead body that allows the opportunity to emphasise the human qualities of the living.

The findings also reinforce criticisms of foreign conflict reporting and media representations of war generally and this conflict in particular. They highlight the extent to which victims claim not to have a voice in the media and that not only is the reality of their situation being distorted by established views, but that these views are permanently being underpinned by unchanging media representations. Participants were equally sensitive to challenging what they presented as distortion of their reality and what they considered unfair representations of their plight in media broadcasts would have an impact on potential viewers globally.

These findings, the first to address the talk of young Palestinians about the reporting of violent conflicts around the world, demonstrate the importance of categorization and how, in this case, the specifics of the use of the (human) category work to rehumanize Palestinians in the face of (claims of) dehumanization. This category work is inclusive as both Israelis and Palestinians are drawn into this category. This research therefore demonstrates the ways in which category use can function to challenge dehumanization, which is known to be an effective way of justifying the harsh treatment of outgroups. Perhaps further investigation into rehumanization may offer ways to overcome the harm of prejudice and conflict.

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[i] See https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/katie-hopkins-urged-to-apologise-for-dehumanising-column-comparing-refugees-to-cockroaches-after-10484400.html for a report on this comment, although the original article featured in the Sun newspaper has since been removed

[ii] See https://int.birthrightisrael.com/ for more information about this scheme

[iii] The West Bank was divided in to three administrative divisions following the Oslo Accords signed in 1995: Areas A, B and C. The first includes eight Palestinian cities and their surrounding areas, including Jenin, and is under full Palestinian civil and security control.