University of Cambridge
Faculty of Education

Academic Life Under Occupation
The Impact on Educationalists at Gaza’s Universities

Mona A. S. Jebril
Queens’ College
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Supervisor: Prof Diane Reay

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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The Impact on Educationalists at Gaza’s Universities

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Abstract

This sociological study explores the past and current higher education (HE) experience of educationalists at Gaza’s universities and how this experience may be evolving in the shifting socio-political context in the Arab World. The thesis is motivated by three questions:

1. What are the perspectives of academic staff in the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities on their own past HE experiences?

2. What are the perspectives of students and their lecturers (academic staff) in the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities on students’ current HE experiences?

3. How do educationalists in the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab World, and what current or future impact do they think it will have on the education context at Gaza’s universities?

To examine these questions, I conducted an inductive qualitative study. Using 36 in-depth, semi-structured interviews which lasted between (90-300 min), I collected data from educationalists (15 academic staff; 21 students) at two of Gaza’s universities. Due to difficulties of access to the Gaza Strip, the participants were interviewed via Skype from Cambridge. Informed by the literature review, and triangulated with other research activities, such as reviewing participants’ CVs, browsing universities websites, and keeping a reflective journal, a thematic analysis was conducted on the interview data. Theoretically, although this study has benefited from conceptual insights, such as those found in Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed and in Pierre Bourdieu’s work on symbolic violence, it is a micro-level study, which is mainly data driven.
The findings of this research show that in the past, educationalists were relatively more passive in terms of shaping their HE experiences, despite efforts to become resilient. In the present, students and their lecturers continue to face challenges that impact negatively on their participation and everyday life at Gaza’s universities. However, how the HE experience will evolve out of this context in the future is uncertain. The Arab Spring revolutions have had an influence on Gaza HE institutions’ campuses as they have triggered more awareness of students’ grievances and discontent. Because of some political and educational barriers, however, students’ voices are a cacophony; they remain split between “compliance” and resistance (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471; Swartz, 2013, p. 39).

Previously, Sara Roy (1995) rightly indicated a structure of “de-development” in the Gaza Strip (p.110). The findings from this research show that the impact of occupation and of the changes in the Arab World on the educational context in Gaza are more complex than previously thought. There is a simultaneous process of construction and destruction that is both external and internal to educationalists and which undermines academic work at Gaza’s universities. Based on this, the study concludes by explaining six implications of this complex structure for academic practice at Gaza’s universities, offering nine policy recommendations for HE reform, and highlighting six areas for future research.
Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration, except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted or is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution, except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted or is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution, except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Mona A.S. Jebril

June 2017
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Being a Gaza-Cambridge ‘Astronaut’:

A Letter of Acknowledgment

In 1994, I was studying for my Tawjihi\(^1\) examination in Gaza. So often, I used to stand on the roof of our two-floor house for a short break, watching the dark sky filled with twinkling stars at night. I was contemplating the future and what career path I wanted to take with my university studies. Looking down at the streets of the occupied Gaza Strip, the sky above seemed far more interesting to me. Consequently, I resolved to be an astronaut. This firm resolution turned out to be meaningless - it was not possible to achieve it in the Gaza context. Years on, to my own surprise, I became an educationalist.

Because of the continued siege of the Gaza Strip, in studying for my PhD at Cambridge, I found myself in a similar binary situation to that of Chris Hadfield who has logged many hours in space. As an astronaut, Hadfield mentions that he had to live with the attitude that once he is back on earth, he “might never get [again] to space—and then, […if he] did get there, [he] might never go back [to earth]” (Hadfield, 2013, p. 40)\(^2\). Similarly, I had one of two choices; either to be in Gaza or out of it. Thus I have not visited home at all during the five years of my PhD study. I did not want to risk being locked inside Gaza since the borders are almost permanently closed and their occasional opening is unpredictable.

Many things have changed in these PhD years; for example, my very dear father, uncle and one of my aunts passed away and I will never see them again, even if the borders to Gaza were now to open; my cousins have got married and started their own families; my little nephews and nieces have grown into young men and women, and generously, my mother’s

\(^1\) An examination equivalent to A-level in the UK.
face has welcomed the aging wrinkles. Over time, I have changed too. The only thing that has remained almost the same all throughout this period is the dehumanizing conditions in which Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip and the severe restrictions placed on their mobility.

Under these conditions, attempting to achieve resilience or perhaps consciously coping, I chose to visualize myself as an astronaut. Although I was half-joking, this image seemed to fulfil my past ambition to take up in this profession after all these years of waiting. It added an imagined sense of achievement and a sense of humour to my Gaza Cambridge journey, which proved to be somehow empowering.

As an astronaut, I would say that I logged in the UK space on two occasions in my life, during my MSc in Oxford 2005-06, and during this PhD study in Cambridge. Being a Gaza Cambridge astronaut, I wish to acknowledge the support, love and guidance of many:

**The NASA Earth (Gaza) Station:**

Firstly, I owe a great debt to my parents, the late Abdel Aziz Saleem Jebril (my father), and Laila Sabri Al Madani (my mother), for encouraging me to continue my studies abroad and up to the doctoral level. With regard to female education, this is uncommon in Gaza’s culture. My very dear mother and father always believed in me even when I lost faith in myself. Abdel Aziz and Laila sowed the love of learning early in my life, trained me to persevere and dedicate myself to work, and always emphasized the morality and importance of social contribution; I am forever grateful. Thanks also go to my family for their efforts to support me. I am particularly thankful to my lovely nieces and nephews who used to offer me advice on how to deal with the challenges of writing a PhD, based on their experience of doing their Basic and Preparatory school homework.

**The Shuttle**

The Gates Cambridge Scholarship has generously provided me with the necessary ‘shuttle’ to undertake this PhD journey. Their extended financial assistance to cover a fifth year was
crucial to completing this study. I also appreciate the help of the Gates scholarship team, and the kind support of Professor Everitt Barry during the 2014 war on Gaza.

**Earth Experts (Research Participants)**

I am greatly indebted to the students and members of the academic staff from Gaza’s universities who participated in this study. Their enthusiasm to co-operate with me and share their experiences in-depth, some of which were emotionally difficult, was very enriching to this research. The participants offered to spend more time in being interviewed by me, as well as contributing powerful and fascinating insights into academic life in the Gaza Strip. Thanks also go to Wael Jebril for assisting me in starting the snowballing process with the students in Gaza.

**Space Mission Director**

During my PhD ‘mission’ in space, I had a wonderful supervisor. Working with Diane Reay is bliss. Diane is a super-supervisor, always there to inspire, follow up, and support. I so often thought of Diane as a mother bird - with compassion, she challenged me to fly independently in the academic field, and with confidence, she waited for me to find my own voice. I am also endlessly grateful to Diane for continuing to supervise my research for a full year after she retired and with the same level of care and devotion. The example of Diane as someone who could, with passion and determination, turn a past source of oppression into a present source of empowerment was very inspiring to me. It was special because despite the earlier challenges and later achievements of her life, her encountered continued to be humane, simple and genuine. Diane’s mixture of experiences seems to have given her the ability to achieve a good balance between some challenging contradictions; she can be both open and structured, indefinite and assertive, and dry and creative. Regarding the supervisions, I very much appreciated this fluidity because it made me feel safe: I had the freedom to disagree, to experiment, and to write spontaneously, yet without compromising quality and professionalism. For all of this, I will always remember Diane as a guiding star in my Cambridge space journey.
Space Mission Invigilators

Many thanks to Dr Philip Gardner (PhD advisor), Dr Hilary Cremin (Internal Examiner), and Emeritus Prof Richard Pring (External Examiner) for overseeing my progress in this project, offering useful advice and constructive feedback. I felt proud by their involvement in this study, and valued greatly the opportunity to benefit from their expertise.

The Crew

I was lucky to meet CoraLingling Xu at the matriculation dinner at Queens’ College in 2012. We both were studying for a PhD in education then and with the same supervisor. Cora and I became close friends and shared a lot regarding research, national cuisine and life in general. I admired Cora her self-reliance, her dynamism and her persistence, but I have also seen in Cora a very kind-hearted, and supportive friend who stood with me in both happy and difficult times. I am also thankful to Cora for offering feedback on the final complete draft of this thesis and for conducting a mock viva, as well as for commenting on my first registration report. Thanks also go to Colin Brock, Max Reibman and Sandra Modh for their useful feedback on the report, and to Lena Bahou for a useful conversation about it. I also benefited from exchanges with Karen Fobes, Eduardo Machicado, Kevin Kester, Garth Sthal, Jengchen Hou and Nickolay Mintchev. To my friends Johanna Riha, Lin Li, Brandon Yen, Farida Larry, Hanan Ramahi, Anna Redmann, and Diane Barley: thank you all for your support and for the lovely times we spent together.

The NASA Space (Cambridge) Station

I had a very positive experience at Queens’ College Cambridge. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the support of Lisa Hall, James Kelley, Howard Jones and Jenny Schiller. From Queens’, I also thank the porters, and the catering team who used to greet me with a cheerful smile that made me feel very much at home.
I appreciate the support offered by the Faculty of Education, namely, Emma Rixon (the PhD and EED Research administrator), and the library team who were at all stages amazing. I also thank Sheila Hakin for proofreading my thesis.

**Firstly, and lastly, God’s Providence**

My utmost gratitude for accomplishing this PhD in Cambridge, goes to Allah, the Most Gracious; the Most Merciful, for, “To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: ‘Be,’ and it is” (Translation of Surat al-Baqarah, 2:117):

> He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days, and is moreover firmly established on the Throne (of Authority). He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it. And He is with you wheresoever ye may be. And Allah sees well all that ye do. (Translation of Surat El Hadid, 4: 57)
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Reflecting on the ‘Invisible’

All research is in one way or another autobiographical or else the avoidance of autobiography.

(Reay, 1998, p. 2)

This auto review points to the ‘invisible’ at Gaza universities, which first inspired me to undertake this research on the HE experience in the Gaza Strip.

A Researcher’s Background

On the 1st of August 1990, my family and I arrived from Kuwait to the Gaza Strip for a one-month vacation. Next morning, Kuwait was invaded by the Iraqi Army. The Gulf War was a turning point in my life. From then I became a permanent resident of Gaza. There, I studied for four years in a restrictive school environment, which was also interrupted by Israeli soldiers. I valued the Gaza university experience as it was more enjoyable. It coincided with the start of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process. After my BA graduation, I worked as a teacher and trainer of teachers at governmental schools. The Gaza political landscape has much deteriorated since the 1990s, affecting my subsequent experience of postgraduate studies.

Post-Oxford Life: The Return to the Gaza Strip

Studying an MSc in HE in Oxford 2005 - 2006 was an enlightening ‘HE experience’ for me. This was the first time I had left Gaza in 14 years and my first time travelling alone. It was a challenging time, but it was accompanied by a feeling of empowerment. Upon my graduation, I returned to the Gaza Strip, but as a Palestinian, my journey back was not straightforward. For example, the Rafah-Gaza border continued to be closed for almost three
weeks. The routine for me and other stuck Palestinians was to hear daily predictions that it would open within the coming few hours. We kept packing, travelling across the Sinai desert, waiting at the border for several hours in the noonday heat, but finally having to return to a village called Al Arish in Egypt in anticipation of an opening date in the near future. When the border opened, I entered Gaza after 12 hours of humiliation at the checkpoint. I was worried that I would never be able to travel again and thought this was perhaps not an option that I would consider unless I were to undertake a big life project, such as a PhD in Cambridge. I realized later how lucky I have been to enter Gaza at all; the siege on the Gaza Strip was immediately afterwards tightened for two consecutive years. My Oxford degree helped me while in Gaza to transfer my career to that of a lectureship at two of Gaza’s universities.

Reflecting on the ‘Invisible’ at Gaza’s Universities

Gaza HE students and the academic staff were functioning under unconventional conditions. Internal challenges included the lack of resources and a traditional educational context. Nonetheless, the reform of these universities was undermined by another hidden challenge, which seemed to suppress intellectual activity and act as a self-oppressing mechanism on their staff and students. This inextricable challenge was quite ‘invisible’! Some people used to take it lightly, responding to any inconvenience with ‘Smile: you are in [name of the university]’; others thought of it as the Gaza Strip’s ‘politics’ of university work. In the course of the literature review, it was striking to come across a similar observation by Roy (1995) on the Gaza Strip, yet in relation to the economic sector, as she referred to a structure of “de-development” (p. 110). From my first-hand experience, I know what this ‘invisible’ means: I was reflecting on it so often, I was oppressed by the invisible – more than once.

Starting the Cambridge HE Research Experience

After five years in Gaza, it has been immensely exciting to go on a journey that I did not know would ever be possible again: my PhD in Cambridge. However, just as I was about to start my study, Israel launched an operation on Gaza where my family lives. Nine of our
neighbours were killed. One of them was a woman who used to work as a dressmaker: she once made me a dress that I keep in my cupboard to this day in Cambridge. The tragic story of my neighbours became part of the literature I read for it was mentioned in Danahar's (2013) discussion on Gaza and the Arab Spring.

**The Invisible: From Reflection to Research**

Reviewing the literature, I began to realize that I was part of an oppressed group. At times, I perhaps have also been an oppressor. It was what Freire (2003) describes as a dual unconscious process of oppression. Despite challenges, HE was perhaps the thing that I enjoyed most in my life under occupation, and perhaps the only space where I felt free to be myself, to think and act beyond any limitations, and to dream of a change and make the dream true. Contributing towards a more empowering HE experience for Palestinians in the future, I take the ‘invisible’ which I observed at Gaza’s universities from an initial reflection to PhD research.
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# A LIST OF ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ARABIC TERMS

## ACRONYMS

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCOP</td>
<td>United Nations Special Committee of Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td><em>Harakat Al-Tahrir Al Watni- Al Filastini</em> (In Arabic) = Palestinian National Liberation Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td><em>Harakat Al-Muqawamah Al-Islamiyyah</em> (In Arabic) = Islamic Resistance Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Work Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoEHE</td>
<td>(The Palestinian) Ministry of Education and Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNA</td>
<td>Palestinian National Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACBI</td>
<td>Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCO</td>
<td>Palestinian ‘General Controller’s Office’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCBS</td>
<td>Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMIDEAST</td>
<td>American Middle East Education and Training Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F16</td>
<td>A type of fighter aircraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td>White Phosphorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations’ Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBGS</td>
<td>West Bank and the Gaza Strip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>The Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Occupied (Palestinian) Territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUG</td>
<td>Islamic University of Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZU</td>
<td>Al Azhar University of Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>University of Palestine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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ARABIC TERMS

- **Al Nakbah**  
The Catastrophe
- **Intifada**  
Palestinian Uprising
- **Al Aqsa**  
Muslims' Holy Mosque in Jerusalem
- **Tawjihi**  
An examination equivalent to A- level in the UK
- **Sumud**  
Steadfastness
- **Jawazat**  
Passports
- **Sheikh**  
Muslim Leader
- **Wasta**  
Nepotism
- **Layla**  
“Literally, ‘of the night’, is one of the most romantic women's names in Arabic, appearing frequently in verse and prose. [...] Layla is also proverbial [...] ‘everyone sings for his Layla’, means, ‘everyone follows his own fancy’” (Barkho, 1990, p. 474)
- **‘Al-Mujamma’ al-Islami’**  
The Islamic complex or centre
- **Al Shabiba El Fathawiah**  
May refer to a Palestinian movement which is of a Fatah orientation
- **Jihad**  
Refers to Harakat al-Jihad al Islami fi Filastin (in Arabic) = Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement
- **Al Kutla; Islamic Kutla; or Al Kulta Al Islamia’**  
A Hamas-affiliated Palestinian movement which literary means ‘Islamic Bloc’
- **Haram**  
A religious term means ‘prohibited’
- **Jilbaab/ Jalabeeb**  
An Islamic “full-length dress or coat” (Hamammi, 1990, p.28). The plural of Jilbaab is Jalabeeb.
- **Shari’a**  
Islamic law
- **Hijab**  
Islamic term usually refers to head cover. It can also be used to refer to Islamic dress
- **Fitna**  
“Temptations [...] that might [...] lead to the corruption of public morals” (Sobh and Belk, 2011, p. 324),
- **Mahram**  
A religious term that refers to people whom a woman cannot marry, such as her biological father, brothers, uncles, sons, grandfathers, and the like.
- **Awra/ Awrat**  
The plural from awra is ‘awrat’. It is a religious term. “Awra is that which ought to be covered and protected, because of the shame of having it show” (Hoffman-Ladd,1987, p. 28),
- **Ramadan**  
Muslims’ holy month of fasting
- **Eid al-fitr**  
A Muslim religious holiday which marks the end of Ramadan
- **Lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llāh, muḥammadur-rasūlu-llāh**
  - Muslim testimonial word
- **Alhamdullillah**
  - A religious term meaning ‘Praise God’. Generally, it indicates contentment and gratefulness to Allah.
- **Shadah**
  - Playing cards
- **Irhal**
  - Leave or go away
- **Maseerat**
  - Marching protests
- **Fadfada**
  - Catharsis
Photos' Source: Palestine Centre  (‘Palestine 1947 district and district centers - Palestine remembered’, n.d.)
Introduction

This PhD research explores the perspectives of educationalists in Gaza’s universities on their higher education (HE) experiences, and the ways in which this ‘experience’ may be evolving in the shifting socio-political context of the Arab world. The term ‘educationalists’ refers to academic staff and students (who study as pre-service teachers) at the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities, and ‘occupation’ refers to the period after *Al Nakbah*\(^3\) (the Israeli and Egyptian takeover of the Gaza Strip, as applicable).

Over the past 50 years, writings on the Arab world have come to be dominated by Western researchers (Said, 1985, 1993). Behind this fact lies the assumption that the understanding of indigenous communities, such as that of the Gaza Strip, was normalized to encompass colonial conceptualization and terminology (Said, 1985; Smith, 1999; Canagarajah, 2002). The experience of people who live in the South is – since it has emerged in a context of colonisation or post-colonisation - substantially different from that of people in the North (Connell, 2007). So as to counter the Northern hegemony and broaden, or, at least, scrutinize the basis of the ‘metropolitan’ sociological knowledge of the South, a highlighting of this experience is required from the Southern perspective (Connell, 2007, p. 224).

I concur with Bourdieu (1993) that “one cannot grasp […] the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of[…] the empirical reality” (p. 271). In the besieged Gaza Strip, however, the relationship between education and conflict is a sensitive one. Although a great deal has been written on the politics and economic aspects of Gaza, only very limited research has investigated how these have impacted upon the educational

---

\(^3\) *Al Nakbah* or the Catastrophe is the war which was lost by Palestinians and Arabs against Israeli forces in 1948. A consequence of this war was the creation of the new State of Israel on Palestinian land and an exodus of Palestinian refugees to Arab countries and to other Palestinian areas, such as the Gaza Strip (Lesch, 1985; Jebril, 2006; Plonski, 2007).
sector and shaped the HE experience of academics and students there from a sociological perspective.

This study aims to establish itself as a pioneer as there have hardly been any studies conducted on this topic and on such a large scale. Although some of the issues discussed in this thesis might have been touched on by other researchers or master's students in Gaza's universities, such studies remain limited, fragmented, often quantitative and almost always ending up where they began: on Gaza library shelves. Since the study in hand is being conducted from Cambridge, it has the potential to reach a wider audience.

i. Emergence: Background to the Research Problem

After the Peace Process of 1994, Palestinians received European financial assistance to build up their institutions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (WBGS). In August 2005, a unilateral disengagement plan was carried out by Israel to evacuate the settlements which were established after the Israeli occupation of Gaza in 1967. Roy (2005) reports that these developments meant that the full responsibility to build institutions and achieve democracy and prosperity in the new ‘mini-state’ was placed on the Palestinians (p. 65).

Since then, the Gaza Strip has been exposed to siege, military operations and different kinds of destruction that have continued until the present time. Nevertheless, that period has highlighted a set of challenges internal to the Palestinian community, including the universities in the Gaza Strip, namely, that there was a lack of a Palestinian vision or a national framework to host the international development projects. Successive occupations have meant that Palestinians “never had a national education system of their own” (Velloso de Santisteban, 2002, p. 149).

Consequently, donors have had to work in an immensely difficult context in the WBGS (Le More, 2008). However, that the Gaza Strip remains an under-researched area suggests that these educational projects are frequently based on the international, rather than the Palestinian, experience. Le More (2008) describes how arbitrariness, further separation, replication and contention have been the aggregated overall outcome of these projects. Such approaches have been replicated by Gaza’s universities themselves since
they have relied, in terms of accreditation, quality assurance, training material and others issues, on imported systems (Abu Lughod, 2000; Nicolai, 2007).

Thus it is in relation to an Israeli “policy of de-development [and] structural contamination of the Palestinian domestic economy” that education should be contemplated (Roy, 1995, p. 110). At Gaza’s universities today, “the real threat lies deep within society” (Roy, 2005, p. 73). Educationalists’ HE experiences, in their different political generations, are reflected in the campuses of Gaza’s universities. Since “teachers are at the heart of educational improvement”, donor investment and educational reform are more likely to be effective if they are based on the Gaza educationalists’ experiences (Hopkins & Stern, 1996, p. 501).

ii. **Rationale: Research Focus on the University**

Abu Lughod (2000) rightly argues that universities are key players in the process of democratizing Palestinian society, achieving national integration and contributing to social and cultural change. Since university students are adults and the “campus [of the university] brings heterogeneous [Palestinian] groups together” (Abu Lughod, 2000, p. 92), I am convinced⁴ that universities are potent places for Gaza educational and social reform to take place.

iii. **Research Questions**

This thesis will address the following three linked research questions:

---

⁴ I believe that the impact of Palestinian educationalists on Gaza’s future generations is powerful in terms of shaping minds and hearts, as they indirectly contribute to future political decision-making at the larger societal level. This motivated me to focus on the university sector in my Oxford MSc study (see: Jebril, 2006), as well as in this PhD research.
**Introduction**

**Table 0.1 Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1</th>
<th>What are the perspectives of academic staff in the Faculties of Education at Gaza's universities on their own past higher education experiences?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q2.</td>
<td>What are the perspectives of students and their lecturers (academic staff) in the Faculties of Education on students’ current higher education experiences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3.</td>
<td>How do educationalists in the Faculties of Education at Gaza's universities perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world, and what current or future impact do they think it will have on the education context at Gaza's universities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following explains the geographical scale, as well as the time-scales underpinning the research questions:

**The Geographical Scale**

The Gaza Strip is the primary geographical site in this study. Gaza is positioned as part of the currently negotiated Palestinian State between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel, but simultaneously as part of historic Palestine (See Map 0.1). A secondary geographical reference is to the Arab world, Middle East (ME), and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since Gaza is part of all these regions at once. Research Question Three is directly related to the shifting context in the Arab world after 2011. Finally, since some of the participants might have studied for HE in other contexts (i.e. Europe, the US etc.), these countries will be referred to occasionally.

**The Timescale**

Each research question in Table 0.1 has a different time-scale as appropriate:

---

5 Because Gaza is part of all these regions at once, these terms (the Arab World, ME and MENA) may be used interchangeably. See Map 1.1 in Chapter One (Section 1.3).
Introduction

*Question 1:* Academics’ past HE experiences varied according to place, time, and context. Therefore I tailored the interview questions to the time-span of each academic participant’s experience.

*Question 2:* In researching students’ current HE experiences, the reference is the present time, namely the four years of their undergraduate study at Gaza’s universities.

*Question 3:* This question was not limited by a time-frame⁶.

(For a list of research questions, aim, objectives and goals, see Appendix 1)

iv. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is presented in two parts followed by a conclusion:

**Part One:** ‘The Anatomy of the Research’ (Chapter One; Two; Three): *Chapter One* provides a context review. *Chapter Two* explores seminal studies on HE in other conflict-affected areas; the informative theoretical backgrounds, and my positionality, reflexivity and Palestinian voice and representation. The nature of the study along with the underlying knowledge assumptions and strategies with which methodological choices are broadly aligned are detailed in *Chapter Three*. How the research was conducted in practical terms and in consideration of ethics and security are also outlined in the same chapter.

**Part Two:** ‘The Anatomy of the Experience’ (Chapter Four; Five; Six): This discussion of the research findings includes *Chapter Four* on the past HE experience; *Chapter Five* on students’ present HE experience; and *Chapter Six* on the future HE experience.

---

⁶ The impact of the Arab Spring on Gaza’s educational context is under-researched. This question was concerned with the perceptions of educationalists on this topic. Since any impact in the future was explored virtually (as seen through the eyes of the participants), the discussion was mostly theoretical and thus was not limited by a time-frame.
Introduction

The Conclusion presents a summary of the project and its empirical findings; a conceptual reflection on these findings; research contribution; its theoretical implications; recommendations for practice, policy and future research; and a discussion of the limitations of this study on the Gaza Strip.

To help the reader, I have included a diagram at the beginning of each chapter that depicts its content. The part and title of each chapter has been indicated, throughout, in the thesis header section. I have also used several figures, tables and appendices, as well as a large number of footnotes, to provide sufficient details on the study and Gaza’s culture. This thesis ends with a photograph essay (Appendix 23), which presents first-hand scenes from academic life under occupation in the Gaza Strip, and an ‘Art Book’ (Appendix 24) featuring some reflective moments in the journey of this research study.
PART ONE

The Anatomy of the Research

Chapter One: A Context Review

Chapter Two: Thinking of the Research Project

Chapter Three: Methodology
Chapter One

A Context Review

In order to contextualize the Gaza HE experience and justify the research questions, I present a brief review. As Figure 1.1 shows, firstly, I discuss the Gaza Strip circle: the historical, political, social and economic background, and subsequently I discuss the history, development and current challenges of Gaza’s universities. From these two contexts, I identify Research Q1 and Q2. Finally, I explain the wider circle of the Arab world, namely, that of the recent development of the Arab Spring and its relationship to Palestinian HE experience which gives rise to Research Q3. A summary of Chapter One will be presented at the end.

Figure 1.1 Visualizing the Context Review
Section 1.1 Background to the Gaza Strip

In this section, I present a synopsis of the historical, political, social and economic backgrounds of the Gaza Strip.

1.1.a Background One: The Historical Context

Gaza has existed from around 3200 B.C and is “one of the oldest cities in the world” (Roy, 1995, p. 14). Until recently, Gaza, however, has not been the subject of political focus or academic research (Lesch, 1985). The difficulty of access or, as Shachar (2010) maintains, the violence or the turbulent conditions have contributed largely to Gaza being under-researched. For Roy (1995), this negligence could be due to Gaza's ambiguity, cultural and political problems, and limited geographical size (approx. 365sq km). What is striking about Gaza, though, is that this city has witnessed successive patterns of destruction and dispossession by several occupations (Roy, 1995).

One of the turning points in Palestinian/Gaza history was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. This declaration promised Jewish people a national home in Palestine, the ‘Holy Land’ (Goetz, 1990). The British Mandate ended in 1947, and thus Palestine has since been considered under the United Nations' (UN) supervision. The UN assigned a committee called The UN Special Committee for Palestine (UNSCOP) to provide insight into the future of Mandated Palestine. As a result of the Balfour Declaration, this committee proposed a Partition Plan⁷, according to which the Arab states would be allocated parts of historic Palestine, including the Gaza Strip (Lesch, 1985). The year 1948 marks the Al Nakbah war since the Palestinians and the Arab army lost their fight against, and their land to, Israel. Simultaneously, this time marked an Independence Day for Israel. With this, “no entity remained that was officially called Palestine […] and Palestinian Arabs have lived in […] different sets of circumstances […] and their history started to diverge

⁷ According to this Partition Plan, Palestine was to be distributed among Arabs, the international community, and Jewish people within the Jewish community, although the Arabs living in Palestine at that time were the majority of the population, having 55 per cent of the land (Jebril, 2006).
according to their location” (in the Diaspora\(^8\), in the then newly established Israeli State of Arab Israel, and in the Occupied Territories (OT)) (Goetz, 1990, 143).\(^9\)

From that time, Gaza's history followed different trajectories. Firstly, it was occupied by Egypt from 1948 to 1967, which was then followed by an Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1967, along with the West Bank and East Jerusalem, all of which have formed the OT since that time (Shachar, 2010). The first Palestinian \textit{Intifada}\(^10\) (uprising) broke out in 1987 leading to the signing of the Oslo Agreement later on in 1993 and the implementation of the Peace Process in 1994. Selected historical events in Gaza 1987 - 2016 are listed in Table (1.1) below:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|p{15cm}|}
\hline
1987 & First Palestinian \textit{Intifada} in Gaza \\
1988 & Hamas emerges/ Palestinian Declaration of Independence (by Yasser Arafat in Tunis) \\
1993 & Oslo Agreement as a start for the Peace Process/ The return of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to the Gaza Strip/ Withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces from Gaza/ Closure Policy begins \\
2000 & '\textit{Al Aqsa}' (Palestinian) \textit{Intifada} \\
2004 & Arafat dies \\
2005 & Israeli 'Disengagement' of settlements in the Gaza Strip \\
2006 & Hamas wins elections and forms government \\
2007 & Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip; dissolution of Hamas government by President Abbas; emergency government \\
2008 & Gaza War (also known as Cast Lead Operation, Gaza Massacre, and the Battle of al-Furqan) \\
\hline
\multicolumn{2}{|l|}{\textbf{………………..(2010-Present) The Arab Spring Revolutions}} \\
\hline
2012 & Israeli 8-day operation in Gaza (named by Israel as 'Pillar Cloud' or Operation Pillar of Defence)/ the Cairo agreement and the Doha Declaration) for reconciliation \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{8} ‘Diaspora’ in the Palestinian context refers to Palestinians living in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria or in other Arab and foreign countries.


\textsuperscript{10} The Arabic term \textit{Intifada} refers to Palestinian uprising, involving youths throwing stones, against Israeli forces in 1987 (\textit{First Intifada}) and in 2000 (\textit{Second Intifada}).
The events mentioned above should not be taken as just a matter of history; they are political, social, economic and, as we will see shortly, educational as well. Also, history, as Avi Shlaim states, is a matter of representation (‘Al-Nakba debate’, 2013), and this in the Palestinian-Israeli context is a highly contentious issue.  

1.1.b Background Two: The Political Context

Here, I will focus only on some of Gaza’s internal political developments. Today the political climate in Gaza suffers from the consequences of competition between the agendas of the two main Palestinian factions: Fatah 1959 and Hamas 1987. While Fatah favours the strategic approach of negotiating with Israel, Hamas has dismissed such a strategy as prolonged and pointless (Munayyer, 2011). The literature suggests that both factions are striving to gain control and supremacy over Palestinian rule in the OT.

The signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, allowed the Fatah-dominated PLO, which had previously been expelled to Tunis, to return and operate in Gaza forming the (PNA) (Munayyer, 2011, p. 22). The Oslo Accords brought, as Jeresaty (2004, cited in Jebril, 2006, p. 15) states, “a flawed peace process that did not yield reconciliation but rather more violence and disillusionment” for the Palestinians (see also Nicolai, 2007; Roy, 2011). 

11 Knowledge production is a sensitive issue in the Palestinian- Israeli context (Ṣāyigh, 1997). I concur with Smith's (1999) argument that power relations give currency to certain ideas over others. Power relations are not balanced in any way between the Israeli and the Palestinian sides. This study on the Palestinian HE experience, despite its sociological focus, is researching and representing history.

PART ONE

Chapter One: A Context Review

2007). Perhaps this Palestinian disappointment, combined with other reasons, had given Hamas the legitimacy it needed to win the Palestinian elections in 2006.

Hamas was democratically elected by the Palestinian people, but this has driven the Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip which is a stronghold of Hamas, into crisis (Jebril, 2006). As evident from Table 1.1 above, Gaza has been exposed, in effect, to at least three large-scale Israeli military operations (in 2008, 2012, and 2014), two of which took place during the period of this research. A tight siege (blockade) was also imposed on Gaza by Israel and the USA, and in cooperation with Egypt, which dragged Gaza into economic and financial calamity (Ra’ad & Nafi’, 2007; Wallner & Prauhart, 2012). Even more catastrophic was the internal Palestinian division in 2007 that resulted in having two Palestinian governments: the PLO in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The latest development in the Arab world, namely, that of the Arab Spring has tended to give rise to new developments in the Palestinian political arena (Boukhars et al., 2014), as we shall observe in section 1.3.

1.1.c Background Three: The Social Context

The historical and political events of the Gaza Strip have significantly impinged upon its social life. Today, there are approximately 1,644,293 Palestinians, of whom, young people (15 to 29-year-olds) make up the majority (ﻟﻠﺘﺨﻄﯿﻂ اﻟﻌﺎﻣﺔ اﻹدارة - اﻟﺘﻌﻠﯿﻢ ﻗﺴﻢ إحصاءات التعليم العالي, 2013). As a result of the above context, Palestinians in Gaza have been exposed to dramatic changes. In fact, as Shachar (2010) points out, “the word ‘change’ is barely adequate to describe […] the violent shifts in Gaza. Each time the Gazan stage has revolved, the script has been rewritten, [and] rules, living conditions, and political options have been reshuffled in a flash”13 (Shachar, 2010, p. 10). It is hard to predict how all

---

13 For instance, a consequence of Al Nakbah of 1948 was an exodus of refugees coming from other Palestinian cities and villages to the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in an overcrowded population in Gaza since then (Lesch, 1985). For those refugees, as well as for this city’s original citizens, this new situation has been difficult. Thus the refugees who used to manage their businesses and land have become dependent upon the assistance of the UN Refugee and Work Agency (UNRWA) (Roy, 1995). Moreover, as these refugees have migrated with their relatives, some of the camps in Gaza today are still based on the ‘original village framework’ (Roy, 1995, p.19). Due to some political, social, and economic differences, relationship between the different inhabitants of Gaza has become one of tension (Roy, 1995).
these experiences, sometimes contradictory, interact and manifest themselves in the structure and culture of Palestinian society and its universities.

1.1.d Background Four: The Economic Context

The Israeli occupation of Gaza from 1967-1994 worked to increase Gaza's economic dependence on Israel (Hilal, 1976, p. 10). With the Oslo Agreement (1993), however, foreign aid was offered to the Palestinians to support the new state and build the new Palestinian institutions (Le More, 2008). Thus Palestinians would become dependent on foreign aid instead of on Israel. But this was not the case either: Israel was involved as a third partner in regulating and co-ordinating the processes of this assistance funding structure (ibid.). This means that Palestinians' resources, land, and everyday life remain under Israeli constraints. Consequently, as Wallner and Prauhart (2012) explain, Palestinians have become “one of the richest oppressed people” (p. 739).

The subsequent siege after the election of Hamas in 2006 has further destroyed the Palestinian economy (Roy, 2007). Trade and travel restrictions increased Palestinian’s reliance on foreign aid, as well as aggravating unemployment in Gaza, which continues to be a presenting problem14 (Roy, 2007). These conditions are particularly damaging to the future of young people in Gaza15 (Bailey & Murray, 2009).

However, as much as one can blame the economic, political and social conditions for impacting negatively on the education sector, problems, such as unemployment, in Gaza seem also to have emerged from a deficiency in the educational sector itself. For instance, Bailey and Murray (2009) point out that there exists, a “‘mismatch between graduates’ overall abilities and the demands of the labour market” (p. 49), and Hashweh, Hashweh,

14 For example, according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, “the number [of unemployed] increased in Gaza Strip from 130,200 in 3rd quarter 2013 to 159,600 in 4th quarter 2013” (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics - State of Palestine, 2013). At the same time, Gaza is reported to have the highest Growth rate of population in the world (Hashweh, Hashweh, & Berryman, 2003). That said, a high rate of unemployment means not only aggravated economic problems, but also more social, political and educational problems.

15 Increased poverty combined with unemployment has encouraged young people to emigrate, as well as motivating them (also taking into consideration the competition between factions) to join soldier brigades, giving currency to nepotism and frustrating students from pursing HE education (Bailey & Murray, 2009).
and Berryman (2003) note, “an inappropriate production in certain fields of study” (p. 88). Other problems will also be discussed in the coming section on Palestinian HE.

From the above section 1.1, it can be seen that there is shady boundary between the historical, political, social, and economic aspects of the Gaza Strip. Hence, as Mitchell (2002), researching Egypt, observes, these contexts are “somehow incommensurable […since they] involve very different forces, agents, elements, spatial scales and temporalities [that ] shape one another, yet their heterogeneity offers a resistance to explanation” (p. 27). In the next section, the review will show how Palestinian education and the university in Gaza have been shaped by the general context of the Gaza Strip.
Section 1.2 The University in Gaza: History, Development and Current Challenges

Interestingly, Palestinians as compared to other Arab countries in MENA, are reported to have a higher educational attainment (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003; Tahir, 1985). Since their lack of education was conceived as the main reason for their loss of land at Al Nakbah, Palestinians view education as a means of resistance (Tahir, 1985). Many writers\(^{16}\) have indicated that Palestinians perceive education as a means of survival through which they can achieve mobility and financial security, but also pride and psychological assurance. The discussion in this section may often switch between education (schools) and HE (universities) because of the lack of literature on HE in Gaza. Nonetheless, I highlight only the events that are relevant to Gaza's universities.

1.2.a History

Ottoman Rule (1516-1917)

During the Ottoman period, Ottoman cultural and missionary agenda controlled Palestinian education. For example, both Barakat (2007), and Nicolai (2007) state that French textbooks and French educational laws were translated into Turkish and used in Ottoman public schools for Palestinians. By the end of the Ottoman rule, there were only three public schools offering Palestinians secondary education (Brown, 2003).

British Mandate (1917-1948)

British education in Palestine was described by Elboim-Dror (2000) as “imperial” (p. 31). The Mandate agenda for education appeared one of modernizing (Westernizing) the ‘uncultivated’ local population when, in fact, it aimed to mould Palestinians according to the colonial government's priorities (Elboim-Dror, 2000, p. 31). Using a borrowed curriculum, Mandate education was a centralized system which promoted the colonial

\(^{16}\) For instance, on education as a means of survival for Palestinians, see Anabtawi (1986), Hussein (2005), Şayigh (1997), Tahir (1985).
expansion tradition in Palestine (Nicolai, 2007). Furthermore, British policies in Palestine displayed an impetus to fulfill the Balfour Declaration of 1917\(^{17}\) (Abu Lughod, 2000). As Shepherd (1999) indicates, “towards the end of the Mandate, government expenditure on police and prisons was five times the budget for education” (p. 127). To achieve the Balfour Declaration, the sustainable development of Palestinian institutions in that period was neglected (Abu Lughod, 2002). Whether Mandate education formed a basis for the emerging Palestinian universities is debatable\(^{18}\). Nonetheless, it is argued that Palestinians did not have any colleges or universities for almost 25 years subsequent to *Al Nakbah* (Anabtawi, 1986).

*Al Nakbah* (1948)

Palestinians post-*Al Nakbah* became scattered across several countries and locations (Ṣāyigh, 1997). They lived as Arab Israelis in the newly formed Israeli state, and as refugees in Arab and foreign countries and in the WBGS (Zahlan & Zahlan, 1977). Hence the diversified labour market and national agendas of these host countries impacted upon Palestinians’ HE (Nicolai, 2007).

Egyptian Political Administration in Gaza (1948-1967)

The Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt from 1948-1967, a period of 19 consecutive years. Shachar (2010) explains that exploitation, discrimination, cruelty and bureaucracy were characteristic of that Egyptian rule. The same applied to Palestinians who were born or had lived in Egypt at that time (El-Abed, 2009). During that period, there were still no universities in Palestine, and the Egyptian curriculum offered in Gazan schools under Egyptian administration was irrelevant to the history, culture and identity of Palestinian students: it was simply Egyptian (Nicolai, 2007). This Egyptian education continued in

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\(^{17}\) The Balfour Declaration of 1917 promised the Jews a national home in Palestine.

\(^{18}\) For instance, Anabtawi (1986) states that universities, such as *Beirzeit* or *Al Najah* have emerged from the already existing British secondary schools at that time. On the contrary, Abu Lughod (2000) states that the British education system had completely fallen apart after *Al Nakbah* (1948) and that the basic and secondary British governmental schools were not able to support the emergence of these universities in any way since these were far too confining and discriminatory (Abu Lughod, 2000). Nonetheless, private (non-profit) schools might have contributed to the emergence of the Palestinian universities that followed (Abu Lughod, 2000). In general, it is reported that during the British Mandate, only a few Palestinians studied at HE level (Abu Lughod, 2000).
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Gazan schools for several years, even during Israeli occupation and after the peace process of 1994.

1.2.b Development

Palestinian Universities Emerge

With the Israeli occupation of Gaza from 1967 to 1994, it was essential that Palestinians had their own universities at home. Due to a more competitive labour market, a growing incapacity of Arab universities to host more Palestinians, and the difficulty of travel from the OT, Palestinian universities needed to emerge (Barakat, 2007). This emergence involved a gradual upgrading of existing secondary schools, which firstly started to offer post-secondary diplomas, then BAs, and eventually became established as universities (see Abu Lughod, 2000; Anabtawi, 1986). Further specific details about the emergence of universities are not available in the literature. It is reported, however, that West Bank universities existed prior to those in the Gaza Strip and that Palestinians founded and administered these universities based on their training in HE in American/ European or other Arab countries (Anabtawi, 1986). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were 49 HEIs in the WBGS, including 19 community colleges, 12 university colleges, one open university and 11 traditional universities (Abu Lughod, 2000).

Gaza’s Universities

The first university in the Gaza Strip was established in 1978. This was named the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) and was initially linked to Al Azhar University, a religious HE institution in Cairo (MoEHE, 2010). Al Azhar University (AZU) was the second university to be established in Gaza in 1992. Both universities had strong ties to Egyptian universities. It might be argued that Egyptian education has strongly influenced other Muslim and Arab countries (Anabtawi, 1986), but I agree with Cochran (1986) that HE would have a greater impact on countries with a limited trained labour force. The continued existence of the Egyptian education system in the Gaza Strip, as well as Egypt’s geographical proximity, have meant that the “the sub-culture of [Palestinian universities] remains very Egyptian at heart” (Anabtawi, 1986, pp. 45–46). Turning to the issue of finance, Palestinian universities in Gaza have usually been supported by religious sources.
and the PLO. Palestinian entrepreneurs or wealthy individuals inside and outside the OT, Arab philanthropists and the European Union (EU) also seem to have invested in Palestinian universities (Anabtawi, 1986, pp. 45–46).

Although Palestinian universities were permitted to exist in Gaza during the Israeli occupation, through the imposition of taxation, recurrent curfews, closures and other restrictive measures, Israel worked in fact to obstruct these universities (Abu Lughod, 2000). With the outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada in Gaza in 1987, Israeli collective punitive measures against Palestinian schools and universities intensified (Ra’ad & Nafi’, 2007). Palestinian academic staff and students were exposed to killings, injuries and expulsion, in addition to various types of psychological and emotional harassment. Schools and universities, moreover, were closed arbitrarily, and/or turned into camps for Israeli soldiers or even jails (Johnson, 1986, 1987; Abu Lughod, 2000; Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003; Barakat, 2007; Nicolai, 2007).

Barakat (2007) rightly argues that the Israeli obstruction of Palestinian education had an ambiguous impact on Palestinians. On the one hand, Palestinians became more ‘empowered’ by the Intifada (Barakat, 2007). Thus the absence of schooling at the time of the Intifada encouraged creativity and innovation, increased students’ motivation to learn, democratized the learning-teaching process, improved social ties, and reoriented the focus on Palestinian and cultural values (Hussein, 2005).

On the other hand, Palestinians, as a result of Israeli obstruction of education, became further oppressed. For instance, Hussein (2005) reports that Israel used to reopen the schools arbitrarily to frustrate and undermine these substitutive educational efforts. Since the new emergent forms of education appeared to defy the imposed Israeli closure, these forms were “criminalized” (Hussein, 2005; Mahshi & Bush, 1989). Such restrictions caused significant “loss of literacy and numeracy skills” for a generation of Palestinian

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19 Alzaroo & Hunt (2003) describe how Palestinians had so often to substitute formal schooling with alternative schooling. Non-formal education (NGO programmes), substitutive education (private schools and self-study packs provided by UNRWA), and mostly popular education (community education by untrained teachers) emerged as new forms of Palestinian education (Ra’ad & Nafi’, 2007). Prison education (classes, libraries and networks for Palestinians in Israeli prisons), moreover, was developed to support students who were jailed by the Israeli occupation, see Alzaroo & Hunt (2003), Hussein (2005), Mahshi & Bush (1989), Nicolai (2007).
students (Barakat, 2007, p. 193). Moreover, the university students who graduated at any time of university closure were denied their degrees, since they were studying in alternative ways (Mahshi & Bush, 1989, p. 474). Palestinian universities also witnessed the increased influence of Palestinian political factions (Abu Lughod, 2000). Politics has become an important component of the functioning of Palestinian universities (Johnson, 1987). With all of the above, Palestinian universities had to face some serious challenges: firstly, in adapting to the new conditions and educational agenda of the Intifada and, secondly, in catering for a new generation of Intifada students who needed a new form of learning (Abu Lughod, 2000).

1.2.c Current Challenges

With the Peace Process of 1994, “the context of Palestinian education in the OT changed radically” (Barakat, 2007, p. 194; see also Johnson, 1987; Mahshi & Bush, 1989). The first Palestinian Ministry of Education and HE (MoEHE) was established. This Ministry inherited a system that was “an outdated, second-hand amalgam from other cultures” (Leonard, 1994, cited in Nicolai, 2007, p. 41). Furthermore, in developing a unified educational system between the West Bank (which previously followed Jordanian education) and the Gaza Strip (which previously adhered to Egyptian education), the MoEHE faced immense reform challenges (Nicolai, 2007, p. 41). Working in a fragmented context, issues of educational relevance, quality, access, governance, funding and equity were, and in fact still are, problematic for Palestinian education and HE (Nicolai, 2007).

The Palestinian HE law was passed in 1999, putting forward the system, its governance, strategy and mission (Abu Lughod, 2000; Al Subu, 2009; Hashweh et al., 2003). The Tempus report of 2010 shows that deficiencies and a lack of co-ordination still exist between HE governing bodies and institutions (Abu Lughod, 2000). The post-Oslo period was a productive time of building and investment in the Palestinian education sector. However, it is claimed that the PNA ministries have “undermined the autonomy of Palestinian universities” since these ministries were PLO-oriented (Bruhn, 2006, p. 1135; see also Bailey & Murray, 2009, p. 37).
The outbreak of the *Al Aqsa Intifada* in 2000 resulted in renewed Israeli occupation of the WBGS. Israeli restrictions on movement, closures, demolitions, imprisonment and other measures were reimposed on Palestinians in Gaza (Nicolai, 2006, 2007). This “renewed occupation and its attendant violence have meant an end to much of that positive momentum” of educational development (Nicolai, 2007, p. 109). This time, however, Palestinians became significant contributors to their own problems. Thus, “political divisions, corruption, and incompetence have played their own part in holding [back] educational progress further” (Nicolai, 2006, p. 25). Unlike the first *Intifada* of 1987, young people, instead of being empowered, were “predominantly excluded or used by political factions as tools” (Nicolai, 2007, p. 11).

The election of Hamas in 2006 resulted in the Gaza Strip being placed under further sanctions and blockade (Ra’ad & Nafi’, 2007; Wallner & Prauhart, 2012). Palestinian universities’ academic and cultural exchanges, as well as their opportunities for professional development, were affected greatly by the restrictions imposed on movement (Nagra, 2013). The result was an overreliance by universities on local and outdated knowledge and teaching methodologies, insufficient experience to offer postgraduate degrees, and limited research and development opportunities in addition to disrupted plans and vision for future development (Nagra, 2013). This was a major argument of the Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), which started in 2004 (Barghouti & Taraki, 2005; Jebril, 2006; El-Abed, 2009; Erakat, 2013).

In 2007, Palestinian internal divisions separated the West Bank from the Gaza Strip creating two Palestinian governments: the PNA (dominated by Fatah) in the former, and Hamas in the latter (Pappé, 2014). The devastation resulting from the internal division of the civil sector, including education, was much less serious in the West Bank than in Gaza (Nicolai, 2007). The Palestinian internal divisions have intensified the isolation of, and sanctions on, the Gaza Strip, creating further economic and educational challenges\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{20}\) For instance, being separated from the PNA MoEHE (the main office is in the West Bank), Hamas established in the Gaza Strip another Ministry of Education to which all educational institutions in Gaza are accountable. In terms of funding and programme accreditation, however, the Gaza universities remain linked to MoEHE in the West Bank (Al Subu, 2009). From another perspective, the takeover by Hamas in Gaza resulted in a large number of PNA teachers and educational administrators, ostensibly urged by the PNA to abstain from work since they are on the PNA payroll, being paid without actually carrying out any
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(Nicolai, 2007). But, there is hardly any information in the literature on the impact of the Palestinian schism on Gaza’s universities.

1.2.d A Recapitulation: Research Q1 and Q2

To sum up, socio-political changes have fundamentally impacted upon Palestinian HE. Moreover, Palestinian education/HE have been conceived as important not only by the Palestinians, but also by their occupiers or, as Alzaroo and Hunt (2003) suggest, by the oppressed and the oppressor21. Throughout all, Palestinian universities have acted, firstly, as “bearers of national consciousness”, then as “centres of resistance” and thirdly as “contributors to state building” (Bruhn, 2006, pp. 1125–1126).

What is absent from the literature is how the dramatic socio-political shifts, have impacted on the HE experience of educationalists, as individuals. Thus “individuals [like institutions] derive their cues as to roles and functions from the social order of which they are a part” (Anabtawi, 1986, p. 30). For example, Roy (1995) argues that the “divisions that characterize the political domain in the Gaza Strip represent much more than a simple difference of opinion, they […] shape the individual’s world view” (p. 22). In this context, a mechanistic reform of Gaza HE institutions that does not take educationalists’ experiences into account would be unsustainable (Freire, 2003, p.155). This study explores these experiences through Q1 and Q2 on the past and present academic life under occupation and its influence on Gaza’s universities today. Research Q3, which explores the future HE experience will be discussed in the following section.

21 On the one hand, Palestinians (the oppressed) have attempted to promote radical and liberal education in resistance to the occupation (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). On the other hand, the authors argue that the British Mandate, the Jordanian and Egyptian administrations, and Israel (the oppressors) have ensured further subjugation, economic and social disparity, and dehumanisation of Palestinians by means of traditional education (ibid.).
Section 1.3 An Arab Spring? The Palestinian HE Experience

Map 1.1: The Arab Spring and the Intersection between the MENA, ME, and the Arab world

Note: There is an intersection between the ME, MENA, and the Arab world: the Arab Spring events seem to be associated with all of these at once. Palestine, including the Gaza Strip, is part of all the above mentioned entities; however, the Arab connection, as we will see shortly, is the most powerful of all connections.
The Wider Circle: The Arab World

The outcome of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was shaped by decisions taken at two levels other than the Palestinian one: the Arab circle, and the international circle (Ṣāyigh, 1997). Nonetheless, “that all power relations were enacted or meditated through the Arab circle made it the central one, and made Palestinian-Arab interaction the most important of all relationships” (ibid., p. 20).

1.3.a Gaza and the Arab World: An Introduction

Gaza has a multiplicity of ties with the Arab world that go beyond the geopolitics of its borders. The connection is also historical, cultural and “symbolic” (Shlaim, 2014, p. 383). Though different in its societal and political formation (Ben-Dor, 2013), the Gaza Strip remains part of the “collective consciousness” of the Arab world (Dabashi, 2012, p. 89), and thus connects synchronically with its “broad, powerful, transitional foci of identity” (Khalidi, 1997, p. 171). The Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation, as Shlaim (2014) indicates, represents “the ideological struggle of the Arab nationalists against Western imperialism” (p. 383; see also Ṣāyigh, 1997).

There is a history of reciprocal influence between the politics of Arab countries (domestic and regional) and the Palestinian context; nonetheless, this impact has waned with the increased nationalization of Arab States, “remaining strongest where it could be harnessed to existing social fissures but weakest where construction of authoritarian rule had developed farthest” (Ṣāyigh 1997, p. 21). Such an impact also varies between countries, depending on their acclaimed role in the region and their proximity to the Palestinian borders. In brief, the Gaza Strip is inevitably and inextricably connected to the Arab world, and Gaza's domestic scene is likely to have been influenced by the recent developments in this wider circle, namely, the so-called Arab Spring.

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22 Gaza shares borders with Egypt, the West Bank with Jordan, and WBGS (as parts of ‘historic Palestine’) share borders with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (See Map 0.1)
23 Arab countries share historical roots, culture, language, religion, kinship and more.
1.3.b The Arab World in Turmoil: Implications for Gaza

Starting in December 2010, unexpected revolutions swept over Arab countries in the MENA region, toppling rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen after decades of bureaucratic control. Inspired by these events, a range of other protests, riots and uprisings broke out across other countries including Syria, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. This phenomenon is commonly known as the ‘Arab Spring’ (Danahar, 2013; Gerges, 2014b; Muasher, 2014).

The revolutions of the Arab Spring were of a “grassroots and home-grown nature” (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012, p.5). Thus the Palestinian cause has not triggered these uprisings since calls were mainly for local reform (Muasher, 2014). Consequently, as Danahar (2013) suggests, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will not characterize a new ME. The uncertainty, chaos, unpredictability associated with the Arab Spring at this time makes it difficult to assess the future (Pappé, 2014). Nonetheless, to assume that the Arab Spring’s repercussions will be contained within domestic boundaries or that the causes of it were unconnected to any other wider influences or concerns is unrealistic (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012). Hence scholars have investigated the causes and the impact of the Arab Spring at both regional and international levels.

As Dabashi (2012) argues, there is no dichotomy between “interpreting the world and changing it” (p. 235), and thus knowledge production at this time should be examined in terms of ideological and political frameworks or agendas (Dabashi, 2012). This is evident in the contestation over the implications of the Arab Spring for the Gaza Strip. For instance, Bligh (2013) argues, with a sarcastic tone, about Palestinian youth and whether the Arab Spring does in fact hold any connection with, or hope for, the

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24 Bligh is the director of ME Research Centre at Ariel University (Israel) and served previously as an advisor on Arab affairs to the prime minister of Israel (1987-1992) (Inbar, 2012).
25 Bligh (2013) seems to reject the idea of a possible third Palestinian Intifada, arguing that Palestinian youth represent a frustrated civil society’s “grassroots”, confused about the identity of their “enemy”, hopeless about “any tangible solutions” to their problems, and silenced by the internal Palestinian division and the corruption allegations against the PLO government (pp.75-77; see also Sandler, 2013).
Palestinians. On the contrary, most experts hold a positive view of the implications for the Palestinians in the present and the future.

According to Shlaim (2014), the young people in Arab countries were inspired by the Palestinian experience of resistance, and the Arab Spring, as a new phenomenon in the Arab world, has already started to generate changes (however minor) on the ground. The examples of this influence include the “shift towards Palestinian unilateralism”, the “pressure from civil society” and young people for Palestinian internal reconciliation and reform, the “ending of the stagnant old Arab regimes” (Shlaim, 2014, p. 384), as well as “pro-Palestinian sentiments and pro-Palestinian slogans” in the Arab revolutions, which gives an encouraging sign; see also Andersson & Djeflat, 2012).

Nonetheless, it is not surprising to read Brresheeth's (2012) observation that “not a single voice from the Israeli political arena welcomed or offered solidarity to the incredible wave of democratic energy and action across the Arab World” (p.35; see also Frisch, 2008; Andersson & Djeflat, 2012; Shlaim, 2014). The words ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ are in themselves contentious when discussed in the Palestinian-Israeli context: Palestinian optimism could be Israeli pessimism and vice versa.

In fact, Pappé's (2014) opinion that “at this transitional period […] we do not possess a clear vision of where [the Arab Spring] might lead in concrete and definable terms” is convincing (p. 326). This uncertainty is reflected in the contested naming of the Arab revolutions as Arab Spring, Arab Autumn (Islamist or European), Arab and/or Islamist Winter, partial awakening, and others (see, for instance, Cannistraro, 2012; Fahmy, 2012; Pappé, 2014). Thus a focus on the common trends behind the different revolutions seems to be a more feasible approach (Shlaim, 2014; Gerges 2014a). As mentioned earlier, the revolutionary wave of the Arab Spring is associated mainly with “local grievances” (Shlaim, 2014, p.381). The young protesters called for freedom, equality and economic and political reform in their countries (Ben-Dor, 2013, pp. 14–15). Yet these


27 It is a Palestinian unilateralism as demonstrated by the PNA's historic winning bid at the UN in 2011 by which it gained international recognition of Palestine as a state with a UN non-observant membership.
demonstrations were expected to motivate change at the regional and international levels (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012). It has already proved to have what Dabashi (2012, p.133) describes as a “nuclear reaction”, or Ben-Dor (2013, p.13) calls a “demonstration effect”, particularly among countries in the Arab world.

To sum up, “how we evaluate the uprisings and where we expect them to lead varies greatly according to where we come from and the issue on which we choose to focus” (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012, p. 1). This research is concerned with the Arab revolutions’ implications (if at all) for the educational context of Gaza’s universities from the Palestinian perspective.

1.3.c The Arab Spring and Education: A Shifting Socio-Political Context

The Arab Spring (awakening) implies a shifting socio-political context in the ME (Muasher, 2014). The momentum of this shift is best viewed bearing the perspective of the past in mind, that is, the Arab world is usually “marked by its historic legacy of powerful ancient civilization followed by centuries of relative stagnation” (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012, p.19), of which the latter was maintained by Arab dictatorship regimes for decades (Dabashi, 2012). Within this narrative, the cultural institutions (such as schools and universities) formed a crucial platform for legitimating the monopoly, bureaucracy, and other practices of these authoritarian governments by means of symbolic violence and control (Brynen, Moore, Salloukh, & Zahar, 2012; see also Bunce, 2014)

The educational system in most of the Arab countries is generally characterized by simplistic thinking, rote learning, religious education, and reverence for, and subjugation to, the ruling regime (Muasher, 2014). The same applies to HE in which students are usually prepared with a mindset that focuses on securing jobs in the public sector rather than on innovation and entrepreneurship (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012). However, these graduates, having studied in traditional, controlled systems, are not often equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to improve their institutions, which means a reproduction of traditional practices and problems in the society at large (Muasher, 2014).

Recently, the Arab countries have witnessed an increased enrolment in HE, and more branches of Western institutions have opened; yet the Arab HE performance in terms of
research, publication, scientific education, technical and vocational training, and its international ranking in league tables is still limited (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012). Despite a maximization of financial support for educational reform, Muasher (2014) points out that, “monetary investments have not produced the desired outcomes because the overall philosophy of education systems still runs counter to them” (p.138). Even the potential for reform created by the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools and universities has often been obstructed by untrained and autocratic educators (Andersson and Djeflat, 2012). The result has been a set of social and political problems for Arab countries, which have included a lack of democracy, increased dependence on foreign thinkers and production, limited economic development, radicalization, nepotism, poverty or/unemployment and the inability to compete in the global labour market (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012; Muasher, 2014).

The Arab Spring revolutions have shown new signs of hope that may impact upon the social-political arena resulting in significant changes at the present or in the future. That is, despite Arab authoritarian regime attempts to domesticate cultural institutions and the intellectual strata, Brynen et al. (2012) argue that, their manipulative and controlling strategies have failed, as evidenced by the revolutions, to contain people's critical awareness and their struggle for a life of dignity and freedom. I concur with Muasher (2014) that the new generational force in these societies may lack the central resources or necessary competence currently to act as a powerful counter to, or an effective replacement for, the old autocratic regimes. Nevertheless, it is clear, by virtue of twenty-first century connectivity, that youth “even in peripheral rural areas […] have” inevitably come to see the world differently from the elderly” (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012, p. 36).

It is true that the role of technology in the Arab Spring revolutions should not be overestimated since it is as Fuchs, (2012) states, only a double-edged medium. However, I concur with Farrell (2012) that for the purposes of political and social engagement in the Arab world, technology provides contentious new spaces in which such engagement is either supported or curtailed. Technology and media have probably fostered a sense of collective agency among Arab youth in different countries, who generally share a similar identity and calls for justice and reform (Gamson, 2011). In all this, education is seen as a barometer of, and contributor to, a shifting socio-political context, which is oriented
towards more democracy and pluralism in the Arab world (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012; Campante & Chor, 2012; Muasher, 2014).

To summarize, the majority of authors emphasize that “the Arab world has entered a new phase in its […] history” (Brynen et al., 2012, p. 301). Yet the shift to constitution and reform from the revolutionary impetus is loaded with complexities and unpredictability (Gerges, 2014a). Achieving a democratic and pluralistic society requires a focus on intellectual activity and educational reform (Muasher, 2014).

1.3.d The University: Exploring the Palestinian Experience and Research Q 3

Palestinian university culture is influenced by the personal and professional characteristics of their faculty members, most of whom have received their HE in Arab host countries (Anabtawi, 1986). Arab education for Palestinians was regarded by Israel as “an effective inculcator of the same cultural and Islamic propensities which have governed Arab intellectual categories for centuries” and hence it was tolerated (ibid., p.10). Egyptian HE in particular continues to be relevant to other universities in the Arab countries (Cochran, 1986; Shann, 1992), and especially to those in the Gaza Strip. Yet the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world implies new challenges and promises for the region (Danahar, 2013)

One of the most important aspects is ideological, namely, a renewed focus on the individual's voice (Inbar, 2012). According to Gerges (2014a), the Arab Spring “reinvigorated academic interest in bottom-up” research as opposed to “the past fixation with top-down politics and the elite” (p. 1; see also Bunce, 2014). Pappé (2014) argues that the focus on analysing authoritarian regimes was behind the failure of academics and ME experts to predict Arab people’s uprisings (see also Bunce, 2014; Gerges, 2014b). Even worse, analysts seem to have built their assumptions on “what they know” about

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28 For example, Shalim (2014, p. 38) describes the Arab Spring as ‘a watershed in the modern history of the Middle East’; Pappé (2014, p. 326) as ‘a defining moment in the history of the region’; Dabashi (2012, p. 133) as ‘an end of post-colonial ideological formations’; and Danahar (2013, p. 428) as the start of a ‘new Middle East’.
the Arab world rather than what is newly evolving (Dabashi, 2012, p. 78). As Dabashi (2012) criticizes, an adherence to the familiar frameworks of knowing is a form of thinking and writing backwards, which is detrimental to the development of the region (see also Mitchell, 2002).

Educational reform in the Arab world may take “half a century” (Muasher, 2014, p.124). Yet so far, attempts at reform do not seem effective due to a failure to identify or address rigorously the quality problems that matter (Muasher, 2014). There is also a lack of research (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012) and statistics (Heyneman, 1997). These problems apply to the Gaza Strip particularly since educational reform is usually a top-down project that is based on Western or other Arab countries’ models (Abu Lughod, 2000). The Palestinian HE experience, being very different, needs to be explored, especially at this critical time in the Arab world. How individual academic staff and students perceive this context and its influence on their universities in Gaza, will be explored in Research Q3.

A Summary of Chapter One

To sum up, Chapter One presented a context review of the research questions (Table 0.1) which included, firstly, the background of the Gaza Strip; secondly, the educational context and Gaza's universities; and finally, the Palestinian experience as part of the wider context of the Arab Spring.

The literature review confirms that this study addresses key gaps in the literature. With the current increased interest in grass-roots academic research after the Arab Spring, this study is also proving to be timely. Its subject is HE, which was, as Muasher (2014) describes, “at the top of […]government policies] failures” that trigged the public demonstrations across many Arab countries (p. 141). Furthermore, it foregrounds the changing perceptions of education at this shifting time in the region. Although Palestinians are part of the Arab world, in the current worldwide Arab Spring dialogue, Palestinian writings are absent. There remains not a single study on the topic of HE in Gaza, particularly, after the Arab Spring. Therefore this research represents a pioneer
contribution to the major academic dialogue on the Arab Spring and to the history of Palestinian HE, past, present and future.
Chapter Two

Thinking of the Research Project

This chapter aims to explore; firstly, seminal studies on HE in other conflict-affected areas; secondly, some of the theoretical insights that have informed this research on Gaza and; finally, contentious issues that relate to the researcher of this study. An overview of this chapter can be found in Figure 2.1 below:

Figure 2.1 An Overview of Chapter Two
Section 2.1 Thinking with Other Contexts: HE in Conflict-Affected Areas

This section seeks to explore the literature on education and conflict. The discussion establishes the Gaza Strip as a conflict area under occupation, and confirms the importance and contribution of this research on Gaza to conflict and education as ‘an emerging field’ (Smith & Vaux, 2003; Leach & Dunne, 2007; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008).

2.1.a The Gaza Strip: Conflict, Post-Conflict, Occupation or Peace?

Thinking about Gaza, it is hard to define what position it occupies within conflict studies. For example, Gaza is variously considered to be involved in an “intrastate armed conflict”; or in peace, it is seen as a “proto-state”; or it is regarded as engaged in an internal conflict\(^\text{29}\) (Strand & Dahl, 2010, p.12). Several other writers, however, have referred to Gaza as being under occupation (Roy, 2005; Barakat, 2007; Shachar, 2010). This problem of ambiguity and variance in definition is, as Brock (2011) suggests, common within the conflict domain.

Since there is a lack of data on conflict-affected areas, a study conducted by Strand and Dahl (2010) attempted to categorize countries into three groups: conflict, post-conflict and peaceful countries. According to the authors, each group, with reference to this categorization, is seen as “internally consistent and externally contrastive” with contentious spaces, particularly between the first and second groups\(^\text{30}\) (Strand & Dahl, 2010, p.6). Whether the Gaza Strip fits within this controversial space is arguable. With little research available on such a space, and perhaps also because I am a Palestinian

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\(^{29}\) Strand and Dahl (2010) refer to “intrastate armed conflict” as that which exists between the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and Israel. In peace, however, the authors see Gaza, as a result of the Oslo Agreement 1994, as a “proto-state”. Strand and Dahl (2010) also regard Gaza as being in an internal conflict, taking into consideration the fight between the Hamas and Fatah movements (Strand & Dahl, 2010, p. 12).

\(^{30}\) Post-conflict countries, even after the signing of peace agreements, may continue to experience violence (Strand & Dahl, 2010).
researcher, I construct the Gaza Strip in this study as both an area of ‘conflict’ and one which is ‘under occupation’.

2.1.b Education and Conflict: A Complex Relationship

I concur with Smith and Vaux (2003) in assuming that a “cause or effect” relationship between education and conflict is too simplistic (p. 3). Though Davies (2004) points out that “the link between education and conflict is a grossly under-analysed area” (p. 7), the evidence so far suggests that the relationship is one of reciprocity and non-linearity.

Firstly, there is an impact of conflict on education and of education on conflict (Barakat, Karpinska, & Paulson, 2008; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Brock, 2011). This means that, the quality, access and provision, as well as the type of education offered, are naturally affected by conflict (Smith & Vaux, 2003). In turn, in conflict settings, education has an influence on identity, ideology and values (ibid, p. 2). Thus education in such areas can be seen as simultaneously playing multiple roles: “victim” or/and “perpetrator” (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p. 478; see also Rutayisire, 2007; Smith & Vaux, 2003). In this respect, Barakat et al. (2008) rightly argue that “education indicators [can be used] as early warning mechanisms” (p. 16). Smith (2010) also maintains that the role of education in conflict-affected areas depends on the quality of education offered in terms of language of instruction, curriculum, learning resources and textbooks, teachers and teaching methods.

Nonetheless, for many people, education remains a crucial component in any process of reconciliation, reconstruction (Leach & Dunne, 2007) and development (Allsop & Brock, 1993; Stewart, 2004). Davies (2004) observes the relationship between education and conflict from two other perspectives, on the one hand, as “the ‘wicked’ end of change” since a change to one cannot happen without a change to the other and vice versa (p. 21), and, on the other hand, as part of a non-linear (interactive) dynamic with other systems. Leach and Dunne (2007) seem to be in agreement with this notion of non-linearity since they perceive education to be implicated in the political, economic and socio-cultural explanations of why conflict happens.
2.1.c Context Matters: Lessons from Conflict-Affected Areas

I believe that “no two contexts […] are the same, no two development trajectories are congruent, and educational realities vary widely from one country to the next” (Rappley, 2011, p. 59). A good example of this is a comparison which Justino (2010) draws between the experience of Rwandans after the 1994 genocide, and that of the Germans and the Japanese after WWII; the first was one of devastation, the second of rapid growth. For this reason, I read research on other conflict areas not to obtain factual details, but to identify themes, lessons and gaps in knowledge.

The key issues that emerged from such a review strongly supported the focus of this study: for example, the research conducted on Bosnia and Herzegovina suggests that divisions and tensions in HE which may have further consequences for these societies were, in fact, caused by imported HE policies (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009; see also Ossenbach & Boom, 2011). Moreover, teachers are thought to be key agents in the process of post-conflict reconstruction (Ezati, 2011; Plonski, 2007; Rutayisire, 2007). For a better future, as Cunningham (2011) also points out, the educational Ministry’s reform should prioritize a focus on young teachers.

From another perspective, HE seems to be influenced by socio-political changes. For instance, as Broadfoot, Brock and Tulasiewicz (1981) state, in many countries, such as those of Western Europe, and also in Chile from 1964 to 1998, socio-economic and political change, in some way similar to those demanded by the Arab Spring, were translated into educational changes (p. 5). Furthermore, in post-crisis countries, as a recent study on Libya explains, HE reconstruction seems to be driven by the use of ICT (Rhema & Miliszewska, 2012).

The following includes some other observations that are relevant to this study on Gaza, namely, that efforts for countries’ reform and reconstruction continue to be impeded in the post-colonial era by internal problems. For instance, the impact of conflict on
Cambodia’s education is thought to be irrevocable\textsuperscript{31} (Fergusson & Masson, 1997). Other studies indicate that as post-colonial teachers continue to behave in ways that are underpinned by colonial attitudes, the reform process becomes further complicated by a policy and implementation gap (Nehwevha, 2002; Soudieu, 2002; Rutayisire, 2007). Therefore, it is important, as Mather (2007) maintains, for the process of reform to redress the problems of the past along with those of the present.

Other studies show that the internal conditions, problems, culture, and structure impact upon the educational sector as much as they do on the approach taken to reform since the education context is contingent upon the society in which it functions (for more details, see Lee, 2007; Mather, 2007; Badat, 2009; Bamwesiga, Dahlgren, & Fejes, 2012).

To summarize, educational conflict research is limited and not amenable to comparison (Barakat et al., 2008; Justino, 2010). Thus Palestinian culture and experience of HE could hardly be compared to that of any other conflict or post-conflict context; it is inherently unique and thus worth studying. Yet most concerns that are raised about post-colonial educational reform appear to be in congruence with this research direction, and this further confirms the focus and the importance of this study.

2.1.d Education and Conflict: Research Gaps

Although data on education and conflict are important to the consideration of local and international developments (Montjourides, 2013), the evidence suggests that this study area remains under-researched (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Field research in conflict zones is a challenging experience (Goodhand, 2000; Wood, 2006). Consequently, most research is based on library study (Barakat et al., 2008). In conflict zones, academic research usually benefits from the work of aid and humanitarian agencies (Leach & Dunne, 2007; King, 2009). Nonetheless, such a dependency is a problem since the focus

\textsuperscript{31} Fergusson and Masson, 1997 explain that “educational practice was severely impacted by civil and regional war between North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the United States, the Khmer Rouge (KR), and a US-backed military junta from 1970 to 1975, and then terminated by the KR from 1975 to 1979” (p. 91). That said, the authors state that “by 1979 the education system in Cambodia had been completely devastated” (p. 111). Despite later efforts for reform, “Cambodia had been traumatized […], and no amount of foreign aid or goodwill can readily correct the devastation” (p.112)
of these agencies seems to be much less on people than on projects (Barakat et al., 2008). Hence, “in the absence of adequate theoretical explanations of the peculiar problems confronting development in the Gaza Strip, an analytic approach is needed that gives primacy to empirical data” (Roy, 1995, p. 122). Furthermore, the fact that HE in conflict zones, in comparison to primary education, for instance, remains seriously underresearched means that this study is urgently needed (Barakat et al., 2008; see also Netswera & Mathabe, 2006)

Another issue is the quality of the research produced on conflict settings. Research in conflict-affected areas remains underdeveloped in several respects. Regular international research ethics committees are not experienced in addressing context-specific ethical dilemmas in conflict areas (Ford, Mills, Zachariah, & Upshur, 2009). Due to personal bias, inaccessibility problems or unclear methodology, the quality of research in these areas may be easily compromised (Strand & Dahl, 2010). Studies on conflict areas tend to use interviews, observations, case studies and documentary analysis, that is, an empirical qualitative approach. However, most of the available research has been conducted post-conflict (for example, see Soudieu, 2002; Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003; Roebken, 2008; Cunningham, 2011; Ezati, 2011; Bamwesiga et al., 2012).

In conclusion, this research can offer various original contributions to an emerging field of knowledge. In addressing the research recommendations of Barakat et al. (2008), this study of HE, as research on a city under siege, also widens the geographical scope of conflict research. PhD researchers in conflict zones should, as Samuel and Vithal (2011) emphasize, concern themselves with their countries’ reforms and be proactive in researching and writing about their contexts.

32 Difficulties of access in this research will be explained in Chapter Three.
Section 2.2 Thinking with Theory

This section is comprised of three related parts: a) Theoretical Insights; b) An Afterthought on Theory; and c) Southern Theory: The Palestinian Experience.

2.2.a Theoretical Insights

Oppression as an area of research remains considerably “under-theorized” (New, 2001, p. 730, (see also Abberley, 1987, p. 7). The following are concepts that underpin this research on Gaza universities:

Oppression

Firstly, HE and oppression have a complex and perhaps contradictory relationship (Von Holdt, 2012). Secondly, there is an oppressor-oppressed dual role commonly found within the same individual (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; New, 2001; Freire, 2003). Hence research participants may be simultaneously privileged and oppressed (Dong & Temple, 2011). Thirdly, oppression implies power relations and thus it is “a value-laden term” (New, 2001, p. 732). Fourthly, oppression takes different forms and operates dynamically across different levels. Fifthly, oppression may generate different responses on the side of the oppressed, such as misrecognition, normalization, resistance or even conscious compliance (Swartz, 2013, p. 44; see also Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). From all of the above, “oppression cannot be ‘read off’ [from] experience” (New, 2001, p. 730). Hence, “responses to oppression vary dramatically according to national, regional, cultural, and interpersonal context” (Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 197).

Education as a Soft Power

In the literature, education is seen as a “soft power”, since it is a decisive process that that can determine the “domestication” of, (Freire, 2003, p.75), or the liberation from,

oppression (or maybe both). On the one hand, it is widely argued\(^{35}\) that education is a tool used for internalizing the oppressor. On the other hand, several authors\(^ {36}\) have argued for the power of education to liberate the oppressed, but the processes of domestication and liberation are also viewed as inseparable. For instance, Prilleltensky (2003) indicates that suffering is simultaneously associated with agency for liberation (see also Freire, 2003). Altogether, as Dong and Temple (2011) maintain, oppression is best measured in empirical research through its consequences.

### 2.2.b An Afterthought on Theory

The inductive data pointed towards the thoughts of two scholars: firstly, and mainly, those of Paulo Freire expressed in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and secondly, those of Pierre Bourdieu on ‘Symbolic power, violence, and capital’. I cast their theoretical lens on the written themes in a retrospective manner, that is, without imposition that would lead to data distortion. This is to benefit from the *posteriori* knowledge and to leave the ‘Southern’ experience of HE in Gaza to speak for itself, in its own language (Connell, 2007).

Firstly, Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is “an extraordinary text […] which had an influence on both theory and practice in education” that is “monumental” (Irwin, 2012, p.12; see also McLaren & Leonard, 1993). The “intimate connections between life and philosophy” in Freire’s work makes it relevant “to the contemporary analysis of education and culture” including this research (Irwin, 2012, pp.1 & 8). Nonetheless, as Apple (2002) mentions,

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\(^{35}\) For instance, Lukes (2005, in Swartz, 2013) points out a “third dimension of power”, Bourdieu, in Topper, 2001, p. 47 refers to a “gentle” domination, “Harvey (1999) has used the term ‘civilized oppression’ ” (Fine, 2006, p. 85), and Mouffe (1979, in Fine, 2006) notes a “passive revolution” as facilitated by assumptions and ideology. Furthermore, Abberley (1987) emphasizes “the ideologies which propagate and reproduce” oppression (p. 17), Young (2000, in Dong & Temple, 2011, p. 171) focuses on cultural imperialism as a category of oppression, and (Hanna et al., 2000 ; Prilleltensky, 2003) view oppression as both political and psychological.

\(^{36}\) Altbach (1966), for instance, highlights the importance of university student unions in political and social action, and Elmer and Frazer (1999) maintain that HE plays a significant role in societal change and transformation. Furthermore, more generally, education is seen as an “empowering tool” (Mayo & Silwadi, n.d., p. 3).
“understanding Paulo Freire is not simple and the implications of his work are extensive’ (p. x; see also: Frankenstein, 1983, p.315).

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed was developed in the Brazilian socio-cultural context and its struggle “with the damaging legacy of Portuguese colonialism, and with its own complex internal politics” (Irwin, 2012, p.2). Although it “originated in Third World countries”, oppression in the Gaza Strip has a different texture and is influenced by its national context and Arab culture (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p.5). Written in the 1970s, Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed also took its “cue from the [specific] situation in which it [found] itself” (Irwin, 2012, p.11). This is different from the social world of the twenty-first century and from the Palestinian context.

Thus it is “naïve thinking, […]to perceive Friere’s analysis in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed as] ‘historical [in] time’ […] from which the present should emerge normalized and ‘well-behaved’ ” (Freire, 1996, p. 161). In order to “define the social world” of HE in the Gaza Strip based on its indigenous voices, I had to “dialogue” with the Freirean text critically (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p.4). I attempted a “cultural synthesis” between his concepts and my empirical data as relevant, applied them flexibly, and whenever possible problematized them (for example, in relation to fatalism) (Freire, 1996, p. 161). To employ one recommendation of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, I was “critically” conscious of the danger of allowing Friere’s “world view” of analysis to “invade” mine as a researcher (Freire, 1996, pp. 73, 141, 133).

Oppression ‘Landmarks’

According to Freire, oppression is “any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his or her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person” (Freire, 1996, p. 37). However, this research is wide-ranging in its themes. Oppression operated on different levels (e.g. society, universities, family, person) and seemed interactive. So often, the role of these actors as oppressors and oppressed seemed interactive too. Also, oppression was not the same experience in all situations; it did not have the same feeling in terms of its depth and power for all my sample. For example, oppression in the case of privileged males was different from oppression for females; and oppression for female students was different from oppression for older female academics. Therefore I chose the
Freirean concepts that could be operational within this variance and which are presented in Figure 2.2 below:

![Figure 2.2 Characteristics of an Oppressive HE Experience](image)

The above concepts from the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* spoke to my data. They allowed a close and critical understanding of Gazan educationalists’ voices. This opened up the data to a wider and multi-dimensional perspective of interpretation. Freire’s concepts helped me to answer the research questions and to gain a better understanding of the nuances of the complex HE context of Gaza. Conversely, Freire’s work can be viewed as a blueprint. Through my study, I show how some of his concepts might apply to a challenging conflict environment.

Methodological concepts such as ‘praxis’ and ‘dialogue’ have been operationalized widely in the literature. On the contrary, most concepts that I have chosen for this study
are rarely used in relation to HE\textsuperscript{37}. Also, to the best of my knowledge, there is almost no study that has used this wide range of Freirean concepts (11 tools) simultaneously on one set of research data, and definitely none that has used them to explore the HE experience in the Gaza Strip.

Applying Freire’s concepts empirically

In using the concept of “dehumanization”, I focused on the instances in which the humanity of my participants was “distorted” (e.g. through the siege, the war, the violation of educationalists’ human rights and freedoms) (Freire, 1996, p.26). The concept “false generosity” draws attention to the “soft” ways in which this dehumanization have sometimes taken place in “an unjust social order” (1996, p.26). This was demonstrated in the data through, for example, local and international aid and scholarships offered for factional recruitment or to advance other political and cultural aims (1996, p.26).

“Prescription” and “banking education” are utilized as somewhat related concepts (1996, pp. 29, 53). ‘Prescription’ is evident in the instances when there is a direct “imposition of one’s individual’s choice upon another” (e.g. families’ prescription of study and career choices for females) (1996, p. 29). As for ‘banking education’, I tried to use it mainly in relation to the traditional educational context at Gaza’s universities in which teacher-student communication is “an act of depositing […]pointing to its impact on] creativity, transformation, and knowledge”, as applicable (Freire, 1996, p. 53).

I tried to use concepts such as “duality”, “self-depreciation”, “silence”, and sense of “fatalism” as tools to highlight the impact of the above-mentioned aspects of oppression on the participants, as individuals (Freire, 1996, pp. 30, 45, 87, 43). In contrast, the concept of “horizontal violence” was utilized mainly at the community level, for example, to refer to rivalry among the Palestinian factions (1996, p. 44). It is described as ‘horizontal’ in relation to the Israeli occupation which, considering the imbalance in the power-relationship, is perceived as a ‘vertical’ form of violence against Palestinians.

\textsuperscript{37} For example, a concept such as ‘horizontal violence’ is surprisingly used more in articles on nursing, and less in HE education (see Curtis, Bowen, & Reid, 2007; Duffy, 1995; Dunn, 2003; Longo & Sherman, 2007; McKenna, Smith, Poole, & Coverdale, 2003; Purpora & Blegen, 2012; Purpora, Blegen, & Stotts, 2012).
“Antidialogics” is a concept that was relevant to the discussion of actions that aimed to “impede communication […] and destroy in the oppressed their quality as ‘considerers’ of the world” (Freire, 1996, pp. 161, 120). Freire explains that “the revolutionary process is eminently educational in character” (1996, p.119). Any cultural action which is a revolutionary action should be dialogical (1996). Hence, “what distinguishes [Palestinian] revolutionary [cultural/political] leaders from the [oppressors] is not only their objectives, but their procedures. If they act in the same way, the objectives become identical” (1996, p.148). Freire asserts that “antidialogical action explicitly or implicitly aims to preserve, within the social structure, situations which favour its own agents […] It is necessarily and fundamentally an induced action” (1996, p. 161).

In this research, I tried to elicit the complex concept of ‘antidialogics’ through focusing on actions that involved “the conquest of the people, their division, their manipulation, and cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, p. 161). I have attempted to adapt these concepts in simultaneous connection to educationalists, their HE institutions, and the Gaza community. For example, “conquest” (1996, p. 129) could refer to dysfunctional relationships between actors at different levels: (e.g. lecturer-student; university administration-students; males-females, parents-sons/daughters; political factions-people; and Israeli occupation-the Gaza Strip). More or less, the same usage applies to the concepts of “division” and “manipulation” (1996, pp. 125, 128). “Cultural invasion” was mainly used to refer to Egyptian and Russian efforts to capitalize on Palestinians’ need of HE for their own interests and political agendas (1996, p.133). (For a list of Freirean definitions of these concepts, see the ‘Concept Review’ in Appendix 2).

Secondly: Bourdieu’s ‘Symbolic power, violence, and capital’

Similarly, “the analysis of power stands at the core of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology [as] he proposes a theory of symbolic power, violence and capital” (Swartz, 2013, p.30). These Bourdieusian concepts “overlap” and their “analytical distinctions appear in different parts of his work” (Swartz, 2013, p. 37).
Swartz (2013) offers a helpful insight into the three concepts of “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2); “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1989, p.23); and “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). The author explains that “the capacity to impose symbolic meanings [is] (symbolic power), the authority to do so (symbolic capital), and the distorting effects upon individual autonomy and interests (symbolic violence)” (Swartz, 2013, p.84). These “are different but intimately connected aspects in Bourdieu’s thinking about the symbolic realm” (Swartz, 2013, p.84). In my research, I use ‘symbolic violence’ as the main conceptual tool from Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133), but, the exercise of symbolic violence presupposes the existence of some sort of symbolic power and capital.

Symbolic Violence

On symbolic domination, Bourdieu (2001) writes:

> The effect of symbolic domination […] is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousness but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 37)

Conversely, Topper (2001) explains that the habitus represents “the embodied product of an individual’s history, experience, […] and social location” (p. 38). This “calls attention to [the] phenomenon [of symbolic violence] at the individual level” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). According to Swartz (2013), “symbolic power shapes the habitus and therefore takes the form of embodied dispositions that generate a ‘practical sense’ for organizing perceptions of and actions [of exclusion and inclusion] in the social world” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89).

Altogether , as Reay (2004b) maintains, habitus “transcends dualisms of agency-structure, objective-subjective and micro-macro” (p. 432). One’s habitus gives way to ‘symbolic violence’ since “symbolic power […] can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p. 164).

Misrecognition, Naturalization, and Compliance out of a Practical Logic

Symbolic violence “suggests a bending under the weight of domination, a distortion, a
deformation, an assault against the personhood of the individual and authentic identity of the group” (Swartz, 2013 p. 97). What makes symbolic violence a violence is that the “actors ‘misrecognize’ its true nature. Naturalizing inequalities create this misrecognition” (Swartz, 2013, p. 95). The “misrecognition occurs for both dominant and dominated parties” (Swartz, 2013, p. 96) since the habitus “adjusts itself to a probable future which it anticipates and helps to bring about because it reads it directly in the present of the presumed world” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 64). This sharing is not equal, since “the dominated tend to adopt the dominant view of themselves” (Swartz, 2013, p.96).

Bourdieu (1996) explains that symbolic violence can also be exercised with agents’ “recognition” (p. 199):

Symbolic violence […] can be practiced only on subjects who know, but whose acts of cognition, being partial and mystified, endorse the tacit recognition of domination, which is implied in the misrecognition of the true foundations of domination. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 183)

In a ‘naturalized’ context, individuals can voluntarily choose their actions based on a ‘practical’ logic. On this Bourdieu (1984) asserts that:

Objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a ‘sense of one’s place’ which leads one to exclude oneself from the good, persons, place, and so forth from which one is excluded. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471)

Consequently, “dominated individuals and groups participate in their own domination helping to perpetuate it, not out of choice or from external constraint but from the ‘fit’ between the expectations of their habitus and the external structures they encounter” (Swartz, 2013, p.98). This “reinforce[s] and reproduce[s] social hierarchies […]and] inegalitarian arrangements” without resistance (Swartz, 2013, p. 100). In that sense, “symbolic power is a pillar of political order” (Swartz, 2013, p.100).
Using Bourdieu empirically

The concept of “symbolic violence is corporal as well as cognitive and finds expression in all forms of body language” (Swartz, 2013, p.92). Symbolic violence could be also seen through “religious rituals […] and the organization of physical space can convey symbolic significance” (Swartz, 2013, p. 91). This study is only concerned with the cognitive dispositions that my participants have “misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199), as “natural” limits to their actions, or to which, despite their recognition, they have unconsciously adopted a sense of “practical logic” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471), to avoid the “anticipated” consequences (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 64). This ensures a focus on participants’ cultural assumptions and the impact of these assumptions on shaping their HE experiences at Gaza’s universities. I have also tried to refer to ‘symbolic power’ and ‘symbolic capital’ as relevant to contextualizing the discussion on ‘symbolic violence’ in sufficient detail about the Gazan context.

According to Bourdieu, “symbolic violence is the gentle disguised form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Bourdieu does not seem concerned with conflict contexts where overt violence is more possible than, for instance, in France. My research offers an opportunity to explore Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence in its interaction with other forms of oppression although “domination, even when based on naked force, […] such as arms […] always has a symbolic dimension” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 172).

A Tripartite Dialogue: Freire, Bourdieu, and ‘I’

Freire’s and Bourdieu’s sociologies had in fact a similar political mission. Freire offered the oppressed a theory of action that counters the oppressor’s ‘theory of oppressive action’ (Freire, 1996, p. 164). As for Bourdieu, since his “socioanalysis brings forth recognition over misrecognition, clairvoyance over mystery”, he “saw his sociology as a tool of struggle against symbolic violence” (Swartz, 2013, p.85). Both Freire’s and Bourdieu’s conceptual tools for understanding power-relations and the oppressive impact they produce overlap. For example, I concur with Burawoy (2012) that “Freire and
Bourdieu start out from similar places – domination- although Freire uses a word with a more revolutionary connotation – oppression” (p.110). Freire’s internal oppression can also be seen as “the counterpart to symbolic violence - the introjection of the oppressor into the psyche” (p.110). However, “Freire is much more optimistic than Bourdieu” about the role of education in individual and societal transformation (p. 111). For example, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, places an emphasis on social reproduction, while marginalizing social and structural change (Reay, 2004b). This suggests limited prospects for transformation. Despite their differences and valued arguments, it is important for researchers to “adopt a broader theoretical canvas and forsake dry statistics for historical process, […] to grasp the ways in which education becomes a terrain of struggle that fosters both […] change and […] reproduction” (Burawoy, 2012, p.118).

The interrelation between Freire’s and Bourdieu’s theories is relevant to the analysis of the social world of Gaza’s universities. This study captures a snapshot of educationalists’ HE experience under occupation by mapping different aspects of this experience. It does not provide the details required for examining each of Freire’s or Bourdieu’s theories and concepts separately. What this study offers as advantageous is a variety of interrelated themes and participant quotes which can constitute a unified platform of real-life situations whereby the selected concepts from both sociologists are in dialogue with each other. This helps to provide an in-depth comprehension of the Gaza social context and the data that were analysed inductively.

38 Burawoy (2012) explains that “where Bourdieu thematises symbolic violence in France, as opposed to physical violence in the colonies, Freire thematises internal as opposed to external, oppression” (p.110). Nonetheless, Freire’s internal oppression “at first glance, […] is not different from Bourdieu’s notion of social structure being inscribed on the body or internalized in the habitus” (Burawoy, 2012, p.110).

39 Freire “sees within the psyche two selves, the humanistic individual and the oppressor; the true self and the false self” (Burawoy, 2012, p.111). Taking this into consideration, critical pedagogy is important for the individual in his struggle for his true self and for liberating the oppressed class (Burawoy, 2012). On the contrary, “through Bourdieu’s eyes, ‘the pedagogy of the oppressed’ is a dangerous fantasy of intellectuals who think they can overcome, firstly, their own habitus as intellectuals (a dominated fraction of the dominant class) and, secondly, and even more difficult, foster the transformation of the habitus of the dominated. Critical pedagogy is an intellectualist illusion […]. It misunderstands the depth of oppression, for it conspires to do what educational ideologies generally do, i.e. focus on the pedagogic relation and thereby obscure its class underpinnings. Freire might retort that Bourdieu is focused on the transmission of the dominant culture and cannot see beyond a banking model of education” (Burawoy, 2012, p.112).
In this study, I am placing my ‘Southern’ organic data at the centre, and Western theories around the periphery (Smith, 1999). Therefore, Freire’s and Bourdieu’s conceptual tools are used flexibly and perceived as “flame[s] whose edges are in constant movement” (Bourdieu, 1987, p.13). I concur with Freire who argues:

The investigator who, in the name of scientific objectivity, transforms the organic into something inorganic, what is becoming into what is, life into death, is a person who fears change […] and who makes’ people the passive objects of investigation in order to arrive at rigid models, or betrays their own character as a killer of life. (Freire, 1996, p. 89)

2.2.c Southern Theory: The Palestinian Experience

Raewyn Connell (2007) rightly states that “mainstream sociology turns out to be an ethno-sociology of metropolitan society” (p.226). For example, Reay (2004b) explains that Bourdieu argues for habitus as a method rather than a dogmatic idea or rigid concept (p. 439). He describes his ideas as “open concepts designed to guide empirical work” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.107). Nonetheless, like other metropolitan social theorists, Bourdieu puts forward his theories as a universal ‘toolkit’ which implies homogeneity of the voices and the history of the colonial and the colonized (ibid., p.44). This also ignores the “fundamental discontinuity and unintelligible succession” that some societies from the South, such as the Gaza Strip, have experienced (ibid., p.45).

I am of Connell's (2007) view that theories, if they are “date-free” and frozen facts, do not encompass the complexity of the Palestinian experience, which should be understood not as Euro-“historic successions” but as time-specific to its indigenous history (Connell's, 2007, p.45). For example, the French origin and ideological foundations of Bourdieu, in other words, his own French habitus, informed his sociological work (Reed-Danahay, 2005). For metropolitan sociology to be universal, peripheral experiences “have to be considered as part of the dialogue of theory” rather than being deleted for being irrelevant or fashioned by accumulative sociological colonial descriptions (Connell,2007, p.46). In fact, to do so (Freire, 1993, p. 84), involves “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.133). That said, “Bourdieu sees social scientists as particularly prone to become
producers of symbolic violence by failing to recognize within their depiction of the social world the social and historical conditions that determine their own intellectual practices” (Reay, 2004a, p.37)

I believe, like Connell (2007), that sociology is not an ideology (p.228). It is an “investigation” that is a process of discovery and ‘mutual learning’ (Connell, 2007, p.224). So, for instance, Dabashi (2012) argues that “instead of quoting what [...] thinkers said some thirty or forty years ago, in an effort to figure out what is happening now, we must instead start thinking like [...]” (p.76). Bourdieu himself, as Richard Harker states, took an iterative approach moving from theory to research to “reformulating theory again but at a different level” (Reay, 2004b, p. 438). Crotty (1998) argues that to apply Freire to other societies, one needs first to explore the different forms of oppression that are specific to these societies. Freire himself also encouraged educators to be crucially conscious in their investigation and rejected a banking education system that assists cultural invasion (Freire, 1996, p. 84). McLaren and Leonard (1993) explain this by indicating that “dialogical education [...] should allow] the cultural experience of the student [...] to define the social world and to challenge theory from the perspective of his/her oppression” (p.4). In fact, Freire rightly considers “the fundamental theme of our epoch to be that of domination – which implies its opposite, the theme of liberation, as the objective to be achieved” (Freire, 1996, p.84). Hence, this research effort is “rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark [it] and which [it] also mark[s]” (Freire, 1996, p.90). To sum up, I am of the opinion that Freire's, Bourdieus or other social theorists' ideas “cannot be simply ‘transplanted’ across time, geographical boundaries, and different struggles, but need to be ‘reinvented’ ” according to each research context (Mayo, 2005, p.181).

For this research on the Gaza Strip, therefore, the theoretical background on oppression and education discussed above, as well as the conceptual tools explored are helpful, but not binding. Hence transcending earlier theories is not the aim of this research. Formulating a new sociological (Palestinian) theory is not an aim either. If this study could merely succeed in “injecting themes [of HE under occupation experiences] that are relatively uncommon in metropolitan thought”, this would be a valuable contribution (Connell, 2007, p. 224).
Section 2.3 Thinking with the Researcher

The “living experience” of authors researching their context should not be silenced in academic studies (Freire, 1998, p. 100). Perhaps, Freire’s book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* would not have been that influential had it been written only as an intellectual exercise (Freire, 1998); neither would Bourdieu’s thoughts and experiments have been as powerful, if they had not been connected, as Topper (2001) indicates, to Algeria's war for independence, of which he had real experience. In this section, the insider-outsider positionality, reflexivity, and the Palestinian voice and representation of this study will be clarified.

2.3.a Insider or Outsider?

According to Naples (1997, cited in Hertz, 1997, p.71), “‘outsiderness’ and ‘insiderness’ are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed”. They are also differently received and interpreted by different groups and societies. So, depending on the context, I can be an insider or an outsider or both at the same time.

Being an insider-outsider, I was in a unique position to conduct this research on the Gaza Strip. In fact, while insider researchers are mostly considered as either ‘fault finders’ or “insufficiently critical” (Hermann, 2001, p. 86), outsider researchers are also criticized for possessing an ‘inexperienced’ criticality. As Nakhleh and Zureik (1980) argue, moreover, Palestinian sociology is “indigenous” and in order to study it, the researcher must be “attached, committed [...and] reflexive” (p.11). Thus my insider-outsider positionality as the researcher in this study, is in itself an asset. Being a permanent resident of the Gaza Strip has bonded me strongly with the Palestinian cause and sufferings, as well as helping me to understand Palestine’s unique culture. Furthermore, my refugee status has given me, as is necessary for this sociological project, a critical and comparative view and a sense of responsibility and commitment. With this duality, similar to that of Joseph (1988, cited in Bolak, 1997, p.97), a bi-cultural (Arab-American) researcher who studied Lebanon, I could become the “subject/ object” of this study and
thus have the ability to “merge and separate” in the researched community as necessary. For more details on the relevance of my dual positionality, see Appendix 3.

2.3.b Reflexivity

Despite attempting neutrality, my identity, stances and feelings have naturally shaped this research, regardless of any effort I could make (Kleinman & Copp, 1993). However, “subjective interpretations […] in constructionist research] are considered a piece of the empirical puzzle that helps us to understand how people ‘accomplish’ social reality” (Marvasti, 2004, p. 5). Conversely, researching the HE experiences of other Gaza educationalists, I was also exposing myself to the “clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error” (Mill, 1956, p. 19). Reflexivity infuses my practice throughout this research and I detail the measures I took to ensure a better reflexivity in Appendix 4.

2.3.c Palestinian Voice and Representation

According to Goodhand (2000), “which voices are heard and whose knowledge counts’ in the research is both an ethical and political decision (p.12). In choosing a Palestinian voice and representation for this study I aimed to unravel the sufferings and social injustices inflicted on Palestinian educationalists in Gaza (Smith, 1999). It is also an inclusion of my Southern voice as a Palestinian researcher on my own Southern context (Canagarajah, 2002). This is supportive of world democratic ideals (Connell, 2007).

40 I believe “research cannot be value free” and “there are […] numerous points at which bias and intrusion of values can occur” during data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2008, p.25). In fact, Eisner (1993) rightly argues that objectivity is an ideal. At a time of increased connectivity in the twenty-first century, assumptions and feelings, however, do not remain products of any insider position that I might have, because ICT, the media and social media simultaneously contribute to these. The literature on the Gaza Strip, mostly a product of Western research, also has an ambiguous influence on how I have come to see the context of my research.

41 Conducting this research makes me reflect on the perspectives, feelings, and actions that have been perhaps internalized within myself from my past knowledge or experiences. When I listen to my participants’ opinions on the different issues, there is an opportunity for me to become aware of my biases and earlier assumptions.

42 This is not a decolonizing research study and does not follow the decolonizing methodology of Smith (1999). Nonetheless, the study acknowledges that it is important to consider some aspects of decolonization; that is, I agree with Edward Said’s argument about the peculiarity of some places (such as the Gaza Strip): its culture and people (Seidman & Alexander, 2001, p. 423).
Hence, a Palestinian voice and representation in this study contributes to global social justice by means of “cognitive justice” (Santos, 2008, p. xx).

To conclude, Section (2.3) examined the researcher’s positionality, reflexivity, and Palestinian voice and representation.

A Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter Two has summarized the thinking about this research project in terms of, firstly, seminal studies on conflict-affected areas; secondly, the informative theoretical and conceptual insights; and, thirdly, the researcher (positionality, reflexivity, and Palestinian voice and representation). Before moving to Chapter Three that addresses the methodology, a reminder of the research questions, aim, objectives, and goals can be found in Appendix 1.
Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter sets out the methodology for this research in four sections. I will discuss, firstly, the study’s orientations; secondly, the access limitations, and data collection method; thirdly, further details on the design of this research; and finally, research planning issues. A chapter overview is presented in Figure 3.1 below:

**Figure 3.1** An Overview of Chapter Three
Section (3.1) Study Orientations

3.1.a The Nature of the Study

Since this educational research was a sociological study, it provided a foreground from which I could open up an array of other perspectives.\(^{43}\) In fact, “the field of education […] is in its own right] a domain that sits at the intersections of many other areas of inquiry” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 130). This is because education, as Brock and Alexiadou (2013) assert, is usually influenced by factors external to the teaching-learning process. From another perspective, Leach and Dunne (2007) indicate that researching education and conflict may be considered a new field since it draws on perspectives from several disciplines. Hence it was important to allow a space for “cognitive fluidity” in this sociological study on the Gaza Strip (Repko, 2008, p. 84).

3.1.b Research Purpose and Strategy

Because my topic of research is under-studied, it operates in multiple under-researched areas, and examines, moreover, the besieged cultural context of Gaza HE, it made a “good sense” for this PhD study to be inductive (Maxwell, 2012, p. 89). Although, “deductive and inductive strategies are better thought of as tendencies rather than as hard-and-fast distinctions” (Bryman, 2008, p. 13), as Roy (1995) recommends, in a context such as Gaza Strip the empirical data was prioritized.\(^{44}\)

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\(^{43}\) The research fits within the discipline of educational sociology. Since it is inspired by insights from Bourdieu, and Freire, it seems the study builds on the sociological conflict tradition in particular (Collins, 1994). In many cases, however, the works of these conflict theorists are found within disciplines other than that of sociology, namely, psychology and politics. For example, Paulo Freire's writings tend to appear in studies of health education (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988); psychology (Parker, 1999; Seedat, Duncan, & Lazarus, 2002); political psychology (Montero, 2007) and so on. Similarly, Bourdieu's work is quoted in studies of cognitive psychology (e.g. Lizardo, 2004); political sociology (e.g. Topper, 2001); and democratic politics (e.g. Wacquant, 2004) and others. This is not surprising, since the traditional boundaries among disciplines have been so often criticized. See, for instance, Becher and Trowler (2001), Amey and Brown (2004), Repko (2008).

\(^{44}\) Thus, “the objective of the study is to obtain an understanding of the phenomenon rather than to test [any theoretical] hypothesis” (Jebreen, 2012, p. 170). It is also different from a grounded theory approach since the inductive study in hand focuses only on ‘themes [that are] most relevant to [this] research [questions]” (D. R. Thomas, 2006, p. 241).
3.1.c Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Taking the social constructionist perspective, I am of the view that social reality is “1. subjective, 2. situationally and culturally variable, and 3. ideologically conscious” (Marvasti, 2004, p. 6). The constructionist research orientation is described by Crotty (1998) as one which encourages creativity in interpretation. That said, the general epistemological orientation of this study is ‘interpretivist’ since understanding the educationalists’ HE experiences in Gaza involves de facto a need to interpret these experiences. Nonetheless, since “epistemological principles and research practices do not necessarily go hand in hand in a neat and unambiguous manner”, I regarded these as tendencies rather than self-contained categories (Bryman, 2008, p.17).

3.1.d Research Design: A Qualitative Study

Several considerations informed the choice of a qualitative design for this project. For Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative research provides richness, local groundedness, holism and a better focus on lived experiences. In the under-researched context of Gaza, qualitative research was needed because of its capacity to generate explanations and detail where they were mostly lacking (Gray, 2009, p.166). Positive designs seem to dominate most research on the developing countries (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997). The Gaza Strip is no exception to this observation, and thus more qualitative research is required. Conducting qualitative research was also important since this was a research study on a conflict area. According to Smith (2007):

> Qualitative research is an important tool for indigenous communities […] which seems most able […] to weave and

45 In researching the HE experience in Gaza, I took into consideration, for instance, the subjective accounts of participants as well as my impressions of these accounts. The study was also predicated on the basis that HE experiences differ between cultural contexts; they also differ between conflict, post-conflict and peaceful countries. The research findings, moreover, might ideologically challenge some of the stereotypical public images or the ‘taken-for-granted knowledge’ about the Gaza Strip (Marvasti, 2004, p. 6).

46 Bryman (2008) points to three interconnected levels of interpretations, which I found generally inspiring for this study: firstly, “the interpretation of others”, secondly, “the researcher’s interpretation of others’ interpretations”, and thirdly, the interpretation of the researcher’s interpretations “in terms of the concepts, theories, and the literature of a discipline” (p. 17). Critical reflection assisted in problematizing the familiar and thus avoiding the imposition of one or more levels of interpretation on others (Crotty, 1998).
unravel competing storylines…to situate, place and contextualize; to create spaces for decolonizing…to provide frameworks for hearing silence and listening to the voices of the silences…to create spaces for dialogue across differences; to analyse and make sense of complex and shifting experiences, identities and realities. (Smith, 2007, p. 103)

Some practical considerations pertaining to access and quality management also contributed to this decision. I also chose a qualitative design based on my preferred cognitive learning approach (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). To sum up, a qualitative research design was selected due to its appropriateness in terms of answering the research questions in the specific context of the Gaza Strip.

Section 3.2 Access and Fieldwork Possibilities

3.2.a The Gaza Strip: Access Limitations

Initially, my plan was to travel back to Gaza and conduct my fieldwork research on the ground. This would also have been a good opportunity for me to visit my family whom I have not seen since September 2012, the start of my PhD study at Cambridge. Although the election of Hamas in 2006 resulted in severe restrictions on Palestinian access (see Map 3.1), this was intensified by an almost permanent closure of the Rafah crossing point (the only one that exists for Gaza civilians) after the ejection of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi from office in July 2013, and the rise of Al Sisi to power. To adapt

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47 Due to physical access restrictions that will be explained shortly, this study was conducted from a distance. Therefore a quantitative study design was avoided for, among other reasons, practically, it would have been difficult for the researcher to conduct it, as well as to monitor its quality, from Cambridge.

48 (Map Source: (Mother Nature Intensifies the Gaza Siege » CounterPunch: Tells the Facts, Names the Names, n.d.)

49 As shown in Map 3.1, the other crossing point named ‘Karem Shalom’ is located in a high-risk area (Israeli controlled) and requires Israeli permits, but this has also been almost entirely closed since the election of Hamas.

50 France Channel 24 reports that ‘since the July 3 oust[...ing] of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood-led government, relations have soured between the Egyptian military and Hamas, the Palestinian group that controls Gaza’; the latter is a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood (“Middle east - Gaza under two blockades as Egypt destroys tunnels - France 24,” n.d.), (see also Danahar, 2013; Anouar Boukhars et al., 2014)
to these conditions, interviews (via Skype from Cambridge) seemed the most feasible\textsuperscript{51} data collection method.

\textbf{Map 3.1} Gaza Strip: Restricted Access

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Map3.1_GazaStripRestrictedAccess}
\caption{Gaza Strip: Restricted Access}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{51} Several methods, such as focus groups and observations, were ruled out because of access limitations and security concerns. Documentary analysis was not a convincing option for me either for the following reasons: there was a scarcity of resources, many of which are outdated, and there were constraints placed on public access to important documents, if available; there was no archival centre or digital archiving service that I could benefit from while in Cambridge, and the material available on the Ministry’s and universities’ websites was not significantly enriching in relation to this topic on HE. An examination of the available reports and documents, moreover, revealed that these “tend […] to record […] and so many privilege a top-down view of education […] rather than] engage with […] the […] learning context, and […] the teachers and learners” (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, & Bell, 2011, p. 253). Based on all of the above, a case strategy for this research was also no longer an option, and automatically ruled out since it is usually a “wrapper for different methods”, which were either not available or irrelevant, as in the case of this study on Gaza (G. Thomas, 2011, p. 21).
3.2.b Data Collection: Interview Research

Selecting interviews as the data collection for this study had to do with some practical, logistical, and ethical and security considerations\(^{52}\). Interviews, as Knox and Burkard (2009) conclude, have become “an important tool to qualitative researchers that […] these researchers] would rely heavily or solely on them as the primary mechanism for data collection” (p. 11).

3.2.c Interviews: A Semi-Structured Technique

A semi-structured interview technique was necessary to serve the exploratory purposes of this study. According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), “semi-structured interviews occupy an interesting position along the structured-unstructured continuum” (p. 29). That is, despite being a “professional conversation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 5), their adaptability and flexibility (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Bernard & Ryan, 2010), “allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a narrative or image of themselves that contradicts common perception” (Seale, 2009, p. 1010). In-depth semi-structured interviewing, moreover, assisted the researcher in building up rapport more easily and effectively, as well as generating richer accounts of research data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Implicit in semi-structured interviewing, though, is a power-relationship since the researcher is the one who designs the interview guide and thus controls, to a considerable

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\(^{52}\) Thus, in designing this research, I had two intersecting considerations in mind: quality and the limitations that could practically obstruct or redefine quality when it comes to the Gaza Strip. Conducting this study as an interview research carried several advantages: firstly, interviews are best suited to exploratory studies (Gray, 2009, p. 370). It is also commonly thought of as an effective method for researching people’s experiences (Kvale, 1996). The complexities involved in areas affected by conflict, moreover, tend to be better discerned through interview research (Brounéus, 2011). Participants from the Gaza Strip were also likely to find the interview a safer and much more comfortable method since it would allow them to express themselves and their views orally and to avoid providing written evidence (Gray, 2009). The suitability of interviews as a data collection method were doubled when considering management and logistical issues, such as the time and funds available for this PhD study.
extent, the direction of the talk (Kvale, 1996). From another perspective, personal explanations and judgements, as in the case of all interviewing (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000), are also generated when using a semi-structured technique. However, I concur with Hammersley's (2003) argument:

That people have background assumptions, preferences, interests, etc. does not automatically mean that their accounts are biased or simply expressions of these things. Sometimes such assumptions, preferences, or interests may actually encourage accurate representation, and sometimes their effects will not be significant for the purpose for which the researcher wants to use the account. Occasionally, they will be a source of bias, but it may still be possible to detect and discount this through methodological assessment. (p. 124)

To sum-up, operating within a constructionist interpretivist paradigm, a semi-structured technique for interviewing enabled the researcher, and the researched (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), to create the meaning of an experience together.

3.2.d Triangulation: Supportive Research Activities

Four supportive activities were employed for triangulation purposes. These activities, as shown in Figure 3.2 below, included, firstly, conducting a self-interview for reflexivity purposes; secondly, developing a reflective research journal to document all thoughts, incidents and decisions taken in the process; thirdly, reviewing participants’ CVs and universities’ websites; and fourthly revisiting the literature. For further details on the chronology, purpose and description of each supportive research activity, see Appendix 5.
Figure 3.2 Supportive Research Activities

Section 3.3 Designing the Interview Research

This section specifies the design of the interview research, outlining the sampling, interview mode, interview situation and data analysis.

3.3.a Sampling: Sites and Participants

Research Sites

Based on MoEHE (2011-12) statistics for HE, there are 29 Palestinian HE institutions in the Gaza Strip of which only seven are universities (five traditional, two open). Taking funding issues into consideration, the universities are usually classified as follows: one

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53 In the context of the Gaza Strip, I recommend that any statistics should be taken not as specific, but as general indicators.
governmental, three public\textsuperscript{54}, and three private universities (قسم الإحصاءات التعليم العالي،- 2013). All Palestinian universities in Gaza have an accredited and licensed Faculty of Education, although the private universities are still in the process of obtaining accreditation for some of the educational majors. Hence, “universities play a central role in offering pre-service teacher qualification programs” (MoEHE, 2014, p. 13)

According to the MoEHE (2010), “education [as a specialization area] makes up 35% of the [total registered] student body [at WBGS HE institutions (HEIs)] (24% females and 11% males)” (p. 93). For cultural and employability reasons, moreover, it appeared that the Gaza Faculties of Education, as compared to other Faculties in the same university, seemed to attract the highest number of students, most of whom were female\textsuperscript{55}. In general, fewer female academic staff tend to work at Palestinian universities\textsuperscript{56}, including the Faculties of Education\textsuperscript{57}. The continuous siege in Gaza and the difficulties for other nationals to take up residence in the Gaza Strip has meant that the university academic staff and students in Gaza are predominantly Palestinians.

In this research, I distributed the sample across two of Gaza’s universities\textsuperscript{58}: the UA and the UB. Hence, this study is cross-sectional (Gray, 2009). According to Bryman (2008), the use of a cross-sectional time-frame (interviewing several participants at a certain time to generate themes) “is a very popular mode of qualitative research” (p.48).

\textsuperscript{54}Public universities are “non-profit and originally created and owned by local charity associations and NGOs. They depend on fundraising and receive partial government funding” (Higher Education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2010, p.5).

\textsuperscript{55}According to MoEHE statistics (2011-2012), in that year 14,282 were registered students at the AZU-, for instance. Of these students, 4,252 (1,367 males, 2,885 females) studied for various degrees at the Faculty of Education, the rest (10030) were distributed over the other (11) AZU Faculties (قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي،- 2013).

\textsuperscript{56}For example, MoEHE statistics (2011-2012) indicate that the total number of academic staff at AZU was 296 (264 males, 32 females) and in the IUG 516 (413 males, 103 females) (قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي،- 2013).

\textsuperscript{57}AZU website, for instance, explains that the Faculty of Education currently employs 23 full-time academics of whom only three are females. (see الهيئة التدريسية, n.d.). Statistics on this do not seem to be available in the MoEHE documents or on the website.

\textsuperscript{58}The institution names here are not actual university names; they are pseudonyms.
In Map 3.2, the red dots indicate the general location of the selected universities. Both are in the Gaza city\textsuperscript{59}.

Research Sites Map

\textbf{Map 3.2}\textsuperscript{60} Approximate Geographical Location of the Research Sites

![Map of Gaza City with research sites marked](image)

Characteristics of Research Sites

Some of the UA’s and the UB’s universities’ basic characteristics are displayed Table 3.1 below:

\textsuperscript{59} These universities, namely, the UA, and recently the UB, have other branches in other towns or cities in the Gaza Strip, but these branches will not be included directly in this research (some academic staff in the two selected universities may have additional teaching hours in these branches). I am interested in researching only the campuses in Gaza City since they are generally thought of as the largest, most dynamic and advanced compared to all other areas in the Gaza Strip.

\textsuperscript{60} Blank map source: (Gaza Strip Map Blank - Mapsof.net, n.d.)
### Table 3.1 Characteristics of Research Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>UB</th>
<th>Reference/Information Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>(الإدارة العامة للتخطيط، قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي، 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establishment</strong></td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>(الإدارة العامة للتخطيط، قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي، 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accredited Faculties</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>(ibid., p.8)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Degree Offered</strong></td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td><em>(ibid., p.7)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Orientation (Student Union)</strong></td>
<td>Hamas/Religious</td>
<td>Fatah/ PLO</td>
<td>Researcher's first-hand experience at Gaza universities. No sources available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Academic Staff for the Year 2012-13</strong></td>
<td>F 103</td>
<td>M 413</td>
<td>F 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Students for the Year 2012-13</td>
<td>F 19915</td>
<td>M 14282</td>
<td><em>(ibid., p.45)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Students for a BA degree at the Faculty of Education for the Year 2012-13</td>
<td>F 5032</td>
<td>M 888</td>
<td>F 2634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Students for the Year 2012-13 for Majors of English Education</td>
<td>F 837</td>
<td>M 72</td>
<td>F 593</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Participants

The total number of participants in this research reached 36: 15 members of academic staff and 21 students (18 English Education; three out-of-sample group). In terms of data collection, transcription and analysis, this number of interviews was manageable\(^61\). In fact, I concur with Kvale's (1996) argument:

> Perhaps as a defensive overreaction [...] qualitative interview studies appear to be designed on a quantitative presupposition-the more interviews the more scientific. In contrast, the present approach emphasizes the quality rather than quantity of the interviews (p.103).

Below, I shall, firstly, discuss the sampling of the academic staff and, secondly, of students.

Sampling Group: Academic Staff

I interviewed 15 members of academic staff (eight from the UA, and seven from the UB). A ‘non-probability purposive sampling’ of academic participants, employed within a ‘maximum variation approach’, was found helpful in eliciting recurrent themes relating to their HE experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

As Cohen et al. (2011) maintain, “the emphasis [in purposive sampling] is placed on uniqueness, the idiographic and exclusive distinctiveness of the phenomenon, group, or individuals in question” (p. 161). The selection criteria for the academic staff included: the participant’s age category (to reflect different historical times and set of influences on the HE experience), the country in which the participant obtained his/ her HE experience, as well as the gender. English was an optional\(^62\) criterion and so was academic staff

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\(^{61}\) Taking into consideration the limited time allocated for this PhD research, a larger number of interviews would not only have been practically difficult, but would also be unsound ethically as it would have meant collecting more data than could be handled.

\(^{62}\) Since, the main language of instruction at Gaza’s Faculties of Education is Arabic, English competence among lecturers tends to be lacking. However, speaking in English was preferred. This was because the data transcription, analysis and reporting would be greatly facilitated if interviewing in English was possible for the selected academic staff.
members’ place of work. Figure 3.3 summarizes the sampling strategy. Table 3.2 displays the gender distribution of the academic participants per university:

**Table 3.2** Gender Distribution of the Academic Staff Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Staff Sample</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>No. per university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UB</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number per gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Academic Staff Interviewed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sampling Group 2: Students

According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), “decisions about whom to study are also affected by logistical constraints” (p. 244). Snowball sampling was the strategy followed to reach the student participants. In fact, Bryman (2008) states that “social research is frequently based on convenience sampling” (p.182) and “snowball sampling is a form of convenience sample” (p.184).

I interviewed 21 students (18 main sample; three out-of-sample group), (13 from the UA; eight from the UB). The majority of these students were studying for the third and fourth year of their undergraduate degree of English education, although one student had recently graduated, and three were studying for English- Arts at the UA but there were included because they showed immense interest in participating. Figure 3.4 below summarizes the sampling strategy for the student population; Table 3.3 shows the gender distribution of the student sample:

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63 Accessing student participants from the English education course at the two different universities was difficult in comparison to reaching academic staff since the latter’s CVs (including contact details) were usually available on the universities’ websites. Contacting the Gaza Faculties of Education to advertise and recruit participants was excluded for practical and security reasons. Therefore I accessed participants through my personal network, through social media (Facebook), and through the help of some students who have been interviewed in this research. For details on anonymity and confidentiality, see Appendix 19.

64 The majority of students at Gaza’s universities are enrolled in undergraduate (BA) degree programmes level. For example, MoEHE statistics for the year 2012-13 show that only 4 per cent of newly registered students at HEIs in Gaza are enrolled in postgraduate studies as compared to 57 per cent studying for their undergraduate degree. Hence the research focused on recruiting student interviewees from those working towards their BA degree.

65 In this research, participants studying English education were likely to have the following advantages: firstly, their exposure to a greater variety of lecturers, teaching styles and curricula (their study combines material in English and Arabic) was likely to enrich the research topic with comparative perspectives. Secondly, their linguistic advantage provided an opportunity for this study to report their thoughts and expressions in their own words.

66 As a result of snowballing, I was connected to these students from the UA who happened to study English in Faculty of Arts not Education. However, they showed an immense interest in participating in this research, which made me agree to interview them as an out-of-sample group. Nonetheless, these students were asked questions that were relevant to their university, and not to their faculty. Their inclusion enriched the sample from the UA since, in comparison to the UB, I had little information on this university’s context.
To conclude, different sampling strategies were adopted in the respective cases of academic staff and students. According to Gray (2009), multiple […] sampling is often used in social research insofar as “the […] samples] cover the various issues and variables detailed in the study's research question[s]” (p. 182).
3.3.b Interview Mode: A Democratic Approach

The research interviewing medium was Skype (video/no video). However, telephone (landline or mobile)\(^{67}\) was offered as an alternative based on necessity. Minocha et al. (2013) has similarly allowed their elderly participants a choice of medium. Giving consideration to the research subjects does not affect the data quality, but rather may improve it (Sullivan, 2013). In fact, as Smyth (2001) explains “many of the problems can be alleviated by democratizing the process of research itself” (p.11). Due to frequent power cuts in Gaza and unfamiliarity with the Skype program, adopting such a democratic approach was helpful. In total, 23 interviews (seven academic staff; 16 students) were conducted via Skype and 13 (eight academic staff; five students) by telephone\(^{68}\). Sometimes, I had to switch in the same interview from one medium to another because of a power-cut and/or bad Internet connection (for the advantages and disadvantages of the interview medium, and for the Gaza Strip Information Society Statistics, see Appendix 6).

3.3.c The Interview Situation

According to Kvale (1996), “interviewing is a craftsmanship […] since] the outcome of an interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer” (p.105). In this research, quality was given due consideration\(^{69}\). The following is a brief account of the interview situation in terms of its themes, sequence and progress, duration, and power relations.

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\(^{67}\) In addition to traditional methods of making international calls (telephone/mobile), now there is a possibility of calling the participant’s landline or mobile using a Skype phone.

\(^{68}\) For more details on each participant’s choice of the medium, see Appendix 20.

\(^{69}\) According to Kvale (1996), the quality of interview research depends on other qualities such as those of the interviewer and the interview subject, and of the interview situation and the interview ethics. These qualities are also contingent upon each other (Kvale, 1996). To address this, quality issues are elaborated, directly and indirectly, throughout Part One of this thesis. Thus different categories of thoughts (sections) are presented for the sake of organization only. Ethical issues, in particular, ‘rise throughout the entire research process’ (ibid., p.110).
Themes for exploration

As shown in Figure 3.5 below, the interview questions were broadly based on the following categories: firstly, life events and the HE story; secondly, college life; thirdly, self-perception (Wengraf, 2001); and fourthly, perceptions of the Arab revolutions and their impact on Gaza’s universities (for a list of indicative questions, see the ‘Interview Guide’ in Appendix 7)

![Figure 3.5 The Interview Wheel](image)

Sequence and Progress

I called the interviewee briefly on their phone. This aimed to develop rapport at an early stage with the participants. Afterwards, I sent the interviewees an ‘Invitation Letter’ and
a participant ‘Research factsheet’ by e-mail. A sample of these two can be found in Appendix 8, and Appendix 9 respectively. Reviewing the CVs of the academic participants, I also developed a ‘Tracking Sheet’ for each academic staff member’s experience so as to tailor the interview questions to their specific context. A sample of this sheet can be found in Appendix 10.

In accordance with Brounéus's (2011) suggestion, the interview situation included an introduction, initial questions, mid-interview questions and the closing of the interview. Building rapport was taken into consideration at all stages (see DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). I could also verify obscure meanings by repeating the same question in different ways, at different times (Kvale, 1996). As Kvale (1996) recommends, at the end, I debriefed the participants on what had been learnt, acknowledged their participation, listened to their feedback, and then sent them ‘Thank-You letters’ by e-mail. Each interview situation was a unique encounter. Thus I did not use the Interview Guide as “a foundation […] but [as] one that allows creativity and flexibility to ensure that each participants story is fully uncovered” (Knox & Burkard, 2009, p. 3). (for a ‘Fieldwork Vignette’, see Appendix 11)

Interview Duration

The participants enjoyed talking about their HE experiences. The result was 90-300 minutes of interviewing. A 10-15-minute break was offered in the middle.

Power Relations

I concur with “Bourdieu […] that all practices involve power relations” (Swartz, 2013, p. 41). Radsch (2009), moreover, indicates that “the insider-outsider roles are not a given,

70 The factsheet included an explanation about the research and interviewees’ rights as participants (e.g. withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality). This gave them a more informed and comfortable start to the interview situation.

71 A few participants did not have an e-mail and agreed to be briefed orally on the day of interviewing.

72 I expected that some female participants would have young children and leaving them for more than one hour alone might have been difficult which could have affected the participants in the interviews in terms of feelings of worry or discomfort. Also, some participants would be heavy smokers, for example, or might be required to take a form of medicine or visit the WC. Taking this into consideration, having a break in the middle was an ethical necessity.
rather they are embedded within multiple social identities and their narration” (p. 97). This signifies a complex interplay of power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee in which reflecting and acting simultaneously as the situation requires is the central point of judgment (Wasserfall, 1997, p. 161). As can be seen in Appendix 12, before commencing the fieldwork, I theoretically contemplated the possible contentious areas of power relations between myself and the research participants. I was aware that I could better “learn from any vantage point as long as [I] know what roles [I] occupy in the different situations” (Kleinman & Copp, 1993, p. 31). For this purpose, I also designed a pre-interview ‘Power Relationship Analysis Sheet’ (see Appendix 13), which permitted a more conscious encounter in the interviews.

3.3.d Data Analysis

Marvasti (2004) rightly argues that “the same data can be read or analyzed from different perspectives” (p.84). Because this is a constructionist research study, as Kitzinger (2004, cited in Silverman, 2006, p. 129) recommends, I took what people said in the interviews “not […] as evidence of their [actual] experience, but only as […]an ‘account’ or ‘repertoire’-which represents a culturally available way of packaging experience”.

Making and Preparing Data

Based on Richards's (2009) explanation, I collected two types of research data: (1) Data for the project and (2) data about the project.

Firstly, the data for the project was obtained only in audio format. I tested the quality of the recording beforehand. Then I transcribed all the audio data (which totalled more than 100 hours of interviewing) using Express Scribe. This transcription software was important “to cut down on […] the transcription time as well as to take advantage of the analysis possibilities contained within the process of transcribing one’s own data” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 305) (for a ‘Transcription Guide’, see Appendix 14). I also used

73 With Internet connection problems, I found it difficult to collect video files as data. For ethical reasons as well, I did not want to use facial and emotional analysis software since I was not convinced of its reliability across different cultures.
the computer management software, *Scrivener*, to organize my work during the different research stages. Many writers\(^{74}\) have indicated the advantages of using such software as compared to messy, slow and expensive manual options. However, I was also aware that computers and software applications are mechanical tools (Richards, 2009). Hence, as Kelle (2004, cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 544) states, they “do not do away with the ‘human touch’, as researchers still need to decide and generate the codes and categories, to verify and interpret the data”.

The transcription took place shortly after the interviews and in the same language in which the conversations were conducted (English or Arabic). Appendix 20 includes two columns on participants’ choice of interview mode and language. The coding was applied to the Arabic transcripts with only the selected quotes being translated afterwards into English. I did the translation myself (mainly for security reasons). I am a competent user of Arabic and English and have a good knowledge of bilingual translation through academic study (BA in English), and practical experience.

Secondly the data about the project included the researcher’s reflexivity, project notes (log trail)\(^{75}\) and memos (reflective journal)\(^{76}\) (Richards, 2009). To sum up, the data was enhanced by the researchers’ reflection, and interpretation for, as Steedman (1991, cited in Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 246) indicates, “nothing means anything on its own […]Meaning] is constructed […]and] produced in acts of interpretations”.

**Coding Data**

Coding was applied to the transcribed material (Schreier, 2012). This helped me to reduce the qualitative data to “analyzable [conceptual] units by creating categories with and from [the] data” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). I generated codes using the *MAXQDA* software. These codes were then arranged into categories and used to develop new concepts or to support earlier ones based on the inductive data. Hence, coding, as Coffey

\(^{74}\) See, for example, Riley (1990), Bernard and Ryan (2010), Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011).

\(^{75}\) This log trail was part of a *Scrivener* project which documented the different research steps (including power-relation analysis sheets, reflections, and other notes etc.)

\(^{76}\) As indicated in Appendix 5, research memos (reflective journal) have included the following classifications: memos about methods, memos about the interview data, and memos about emerging ideas (Richards, 2009, p.81).
and Atkinson (1996) maintain, is “never a mechanistic activity” (p. 46), but rather an “analytic” and “cyclic procedure” (Schreier, 2012, p. 41). The ‘Coding system’ of this study can be found in Appendix 15.

Analysing Data

Analysis is a “pervasive activity throughout the life of a research project” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.11; see also Miles & Huberman, 1994; Richards, 2009). In brief, I displayed the reduced (coded) data, examined them for patterns, exceptions, surprises, new questions, ideas and themes, and then tested them through comparing and contrasting, as relevant (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Marvasti, 2004; Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The display was achieved through applying the traditional technique of cutting, piling and sorting\(^77\) to the computerized coded material. This method is acknowledged as effective in qualitative research and helped me to elicit the most informative quotes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). To conclude, I enjoyed the data analysis as an “imaginative, artful, flexible, and reflexive” process (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.10; see also Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Interpretation

Turner (1993, cited in Richards, 2009, p.73) states that “data don’t speak for themselves. We have to goad them into saying things”. Broadly, I followed Alvesson and Sköldberg's (2000) interactive model. This offers four levels of interpretation that I found helpful only as an initial guide (for more details on this Interactive Model, see Appendix 16 or Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000, p. 254). Soon afterwards, I realized I had to work spontaneously with my data observing as Sorsoli and Tolman (2008, cited Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008, p.497) recommend, the “building of an interpretation from the perspective each angle or part offers”.

In conclusion, I neither saw nor took the different processes of data analysis to be separate or rigid. To do so, would be “to misinterpret [as Burgess (1984, cited in Crossley &

\(^{77}\) I applied the ‘piling and sorting’ method not using scissors, but using the cut and paste function on the computer.
Vulliamy, 1996, p.446) argues] the nature of social enquiry and of the practice of research by playing down the importance of the social process and context for research”.

To summarize, Section 3.3 has specified the study sampling, interview situation and data analysis. An overview of this research at a glance is in Figure 3.6 below:

**Figure 3.6  The Research at a Glance:** Elements of the Research Process

This diagram idea benefited from Figure 2.3 in Gray (2009, p. 33).
Section 3.4 Research Planning

3.4.a Verification

Lave and Kvale (1995) explain that “the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence is another human” (Lave & Kvale, 1995, p. 200). Drawing on the different arguments about verification, this study constructs quality as based on “good practice” as much as on the “trustworthiness of the interpretations” (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002, p. 731). These two points were implied in the various discussions above. As such, what I present below is only a selected highlight:

Good practice

As Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers, (2002) explain, I was responsive to any political changes in Gaza and considerate of participants' conditions. I also applied reflexivity at all stages and disclosed my motivation and Palestinian voice and representation from the outset of this study.

Trustworthiness of the Interpretations

Firstly, the study is in congruence with the constructionist and interpretive paradigm which it assumes (Fossey et al., 2002). Secondly, the research purpose, questions, methods, conceptual insights and verification strategies are “meaningfully” coherent (Tracy, 2010, p. 848). Thirdly, the sampling was based on “adequacy” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 18). Fourthly, “multivocality” and triangulation were ensured through including

78 Reviewing the literature on verification proved to be confusing since there are several perspectives on what quality means and how it might be ensured (for instance, see Maxwell, 1992; Long & Johnson, 2000; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Koch, 2006; Tracy, 2010). Yet, Tracy (2010) rightly argues that, “values for quality, like all social knowledge, are ever changing and situated within local contexts” (p. 837). The constructionist interpretive paradigm upon which this research is generally based also gives space to constructing quality itself as a shared meaning between the evaluators, the participants and the researcher.
the voices of different participants across two different universities (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). For more details on triangulation in this research, see Appendix 17.

As Morse et al. (2002) recommend, the data were examined with respect to some macro-conceptual insights from theories. I deliberately avoided member checking of the data afterwards as it was likely to “invalidate the work” by confining it to the micro-level of interpretation (Morse et al., 2002, p. 16).

As for generalization, “it is not always what is wanted from the inquiry process” (Thomas, 2011, p. 23). Nonetheless, this study is aimed to have transferability and “resonance” in terms of its common themes, and arguments (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). The contribution of this study will be discussed in the Conclusion.

To recap, in designing this study, I attempted to allow for what Morse et al. (2002) describe, as “self-correcting mechanism[s]” so as to maintain quality as much from the inside of the research project as from external evaluation (p. 14). In this, strategies of verification were viewed as falling short unless combined with the researcher’s responsibility for ethical judgments (Morse et al., 2002).

3.4.b Security and Ethics

There are three related challenges for researchers in conflict areas: practical, methodological and ethical (Goodhand, 2000, p. 8). Earlier, I have indicated some of the methodological constraints and practical considerations. This section focuses on security, risk and ethics in relation to the turbulent context of Gaza. To the best of my knowledge, there were no central ethical review boards for research in Gaza. Therefore I followed the guidelines set by ethical boards outside, as an alternative (Ford et al., 2009).

According to Borg and Gall (1989) “the greatest danger of [ethical] laws is that rigid and bureaucratic interpretations can stifle many valuable research activities” (p. 93). However, Lichtenberg (1996) rightly maintains that ethical codes increase the “likelihood that [different researchers] will behave in certain ways” and “[draw] attention to features of the proposed research […] which the researcher might have […] overlooked” (p. 20). But academic research in conflict areas “remains relatively ad hoc and unregulated beyond the basic ethical guidelines and norms” (Black, 2003, p. 95).
Hence, despite the fact that BERA’s, BSA’s, and The Cambridge Faculty of Education’s ethical codes were helpful, I was aware of my larger ethical responsibility as a researcher of Gaza (Zwi et al., 2006).

Informed by the two main principles of Goodhand (2000) regarding research in conflict areas, namely, doing no harm and doing some good, I monitored ethical and security issues before, during, and after the study. In these, I took into consideration both the researched and the researcher (King, 2009):

Pre-Fieldwork

In addition to the Faculty’s forms, I developed, as King (2009) suggests, two other preliminary assessments79 (see Appendix 18). Conducting this study from distance, although a result of access limitations, happened to be positive: I could avoid the hazards of the Gaza-Egypt border crossing or closure.

The participants sampled from this conflict area were educated adults, (university academic staff and students) and from two universities, and so no gatekeeper was required. The mode of interviewing further allowed the participants the choice of time and place, as convenient to their safety. The interview questions were designed only to facilitate access to the required information.

Also, this study was conducted for academic purposes only80. Academic studies are important and worth conducting, nonetheless, so as to “inform theories and perspectives” that contribute to educational reform in Gaza (Black, 2003, p. 97).

79 The first form included an external vulnerability assessment that provided knowledge of the Gaza Strip as a research site. The second, however, was an internal vulnerability assessment of the level of risk for the researcher. This form of internal assessment was based on the questions of Van Brabant, “a leading scholar whose work has shaped the direction of the security discipline” (King, 2009, p.169) (for more details, see Appendix 18).

80 Although I am sponsored by the Gates Cambridge Scholarship Foundation for my PhD and am a member of academic staff at one of the Palestinian universities in Gaza, my motivation for researching this topic was personal and academic.
During Fieldwork

I kept up to date with the news on the political context of Gaza and the ME region\(^81\). All decisions taken were documented in the reflective journal/ memos of this study. Prior to conducting the interviews, I informed the participants of all important details with regard to their participation, including their rights (with regard to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, the right to withdrawal). Informed consent was obtained orally in this project since this seemed a more culturally sensitive practice\(^82\). As Ford et al. (2009) indicate, “the process of obtaining informed consent must be sensitive to the norms, customs and sensitivities of the local environment” (p.5).

During the fieldwork, I remained sensitive towards any explicit or implicit expression (Goodhand, 2000, p.14) of constraint or distress shown by participants when talking about their experiences (Sriram, 2009, p. 182).

After Fieldwork

The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were protected during all stages. This will also continue in any future publication concerning the research. Prior to the interviews, I developed ‘A Safe Communication and Data Storage Guide’, which can be viewed in Appendix 19\(^83\).

Wilson (1992, cited in Black, 2003, p. 99) states that “researching in an ‘ethical manner’ [in conflict areas] seems not about proclaiming good and evil, but about enabling the reader to hear the voices and appreciate the actions of as many of the different people

\(^81\) Any significant developments that might have impacted upon the research or the research subjects were taken seriously and discussed with Prof. Diane Reay (my supervisor). Prof. Reay was also consulted with regard to any other ethical or practical concerns in the process of fieldwork.

\(^82\) As Liamputtong (2010) indicates, ‘written consent can be intimidating to many cultural and ethnic groups’ (p. 54). People from Arab nations (particularly, the Gaza Strip as a conflict area) are more used to an oral culture and do not feel comfortable “leaving a paper trail” that could have repercussions for them in the future (Radsch, 2009, p. 95).

\(^83\) In brief, a list of codes was used to anonymize the research participants, referencing the research data, and archiving it on the computer. Research sites were anonymized using pseudonyms. Moreover, all interview data were strictly protected. It will be destroyed upon the completion of my PhD studies in Cambridge.
involved as possible”. This research attempted to do some good by giving voice (Goodhand, 2000, p. 14) to the Palestinians, as an oppressed group. I reported this voice transparently, maintaining openness to different perspectives.

In conclusion, I “accord[ed] due respect to all methodologies and related methods” (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2004, p. 12). I concur with Pring (2004) that “moral thinking is a kind of practical thinking” (p. 143). Observing ethics in research in conflict areas was very challenging. Nonetheless, it was necessary since “the value of research depends as much on its ethical veracity as on the novelty of its discoveries” (Walliman, 2005, p. 360). I am also convinced of Kvale’s (1996) argument that “moral research behavior […] involves the person of the researcher, his or her sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and actions” (p.117; see also Pring, 2000).

Summary of Chapter Three

In this chapter, I discussed the study orientations, access and fieldwork possibilities, the design of the research interview, and issue of research planning, including verification, security and ethics.

For more details on the methodology, see the following: Appendix 20 for Participants’ Characteristics; Appendix 21 for Sites’ and Participants’ Pseudonyms; and Appendix 22: On the Thesis Presentation Mode and the Writing Style – use of metaphors, humour and lines of poetry).
Before moving to Part Two of the thesis, namely, the findings, it is very important that the reader review Figure 3.7 below for a key to pseudonyms’ key:

**Table: Key to Pseudonyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>[Mr/ Ms] ‘name’ [University]</td>
<td>(male)- Mr Mehdi UA (female)- Ms Etaf UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>‘name’ [UA/ UB]</td>
<td>(male)- Khaled UB (female)- Nora UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Sample Group</td>
<td>‘name’ ofs UA</td>
<td>(male)- Abdullah ofs UA (female)- Samah ofs UA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.7** A Pseudonyms’ Key

**Note:** Participants’ university name (UA or UB) is used as a surname.
PART TWO

The Anatomy of the HE Experience

Chapter Four: The Past HE Experience

Chapter Five: The Present HE Experience

Chapter Six: The Future HE Experience
Chapter Four

The Past HE Experience

No one said to me, this place is called a country, around the country are borders, and beyond the borders is another place, called diaspora and exile for us.

Mahmoud Darwish

Figure 4.1  An Overview of Chapter Four
Introduction to Chapter Four

Academics staff members’ accounts of their HE experiences differ considerably. Degree specifications, institutional context, the sociopolitical background of each HE country, time variance\(^\text{84}\), and “personal knowledge [or what Dewy explains as] subjective life experiences”\(^\text{85}\) have impacted on their perceptions (Kolb, 1984, p. 36). Nonetheless, all their stories, on when they were students, point towards how pursuing HE in the past was a “de-humanizing” process that is “thwarted by injustice, exploitation […] oppression […and] violence” (Freire, 1996, pp.26, 25).

Section 4.1 Between Borders and Barriers: A Structure of ‘De-mobility’

Much research has been conducted on borders [and barriers] at the current time of increased securitization (Newman, 2006a). But, as Newman (2006a) suggests, “if we

\(^{84}\) Time variance played an important role in shaping interviewees’ perspective on their HE experiences. Mr Mehdi UA is an example. He studied for his BA (1974-1978), and MA (1983-1985) at two different universities in Egypt. His experience in this host country has been significantly influenced by the change in Egyptian presidency over time. According to Mehdi, the succession from Abdel Nasser (1944-70) to Anwar El Sadat (1977-1981) to Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) has meant different HE contexts for Palestinians in Egypt. During his BA period, Mehdi reported that ‘the Palestinian was welcomed’, assisted and appreciated but afterwards, ‘the Egyptians started to put new restrictions on university admission’ and things have become ‘very, very difficult’. This is consistent with El Abed (2004) who explains that “the rise to power of Gamal Abdel-Nasser […] ushered in a golden age for Palestini ans in Egypt […] while the Camp David peace agreement and the assignation of Egypt’s culture minister by [a] Palestinian faction […] proved a turning point” (p.29). Since then, Palestinians were treated as “ungrateful” “foreigners” “who deserve neither sympathy nor assistance” (El Abed, 2004, p.29-30).

\(^{85}\) Mr Hassan UA and Ms Lamia UB are examples of how perspectives are influenced by individual’s knowledge and experience. Both lecturers have studied in Egyptian universities for an undergraduate degree in a relatively close time-span; the first graduated in 1980 while the second matriculated in the same year. Reviewing their CVs, Hassan had lived abroad for a while, as well as pursuing his master’s and doctorate at US universities. Lamia’s encounter, however, was totally confined to the Gaza-Egypt context. Consequently, there was a noticeable gap between these lecturers’ evaluation of the Egyptian universities. While Hassan criticized Egyptian education as being ‘too limited’, Lamia surprisingly perceived it as ‘too wonderful’. The majority of the research participants (eight out of 15) had studied for at least one of their academic degrees in Egypt. Their comments on the Egyptian educational system supported Hassan’s criticism. This contradiction suggests that Lamia’s idealization of her BA study was based on her narrow range of comparison. Hence, participants’ perspectives on their HE experiences needed to be considered critically.
really want to know what borders mean to people, then we need to listen to their personal and group narratives” (p.154). In this section, I use the word ‘de-mobility’\(^{86}\) to indicate how Palestinian freedom of movement was and continue to be restricted by the Israeli occupation and how this had a detrimental impact on my academic participants, when they were students, which goes beyond the physical. Among other things, mobility restrictions contributed to “enframing” people’s imagination about possibilities whereby occupation rules “appear[ed] as something essentially law like [...and thus] external to practice” (Mitchell, 1990, p. 571). A structure of ‘de-mobility’ created “a form of [symbolic] violence that […] subtly implement[ed] a social as well as symbolic logic of inclusion and exclusion” for Palestinians in and from the Gaza Strip (Swartz, 2013, p. 39).

4.1.a Studying in Egypt

According to Anabtawi (1986), “the Gazan pool of talent from which to draw the faculty is predominantly Egyptian trained” (p.44). In fact, 56 per cent and 77 per cent of the academic staff at the Faculties of Education of the UA and the UB respectively were Egyptian university alumni. Eight out of 15 of the academic participants had studied for at least one of their HE degrees, in Egypt (see Appendix 20).

Anabtawi (1986) explains that “years of Egyptian tutelage over Gaza had given Gaza’s educational system a strong Egyptian orientation which made it both easy and logical for students to pursue their higher education in the same Egyptian mould” (p.8). Jensen (2006) adds that “the majority of Gaza’s educated young people had received their degrees in Egypt” since, under occupation, the first Gaza university was not established until 1978 (p.60). Thus, within limited options, Palestinians took advantage of “the opportunities that were made available for them by the Egyptian government […] especially as these were] at little or no cost” (Anabtawi, 1986, p. 8).

The historical occupation of Gaza has enabled Egyptian education to “penetrate the cultural context [of Palestinians as…] another group” (Freire, 1996, p.133). Despite an

\(^{86}\) The use of ‘de-mobility’ is influenced by Roy’s (1995) use of the term ‘de-development’ to indicate a structure that is resistant/ immune to development.
“urbane” violence, this “cultural invasion” is undermining of Palestinians’ “potentialities [
……] inhibit[ing to their] creativity […] and] curbing [of] their [indigenous] expression” 
(ibid.). For example, Abu Lughod (2000) states that Palestinian HE “has not yet produced
a critical faculty that is prepared to question the legitimacy and utility of the inherited
system of HE prevalent today” (p.86).

Nehwevha (2002), Soudieu, (2002), and Rutayisire, (2007) explain that one of the most
challenging problems for educational reform in post-colonial countries is that teachers
continue to operate with the old colonial impetus. Thus allowing Palestinians to study for
HE, was in fact “a false generosity” of Israel (Freire, 1996, p.26). According to Anabtawi
(1986), the cultural ‘invasion’ of Gaza by Egyptian Education was tolerated by the
occupation so as to instill in Palestinians traditional “dispositions” that were traditional
enough to maintain the status quo of occupation (Freire, 1996, p. 133; Swartz, 2013, p.
89).

Studying in Egypt was not without difficulty. According to Ms Lamia UB, these Egyptian
offers were only available for high-achieving students in the Tawjíhi examination87. Mr
Zeyad UB also explained that going for the scholarship option was a lengthy process
which took up to one year. Sarcastically, students used to call this year the sumud year
(i.e. steadfastness)88. Hence continuing on to HE was perceived as a form of “resilient
resistance” (Ryan, 2015, p. 299). The lack of alternatives made students “comply” with
prolonged waiting and ‘rationalize’ it as a nationalistic practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471)

Although, in the past, Gaza students could travel, their movement was curtailed by the
many difficulties they encountered. Due to Israeli occupation of the Egyptian Sinai
Peninsula (1967-1982), the Gaza-Egypt border was not accessible. Students’ inability to
manage their own travel placed them, from the outset of their HE experiences, in a
collective passive position. For example, Mr Mehdi UA mentions that the International
Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), used to co-ordinate students’ transfer to Egypt in
groups. According to Mehdi UA and Lamia UB these groups would be ‘taken’ by the

87 Tawjíhi examination in Gaza is equivalent to A-level in the UK
88 In the Palestinian context, the term “sumud [refers to] a tactic of resistance to the Israeli occupation that
relies upon adaptation to the difficulties of life under occupation” (Ryan, 2015, p 299)
ICRC buses from a place called Jawazat\(^{89}\) in Gaza, and only be ‘set free’ in Egypt, each to go to his/ her arranged university. I agree with Pennebaker, Mehl, and Niederhoffer (2003) that “the words people use in their daily lives can reveal important aspects of their social and psychological worlds” (p. 547). Using the passive voice, in this context, Mehdi and Lamia implied a state of helplessness and of “compliance” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471; Swartz, 2013, p. 39). Neither of them, however, questioned the causes of this “de-humanizing” process (Freire, 1996, p. 26). On the contrary, Ms Lamia “misrecognized” it (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199), as a “generous” practice (Freire, 1996, p. 26) since it was of help, especially to inexperienced females who felt unsafe to travel on their own in an oppressive context of ‘de-mobility’.

Rieffer-Flanagan (2009) argues that the ICRC works “in situations of war and […]violence] to achieve humanitarian assistance” that is neutral (p.889). Nonetheless, Mehdi explains more compelling details of this arranged transfer:

> The Israelis used to cover the bus sides with blankets […], so that we don’t look at Sinai and at their troops there. Israeli soldiers used to accompany us in the bus during our journey. The bus used to keep moving until we reach Suez Canal. […]Afterwards[,] the Red Cross would take us and hand us to the Egyptians […]. We used also to return to Gaza for the summer vacation in the same way … (Mr Mehdi UA)

Ironically, Gaza students were “de-humanized” by the very experience that was to bring them empowerment (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Winners of scholarships were taken as if they were goods packed into buses to be exported to their universities. These members of academic staff, when they were students, had to follow the “prescribed” rules of the Israeli occupation (ibid., p. 29), which had the actual and “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2), to “naturalize” their practical adaptation as a HE access pre-requisite (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). Even their ability to visit home depended on the availability of the ICRC

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89 Jawazat is an Arabic word which means ‘passports’.
buses, which ignored students’ priorities. Hence Palestinian students were simultaneously ‘privileged and oppressed’ (Dong & Temple, 2011).

4.1.b Travelling from Gaza

Gazan historical changes seemed to reassert their oppression as “fate” (Freire, 1996), and would thus “orient [their] individual and collective dispositions” further towards practical adaptation (Swartz, 2013, p. 83). The Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula\(^{90}\) did not significantly improve the movement conditions. Mr Ashraf UB is an example. After obtaining his master’s, he postponed his PhD study for 14 years. One of the reasons he mentioned:

> In these days, we did not have any [postgraduate studies] in the Gaza Strip. Also, if I wanted to go outside Gaza, a permission was needed. To get that permission, I would have been required to meet the Israeli intelligence. But, the Israeli Intelligence used to blackmail the students [who are less than 35 years old] so that they accept to co-operate with it. [They would allow the student the first, and the second year and when he is about to graduate, they would call him and drag him to such matters]. So, things were not easy for me to get a permission and travel… (Mr Ashraf UB)

For Mr Ashraf UB, a travel permission was only a form of “false generosity” by Israel (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Gray (1990) also writes that “exit permits [were granted by Israel] on the condition that [Palestinian students do not return] for at least five years” (p.14). Mr Majid UB is another example. After 1985, the unpredictability on the Gaza-Egypt borders made him decide not to study for a BA in Egypt. Majid explained: ‘I did not like to undergo adventures beyond my purpose’. Both Ashraf’s and Majid’s choices of when and where to go for HE was influenced by their “unconscious calculation of what is

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\(^{90}\) According to Dyer and Kessler (2014) “the Sinai is a triangular peninsula of 60,000 square kilometres – around three times the size of Israel – that bridges North Africa and the Levant. To its east is Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the Gulf of Aqaba; to its west is the Suez Canal and Gulf of Suez; to its north is the Mediterranean; and, to its south, the Red Sea. […] The Sinai is divided into two of Egypt’s 27 governorates – North and South Sinai – with district capitals in el-Arish and el-Tor, respectively” (p. 12).
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possible, impossible, and probable for people in their specific locations in [their occupied...] social order” (Swartz, 2013, p.90).

Even after the Peace Process 1993, Palestinian students faced mobility restrictions and “de-humanization” in their travel (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Shortly afterwards, “checkpoints and other obstacles (administrative and legal) became more numerous” (World Bank, 2010, p.8). For Mr Zeyad UB, crossing the border was full of ‘suffering’. Mr Omar UB who finished his PhD in 2004 reported that leaving Gaza, for the first time ever, to go to Egypt was ‘bad, bad, very bad’. On the border, Omar was imprisoned in a cell for investigation for ten hours, anxious and humiliated. He became an object of negotiations between the PNA, Israelis and the Egyptian side to determine whether to release him or not. For him, his “de-humanization” came not only from Israelis, but also “horizontally” from Egyptians and his own people, the oppressed (Freire, 1996, pp. 26, 44). As a student, exposed in his travel to “humiliation, threat, and fright”, Mr Omar UB was tortured not physically, but psychologically (Kanninen, Punamäki, & Qouta, 2003, p.98). Consequently, whenever he crossed the border, Omar ‘would be putting his hand on his head and asking for the mercy and protection of Allah’. This situation of Omar supports Barakat's (1993) explanation that fatalism can be used, inter alia, as a “psychological mechanism” of “self-assertion” (p.194). But, Omar, as an “oppressed [is not] seeing his suffering […] as the will of God”; he is not “submerged in [this oppressive] reality [on the border]” (Freire, 1996, p.44). This is different from what Freire suggests, although the result is the same: mobility for Omar became a “limit situation” in which “fatalism” can be the only “theme of reference” (ibid., p 94).

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91 According to Freire, “limit situations imply the existence of persons who are directly or indirectly served by these situations, and of those who are negated and curbed by them. Once the latter come to perceive these situations as the frontier between being and nothingness, they begin to direct their increasingly critical actions towards achieving the untested feasibility implicit in that perception. On the other hand, those who are served by the present limit-situation regard the untested feasibility as the threatening limit situation which must not be allowed to materialize, and act to maintain the status quo” (Freire, 1996, p. 83).

92 In his Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire asserts that “if individuals are caught up in and are unable to separate themselves from [their] limit situations, their theme in reference to these situations is fatalism, and the task implied by the theme is the lack of a task” (Freire, 1996, p. 94). However, one wonders whether Mr Omar UB was capable of doing any task at all in this situation. Thus, Omar’s case fits only partly within this Freirean description. Yes, Omar resorted to fatalism; however, this participant had no choice in terms of doing anything as he was surrounded by Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian military and police forces on the borders. As an individual, Mr Omar UB was in a very disproportionate position in which action was
4.1.c Travelling to Gaza

Palestinians who studied in other Arab and foreign countries were not immune to this demobility structure of closure, restrictions, and investigations at the borders. This casued academic staff, when they were students, to anticipate the difficulties and internalize travel as a risky action (Bourdieu, 1984). For example, Mr Zeyad, having been jailed (for political activism) at the border after finishing his BA in Iraq, did not attempt to visit home during his master’s study in the USA. He mentioned: ‘I did not try to go, […] I was afraid to go and not to come back’. Zeyad’s earlier experience dominated his actions long after he was jailed. This supports Bourdieu’s argument that “the structures of power are deeply internalized by individuals […] and orient all subsequent individual conduct” (Swartz, 2013, p.89). Visiting home was associated with anxiety for almost all academics when they studied abroad93. Their perception of risk was “reinforced” by the actual border restrictions (Swartz, 2013, p.100). As such, they chose what worked for them practically within the limits of the possible.

4.1.d Travelling Inside Gaza

Barriers have also existed inside Palestine, with regard to moving between the different Palestinian cities and villages, and the areas of the Gaza Strip. This has reinforced the “symbolic power” of the Israeli occupation, internalizing in the academic participants, when they were students, the “disposition” of limitation (Bourdieu, 2001, pp.1–2; Swartz, 2013, p.89). The case of Mr Ashraf UB is illustrative here. Under the occupation, this participant used to drive his Mercedes car after 8:00 pm to other cities, such as Ramallah Hebron, and even to Tel Aviv, as it was a time of ‘safety and security’ (Mr Ashraf UB). But he regretted that the first Intifada in 1987 brought danger to Palestinians. From 1987

both unwise and practically impossible. That said, fatalism in this context was in fact a positive and helpful alternative for the participant. It also built on his worldview as a man of faith.

93 For example, Mr Riyadh UA did not visit Gaza during his PhD. Also, Mr Suleiman UA, and Ms Randa UA, studying in Saudi Arabia and in the USA respectively, arranged to meet up with their family in Gaza in a proxy country, such as Egypt or Jordan. But Mr Hassan UA and Mr Majid UB had not seen their families for three and six consecutive years respectively.
onwards, “Israeli authorities introduced magnet cards [..., established] military checkpoints [, imposed] closures curtailing Palestinians’ social and economic life and preventing” their mobility (World Bank, 2010, p. 8). This shows an interesting paradox in which Mr Ashraf UB “misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199) “compliance” with the occupation rules (Bourdieu, 1984, p.471), as rewarding (i.e. with safe mobility) and Palestinian people’s resistance as deserving of punishment.

The roads between Gaza’s different areas were also obstructed. Mr Zeyad UB mentions:

> When I used to visit my family’s home, there were barriers. It would take me three or four hours sometimes to reach my work place, [...]. One would reach [his work] tired. When I enter the lecture hall, I would find that the students were equally late, or have not come at all. For those who could come, it was not easy at all. [...] There was not that much quality in education. Besides, the university’s regulations were so often crossed over [...] there was no discipline, and no commitment… (Mr Zeyad UB)

Israeli restrictions became the centre around which Palestinian life was structured. The oppressed had to abide by the law of the oppressor; the law of the oppressor became everyday law. In these circumstances, the lack of discipline, commitment, and quality of HE was “naturalized” as inevitable, as a “fate” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471; Freire, 1996, p.43).

With the evacuation of settlements (2005), Israeli physical barriers were removed from Gaza to be replaced with other forms of restriction. Thus, “Gaza and the West Bank became increasingly cut off from each other [from the mid-1990s]” (World Bank, 2010, p. 6). Ms Randa UA was directly affected by this situation. She lost her job in the West Bank as she was not allowed to enter. This dramatic consequence for Ms Randa UA was a result of “fate” (Freire, 1996, p. 43).

4.1.e ‘De-mobility’ Continues

Ms Etaf UB described the Egyptian Border in 2012 as ‘torturous’. Etaf stated, ‘They shake you with torture, torture, torture until you start to feel as if they were guarding paradise [from Palestinians] with these borders; however, later you discover that what
follows was yet another hell”⁹⁴. Etaf’s account evokes the “de-humanizing” impact of the borders in which this participant “self-depreciated” herself and Palestinians as the inferior ‘other’ to the world (Freire, 1996, pp. 26, 45). Mr Omar UB is another example. Experiencing a life caught between borders, barriers, roadblocks and checkpoints for 55 years, towards the end of his interview, he made an anguished cry for freedom:

We are oppressed people and we live the oppression every day. We are locked in from all sides. I am not allowed even to visit Israel. Suppose I have relatives in Lod and I want to visit them. Why am I not allowed to? I want to visit them with a formal passport and let them check me on the border if they want to […]. It is my natural right to go out [of Gaza]. Isn’t it? To go to America… to go to Australia, and to go to all the countries of the world. Why should this be a problem? I want to see the world, because the world exists … (Mr Omar UB)

Omar was aware of the oppression, and yet showed a practical adaptation to it. Since Gaza has been “under the Israeli enclosure and fenced [off] for decades until today”, needing a passport inside Palestine, or being investigated at the borders was not questioned by Omar (Jabareen & Carmon, 2010, p. 448). This was “naturalized” as a social order for Palestinians (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). Realizing the oppression as “de-humanizing”, Omar called for human not Palestinian rights (Freire, 1996, p 26). He “self-depreciated” his Palestinian identity as non-equal (ibid., p 45) since he attempted to take out the ‘otherness’ component in himself (his nationality) to appeal to people of the world. It is the case, then, as Newman (2006b) argues, “borders create (or reflect) difference and constitute the separation line not only between states and geographical spaces, but also between ‘us’ and ‘them, the ‘here’ and ‘there’, and the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’” (p.148). In fact, Edward Said maintained that Palestinians have always been an “‘other’ and opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement and exodus” (Gregory, 1995, p. 450).

To sum up, Mitchell rightly argues that “the complexities of domination [entails no] opposition between a physical and mental form of power” (Mitchell, 1990, p. 573). The

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⁹⁴ An effect of the Israeli war (2012) was that Ms Etaf UB was also questioned at a German airport for security reasons.
data suggested that framing people’s mobility on the physical level has simultaneously ‘enframed’ participants’ imagination and actions within the oppressor’s law (Mitchell, 1990). A focus on borders and mobility here does not dismiss other factors which might be “invisible to the human eye but nevertheless impacted strongly on [Palestinian] daily life practices” (Newman, 2006a, p. 172). By and large, however, geography and the extent to which mobility is possible remains, until this time, most central to the work of power and domination, which can be seen in “Orientalism and in the wider culture of imperialism” more generally (Gregory, 1995 p. 447). Its impact, in the context of this research, is best recapped by quoting Edward Said:

Palestinian life [became] scattered, discontinuous, marked by artificial and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time…[W]here no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events are accidents, all progress is digression, all residence is exile. (Said, 1998, pp. 20–21)
Section (4.2): A ‘Useful’ Social Relations Network

If mobility was restricted for Palestinians and ICT was not available until recently, the question that comes to mind is how would an old man in the Gaza Strip in the 1970s help his son, for instance, to enrol at a university abroad? The traditional and difficult context of Gaza made dependence on social networks of “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp1-2) become “naturalized” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). This proved to be a process of both empowerment and of “horizontal” (Freire, 1996, p. 44), and ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133).

4.2.a The Power of Example

In Gaza, important decisions including where to study for HE, were sometimes influenced by the power of example. Mr Majid UB is one example. Access to HE abroad, in the past, was mostly processed in groups, as in the Egyptian scholarships or through other countries’ co-ordination offices in Gaza. Majid studied in Russia in 1985 as a result of applying to one of these offices:

Some Communist countries such as Russia or what was so called the USSR at our time used to offer services to Palestinians […], including the student sector. Thus, there was an opportunity to help students in studying at USSR’s universities nearly for free, and this was encouraging […] There was a capacity to admit numbers from Gaza […]. So, I applied like any other student… (Mr Majid UB)

Smolansky (1978) writes that “the Soviet Union has been active in the Middle East since 1955” and that Moscow was considered an important “factor in the Arab- Israeli equation” (pp. 102, 107). That said, these offices were a means of “cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, p. 133) that promoted the “symbolic power” of Russia in the region (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). Within the lack of alternatives, Majid, rationalized the “false generosity” of these offices of the Union Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as offering benevolent services to the Palestinian community (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Nonetheless, in the interview, what encouraged Majid to contemplate the idea of applying was not the
USSR office but the example of his neighbour. This supports Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels (2009) who indicates that even with the modern Internet social network, “[word of mouth] can have larger and longer-lasting effects than traditional marketing activity” (p.99). Majid’s neighbour had a “symbolic power” locally as he used to send his family regular letters describing his life and experience of study in this foreign country (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). The relative isolation of Gaza gave glamour to these stories, which caused Majid to internalize this person as a “model of humanity” to follow in this respect95 (Freire, 1996, p. 27).

4.2.b Gaza Culture as a Resource

For those Palestinians who studied abroad, Gaza culture provided a source of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). As a Muslim96 and traditional society, there is a “relationship of trust among people living in the same locality” (Jabareen & Carmon, 2010, p. 457). The mutual neighbourhood “dispositions” in Gaza encouraged Majid and his neighbour to co-operate for Majid to gain access to HE in Russia (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). Majid stated, ‘It was through my friend. He [...] encouraged me. I asked him how to apply and he helped me’. In Russia, Majid relied on other Palestinian and Arab friends who shared similar “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89) by virtue of religion, Arabism, and nationality, and who were therefore mutually concerned about offering help to Majid as he encountered “the unknown and the mysterious for the first time”97 (Newman, 2006b, p. 450).

95 Majid told himself: “as someone has tried being there before, why don’t I go then to the USSR??”
96 As Jabareen & Carmon (2010) state, “people in Gaza often say “The prophet recommends being good [even] to the seventh neighbour”’. (p.450). In the hadith of prophet Muhammed that ‘The rights of the neighbour is that, when he is sick you visit him; when he dies, you go to his funeral; when he is poor you lend him (money); when he is in need you protect him; when he is [happy] you congratulate him; when he is stuck with a calamity, you condole him; don’t raise your building above his to cut off the wind from him; don’t harm him with the good smell of your food unless you let him have part of it (mentioned in Tabarnai and quoted in Sakr, 2008)”‘ (ibid., p.451)
97 Majid’s friends oriented him to the new place, provided assistance as well as, if any happened to go to Gaza, carried money for him from his family to supplement his insufficient maintenance. Majid mentioned: ‘To go to Russia was an adventure for me. At first, I met a few Palestinian young men who introduced themselves and assisted me. I feel thankful to them. [...] I did not know the language of other students so I could not communicate with them at the beginning. Later, I also found new Arab friends in the city [...] who speak Arabic [...] this made me feel comfortable. [...] There were no bank transfers between Gaza and Russia, but there were students who came to study from Gaza or the West Bank at Russian Universities. My family in Gaza would therefore look for one of these students and ask them to carry money for me, although these Palestinian students would be traveling to another city. I would then arrange to meet them’.
kinship relations are also considered as a source of “symbolic power” in Gaza (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). According to Qouta and Odeh (2005), “Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip are large and members show strong affiliation to their families” (p.75). A “network of interdependent kinship relations continues to prevail” in Arab societies of all types (Barakat, 1993, p. 23). This means that “the success of an individual member becomes that of the family as a whole” (ibid., p.23). My participants perceived this “capital” as helpful for HE access (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). One example is Ms Randa UA. As a female, she was able to study in the USA only because she could draw upon her brother as a resource there. Their mutual cultural “dispositions” of kinship (Swartz, 2013, p. 89) constituted a form of ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23) for Ms Randa UA that prompted her brother to help her with university admission and afterwards in what seemed a natural brother-sister practice.

4.2.c Social Dependency

The need for social connections, inter alia, in accessing HE reinforced social dependency in Gaza as a way of life. Mr Zeyad UB is an illustrative case. Zeyad’s father worked as a Sheikh (Muslim leader) and local judge in Gaza in about 1974. His father had more “symbolic power” than the ordinary Gazan and was able to travel with a Jordanian passport despite the occupation conditions (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). Drawing upon his “symbolic capital”, Zeyad’s father sought HE opportunities for him somewhere outside the Strip (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). More details are in the following quote:

There was a kind of nepotism, which means if you know someone who has connections in Syria, or in Iraq [, then this helps]. So, we met someone in Syria, and he said, I could send him to Iraq. In fact, I did not want to travel to Iraq, because I wanted to study medicine, but when I found matters easy, I went to Iraq… (Mr Zeyad UB)
Zeyad “anticipating” the difficulties of access to HE (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 64), followed what was “prescribed” for him as he ended up studying for a BA in English Literature in Iraq (Freire, 1996, p. 29). The “symbolic capital” of his father and his connections were able to secure an opportunity for him through nepotism (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

In the interview, Zeyad said that he also studied for an MA in the USA and a PhD in Eastern Europe as a result of having social connections there. Later, his affiliation (PLO) entitled him to become a political appointee at one of the PNA’s offices in Gaza. This is a common practice of new governments in order to establish their control over the executive sector even among the democracies of Western Europe (Pfiffner, 1987). Although Zeyad was interested in foreign affairs, he remained “silent” in the face of Mr Yasser Arafat’s “prescription” for him to become a UB lecturer (Freire, 1996, pp. 87, 29). From then, his career path was located in academia and for the last 20 years he has continued to work in the same place, at the same university.

Zeyad’s case implies a “cultural norm of dependency” in Gaza (Cunningham, Sarayrah, & Sarayrah, 1994, p. 30). Across time, he had based his life choices on what became available to him through his connections. Accessing opportunities through social networks resulted in him internalizing this process “as a [successful] way of life” (Cunningham et al., 1994). In the long run, nepotism proved to be a form of “false generosity” (Freire, 1996, p. 26), as it had led to the “symbolic domination” of Zeyad (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 37).

The story of Mr Zeyad UB, when he was a student, points towards another characteristic of Gaza as an Arab society. There is a hierarchal structure within the family whereby the relationship between the young and the old is “vertical rather than horizontal” (Barakat, 1993 p. 106). This patriarchy implies a “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). It is projected through people in esteemed positions (leaders, teachers etc.) at the different societal institutions where usually “strict obedience” is expected (Barakat, 1993 pp. 2, 106). The wider power-relations context in the 1970s suggest that Zeyad’s practical adaptation to the choices of older and powerful others was expected as a “form […] of

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99 There is also a hierarchal structure based on sex in the traditional Arab family (Barakat, 1993, p.106).
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respect” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 94). Zeyad’s cultural “dispositions” facilitated his “symbolic domination” by their “prescriptions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89; Bourdieu, 2001, p. 37; Freire, 1996, p. 29). Thus, oppression was/is mainly caused by occupation, but simultaneously nurtured within Gaza’s own indigenous cultural practices. Zeyad’s “very structure of thought […] has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete/existential situation by which [he was] shaped” (Freire, 1996, p.27). His “submersion in the reality of oppression” made him adopt the “guidelines of the oppressor […]and thus he continued to be] fearful of freedom” (1996, p. 28; 29). The occupation provided the pretext for Zeyad’s “fear” (1996, p. 29). In that sense, Zeyad was simultaneously, privileged (compared to other Palestinian students in Gaza), and yet oppressed (Dong & Temple, 2011).

4.2.d Wasta as a Commonplace

Gaza culture caused wasta\(^\text{100}\) (nepotism) to become a commonplace under occupation conditions. Thus, “wasta favors those connected to well-established families and social groups” (Cunningham et al., 1994, p. 38). But, it is not limited to kinship or friendship as wasta “may [also] involve strangers” (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011, p. 414).

Mr Ashraf UB is one example. In the past, Ashraf gained employment at one of Gaza’s universities through wasta. Currently, he is working to enhance the transparency of the master’s degree application system at his Faculty. In our conversation on student employment, this participant showed a “dual” perception (Freire, 1996, p. 30). He said, ‘Listen Mona, you are from Gaza and you know; if you have wasta you get a job, if not, then not’. Mr Ashraf UB’s lack of embarrassment about the contradiction between his earlier practice, current work and general perspective on wasta shows that it has become “naturalized” in Gaza (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). As in the wider Arab World, “wasta [has become] a fixture of everyday life” (Barnett, Yandle, & Naufal, 2013, p. 46). It is, as Meles (2007) suggests, the “right and expectation” (cited in Barnett et al., 2013, p. 46). Ashraf’s earlier experiences continue to play out in a degree of “misrecognition”

\(^{100}\) “Wasta is an Arabic word that means the intervention of a patron in favour of a client in attempt to obtain privileges or resources from a third party”(A. A. Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011, p. 412). Sometimes, wasta is also referred to as nepotism or clientalism.
(Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199). His “duality” indicates that *wasta* as an “oppressive reality [in Gaza has] absorb[ed…his] consciousness”, at least partially (Freire & 1996, p.33). In Bourdieu’s words, the participant “appl[ied] to the objective structures of the [Gaza] social world structures of perception […] that have emerged from these objective structures and tend[ed] therefore to see the world as self-evident” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 135).

Mr Suleiman UA is as another example. Graduating from Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s, Suleiman was offered a part-time job at the UA through his connections. Seeking a promotion to full-time employment, he was called for an interview by the university each term to recheck the authenticity of his certificates. Suleiman perceived these “de-humanizing” interviews as a form of “manipulation” the aim of which was factional screening (Freire, 1996, pp 26, 128). Thus the political factions resorted, even within the universities, to *wasta*, or “political clientelism”101, as a “tool […] to secure political control” in the Palestinian society (Tuastad, 2010, p. 792). This is a “divide and rule” method, which proved oppressive to people such as Suleiman whom the political factions ideally aimed to liberate from the occupation (Freire, 1996, p 125). Exposed to “horizontal violence” (ibid, p. 44), Suleiman as an academic was both privileged and oppressed (Dong & Temple, 2011). Suleiman was later offered an immediate permanent position at the UA based on the following.

I saw the university president on the stairs […]. They threw a stone at him, which was about to reach his head. I saw him and shouted […]. Had he not moved his head it would have hit him. The [president] said, ‘you saved my life’. It was this point that made a difference in my life [Suleiman reflects]. He appointed me not because of my qualifications, although at that time it was a big thing to have an MA… (Mr Suleiman UA)

The president had the “symbolic power” to promote Suleiman, based on a favour (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). This supports Cunningham et al.’s (1994) argument that

101 Tuastad (2010) article: The Role of International Clientalism in the National Factionalism of Palestine includes a discussion on political clientelism under the Fatah/PLO. However, the interviewees indicate that such an approach is also applicable to other political factions in Gaza.
leaders are wasata-oriented as the rest of society and profit most from the wasata system” (p.38). Mohamed and Mohamad, (2011) rightly argue that, such a practice is "inconsistent with Muslim teachings regarding hiring practices”(p.413). Suleiman accepted the promotion, although he was not a nepotistic person. Despite his critical attitude towards the president’s practice, it seemed natural for Sulieman that he obtained his full contract based on wasata. Although “the negative view of wasata extends to those who use it”, as we can see here, in the Gaza context, it is socially tolerated (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011, p.420).

To conclude, the difficulties of life and travel in Gaza under occupation naturalized a “cultural norm of dependency” on social relations (Cunningham et al., 1994, p. 30). This, despite its contradiction with Islamic teaching, has internalized wasata in the Gaza community as a “social construct” since it provides solutions to intractable problems (Barnett et al., 2013, p. 42). Such solutions include “minimiz[ing] the risk of poverty, through increasing opportunities of employment” (Hilal, 2010, p.6), and HE access as we have seen above. Omer (2014) explains that even nowadays, wasata remains so crucial to helping young people in Gaza society that they popularly call it ‘Vitamin W’. Nonetheless, an “‘intercessory Wasta’...represents] a collective action problem […where the ] behavior which furthers one’s individual interests harms the collective interest [...] drives competence by ignoring merit and performance” (Barnett et al., 2013, P. 36). This creates a “reinforcing cycle” of inequality, which is oppressive even to the people who benefit from it since they are usually stigmatized as “corrupt and

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102 According to Mohamed & Hamdy (2008), “Islam stress the importance of hiring based on qualification and merit in several places (Abbas, 2005). In the Quran, Muslims are instructed that ‘the best that you can hire employee is one who is competent and trustworthy’ (Quran, 28, 26). Prophet Mohamed is also reported to have said ‘He who is in a leadership position and appoints knowingly a person who is not qualified to manage, than he violates the command of God and His messenger’. He also stated ‘when a person assumes an authority over people and promotes one of them because of personal preferences, God will curse him for ever” (p. 2).

103 In the interview, Suleiman pointed out that he rejected two offers (which had been made on the basis of bribery), to study at Egyptian universities. Consequently, he delayed his PhD studies for several years.

104 Cunningham et al (1994) defines ‘Intercessory wasata’ as follows: “It involves a protagonist intervening on behalf of a client to obtain an advantage for the client - a job, a government document, a tax reduction, admission to a prestigious university. Many individuals, supported by their wasata backers, may be seeking the same benefit. When the seekers for a benefit are many and the opportunities are few, only aspirants with the strongest wasatas are successful. Succeeding or failing depends on the power of the wasatas more than on the merits of the seekers” (p.29).
morally lacking” (Mohamed & Mohamad, 2011, pp. 413, 420). Hence, *wasta* can be viewed as a form of “horizontal violence” among the oppressed people of Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 44). But, according to Barnett et al. (2013), it was colonial rule which strengthened nepotism in the Middle East by exploiting the society’s tribal culture (p.43). Similarly, the occupation in Gaza, and political factionalism, had increased Palestinian students’ (now members of staff) reliance on social relations as a way of life.
Section 4.3 Solidarity and Adversity: A Critical Interaction

The past adversity of Palestinians “helped people discover a deep sense of community because of their need for mutual help” (Moffat, 2001, p. 69). Like a flower amid thorns, solidarity has flourished under a “de-humanizing” occupation in the Gaza Strip (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Side-by-side invasive plants have developed to produce poisonous seeds (individualistic tendencies), which have undermined Palestinian unity. The data on the past HE experience shed light on this argument, suggesting that “the oppressor ‘within’ [Palestinian people as the] oppressed is stronger than they themselves are” (Freire, 1996, p. 150).

4.3.a Efforts for Solidarity

It was contradictory that Israeli oppression generated a “disposition” among Palestinian people as united in domination; this “symbolic violence” seems to have paradoxically motivated their actions to develop solidarity (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Jabareen and Carmon (2010) maintain that, in Gaza, the shared interests, basic beliefs and attitudes, space, daily life practices and the shared perceptions of risk continue to produce “communities of trust” (p.448). Similarly, Blum (2007) outlines three bases for solidarity. These include identity, shared experience and political aims, all of which seem applicable to the Palestinian case. Here, I present more details on this Palestinian solidarity.

Ms Randa UA is an example. This lecturer was born in the Kuwait to a refugee Palestinian family. Randa mentioned:

My family was very keen on arranging for us to visit Gaza every […] summer. This kept us connected […]. We […] did not use to feel […] ourselves as Kuwaiti citizens […] In Gaza, we] used to see […] all our relatives, our lands, our houses, and all these things […] when I finished my PhD, […] I did not think of going anywhere else. I had to return to […] offer my contribution to my people […] under occupation… (Ms Randa UA)
According to Ahmed (1999) for migrants, “being at home or leaving home is always a question of memory […] whereby acts of remembering […] are felt […] in the form of a discomfort, the failure to inhabit the present or present space” (p. 343). Ms Randa UA’s consciousness that she was part of the diaspora affected her perception of Kuwait as a ‘home’. Consequently, her “habits of life, expression or activity in the [Kuwait] environment inevitably [occurred] against the memory of things in the [Gaza] environment” (Said, 1990, p. 366). Observing a context of oppression heightened Randa’s commitment to Gaza from community, to solidarity, based. According to Blum (2007), solidarity is a “political” concept105 (p. 53). That said, Randa committed herself to the “restoration of [Palestinian] humanity” in terms of contributing to Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 38).

Most academic participants showed “true generosity” in helping their oppressed Gaza society through education (Freire, 1996, p. 27). For example, Mr Majid UB’s motivation to study psychology was to assist his people. This consolidates Qouta and Odeh (2005) view when they point out a persistent “need for concentrated [mental health] action in Gaza under conditions of war and violence” (p.79). Mr Omar UB is another example. While he was studying at an Egyptian university for a PhD in art education, he refused to work on Egyptian-themed paintings106 in solidarity with his Palestinian group. Omar viewed Egyptians as ‘other’ and his art in nationalistic terms. In fact, art has played an important role in the Palestinian struggle. Rolston (2014), for instance, mentions that since the first Intifada, “as part of the resistance to the Israeli occupation and repression, young people, at great personal risk, mobilized popular support through their clandestine artwork” (p. 40). Even today, “behind the iron grip which Israel maintains on the Gaza Strip, there exists a vibrant tradition of painting murals and graffiti on outdoor walls” (Rolston, 2014, p. 40).

105 Blum (2007) argues that “solidarity and community are not the same. Solidarity seems political in a way that community need not be, in the sense that solidarity is something that responds to adversity or at least perceived adversity, while community does not necessarily involve adversity. Solidarity is a kind of pulling together of a group in the face of perceived adversity, generally but not necessarily human-created adversity” (Blum 2007, p. 53).

106 Declining one offer for nationalistic reasons, Omar replied: ‘No way for me to paint for Egypt. I can only paint a picture for my people, and I am happy to give it to you for free’.
Mr Suleiman UA is further an example of Palestinian solidarity. Graduating between 1996-97, Suleiman and his colleagues initiated new diploma and master’s programme at the UA which widened Palestinian access to HE in Gaza. This supports Anabtawi’s (1986) argument that, in the Palestinian context, it is the “returning academics that [had been] setting the intellectual tone and standards which [had accompanied, positively or negatively] their universities’ growth” (p.80). Suleiman’s commitment was clear on more than one occasion. During the Intifada, for example, he taught at the UA, then at mosques, then in his own home, and when this also became difficult, he went to students’ areas in person. This account is consistent with Gray (1990); see also Mahshi & Bush, 1989; Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003; Hussein, 2005; Nicolai, 2007), and with Ms Amna UA as follows:

The meeting place maybe the home of the faculty member or a student, the back room of a shop, or even an automobile. A day may include several classes in widely separated locations, to which many faculty members will walk or catch buses or share taxis […] Classroom locations may change as the last minute if reports of shooting or raids come through… (Gray, 1990, p. 15)

Ms Amna UA also stated:

I remember that my biology teacher took many of the teacher’s tools including slices of live cells to her home. To finish the teaching of [the] subjects, the teacher[s] had to make of [their] homes a small school or university… (Ms Amna UA)

The occupation conditions gave teachers the “symbolic power” to act on behalf of institutions (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). Under “de-humanizing” conditions, they used this power to sustain the educational process and preserve the community’s welfare (Freire, 1996, p. 26). According to Routledge and Simons (1995), “local popular committees were established [during the Intifada] to deal with health, education, commerce, food supplies, [and] neighborhood watch” (p.490). Building a Palestinian “civil society” was seen as a form of active resistance (Routledge & Simons, 1995, p.490). That said, “because of the purpose given [to this action], [these Palestinian efforts] constitute an act
of love” among the oppressed (Freire, 1996, p. 27). This supports Moffat's (2001) argument that “adversity tends to encourage the building of community” (p. 70).

4.3.b A Critical Relationship

So far, I have presented a positive relationship between solidarity and adversity. I will now present a more complex picture of this interaction (Freire, 1996, p.28).

According to Gray (1990), during the first Intifada “many students have spent time in prison” (p. 16). Three of the academic participants had been oppressively detained for alleged political activism (see also Hussein, 2005). Their reflections on the “de-humanizing” experience of prison varied (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Mr Zeyad UB, as a first example, was convinced that “freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift” (ibid., p. 29). For this purpose, he and other detainees arranged several ‘strikes’ which exposed them to Israeli ‘punishment and [tear] gas’ inside the prison cell. Zeyad explained that Palestinian prisoners ‘had serious challenges […that required] cooperating with each other’.

Mr Omar UB is a different example:

I retreated into myself a bit, because one was afraid from the [prison] situation. I used to sit and listen to others silently. I did not make relation with people […], […] not all people there] might be trusted… (Mr Omar UB)

According to Gold et al. (2000), there is a correlation between the “trauma experiences” of prisoners of war and increased levels of “anxiety and depressive disorders” (p.36). Kanninen et al. (2003), researching prisoners of the Gaza Strip, found out that prisoners differed “in their strengths and vulnerabilities depending on whether the torture was psychological and interpersonal or physical in nature” (p.98). Omar’s experience in an oppressive Israeli prison instilled in him the “dispositions” of fear and social anxiety (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). For his security, he preferred to keep “silent” (Freire, 1996, p. 87). Isolated by the prison walls from his family and friends, Omar established further “invisible borders” between himself and other Palestinian prisoners (Newman, 2006a, p.
PART TWO

Chapter Four: The Past HE Experience

172). This implies a problem for Palestinian solidarity since “whereas faith […]in others] is a priori requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue” (Freire, 1996, p.72).

Weakening Palestinian solidarity was a deliberate Israeli strategy that aimed at dismantling the society’s fabric through encouraging “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, p. 44). Gray (1990), for instance, writes that the Israeli forces used a “tactic […]of[…] dehumanization” in the Palestinian territories which “seem[ed] to be an end in itself” (p. 14). This process “particularly [involved] the humiliation of fathers before their families” (Gray, 1990, p.14). In the Arab World, “legitimacy of political orders and rulers derives from the family and its values […] since rulers and political leaders are cast in the image of the father” (Barakat, 1993, pp. 116–117). Thus it is the case that, as Bourdieu indicates, “politics are rooted in group formation and identity” (Swartz, 2013, p.88). Undermining the “intergenerational” symbolic power and legitimacy of the Palestinian family was a way of influencing politics (ibid., p. 80).

Mr Suleiman UA elaborated further on this “de-humanization” process:

Sometimes [the Israeli soldiers] would stop students on their way to the university, the UA. They would stop […] particularly university students […] And then out of provocation] order one to hit his friend, to beat him […]and] to spit on his face… (Mr Suleiman UA)

This is another example of the conflicting mix of oppression and empowerment in students’ HE experience. For their own safety, Gaza students were forced to follow Israeli “prescription” of “horizontal violence” and practise “silence’ (Freire, 1996, pp. 29,44, 87).

A mechanism of collective punishment inflicted not only by Israeli, but also by Egypt, impacted on Palestinian solidarity. For instance, Jensen (2006) reports that “after 1977, [Egypt] had begun to deny access to a large number of Palestinian students […]mainly because] a Palestinian group had been responsible for the murder of a prominent Egyptian intellectual” (p.60). Mr Omar UB reflected on this Egyptian decision as follows:

I applied to study in Egypt, and in that period, Youssef El Sebai was killed […]. He was assassinated by
Palestinians, and so all the Palestinian community was punished and thus all their applications to enrol at Egyptian universities were rejected. This incident was in fact outrageous. If one has committed a crime, why should the whole community be punished?… (Mr Omar UB)

El Abed (2004), discussing Palestinians in Egypt, points out that “the assassination of Egypt’s cultural minister by the Palestinian faction headed by Abu Nidal in 1987 proved a turning point” (p.29). The “laws and regulations […] including] rights to free education, employment and residency were rescinded” (El Abed, 2004, p. 29-30). It was “de-humanizing” for Palestinian students, who had just finished their Tawjihi\textsuperscript{107} examination, to be punished for a crime they had not committed (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Collective punishment is a “divide and rule” method, which aimed to create a form of surveillance of Palestinians by Palestinians (\textit{ibid.}, p. 125). For Mr Omar UB, the people who caused him such trouble, when he was a student, remained ‘Palestinian dangerous others’, and this feeds into Palestinian “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, p. 44).

Egypt had the “symbolic power” to withhold its “generosity” with regard to HE scholarships (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2; Freire, 1996, p. 26). The first Gaza university was established as a result of this oppression (Jensen, 2006), providing another example of the intertwined nature of oppression and empowerment. It also supports the fact that Palestinians had always viewed education as key to their life and struggle under occupation (Gray, 1990; see also, Tahir, 1985; Anabtawi, 1986; Şayigh, 1997; Hussein, 2005)

\textbf{4.3.c On Palestinians’ Contribution to ‘Horizontal Violence’}

In comparison to Israel, Palestinians’ role in undermining their own solidarity can be likened to the straw that broke the camel’s back. Here are more details of this Palestinian contribution:

Mr Majid UB, returning from Russia to Gaza, observed a deterioration in Palestinian social relations (between 1986-1992\textsuperscript{3}). He commented:

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Tawjihi} examination is equivalent to A-level exams in the UK.
Everyone was occupied with something in his life. Before I left, [...] the family interconnection, and the social interconnection was wonderful. However, when I returned after six years, there was some disintegration. Everyone was concerned with his own personal interests… (Mr Majid UB)

Adversity undermined the basis of Palestinian solidarity and increased individualistic tendencies and “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, pp. 28, 44). Having more “symbolic power” in Gaza after the Peace Process of 1993, Palestinians have contributed to this deterioration (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). Nossek and Rinnawi (2003) explain that:

The main practical result of the transition from Israeli military rule to that of the PA has been the definition of the ‘enemy’. Under Israeli censorship, [for instance], the PLO was seen as the enemy and all support for it was a threat. […] Under PA rule, Palestinian groups opposed to Oslo Accords or other agreements between the PA and Israel became the ‘enemy’… (p. 199)

Mr Abdel Rahman UB, for example, pointed out that in the Palestinian political organizations, including the PLO ‘everyone sings for his own Layla’. This shows the “duality” of political factions, as oppressed by the occupation and oppressors of their own people (Freire, 1996, p. 30). Abdel Rahman further commented:

As a reflection of the different Palestinian factions [in Gaza], we did not accept the ‘other’. The factional atmosphere appeared on the level of the family, and the institution, any societal institution regardless of whether it was educational, health-related, or cultural etc. We lacked democracy… (Mr Abdel Rahman UB)

In Gaza, as in the Arab world, family is “the basic unit of social organization and production” (Barakat, 1993, p.23). Factionalism incited ”division” and “horizontal violence” that affected this social structure (Freire, 1996, pp. 125, 44). Nonetheless, the

108 “Layla, literally, ‘of the night’, is one of the most romantic women’s names in Arabic, appearing frequently in verse and prose. […] Laila is also proverbial […] ‘everyone sings for his Layla’, means, ‘everyone follows his own fancy’ ” (Barkho, 1990, p. 474)
roots of this Palestinian versus Palestinian animosity were generated by the Israeli occupation years before the Oslo Accord, as we shall see shortly.

In his article the *Muslim Brotherhood Movement in the West Bank and Gaza*, Shadid (1988) explains, for instance, that Israel had firstly tolerated the Brotherhood’s presence\(^{109}\) and its Islamization project in Gaza. The Muslim Brotherhood’s short-term strategy\(^{110}\) challenged the nationalist factions, which were led by the (secular) PLO. Hence, as Abū ‘Amr (1993) suggests, “the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Israeli occupation authorities in the West Bank and Gaza [was] a practical one […] because any success by the Muslim Brotherhood will be at the expense of the nationalists” (p.39). Muslim Brotherhood were permitted by the occupation to centre their activities on “university campuses, high schools and, mosques, where [these could obtain a…] maximum exposure from a largely captive student audience” (Shadid, 1988, p.666; see also Roy, 2011). This tolerance was an example of Israeli “false generosity” (Freire, 1996, p. 26), since it is a “divide and rule” strategy that incited “horizontal violence” among Palestinian factions (*ibid.*, pp.125, 44).

The Muslim Brotherhood “challenged the nationalist dominance in almost all the institutions in the occupied territories […] and controlled the student council] at two out of the six universities [which were] in the West Bank and Gaza”, including the UA (Shadid, 1988, p.679). This required violence on campus which at least four of my academic participants had witnessed. For example, Mr Abdel Rahman UB mentioned that *al-Mujamma’ al-Islami*\(^{111}\) witnessed several aggressive conflicts where ‘*sharp tools*’ were

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\(^{110}\) The Muslim Brotherhood’s “short-term strategy is to transform Palestinian society into an Islamic one and during this process to avoid confrontation with the Israeli authority and to challenge the Palestinian nationalist strategy and demonstrate its failure to Palestinian masses, presenting themselves as the only viable alternative” (Shadid, 1988, p. 674). It “contains no transitional strategy for a prolonged occupation, given that it will take time for the movement to transform the Palestinian population into a true and fully observant Islamic society” (Shadid, 1988, p.670). This is a gap that the Muslim Brotherhood had to address, at the time of the first *Intifada*, allowing the emergence of the Hamas initiative out of its movement (see Abū ‘Amr, 1993; Shadid, 1988)

\(^{111}\) “The *Mujamma’* (complex or centre) is an all-encompassing centre for social, educational, religious, and cultural functions. […] The *Mujamma’* usually contains the main prayer hall of the mosque, rooms for sports activities, social functions, classes, nursery, health clinic, library and meeting rooms. The *Mujamma’* have evolved to wield a great deal of power and influence in the community; each one is administered by a committee usually controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood” (Shadid, 1988, pp.673-p.674). It should be noted, however, that this centre was firstly established by “Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, a dynamic preacher and
used. In Mr Zeyad UB’s account, such clashes could also be seen later at the UA. This resulted in Mr Suleiman UA describing university students in the past as ‘fierce and aggressive’. According to Mr Ashraf UB, such ‘occasional clashes in campus, although not related directly to any factional base, they represented seeds of future factional conflict’. Nonetheless, ‘the occupation overlook[ed] campus factional clashes because it was concerned with exacerbating Palestinian divisions to distract them by each other’ (Mr Zeyad UB). This consolidates the view of Freire who mentions that “it is in the interest of the oppressor to weaken the oppressed still further, to isolate them, to create and deepen rifts among them” (Freire, 1996, p.122).

Gaza’s universities contributed to the incitement of Palestinian “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, p.44). For example, after the emergence of Hamas, the UA continued to be “useful [vehicle] for spreading Hamas’ ideas and influence and enlisting supporters” (Shadid, 1988, p.14). Similarly, Jensen (2006) indicates that, the UB “was established on the initiative of the mainstream Fatah movement in the early 1990s, clearly as a counterweight’ to the UA (p.59). Hence, the political factions “used civil society to recruit members and build public support” (Pace, 2013, p.54). This is consistent with the view of Mr Ashraf UB who mentioned that ‘afterwards, every faction started to actively recruit supporters from the university’. It also coheres with Mr Suleiman’s indication that the ‘Hamas and Fatah student supporters used to quarrel at the UA campus’.

The result of this “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, p. 44) was that under the PNA authority in Gaza, the UA became an “Islamist island in a ‘Fatah-land’ ”(Jensen, 2006 p. 62). Under the current Hamas control of Gaza, this description can be seen as vice versa. Hence, Palestinian HE institutions were “manipulated” actively to incite conflict and division (Freire, 1996, p. 128). Students were perceived by political factions as an audience; a target in which to “deposit” the different political agendas (ibid., p. 53). The campus became a space of/for factional recruitment. Mr Sueliman UA explained that in the past, for instance, ‘there were also fights between Hamas and Fatah inside the UA’. Hence, in working for liberation, Palestinian factions resorted to “banking education”

1948 refugee who was later to become the primary force behind Hamas” (Abū ‘Amr, 1993, p.7). Yasin is also the founder of the UA.
(Freire, 1996, p. 53). Their practice was oppressive as it aimed, through political ideologizing to “‘dislodge’ the oppressed from [one] reality [of oppression] in order to ‘bind’ them to another” (ibid., p.155).

In the process, the “dual capacity of religion - both to repress and to resist repression - […] seems to have been] harnessed by [the different] movements”, each for its different aims (Barakat, 1993, p. 130). In the Gaza Strip with its overwhelming Muslim majority, religion’s “symbolic power” is accepted as legitimate (Bourdieu, 2001, pp.1–2). The Muslim Brotherhood attempted “to ‘reform’ Gaza social behavior” in accordance with Islamic teachings (Shadid, 1998, p. 674). In order to impose their perception of reform on the community, they used violent “policing activities” (ibid., p.674). The Muslim Brotherhood attempt to “conquer” the people was an “antidialogical” practice, which was motivated by the “fear of [people’s] freedom” (Freire, 1996, pp.129, 161, 29). Religion was used here as “mechanism for control” - a way to “legitimize” the movement’s policy (Barakat, 1993, p.129).

The Islamization of the society, and the politics of the Muslim Brotherhood as a movement, was proposed as an “Islamic solution” for the Palestinian problem. Subsequently, Hamas, as a political organization, benefited from this Islamization of Gaza (Shadid, 1988, p.668). The PLO similarly attempted to “use religious expressions and Quranic verses [to advance their political] statements” (ibid., p.18). These attempts at cultural “invasion” are “especially terrible because [they are] carried out not by the dominant [Israeli occupation] recognized as such, but by those who [should] have participated in the revolution” (Freire, 1996, p. 140). We can see, therefore, what Anderson (1977:22) suggests, namely from “the possibility of religious people using politics for religious ends” as well as ‘politicians using religion for political ends” (cited in Hefner, 1987, p. 533).

Religion has been frequently “used by the colonized and the oppressed as a mechanism of instigation against their colonizers and oppressors”, as for example in the Algerian

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112 “Some of the most popular slogans of the Algerian revolution were from the Qur’an […for example]: ‘God does not change what is in a people unless they change themselves’ (13:11)” (Barakat, 1993, p.192).
as well as in the Iranian revolution\textsuperscript{113} (Barakat, 1993, p.130). Researching African-American political activism, Harris (1994) similarly concludes that religion is not “antipolitical, anti-participatory [or] and opiate of mass political consciousness” for it can actually “provide a psychological and social foundation for morally motivated behavior” (p. 65). In the Gaza instance, people’s religiosity has been used for politics, in a way that caused “horizontal violence”\textsuperscript{114} among the Gaza society (Freire, 1996, p. 44). Şâyîgh (2010) explains that more than 15 years of Gaza’s “isolation from the outside” world continues to make people “receptive” to political/religious “campaigns”, yet in a passive way (p.5). This coheres with Freire who argues that the oppressed, “deprived of their own power of decision, which is located in the oppressor, follow the prescriptions of the latter” (Freire, 1996, p.142).

4.3.d Palestinian Schism

The interviews shed light on the consequent Palestinian schism and “horizontal violence”. (Freire, 1996, p. 44). Mr Suleiman UA described his colleagues at the university who interviewed him for political screening as ‘perfidious’. Mr Zeyad UB felt disappointed by the PLO and its ‘fantasies’, and he explained:

> Matters took different courses […]. There became chaos […] factionalism […]. Everyone’s concern was how to get a job, regardless of whether he deserved it or not, or of whether he was put in the right position or not… (Mr Zeyad UB)

Zeyad, a political appointee, criticized the PLO for their “de-humanizing” lack of transparency (Freire, 1996, p. 26). This coheres with Freire’s argument that “sooner or later […] being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against who made them so” (ibid., p. 26). Zeyad observed a growing materialistic trend among people in the

\textsuperscript{113} “The Iranian revolution managed to galvanize religious sentiments against one of the world’s most repressive regimes and its allied global power, when that alliance showed total disregard for the nationalistic dignity and aspirations of the Iranians” (Barakat, 1993, p.130)

\textsuperscript{114} Factionalism challenged the traditional structure of Palestinian society. For example, Qouta and Odeh (2005) explain that “the influence of political parties has decreased the social role [and the solidarity among members] of the extended family” (p.75).
aftermath of the Peace Process. The GCO\textsuperscript{115} report (1997) pointed to “widespread bureaucratic corruption within virtually all PA institutions. It included favorism, unequal opportunities, abuse of power, monopolies, the private pocketing of public resources and mismanagement of public funds” (Le More, 2008, p. 70; see also Munayyer, 2011; Roy, 2007). Hence, as Moffat (2001) points out, “prosperity seems to break down into the pursuit of ego gratification by individuals isolated by one another by their selfishness” (p. 70).

According to Pace (2013), however, offering “welfare services” was used by both Fatah and Hamas, “to derive popular support” (p.54). In a deteriorating economy, such services, especially those of Hamas, were “vital to Palestinian life” (Roy, 2011, p. 4). Nonetheless, this politically-driven assistance was an example of “false generosity” that exacerbated “horizontal violence” among the members of the Gaza community (Freire, 1996, pp 26, 44). Freire explains that “welfare programs as instruments of [political] manipulation ultimately serve[s] the end of conquest […] and] splinter[s] the oppressed into groups of individuals hoping to get a few benefits for themselves” (ibid., p.133).

People’s livelihoods were similarly “manipulated” as part of the Palestinian schism (Freire, 1996, p. 128). Şayigh (2010) mentions, for example, that when Hamas took over Gaza, the Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the ‘rival’ West Bank government obliged “70,000 Palestinian Authority employees in Gaza to stay away from work, on penalty of losing their salaries” (p. 2). Mr Zeyad UB perceived a frustrating impact of this on PA’s employees who were left with inactivity and boredom.

A Hamas-Fatah rivalry “may not cease in the event that the Israeli occupation ends, since what is at stake […]is the leadership, the identity, and the future direction of the Palestinian people”\textsuperscript{116} (Abū ‘Amr, 1993, p.6). According to Roy (2011), however, this

\textsuperscript{115} GCO stands for Palestinian ‘General Controller’s Office’

\textsuperscript{116} According to Abū ‘Amr, (1993), “the charter [of Hamas] refers to the PLO as a ‘father, brother, relative, or friend’ of the Islamic movement and stresses the fact that the two movements have a common plight and common destiny and face the same enemy (article 27). At the same time, Hamas sharply criticizes the PLO’s secular course and its leadership, as well as its political program calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state that would coexist with the State of Israel. […]These] are all manifestations of its rivalry with the PLO for leadership” (p.13).
Palestinian schism “was rooted in a US government plan to undermine the Hamas-led government” (p. 42). Hence, a mechanism of internal Palestinian-against-Palestinian oppression is again linked to an external oppressor, this time, the supportive policy of the USA towards Israel. Since Gaza’s “political, economic, and cultural decisions […] continue to be] located […] in the invader society”, it remains largely “dual, ‘reflex,’ invaded and dependent” on the oppressive powers (Freire, 1996, p. 142).

To conclude, there is a critical interaction between adversity and solidarity, but for Palestinians, adversity and “de-humanization” is a continued condition (Freire, 1996, p.26). Peteet (1998), for instance, explains that “calling oneself or others a ‘Palestinian’ […] implies suffering, mistreatment, and struggle […] It embodies an overwhelming and undeniably constricting set of daily life circumstances” (p. 64). Nonetheless, as Edward Said (1998) mentions, with optimism, Palestinians remain symbolically connected:

The vast majority of our people are now thoroughly sick of the misfortunes that have befallen us […]. On the other hand, I have never met a Palestinian who is tired enough of being a Palestinian to give up entirely. (Said, 1998, p. 158)

Summary of Chapter Four

In this chapter, I have presented three main themes in relation to the past HE experiences of academic staff: Section 4.1 outlined the difficulties that my participants encountered in their movement from and to, and inside and outside the Gaza Strip in what amounted to a structure of ‘de-mobility’. Section 4.2 pointed out how, among other things, this has increased social dependency and had given rise to wasta as a form of “horizontal violence” in the Palestinian community (Freire, 1996, p. 44). Finally, a critical relationship between solidarity and adversity was discussed.
Chapter Five

The Present HE Experience

*My summer is emptiness*

*My winter is horror*

*And my life is a train passing between them whistling!*

Tawfiq Sayigh (d. 1971)

Figure 5.1 An Overview of Chapter Five
Section (5.1) HE: ‘A Journey Without Aim, Without Hope’

These research interviews\textsuperscript{117} provide a lens through which to view Gazan students’ enrolment in HE, focusing on their choice of education as a study major. As indicated earlier, the HE accomplishment of Palestinians is among the highest in the Arab world (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). UNDP (2014) states, moreover, that “from 1993 to 2011, the enrollment rate of students in higher education increased by 940% […] with an observed narrowing in] the gender gap” (p. 4). Thus Koni et al. (2012) note that “the estimated number of students attending HEI in 1993 was 22,750 it rose into 213, 973 in 2011 […] with ‘56% (females) enrolled […] in HEI [for the academic year 2010/2011]’ ” (p.2328). According to UNDP (2004), both an enhanced “social awareness of the value of women’s education” and a decrease in male participation for financial reasons were behind this expansion (p. 54). Nonetheless, a few considerations have made both males and females inclined to study as pre-service teachers, as we shall see shortly.

5.1.a HE as ‘Natural’

It felt redundant to ask my participants about why they enrolled in HE, however, a few examples are given below:

Samira UA: Stopping my education after Tawjih\textsuperscript{118} has never even occurred to me.

Tamara UB: No one nowadays drops out of school or […] gets married [only]. It was not a choice at all not to go to college.

Ferial UA: Well it’s like life has to go on, and I've never thought of finishing the high school and staying at home.

\textsuperscript{117} The interviews on students’ present HE experiences involved 21 students (14 females; seven males) and 15 participants from the academic staff (five females; ten males).

\textsuperscript{118} Tawjih examination is an equivalent to A-Level in UK educational system.
Nawal UA: I was raised up in an environment where all my family are educated. So, I followed their footsteps.

Despite progressiveness, there remains in Gaza, as in the rest of the Arab world, a relative “hierarchy based on sex” (Barakat, 1993, p. 106). Since, these responses came from females, such a question seemed less relevant for male students for they usually enjoy more freedom of self-determination and “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, 1-2). As expressed in UNDP (2004), Dalal UA pointed out that her ‘parents realized how important it is for a woman to continue her studying as this will help her in her life and in her family’. Likewise, the above students, such as Nawal UA, indicated that when it came to HE, they followed in their family’s ‘footsteps’- in an automatic fashion. Enrolling in HE was not a rational choice; it flowed from one family member to another, and from school to university level, as if on “conveyor belts” (Reay, 2016, p. 135). The lack of alternative opportunities led to HE being “misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199), as a natural route to follow after the Tawjihi examination. For many students in Gaza, HE has simply become a social norm.

5.1.b Female HE

Leathwood and Read (2009) rightly argue that with regard to “women’s participation in [HE], in many cases there are larger differences within regions than between them” (p.5). These differences are contingent upon “social, economic and cultural factors” (Leathwood & Read, 2009, p. 28). Mr Ashraf UB and Ibtisam UB are examples:

Firstly, Mr Ashraf UB explained:

The economic condition in Gaza has affected [university] attendance […and] registration. There are students who finished Tawjihi with 98%, but could not make it to the universities […]. University education costs money. I know people who have three outstanding students. They said, ‘We could educate the males, and then the females, and we could educate only one of the two girls’… (Mr Ashraf UB)

I concur with Azzouni (2010) that “Palestinian women currently face two major types of obstacles to their rights: those arising from within their own culture and society, and those
imposed as the result of occupation, war, and civil unrest” (p.2), although there is an inter-relatedness between these types of obstacle. Despite greater HE participation in Gazan society, the difficult economic conditions affected families’ decision regarding who and how many of their children they could afford to send to university. According to UNCTAD (2015), three “conflict[s] with full-scale military operation in six years, coming on top of eight years of economic blockade [...] meant that the] socio-economic conditions [of the Gaza Strip] are at their lowest point since 1967” (p.1; see also Omer, 2015). These “de-humanizing” circumstances pushed poorer families to deprive even well-achieving females of HE (Freire, 1996, p. 26). This is consistent with Sewell and Shah's (1967) indication that the “relative effect of socio-economic status is greater than intelligence for females, while the relative effect of intelligence is greater than is the effect of socioeconomic status for males” (p. 23). It also coheres with the view of Kirdar (2006) who points out that in the Arab world, “women’s education is [perceived] of less importance than men’s”119 (p.192). But Ashraf’s quote further evokes images of ‘water ripples”: the Israeli oppression triggered parental discrimination, in response to a resulting deteriorating economy, and this in turn reaffirmed traditional constructions of gender, providing a further practical justification for the “symbolic violence” against women in Gazan society (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133).

Ibtisam UB is a second example:

Many females do not continue their education for several reasons; first, because of marriage; [secondly] maybe their family [...] fear that they would have a free life; and maybe due to [...] poverty [...]. As for me, [...] my father died when I was four days old and I do not have any brothers or sisters so I have to depend on myself. [For this,] I should study hard and be a good student at the university…

(Ibtisam UB)

119 In fact, excluding females from HE based on the traditional sex hierarchy is not “naturalized” in the Arab context only (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). For example, Parish and Willis (1993) explain that in historically patriarchal societies, including Taiwan, parents similarly choose to “invest in sons’ versus daughters’ education” (p.864).
Joseph (1993) rightly argues that “the centrality of the family in the Arab world [is] axiomatic” (p.466). The three reasons outlined by Ibtisam for why some families would prevent their daughters from going on to HE are somehow related. To explain this, UNDP (2004) indicates that early marriage is “the reason behind 64 per cent of [Palestinian school] drop-out cases involving female students” (p.50). In many ways, education is perceived to enhance women’s autonomy and “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). According to Huntington, Fronk and Chadwick (2001), “education exposes women to non-traditional role models and to ideologies supportive of greater equality in marriage and greater independence from fathers, husbands and extended family”(p.2). Jacobson (2003) also explains that “as a result of their increasing equality with men in the public sphere, middle and upper class [Palestinian] women began to resent their continuing subjugation to men in the private sphere, and began to agitate for reform to the personal status law” (p. 150). This makes traditional men “fearful of [women’s] freedom” (Freire, 1996, p. 29). As such, they would prefer not to get married to well-educated women which consequently affects families’ decisions regarding HE, especially if they have a low socio-economic status. Thus I acknowledge Reay's (2003) view that an “emphasis on widening participation and access to higher education assumes a uniformly positive process, yet the reality, particularly for working-class students, is often confusing and fraught with difficulties” (p.301). In fact, “students from rural and marginalized areas” remain “under-represented groups in HEIs in the Gaza Strip” (Alqarout, 2013, p. 13). In such a marginalized context, the “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133) against women is a common and largely “misrecognized” practice (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199).

Contrary to the above, females’ education in Gaza has been viewed sometimes as a form of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). For example, Muhanna (2013) states that “families [in Gaza] have invested in their children’s education especially female education, either as a potential source of economic support for the family, or as a marriage resource”(p.13). This was also encouraged by Gaza educational expansion since, according to Blossfeld and Huinink (1991), “education expansion has a delaying effect on the timing of the first marriage” (p.163). From another perspective, “economic hardships […] have forced women, including wives, to enter the labour force in response to family financial needs” (Huntington et al., 2001, p. 2). This is reflected in the PCBS
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Chapter Five: The Present HE Experience

(2015) which indicates that “the gender parity index [for university education] is in favor of females” (p.26; see also UNDP, 2005, p. 78).

Hence, different families in Gaza might hold different “dispositions” and take different actions concerning their daughters’ HE (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). This is consistent with Wilson, Peterson, and Wilson’s (1993) explanation that “family socioeconomic standing [and] aspirations [impact] on female [educational and status] attainment” (p.170). This is also true with regard to the Arab world more generally. Kirdar (2006), for instance, states that “it is necessary to dispel the notion of the ‘Arab woman’ […as] sharp disparities exist among the various Arab countries in the region” (p.191). In fact, Saadawi (2007) argues that “social pressures to which [women] are exposed, are not [even] characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, […as ] they constitute an integral part of the political, economic and cultural system, preponderant in most of the world” (p. xiii).

Ibtisam UB, of the quote above, mentioned in the interview that she was both an orphan and a divorced woman. In Gaza, marriage is thought to protect females from societal “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Ibtisam chose the difficult route of divorce, although, as an orphan, she lacked the “symbolic capital” of her father’s support (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). HE (and obtaining a scholarship for her BA) was empowering for this participant to sustain an independent life, obtain an alternative “symbolic power”, and maintain her humanity in an oppressive environment (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). A good salary motivated Ibtisam to study harder, but during our conversation, she also stated, ‘I want to learn English language and education […]. I love children. I care about education in my country’.

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120 An orphan is “a child who has lost either one or both parents” (Skinner et al., 2006, p. 624).
121 In Gaza, as in the Arab culture, there is a “tremendous social stigma associated with divorce” (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001, p. 416). Therefore, “a divorced woman’s marital prospects can be poor” (Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Izzeldin, 2001, p.7). Several women, consequently would prefer to stay in an abusive marriage if “they did not have the power, the energy, and the strength to face and deal with the consequences of divorce” (Gharaibeh & Oweis, 2009, p.382).
5.1.c Education as a ‘Pragmatic’ Choice

Not all education students were as motivated as Ibtisam to embark on a teaching career. At least eight (out of 19)\(^{122}\) showed resentment about being a teacher. Here are a few examples:

- Talal UA: I hated teaching and still hate it
- Lubna UB: I hate teaching
- Ferial UA: I don't want to be a teacher
- Ahmed UA: Not being able to study what I like is really a problem
- Khaled UB: It was not my own choice

According to Bess (1977), this antipathy of pre-service teachers is problematic because “if teaching is to be externally rewarded, it must also be internally rewarding [since] system values will follow from aggregate personal values”\(^{123}\) (p. 256). “Symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133) is evident in the responses of these students for whom four years of studying for pre-service teaching was only a pragmatic or/and a “prescribed” choice (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Below is a sample of students’ rational justifications:

- Dalal UA: In Gaza, *they tell you must choose education, because this job has a few hours of work and it is better for you when you become a mum
- Lubna UB: I didn’t think about it. […] The *only job available is teaching

\(^{122}\) The student sample is 21, but those from the Faculty of Education were only 19. For more details on sampling, see Chapter Three.

\(^{123}\) Deci and Ryan (1982) also assert that when “people are intrinsically motivated to learn; they are curious and eager to try new things” (p. 28).
Ahmed UA: This is the *expected future for most Palestinians in Gaza

Talal UA: My family advised me to do so. Unfortunately, this is a *destiny so I cannot change it

(*Researcher’s emphasis)

The Gazan economic reality imposed education as the only practical route to employment. The anticipation of unemployment as a “fate” (Freire, 1996, p.43) gave a further “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp.1-2) to societal and family “prescripton” (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Hence, students, males and females\textsuperscript{124}, studied education as a way of practical adaptation to frustrating and “de-humanizing” conditions in Gaza (Freire, 1996, p.26). As for females, they seem also to have “naturalized” the traditional “dispostions” regarding their gender role (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471; Swartz, 2013, p.89).

In fact, “symbolic violence” is also evident in females’ HE and career choices more generally (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). For example, Bradley (2000) notes that “women, on average choose from a narrower band of options, […] and it is] the embedded nature of these choices in culturally proscribed future consequences that transform gender difference into gender inequality” (p.12). According to UNDP (2005), “women [in Arab countries] are still concentrated in specializations such as literature, the humanities and the social sciences, where they constitute the majority” (p.78-79). This is also consistent with PCBS (2015) which indicates that in Palestine “women still work mainly in traditional occupations”, for example, in teaching (p.42).

For females to study teacher education is common in traditional contexts (see Kirdar, 2006, p.198), including the Gaza Strip. For the year 2012-13, at the UA, 5032 females in comparison to 888 males; and at the UB 2,634 females compared to 1,148 males were

\textsuperscript{124} For instance, MoEHE statistics 2011-2012 show that, 14,282 were registered students at the AZU. Of these students, 4,252 (1,367 males, 2,885 females) studied for various degrees at the Faculty of Education, the rest (10, 030) were distributed over the other 11 AZU Faculties (الإدارة العامة للتخطيط: قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي - 2013).
registered for a degree in education (see Table 3.1). Mr Ashraf UB explained why teaching is preferred for females:

I am registering my daughters in education […]. People say that the best specialization for a female is education […]. As a teacher, she will be working with other female teachers until […] noon and then […] go home. But, if a female would study nursing or become a doctor, she would be staying in night shift until 02:00 and 03:00 am at night. As such, our traditions […] makes people inclined to education… (Mr Ashraf UB)

Mr Ashraf UB perceived other people’s opinions to be “more reliable than other ‘official’ sources of information” (Ball & Vincent, 1998, p.380). The participant responded to other people’s perceptions for some “social considerations” (ibid., p.392). These considerations made Mr Ashraf UB “misrecognize” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199) a specialization in education, as a natural choice for females. According to Bourdieu (1976):

Each family transmits to its children, indirectly rather than directly, a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos. The latter is a system of implicit and deeply interiorized values (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 110).

Mr Ashraf UB’s choice reflected his interiorized values and ethos and this influenced, in many ways, his daughters’ lives. Based on his traditional “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89), as a father he used his “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2) to “prescribe” his choice for his daughters (Freire, 1996, p. 29), and shaped their “consciousness” in accordance with societal constructions of gender roles (Freire, 2003, p. 74). Hence, it is as Witt (1997) argues, despite other factors, “the strongest influence on gender role development seems to occur within the family setting, with parents passing on, both overtly and covertly their own beliefs about gender” (p.254).

In the Arab world, “women’s orientation [was reported by the UNDP (2005) as being] towards jobs that permit part-time work and that do not contravene the traditional view of their reproductive role or the division in the house and the raising of a family” (p. 79). As such, women usually prefer to work as “civil servants”, for example, in education
This consolidates Bradley’s (2000) view that “cultural ideas on gender relations and the roles of women and men in society influence the formation of educational options and choices” (p.12). I concur with Barakat, (1993) that “few professional careers are available to women […in Arab countries], and whatever is available tends to be an extension of their traditional roles” (p. 102). Traditional “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89) with regard to women’s role seem to be in synchrony with a continuing unjust context of “symbolic violence” in the society at large (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). This is also true regarding other countries. For instance, Reay (2000) regrets that the “academia in Britain just as much as in France, is a territory ruled by men; where the vast majority of women if they count at all count for less” (p.14). Together, the result is, as Jansen (2006) states, a paradoxical impact of education where women are encouraged to promote “domesticity, modesty and obedience” together with taking a “public role” (p.484). In that sense, “women’s empowerment through education […]remains largely] symbolic rather than real” (Jansen, 2006, 486). It is symbolic especially in a place as isolated as the Gaza Strip where “discursive hegemony” can be prevailing and as such, asserting of “gender […] inequality […] by] simplistic, reeking of old discredited metanarratives” (Reay, 2000, p.4).

Educated females in this context, have at best, what Freire (1973) calls a “naïve transitive consciousness”: they “are still almost part of a mass [of feminists], in whom the developing capacity for dialogue is still fragile and capable of distortion” (p.18). Hence, women remain “symbolically dominated” in a prevailing “masculine” world (Bourdieu, 2001). They are “fearful of freedom”- its “autonomy” and its “responsibility” (Freire, 2003, p.47).

5.1.d HE and Unemployment

From another perspective, families in Gaza prefer to send their daughters and (now also sons) to study as teachers, because “teachers constitute the largest employment sector in Palestine” (UNDP, 2004, p. 49). According to the World Bank (2015), unemployment in Gaza is the highest in the world at 43 per cent, with 60 per cent unemployment among the youth in late 2014. This has resulted in increased demand being placed on the Faculties of Education. The MoEHE’s statistics (2011-2012), for example, show that 42 per cent of the students registered at the UB for that academic year studied at the Faculty
of Education in comparison to 58 per cent who were distributed over the other (11) Faculties at this university (الإدارة العامة للتخطيط- قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي - 2013).

The economic pressures have led females to rationally accept the “prescriptions” regarding their career choices (Freire, 1996, p. 29). However, it is this same practical adaptation, which has intensified females’ “domination” by a “masculine” culture in Gaza (Bourdieu, 2001). For male students, as mentioned earlier, unemployment caused them to view their specialization in education as a fate; for example, Ahmed perceived it as an ‘expected future for Palestinians’ in Gaza, and Talal as an unfortunate ‘destiny’. This sense of religious fatalism reassured them psychologically (Barakat, 1993, p.194). To recap, in Gaza, students perceived that ‘all roads lead to “education” ’.

Interestingly, however, even though the students ended up studying as pre-service teachers, they did not feel secure with regard to future employment. Below, I include two quotes from Dalal UA and Halima UA:

Dalal said:

You make me laugh […] because all of us will take the certificate and queue aside […]. I am so pessimistic… (Dalal UA)

And Halima:

People say that there is no work in this country. You need wasṭa in everything and if you do not have it, you will not get any job. This is Gaza! No one gets work […] But] one should believe that [the situation] will change and that everything will be good… (Halima UA)

Jansen (2006) rightly argues that “higher education increases employment chances, but does not protect against unemployment, especially not for women” (p.485). Salehi-isfahani (2012), for instance, points out that in the MENA regions, there is “a credentialist equilibrium, in which investments in education have mainly served to secure desired public sector jobs […] after long time in queues, leading up to large pools of unemployed
graduates” (pp. 843-860). This was among the reasons that made the “frustrated youth pour […] into streets in 2011 and topple[…] entrenched autocrats” (Salehi-isfahani, 2012, p. 859).

In Gaza, “unemployment rates [seem to] increase as youth exit education” (Brodmann et al., 2012, p.2). According to the United Nations (2012), Gazan “unemployment is high and affects women and youth in particular” (p.2). Among other things, Palestinians, as a result of the Israeli blockade, “lack […] control over their economic environment” (Beirzeit University, 2010). The last war on Gaza “has [moreover] effectively eliminated what was left of the middle class sending almost all of the population into destitution and dependence on international humanitarian aid” (UNCTAD, 2015). Consequently, there is a “limited size of the labour market compared to the large number of graduates” (Brodmann et al., 2012, p.4). This resulted in both Dalal UA and Halima UA hearing frustrating and “de-humanizing” narratives about graduates queuing hopelessly for jobs (Freire, 1996, p. 26). The unavailability of jobs triggered “horizontal violence” among the oppressed (ibid., p. 44). Wasta was perceived by the powerful as a way out of the fierce competition with the ‘other’ but, simultaneously, as a blight for those who do not have it or do not want to use it. The powerful became “oppressors” or at least “sub-oppressors” of the unprivileged from the same community (Freire, 1996, p. 27). Thus, we get back to the ‘water ripples’ image, whereby one ripple of oppression triggers another in a fluid and successive mode. While Halima UA remained optimistic about the future, almost all other students (and their lecturers) were pessimistic and thought that their HE would be ‘in vain’ (Waleed UB).

125 Other unemployment reasons which are largely affected by ‘the Political and Economic Situation’ include the followings: “lack of labour market assessment and coordination […]; skill mismatch […]; Limited capacity of tertiary education institution […]; the limited size of the labour market compared to the large number of graduates; negative attitudes towards vocational students […]; with personal connections dominating recruitment and graduates unwilling to accept employment below their skill levels […]; low salaries; and […] poor working conditions […]; the lack of support and capital for new companies, [and […] no guidance on further education in high school’ (Brodmann, Cuadra, Allouche, & Hillis, 2012, pp. 3–4)

126 For example, Amira UB, stated, ‘I am not very optimistic, there are lots of students who graduated, but could not find any job until now although they were good in English; Ibtisam UB, ‘I am afraid of the future’; and Waleed UB ‘I have to find a job to help my family because they are expecting much from me, so I have to take an action. For this I go and search every day for a job, but in vain!’.
So to conclude, students at the Faculties of Education are, as Ms Etaf UB maintains, learning ‘without aim; without hope’. Their HE choice was not rational, and their specialization was “prescribed” for them (Freire, 1996, p. 29) on the basis of their gender roles and an anticipated lack of employment. Becoming a teacher was perceived as a sensible choice to practically adapt to the Gaza context, but as the time went on, students realized that they were only clinging to a mirage of a better future.
Section 5.2 Students in a Political Culture: Rethinking Factionalism

Very little literature exists on factionalism in Gaza’s universities (Jensen, 2006), and the extent to which they remain factional nowadays was contested in the interviews. This of course might have been due to participants’ “fear” in a “culture of silence” in Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 29, 87), or an attempt to present themselves and their HE institutions as academically focused. Nonetheless, students’ accounts showed that their HE experiences were affected by the political culture of Gaza’s universities: its “antidialogics”, and “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, pp. 161, 44).

5.2.a Participants’ Politics as Individuals

Politics, religion and nationalism interact together in the Palestinian case. Palestine is considered a ‘holy land’ for Muslims. In the Gaza Strip, with its overwhelming Muslim majority, the politics of resistance against the Israeli occupation and a nationalistic feeling towards Palestine as a land is influenced by religious “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). Routledge and Simons (1995), for instance, mention that “Palestinians have a strong attachment to their land” (p.489). Here are a few responses which show participants’ attachment to Gaza:

Ms Etaf UB: There is no oxygen except in Gaza.

Mr Majid UB: I adore Gaza on all levels […]. My attachment to Gaza is very strong

Mr Mehdi UA: To leave Palestine [and live abroad] has never occurred to me. I want to remain here and serve our students

Mr Ashraf UB: I consider it a bliss from Allah […to work] in my homeland

127 In fact, “Palestine is an area of strategic importance as well as a sacred place for Muslims, Jews and Christians. Each of them has always seen this place as its own special ‘Holy Land’ ” (Jebril, 2006, p. 13).
Moeen UA: It is my city. I was born in it and I will never forget it

Ferial UA: My homeland is my homeland. It is where I belong; It is where I should return, [even if I studied abroad].

According to Billig (1995) “to have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood” (p.8). Students and the academic staff talked passionately about Gaza. Under occupation, this is natural since “only if people believe that they have national identities, will [their] homeland […], be reproduced” (Billig, 1995, p.8). Nonetheless, the daily difficulties in Gaza make a romantic sense of belonging strange. Ferial UA explained this contradiction:

I belong to the Never-Never land\textsuperscript{128}. I resort to this fictional world whenever the [actual] wicked world kicks me out. […] I say wicked world because I am from Gaza, not because of Gaza, but because of the things that I suffer due to being a Gazan\textsuperscript{129} … (Ferial UA)

Dovey (1990) states that although persons might be “largely stuck with the oppressions […], places of peace- of escape and dreaming, of sanity and imaginative independence- can provide important opportunities that might enable [them] to endure with sanity and imagination intact” (p.17). Ferial escaped to her imagination by way of practical adaptation, and as a self-defence mechanism. She was “divided” between her commitment to the land, and her frustration at enduring the daily “de-humanization”, as a cost of being a resident of Gaza (Freire, 1996, pp. 125, 26).

\textsuperscript{128} Meriam Webster dictionary provides a simple definition of the Never-Never Land as an “imaginary place without problems” (See http: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/never-never%20land, accessed 12 June 2017).

\textsuperscript{129} In the interview, Ferial UA explained, ‘I am a sociable person and I love the world. I love making relations with other cultures. I love to experience new things and to go here and there and do everything. I love the spirit of creativity and every girl in my age loves everything that is active and aspirational. But what makes me hate this world is that it is not giving me what I want or what I deserve’.
5.2.b The Extent to which the UA and the UB are Factional

For more than 20 years, the UA and the UB have shared the same wall that separates their student campuses. Nonetheless, their relationship remains largely adversarial.

To begin with, the establishment of the UB, after the Oslo Agreement, negatively affected the ‘other’ university. Mr Kamal UA commented:

The [UA] has become accredited and this was a positive thing. But, the negative impact was that […the PNA] attempted to offend the UA and to interfere in its policy, […], but they could not […]. And then the UA was supposed to take an allocation from universities’ Fund in Jerusalem, but they started to distribute this among both the UA and the UB […]. Then for about 17 years now, UA’s allocation was declined out of a dirty political decision. The UA is now in a financial crisis… (Mr Kamal UA)

According to Roy (2002), “since Yasser Arafat came to power, he has been under considerable pressure from Israel and the US to suppress radical Islamic groups, notably Hamas […and that his strategy worked to] undermine [Hamas] institutions, including universities” (p.179). Thus, the USA and Israel had the “symbolic power” to “prescribe” Arafat’s “horizontal violence” as a necessity for peace and to maintain his legitimacy in Gaza (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2; Freire, 1996, pp. 29, 44). This served their interest of dividing and ruling the oppressed Palestinians (Freire, 1996, pp. 125). HE was not immune to this “horizontal violence” and political “manipulation” (Freire, 1996, pp. 44, 128). That said, “as a result of the Oslo accords”, the first MoEHE ever was established as a PNA institution (Nicolai, 2006, p.24). As such, it used its “symbolic power” to impose restrictions on the UA (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). In the interview, Mr Kamal UA angrily referred to his past colleagues, who had then moved to the UB, with contempt, misusing terms from a Quranic verse to indicate this in a subtle way. However, as Bell

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130 Mr Kamal UA referred to his colleagues from the UB using the terms (in bold) from this Surah Al-Ma‘idah (The Table Spread with Food), verse 3:
(2013) explains, “contempt takes as its object whole persons and not simply person’s actions; it presents its targets as low and as all of one piece” (p.13). This placed “contempt […] at the heart of […] systems of oppression” (Bell, 2013, p.14). At least three of my academic participants were among those who left the UA to work in the newly established Fatah university. They left to avoid the UA’s discrimination against them as PLO loyalists. Thus Mr Kamal UA’s continued hostility towards the ‘other’ university was mainly based on his political “dispositions”, rather than on any scientific grounds (Swartz, 2013, p. 89)

Another case in point is Mr Suleiman UA:

For ten years now (2004-14), the UA has been trying to open a doctoral programme and submitted to MoEHE the modules for this programme in the past, but they told us that we cannot open it alone; they wanted the UB to open one as well. This is because the MoEHE in Ramallah belongs to Fatah… (Mr Suleiman UA)

The MoEHE, a PNA institution, “feared” UA’s progress (Freire, 1996, p. 29). It postponed the licensing of the UA. Both Kamal and Suleiman criticized this PNA oppression of their social institution. This is consistent with Roy's (2002) argument that “the work of the Islamic movement has been implemented through institutions engaged in the provision of social and economic services (p.178). Consequently, “an attack against [Hamas] mainstream […] institutions would not be readily tolerated […by people especially] those who either depended upon the services they provide or who perceive their work as crucial” (Roy, 2002, p.179). These welfare institutions were not only designed to serve the people, but also to “manipulate” them politically. They represent an

“Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten except what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and [prohibited is ] that you seek decision through diving arrows. That is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin – then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (A translation of Surah Al- Mai’idah: (5:3)).
attempt at factional “conquest” (Freire, 1996, pp. 128, 129). To an extent, they are a form of ‘false generosity’ from Hamas (ibid., p. 26). Hence, as Freire suggests, “the content and methods of conquest vary” (Freire, 1996, p. 122).

UB academics have similarly perceived the UA, in negative terms:

Mr Omar UB: The UA was and still is dealing with extreme factionalism

Mr Zeyad UB: The UA did not want to hire me […] because they discovered […] that I belong to a different political organization.

Mr Etaf UB: Over the years, the UA has become even more factional […]. They have restricted employment opportunities for the advantage of a certain group

Altogether, the UA’s and UB’s academic staff have accused the ‘other’ of factionalism in a defensive blame game131 manner (Hood, 2010, p.8), while establishing their own institution as diverse and democratic132. This “antidialogical” practice is a form of “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, pp. 161, 44).

Mr Ashraf UB’s viewpoint gives a different perspective:

All universities in Gaza are factional. […] Such a factionalism is usually seen in that the members of the academic staff would be from [the same] faction [of their university]. […] If there are elections at the employees' syndicate, we would choose them. […]. Now, if someone

131 Hood (2010) explains that “professionals will care about blame if they think it will diminish their reputations in ways that could damage their careers” (p.8). Furthermore, “social settings and institutional background seem also to play a part [in people’s concern about blame]” (Hood, 2010, p.8). Hence, it is suggested that blame as a form of “horizontal violence” was influenced by people’s concern about their own academic reputation as staff, their political orientations as well as the general factional context of their universities and in Gazan society (Freire, 1996, p. 44).

132 For example, Mr Suleiman UA mentioned that his university is non-fictional since it ‘admits all groups for the community [to its campus] even those from Fatah, and even Christians’. Also, Ms Etaf UB did not shy away from stating that the UB was linked to the PLO, simply because she perceived this as “natural”, since this was in congruence with the PNA as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian society (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). Etaf defended links of the UB and this political faction on the basis that it was more concerned with giving equal rights and opportunities to all Palestinians as citizens, regardless of any political orientations.
is well-known to be Hamas, [it is impossible that he] would get employed at the UB… (Mr Ashraf UB)

Allegations of factionalism and “horizontal violence” extended to other Gaza universities (Freire, 1996, p. 44). An internal system of factional “manipulative” surveillance was intrinsic to each university (ibid., p. 128). Mr Omar UB confirmed that universities ‘conduct political screening of an employee who comes from another [university]’. Tamara UB also criticized how the promotion of her friend’s father, an employee at the UB who was not affiliated with Fatah, was “manipulatively” delayed for factional reasons133 (Freire, 1996, p. 128). This consolidates Brynen's (2000) view that inter alia “political patronage has been used by the Palestinian leadership to cement its political position and marginalize that of the opposition” (p.27). This political patronage entails compromising freedoms and quality, since “tolerance of corruption by subordinates may become one of the rewards used by political elites to consolidate their support bases” (Brynen, 2000, p. 29).

Unanimously134, students were convinced that their universities favoured a certain political affiliation over others in terms of rights and resources. Dalal UA stated:

Inside the UA there [are different faction groups], but there is only a little percentage of Jihad and Fatah there, compared to Hamas Al Kutla which is the highest. Every year, Hamas wins the first electoral position at the university… (Dalal UA)

Weinberg and Walker (1969) explain that there are “structural links between political system, university, institutionalized, and non-institutionalized student politics” (p. 77).

133 Tamara UB explained that the UB was ‘Fatah and that most of the lecturers there are Fatah affiliates’ even though it included people from other affiliations.

134 For example, Halima UA maintained, ‘everyone knows that the UA is for Hamas and the UB is for Fatah’. But, Ferial UA stated, The active faction in the UA is the Islamic Kutla [i.e. Hamas], but they don’t give a similar space to Al Shabiba El Fathawiah [i.e. Fatah] which […]is] banned from being active’. Similarly, Samah ofs UA stated that the UA usually celebrates the day on which Hamas was established but not when Fatah way, and this was why she thought, ‘the UA is Hamas’. Samira UA also pointed out that the UA was most likely Hamas and ‘the proof on that is that the student union was dominated by Al Kutla Al Islamia’. 
Despite student union elections, over the years, the “conquest” of the UA has been by Hamas, and of the UB, by Fatah.

5.2.c The Manifestation of the Factionalism of Gaza’s Universities

While academic staff from the UA have completely rejected the idea of factionalism as irrelevant to their university today, those from the UB have acknowledged an influence, but regarded it as natural.

Contestation

Firstly, I concur with Jensen (2006) who explains that “authorities at [the UA] are not fond of being perceived as a Hamas institution” (p.62). In fact, UA academic staff “misrecognized” any impact of factionalism on their UA campus (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199). Ms Amna UA stated:

From a media perspective, there is a political side [to the UA]. Nonetheless, on the ground, there are no racist restrictions on the freedom of thought, on the study curricula, or on students' practices. Other factions also hold celebration in the UA's campus on the condition that they obtain a license for their special occasion… (Ms Amna UA)

Roy (2002) also notes that “Hamas social institutions […] are most effective and] promoting moderation and stability” (p.179). This was contradicted in the research data, which suggests the UA was maintaining a balance between being a liberal

135 In the interview, since I was an insider to Gaza, so often, students such as Talal UA did not feel that they had to mention to me which university was oriented to which faction. Talal, for example, only stated: ‘It is known that the student union in the UB has a very big role in the university, […] because they are linked directly to their political affiliation’, which he assumed I knew very well to be Fatah.

136 For example, Mr Riyadh UA said: ‘factionalism does not have any impact on our university’; and Mr Suleiman UA stated - and I quote, ‘Although the university has an Islamic philosophy and its founders are, of course, Hamas, […] those who are in charge of the university itself are not Hamas, although there are some from Hamas working in high positions at the UA’.

137 For example, as indicated earlier, Halima UA maintained, ‘everyone knows that the UA is for Hamas and the UB is for Fatah’. But, Ferial UA stated, ‘The active faction in the UA is the Islamic Kutla [i.e. Hamas], but they don’t give a similar space to Al Shabiba El Fathawiah [i.e. Fatah] which […] is] banned from being active’. Similarly, Samah ofs UA stated that the UA usually celebrates the day in which Hamas was established but not when Fatah way and this was, why she thought that ‘the UA is Hamas’. Samira
academic institution that is eligible for wider recognition and support, and its factional interests. According to Marginson (2002), “institutional identity is constituted by more than global systems: it is a product of history and retains national [and] local […] roots” (p.413). Ms Amna UA, “misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199) that UA’s control of factional celebration could be used as a way of “manipulation” (Freire, 1996, p. 128), and “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Thus it allows the UA to use its “symbolic power” to contain opposition and “silence” difference while appearing to be a guardian of democracy (Freire, 2001, pp. 1–2; Freire, 1996, p. 87). Nossek and Rinnawi (2003) explain, for example, that “while democratic regimes use the mechanism of censorship against external enemies […], censorship mechanisms in totalitarian regimes tend to be focused both internally and externally and aim mainly at safeguarding the regime rather than protecting society” (p.184).

In contrast, UB academics were less defensive about their university’s factionalism. For instance, Ms Etaf UB indicated that an affiliation with the PLO was in fact advantageous. Another example is Lamia UB who argued:

> Wherever you go, you would find the students factional; some will belong to Hamas, others to Fatah or the Public Front. It depends on the lecturer whether he would give a breathing space for students. There is freedom of speech, but it should not be to the extent that would affect academic work… (Ms Lamia UB)

In Gaza’s politically laden context, factionalism was perceived as natural. Consequently, Lamia believed that lecturers should practically adapt to it as a matter of “fate” (Freire, 1996, p. 43). She “misrecognized” the role that universities play in reinforcing and reproducing this factionalism (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199). In the interview, Lamia thought

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UA also pointed out that the UA was most likely Hamas and ‘the proof on that is that the student union was dominated by Al Kulta Al Islamia’.

138 Ms Etaf UB did not shy away stating that the UB was linked to the PLO, simply because she perceived this as “natural”, since this was in congruence with the PNA as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian society (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). In this respect, Etaf defended the links of the UB with this political faction on the basis that it made it more concerned about giving equal rights and opportunities to all Palestinians as citizens, regardless of any political orientation.
that if the lecturer was not able to control the class, ‘students will clash with each other’ because of their political ideologies. Fearing “horizontal violence”, Lamia argued that of the lecturer should operate as a regulating valve who should cut dialogue and restrict the freedom of speech (Freire, 1996, p. 44). According to Byrne (1993), however, “an individual scholar’s political commitments may obstruct her search for truth, which requires perspective and objectivity” (p.318). Thus, Lamia “misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199) the impact of factionalism on lecturers who could use their authority to “conquer” students of contesting political affiliations (Freire, 1996, p. 129). This results in students preferring to remain “silent” about politics in class (ibid., p. 87).

The population at the UA, as at the UB, seemed to comprise diverse political orientations. Samah ofs UA stated:

The students are normal students, Palestinians. Thus some of them might be Hamas, some of them might be Fatah, and some might support other movements. As for the lecturers, I firstly thought they were Hamas but I was surprised that not all of them were in fact so. Some of our UA lecturers would prefer to keep silent and not to speak if they do not support Hamas… (Samah ofs UA)

Samah ofs UA indicated that factionalism has “impacted on authentic dialogue” in the UA campus (Freire, 1996, p. 161). On the contrary, most UA academic staff confirmed that they have freedom of speech. Moeen UA, a student, also argued, ‘there is a difference between criticism and distortion. In general, there is freedom’. To combine both Moeen’s and Samah’s perspectives, if the UA has the “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2) to evaluate criticism and impose penalties accordingly, the offering of

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139 For example, Alaa UB stated that ‘once a student who supported Hamas argued with a lecturer who supported Fatah, but at the end, the lecturer “defeated” the student’.  
140 This discouraging of dialogue is detrimental to the future of Gaza’s universities (Freire, 1996, p. 161). John Stuart Mill, for example, maintains that “the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the present generation” (p.140). Also, from an institutional perspective, “moral muteness or silence cannot be part of […] Gaza universities if they aim to achieve a…] challenging but inspiring transformation to an integrity-based framework” in the future (Verhezen, 2010, p.200).
freedom of speech becomes a “false generosity” since people would “fear” to voice their different political views\(^\text{141}\) (Freire, 1996, pp. 26, 29).

A Further Exploration of the Impact

Roy (1994) states that “for Gazans, the political and personal selves have always been indivisible” (pp. 85-86). Ms Randa UA also explained, ‘political is part of every Palestinian’s life. A 3 to 4-year-old in Gaza talks about politics; a 90-year-old person talks about politics; everyone talks about politics [. . .] since academic work is not separated from the Gaza context’. That said, it is difficult to differentiate between what impact on students’ HE experiences at the UA and the UB was a result of their universities’ factionalism and what was a result of the wider factionalism within Palestinian society. Here, I shall include what the student participants have attributed to their universities:

Starting with the UA, Khadra ofs UA said:

> Sometimes, I hate the university because […] I don’t like Hamas, and also Fatah, but I certainly don’t like Hamas. I go to the UA only to have my lecture so why should I […] be besieged by ceremonies about Hamas. It is an academic place. Also, Fatah, doesn’t have the chance to do such things. I have never attended a ceremony of Fatah in the university or saw posters of Fatah at the university… (Khadra ofs UA)

Ricoeur (1999) argues that “narratives are […] the occasion for manipulation through reading and directing narratives […] and the excess of certain commemorations, and their rituals, their festivals, their myths […] is an opportunity for the abuse of memory” (p.9). Khadra ofs UA felt harassed by the “manipulative” practice of her university (Freire, \(^\text{141}\) Byrne (1993) argues that ‘academic freedom provides both functional and aspirational norms for the university (p.317). However, all my student participants from the UA pointed out that the UA imposes restrictions on lecturers to keep ‘silent’ and ‘prescribe’ that they do not discuss political issues in the class unless directly and specifically related to the study material\(^\text{141}\) (Freire, 1996, pp. 87, 29). This was somewhat different from the UB since the data showed that students and lecturers did have political discussions in the class which was perceived as, a ‘fate’, and de facto of academic life under occupation (Freire, 1996, p. 43).
The lack of other factional representations was ‘antidialogical’ in that it allowed Hamas to “deposit” its narratives into students’ minds without contestation (ibid., pp. 161, 53). According to Perry (2003) “symbolic barriers such as national […] symbols can create a hostile atmosphere for a student who is not in the majority and for whom the symbol may have highly negative connotations” (p. 31).

UA’s factionalism was manifested in several activities that affected students’ perceptions towards Hamas. UA’s success was “manipulated” to indirectly foster Hamas’ “symbolic capital” and “symbolic power” (Freire, 1996, p. 128; Bourdieu, 1989, 2001). Hence, I acknowledge Perry’s (2003) view that “the politicization of universities [might be there] through both subtle and obvious means” (p. 39). For Ahmed UA, however, the impact of factionalism was more evident in the UB:

I think the UA is affected by factionalism, but not in a way that is noticeable. For example, we can see the flags of Hamas put here or there, but […] not someone calling for a specific faction at the UA. But […] in the UB, I heard the administration calling the name[s] of […] Fatah political figures. […] I do admire […] that even if the UA is taking the side of Hamas a bit more, […] I haven’t seen a picture of any Hamas figure on campus… (Ahmed UA)

This participant’s quote somewhat contradicts Jensen’s (2006) report that at the UA “Isma’il Haniyya, a prominent Hamas leader [who, after the elections of 2006, became a prime Minister], took the microphone […] and spoke to ‘2000 students’ on the orientation day, stating:] ‘Hamas is the true path, and we need them in our daily life’ ” (p. 64).

On the UA’s campus, not all of the Hamas group’s political activities were centred on this movement’s propaganda. For example, Nawal UA also pointed out that there were many political activities that took place inside the UA, including events in support of the prisoners, speeches and posters on hot political issues. After the Israeli war, moreover, the UA invited journalists to report on their experience and honoured them by offering them certificates for their contributions. But because of the assumed link (even if not true) between the UA and Hamas, at least two students indicated that their perception of Hamas as a political movement has actually improved for several reasons, one of which was their study at the UA. Moeen UA commented, ‘It was one of the factors […] although the UA does not represent all Hamas’s achievements’; and Abdullah of the UA stated, that at the UA, ‘I know many lecturers who belong to Hamas and the way they deal with students is amazing; they deal with us as if we are their sons’.
UB students complained about the impact of factionalism on scholarships. Ibtisam UB and Khaled UB are two examples:

Ibtisam mentioned:

The University is a mixture of Fatah, Hamas, etc. And every side […] loves only the people who share with them the same […] thought. If […] scholarships should come to the university and let us say, Al Kutla is responsible for it, they would just give it to the people who support them. But, this is wrong! … (Ibtisam UB)

And Khaled stated:

It affects us, because you feel that scholarships go to politics' people […]. These scholarships come to people who can't pay like me, and [other] students, but […] our university gives it to people who do not deserve it… (Khaled UB)

University scholarships were factionally “manipulated” (Freire, 1996, p. 128). This resulted in students, such as Ibtisam and Khaled, feeling angry.

Mr Abdel Rahman UB also argued:

Do you think that all those who belong to Hamas believe in Hamas? No! They want to live, but they don't have money. Hamas has been in control of Gaza since 2007. Thus, a person who was 20-year-old at that time has become now [older than] 27. He wants to get married, he wants to work, but [he does not find an opportunity]. When I was their age, I was also offered work in [PLO’s] apparatuses. […] Everyone nowadays is looking for money … (Mr Abdel Rahman UB)

According to Jensen (2006), “universities are by definition important recruiting grounds for the state apparatus” (p.62). Factional assistance with tuition fees and employment was helpful to students in overcoming Gaza’s economic conditions. Consequently, however, as another academic, Mr Zeyad UB, stated, ‘most [Gaza] students are [politically] controlled […]. They were programmed’. Hence, “on the one hand, the
ability to award patronage resources can be seen to open new avenues for political mobility and stimulate political talents at various levels [...] At the same time, it is at best unclear whether these activities [...] in fact retard social and political transformation” (Weingrod, 1968, p.400). For example, Waleed UB, and most student participants, complained about factional celebrations disrupting academic lectures at the UB.

5.2.d The Impact on Academic Relations Between the UA and the UB

The Palestinian schism affected Gaza’s universities with further “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, p. 44). Mr Riyadh UA pointed out – and I quote, ‘the division has impacted on students’ psychology. Before the schism, co-operation was better among students; their perception of each other was better too’. Ferial UA also explained that in consequence of the division, ‘social problems emerge[d] which affected students’ level of achievements’.

Although Gaza’s universities, as Mr Riyadh suggests, ‘strive[...] to transcend this division’, people at these institutions casually “replicate” and “reproduce” this division inside their campuses (Swartz, 2013, p.100). For example, two UB students and one academic member of staff complained about violent quarrels inside their university. Firstly, Yasser UB reported that:

I witnessed a very horrible scene when people, or maybe students from other universities attacked the UB in order to take revenge for a student [of their group] who was beaten inside the UB and there were some bad quarrels and some casualties… (Yasser UB)

This experience of Yasser caused him to adopt an “avoidance of dialogue” as a coping mechanism (Freire, 1996, p. 161). He stated in the interview that when any of his colleagues argues seriously about politics, he would start telling ‘jokes [...] to make things more fun’. The second student, Ibtisam UB, also agreed that factionalist quarrels happened at her university, frequently resulting in ‘the academic day […] being] suspended’. Ibtisam added that factionalism affects, to varying degrees, the relationship among lecturers and their ability to “dialogue” with each other (Freire, 1996). This is consistent with Furedi’s (2005) view that “cynicism and suspicion towards politics
ultimately represents cynicism and suspicion towards one another” (p.2). Thirdly, Mr Ashraf UB criticized factionalism as it ‘usually causes problems between students. [...] For instance, when a certain faction hangs its posters on the wall, the other would come and tear them off [...] inside the university’. This “antidialogical” practice increases “division” and “horizontal violence” among the already oppressed HE students (Freire, 1996, pp. 161, 125, 44). Unlike the UB, such quarrels did not seem to occur inside the UA. This implies that the UA imposes a tighter control and surveillance over its student body.

Academic Co-operation between the Universities

Most UA academic staff rejected the view that the Palestinian schism has affected academic co-operation between Gaza’s universities. Mr Kamal UA, stated, ‘not as academics. There is co-operation: We examine [their students], and they examine [ours]’. Ms Amna UA also argued:

In the 90s, when the UB was established, there was a competition between the two universities and factionalism was clear in its impact on academic co-operation. But, nowadays, there is more co-ordination. Two years ago, there was a workshop [offered by Americans] on teacher development that took place at the UB […]. They invited us and we participated for a whole week […]. At the UA, we also had […] a huge project which included all the lectures at the UB and also the UC [...] […]. This was an excellent opportunity […] I was keen on networking with my colleagues from other universities […] We dealt with them very kindly … (Ms Amna UA)

According to Qarmout and Béland (2012), “while direct donor assistance [after the Palestinian schism] resumed support for the PA budget and government institution building, aid to Gaza was channeled [mainly] to humanitarian organizations, civil society actors, and UN agencies” (p.38). Some of these civil society projects at Gaza’s universities required the inclusion of lecturers from different HE institutions and this was “truly generous” (Freire, 1996, p. 27). Internationally sponsored projects encouraged

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143 UC refers to a third university which is not included in the research sample.
exchange visits, and mutual workshops among Gazan HE institutions. However, external aid may not always act as a reliable source for promoting cooperative relations. That said, “aid polices in the Hamas-controlled Gaza strip have been heavily influenced by politics” (Qarmout & Béland, 2012, p.44). In fact, “these polices have played a role in sustaining the Israeli- Palestine conflict and the Israeli occupation while fueling the Palestinian internal split by taking sides”\textsuperscript{144} (ibid., p.44). Moreover, “the conduct of aid policies under the Israeli blockade has exacerbated the political, social, and economic problems and challenges facing Palestinians” (ibid., p.44). Some of these projects may be a matter of “false generosity”, exacerbating factional division and working towards the “cultural invasion” of Palestine in support of Israel (Freire, 1996, pp 26, 133). Hence, Gaza, being a “dual” society, gives the opportunity for the metropolitan societies upon which it is dependent to “induce […] reformist solutions in response to the demands of the historical process, as a way of preserving its hegemony […] through conquest, manipulation, economic and cultural […] invasion” (ibid., p.143). It is as Freire maintains, “all domination involves invasion – at times physical and overt, at times camouflaged, with the invader assuming the role of a helping friend” (ibid., p.134).

Contrary to the account of Ms Amna UA, most UB academic staff and almost all UA and UB students had limited or absolutely no relationships with the other neighbouring universities. This points to the weak and “antidiaological” partnership between these HE institutions (Freire, 1996, p. 161). Also, at least two participants, Mr Ashraf UB and Ms Jamila UA criticized factional conflict for discouraging co-operative relations. Firstly, Ashraf explained:

I would not ask a lecturer from the UA to be an external examiner for master’s students here, unless I have a good relation with a particular person there. I might bring lecturers from other Gaza universities, but not from the UA to here. And they won't bring us too… (Mr Ashraf UB)

\textsuperscript{144} Qarmout and Béland (2012) report, for example, that “there is strong evidence that donor involvement was critical in undermining and isolating the ephemeral unity government [between Hamas and Fatah] that was formed after the Palestinian elections in 2006” (p.37).
Factionalism affects professionalism, and likewise influences the quality of students’ HE experience. It also increases “horizontal violence” among the academic staff from both institutions (Freire, 1996, p. 44; see Jebril, 2006). Thus I concur with Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) that “although trust can frequently lead to cooperative behavior, trust [should] not [be] a necessary condition for cooperation to occur, because [academic] cooperation does not necessarily put a party at risk” (p. 712).

So, to recap, “political factionalism [continues to shape] many aspects of [Palestinian] life” (Brynen, 2000, p. 52), including the universities.

5.2.e Neutral Atoms: Rethinking Factionalism?

Even though students appeared to rethink factionalism, the data show that these participants (and a few of their lecturers) remained in an intermediary position whereby their condition can be likened to ‘neutral atoms’. Students’ inclination to neutrality is a temporary coping mechanism whereby they remain susceptible to being, ionized to either side – positively or negatively in the sense of being factional or not. Hence, Gaza’s university students continue to be “objects of [factions’] action” and their “cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, p.161).

The following are some participants’ responses regarding their factional orientation:

Students commented:

Lubna UB: I neutralized myself.

Moeen UB: I am neutral.

Tamara UB: No, I am nothing. […] I belong only to myself.

Dalal UA: I hate both Hamas and Fatah. I am neutral.

Khaled UB: No, I'm just Palestinian. I hate all these things.

Waleed UB: None.
And lecturers stated:

Mr Suleiman UA: I am an independent.

Ms Amna UA: I am neutral.

Mr Omar UB: I am an ordinary person who loves his people and his country.

Most students and a minority of their lecturers from the UA and the UB alike stressed their ‘neutrality’. The term ‘neutrality’ was underlined by an array of other descriptions/feelings including participants’ “fear” to indicate their political affiliation (Freire, 1996, p. 29). In the interviews, several reasons were used to justify being neutral. For example, at least three female students were not interested in politics, but Yasser UB, a male student, said, ‘I am always trying to be wary of those people who are working with politics’. In the interview, Yasser explained why he was neutral:

All people are expecting the reconciliation [between Hamas and Fatah] will give them [...] as a magic stick] new opportunities [...] If the traditional political parties are not able to find solutions for this crisis and for these miserable conditions, what about young people, [...] the youth's innovative or creative means … (Yasser UB)

Othman (2014) explains that “frustration with Hamas and Fatah are widespread among Gazans who feel their plight is being ignored for the sake of political point scoring” (no pagination). Yasser’s frustration made him reject party politics and place his hope in young people getting involved in their community. This coheres with Freire who mentions that “human kind [can] emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled” (Freire, 1996, p.90).

Another case in point is Nawal UA:

When I turn on the Palestine media channel, they would be talking about Hamas; and when I turn on Hamas Channel, they would be talking about Fatah. They are sons of the
same country. They should be against the Israelis not against each other. So, one feels sorry for people who die out of this trivial [factionalist] fight… (Nawal UA)

Jamal (2000) points to the “tension between the media as a public space and the media as a tool of political control” (p.45). As such, Nawal UA condemned the “horizontal violence” among the political parties and regretted its oppressive consequences for the Gaza community who became more “divided” and oppressed than ever (Freire, 1996, pp. 44, 125). As a university student, Nawal was aware that factions’ publicity about themselves was “manipulative” and elusive as it aimed at the “cultural invasion” of Palestinian people (ibid., pp. 128, 133). As Freire explains, in a context of factionalism, “myth-creating irrationality itself becomes a fundamental theme” rather than the main goal of liberation (ibid., p. 83). This is consistent with Jamal (2000) who explains that “formal and informal limitations on the media [were] exercised by PA officials in the name of national interest, but these policies [were] tainted by corruption, nepotism, and authoritarianism” (p. 58). Nonetheless, for Palestinian factions “to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiques for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication” (Freire, 1996, p.47). For this, Nawal denounced factionalism as misleading, and chose to ‘support whoever is going to make the country move forward’ (Nawal UA). This neutral position was in fact based not on knowledge, but on the lack of it.

Similarly, Ibtisam UB ‘lately, [did] not agree with anyone [as each of these factions] has advantages and disadvantages’. Her neutrality reflects a degree of confusion as both factions seemed to have comparable levels of achievements and failure. Among other things, HE had an impact on Ibtisam since it made her question and compare factional arguments. Gaasholt and Togeby (1995) explain that “academic education promotes the ability to connect ideas, and minds equipped with this ability will tend to generaliz[ations]” (p. 265). Ibtisam mentioned that a few lecturers encouraged political discussions in the class, allowing students the freedom to ‘agree or disagree’. Samira UA also argued:

I feel that my mind is more open-minded than to fully support a certain faction. When I give my opinion, I say what I think is right or wrong about each political party,
but if I was an affiliate to Fatah and Hamas, I would need to accept all what they do, and should defend it in front of others even though I disagree with it… (Samira UA)

Moodie (1994) rightly states that “at its highest levels intellectual activity has the capacity to transcend immediate circumstances, if only by redefining them” (p.35). HE helped Samira to become an ‘open-minded’ person, or so she perceived herself. She took responsibility for thinking for herself, aiming at objectivity. Golebiowska (1995) indicates that “higher education tends to be linked with greater tolerance […] because it leads to individual value priorities that are conducive to greater openness to political diversity” (p.23). Samira’s criticality made her an active observer who is less “submerged” in factional “cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, pp. 44,133).

At least two students replied to the interview question by referring to literature they had read at their universities.145 The intellectual study of HE for Halima UA and Yasser UB seemed to have widened their imagination, allowing them to develop, as Bourdieu indicates, a reflexive ‘socio-analytical’ understanding of the factionalist context in which they lived. As Bourdieu writes in Propos sur le Champ Politique (2000: pp. 67-68), the “stakes in the political game are about the monopoly of the capacity to make see and make believe differently” (Frangie, 2009, p. 217). Such a reflexive position then is important in helping students to “comprehend, accept and even re-create their selves” (ibid., p. 213). This is consistent with Bobo and Licari, (1989) who indicate that “the effects of education on tolerance are strong even when a person has negative feelings toward the target group” (p.286).

Currie and Newson (1998) argue that “as the media, in so many forms, increasingly become controlled by vested interest groups, there is a growing need for universities to

145 For example, Halima UA made links between the events of the Arab Spring and those of George Orwell’s Animal Farm; and, Yasser UB, also saw in the Shawshank Redemption a ‘full resemblance to the prison of Gaza’. These students, moreover, tried to derive from this reading some wisdom to guide them in how to deal with their difficult life conditions in Gaza. Yasser, as a case in point, explained that he admired that Shawshank escapes from the prison by digging a tunnel for 20 years (a lesser time than was expected), that he ‘thought out of the box’, and achieved his aim by ‘bucking down to the idea, not [by] crying over it’. As such, this student believed that he had learnt for himself that ‘one can achieve a difference by keep digging with determination, […] and by trusting his abilities’.
provide a space for a critical analysis of social issues” (p. 3). Despite reservations, HE at Gaza’s universities seems to have had a moderating impact on a significant number of students. This was different from the experiment of the older generation of Palestinians.\(^{146}\)

Nonetheless, “education is only one of several factors influencing tolerance” (Bobo & Licari, 1989, p. 305). For example, Huda UA commented:

> I feel very sad when I see the sit ins and the quarrels between the factions. Even at the campus, some of the female students are from Fatah and some from Hamas and [...] they would reject each other for this. To become better, we don't want to be either. We want to become one hand [against the occupation...]. I don't have an affiliation … (Huda UA)

Some university students were contributing further to the Palestinian “division” by rejecting the ‘other’ in campus (Freire, 1996, p. 125). Thus there were other factors influencing students’ perceptions towards factionalism.\(^{147}\) Jennings and Niemi (2015), for

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\(^{146}\) For instance, the academic participants from the UB included four lecturers who all indicated their fading trust over the years in the PLO and their inclination to neutrality. However, this current inclination was not in general motivated by their academic study, but rather by these participants’ frustration with the peace process, and the instances of corruption and injustices that were associated with the PLO. This coheres with Roy (1994) who mentions that "people in Gaza [felt] numb, beyond despair […] and their disengagement derive[d] not from their suffering but from their sense of betrayal […] since the promise of the peace agreement proved illusory for Gaza” (pp. 85-96). Among other things, being exposed to imprisonment because of factionalism seemed to have had an impact on my academic participants. For example, Mr Omar UB argued, ‘I have no affiliation […] we were punished for this’. Similarly, from the UA, Mr Mehdi UA explained that he did ‘not want to get into politics because this will bring [him] and [his] family problems’; and Mr Suleiman UA also felt resentful about politics because it was a tricky and non-transparent area which he exemplified to a ‘cooking career’, meaning that it involved diplomatic manipulation. Similarly, Ms Randa UA refused an offer to join political affiliations because she was convinced that ‘politics work needs politics people’. Only one academic, Ms Amna UA, mentioned her ability to ‘think for [herself…] and criticize political views’ as the reason for her inclination to neutrality.

\(^{147}\) Alaa UB, for instance, pointed out that as far as political factions were concerned, she simply ‘follow[s] what [her] family follows. […] They are Fatah supporters’. Alaa’s statement is important. It implies that this female student was not a sufficiently independent thinker. Thus, although initially she did not bother to be affiliated to Fatah, she complied with her family’s tradition rather than making a judgment based on her own convictions. Another example is Lubna UB. Similarly, Lubna who pointed out that she was not involved in factional politics because, in her family ‘everyone around [her] is not political too’.

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example, mention the “direct and indirect ways in which the family exerts its influence on young people’s political views” (p.25).

Three students have indicated a double identity regarding factionalism. According to Huang, Liu, and Chang (2004), “double identity configuration makes identity-based threat or conflict […] mild compared to that experienced by more exclusive identities” (p.151). Firstly, in the interview, Moeen UA has once mentioned himself as neutral, and once as a supporter of Hamas. Secondly, Halima UA explained:

> I am silent Hamas. […] I have my ideas, my principles, but I don't have to be angry about them. Because everyone sometimes has his own idea and do not want to change it. But, we usually do not have these serious conversations […and when we have] I feel proud because I know that I am better than them because of my point of view […and so] I don't go deep with them … (Halima UA)

Neutrality was taken by Halima UA as synonymous with “silence” (Freire, 1996, p. 87). Because this participant was convinced of the righteousness of Hamas as a political faction, she avoided “dialogue” (Freire, 1996). Halima and her colleagues were females. But Abdullah ofs UA, a male, also showed evidence of “silence” and avoidance of political discussions (ibid., p. 87). Abdullah explained that ‘when [I and my colleagues] are at the university, we don’t care about Hamas or Fatah or any party – we just care about our friendship’. Thus the campus acted as a place where students from different socio-political backgrounds and political orientations could meet as friends. Despite attempts at cordial encounters with the ‘other’, such campus friendships might only be fostered, if these students had equally and voluntarily chosen to “mute” political discussions (Freire, 1996, p 87). Thus it is the case that as Jamal (2000) suggests, “censorship in the Palestinian context is not a set mechanism but a behavioral pattern” (p.55).

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148 This student’s avoidance of political dialogue could have also been linked to the fact that she and her colleagues in campus were all females who viewed politics as a less interesting topic for them to discuss.
Moreover, one academic and one student pointed to UA’s inclination to moderation as an institution. Firstly, Mr Suleiman UA stated:

The UA was religiously strict, but [...] people in Gaza don't want fanatics and therefore, the university attempts to hold the stick from the middle [...] Those who are responsible for the UA now are from the moderate group not from the fanatics… (Mr Suleiman UA)

Although Suleiman mentioned religion, Hamas is considered an Islamist/ic movement. The quote shows that the UA have “manipulated” its factionalist orientation for pragmatic considerations (Freire, 1996, p. 128). Hence, it is a possibility that at the UA while “policy decisions are political; administrative decisions are non-political”, although both necessarily feed into each other (Kemaghan, 1976, p.434).

A second example is Ferial UA who argued:

We are fed up with the political things in Gaza, so why do they bring political issue into the university? The university does not have to hold additional festivals. If any [student] wants to participate in the marches out there, they can simply go there [outside the university]. The UA does not have to do this because it is an educational institution… (Ferial UA)

Students such as Ferial expected her HE institution to be neutral.149 Similarly, from the UB, Ms Etaf UB stated, ‘Hamas and Fatah [...] should be thinking about the welfare of the public not of themselves as individuals or as factions’; and Mr Omar UB asserted that the ‘Palestinian issues should be conveyed to the world not in the way [the] factions do, but rather in a polite and organized way’.

Altogether, students’ reflections on neutrality implied that such a state of mind was a temporary coping mechanism.150 This supports Baddeley and James's (1987) argument

149 Ferial was convinced that the UA should not be factional so as to give the student a breathing space from the politically charged environment in the Gaza Strip.
150 Moderation was taken as a way of practical adaptation - a copying mechanism to deal with frustration, ‘fear’, confusion, lack of knowledge, and a camouflage that hides one’s disinterest in politics in a politicized society (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471; Freire, 1996, p. 29). Neutrality seemed also to be used as synonymous
that “political neutrality […] acts] as an emotional stability zone” (p.38). Hence the participants had resorted to “neutrality as an insulated box to protect them [mainly] from [frustrating] politics” (Baddeley & James 1987, p.38).

To recap, I concur with Freire that “unfortunately, those who espouse the case of liberation are themselves surrounded and influenced by the climate which generates” oppression (Freire, 1996, p.60). Students continue to study for their HE in a political culture at Gaza’s universities which is characterized by “antidialogics” and “horizontal” (ibid., pp. 161, 44), and “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Despite universities’ and participants’ claims about neutrality, “adherence to general principles of tolerance [or moderation] is of little practical value if those principles are not successfully applied to specific settings” at Gaza universities (Jackman, 1978, p. 302).

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with “silence” and avoidance, and to transcend political failures with the hope of changing the current factionalist experience with - any alternative (Freire, 1996, p. 87).
Section 5.3 A Gendered Experience? Male-Female Interaction at Gaza’s Universities

“Gendered norms and expectations have a variety of effects on teaching, learning, and leading in HE” (Ropers-Huilman, 2003, p.3). Gaza’s universities are largely arranged around societal gender values and its conservative “prescriptions” regarding male-female interaction (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Most student interviewees were females (14/21), while males were the majority of academic staff (10/15). Although students criticized their universities’ gendered practices, they were mistrustful of a Western model of co-education.

5.3.a A Gendered Campus?

In fact, “many contemporary Muslim scholars\(^{151}\) […] explain that Islam does not require gender segregation in the public or private domains and that sharp gender segregation in the home and in public, […] is a local cultural practice rather than a religious requirement” (Sobh & Belk, 2011, p.323). Nonetheless, as Esposito (2002) points out, still, “many, though not all, Muslim societies practice some gender segregation […] – to various degrees, in public spaces such as mosques, [and] universities” (p.87). Both of Gaza’s universities segregated male and female students through their campus arrangements, with the UA being stricter.

Jensen (2006) states that the UA “differs from other Palestinian universities in having a policy of gender segregation” (p. 63). Ferial UA, as an example, mentioned that ‘in [this] university, there is a male part and a female part’. Talal UA also stated:

The females’ number is twice as big, but their space is less.  
If we have a seminar in our area, the females can enter.  
But, if it was in their area, we cannot.  

\(^{151}\) Examples of modern contemporary scholars who argue that Islam does not require male-female segregation include “the Egyptian Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, the Sheikh of Cairo’s Al-Azhar university” (Sobh & Belk, 2011, p. 323).
administration, there are two shifts\footnote{This shift-based system of the UA operates with regard to shared facilities between males and females including, for example, the Department area, the library and the administration offices}, one for female students and one for male students. However, sometimes, one might not be able to make it at the specified hours or, for example, the lecturer that you want to see might not be available at the time of your shift in the department. […] But, I think they would be more flexible with females … (Talal UA) Gibbs (1992) states that students who learnt in large classes usually had “experiences of feeling bewildered, over-whelmed and anonymous” (p.23). In the interview, Talal UA pointed out that the small number of males gave them ‘better opportunities to participate and make presentations in the class, while for females, they would need to exert more effort to appear in the picture’. Talal UA, and all other male students perceived this UA system of sex “division” and “prescribed” interaction as biased towards females (Freire, 1996, pp. 125, 29). This shows feelings of “horizontal violence” among students from the two parts of the campus (ibid., p. 44). Abdullah ofs UA, as one example, felt angry because males were excluded from an important seminar that took place in the females’ part:

This meeting was held by a foreign guy who came to the university [to talk] about how to use social media […] to send your messages as a Palestinian to the world […] Men are much more concerned with this than girls, but unfortunately […] the seminar was in the females’ part […] and] we were not allowed to go there, because […] it is like haram (religiously prohibited) to go there! But when something like that happens in our part, they can come ... (Abdullah ofs UA)

Hoffman-Ladd (1987) argues that “a corollary of sexual segregation is a fundamental belief in distinct differences in the composition of the male and female personalities that entail different social roles and functions” (p. 33). For Abdullah, the imposed UA sex restrictions were grounded in religious thought\footnote{The mentioning of the word ‘haram’: i.e. ‘prohibited’ by Abdullah ofs UA in the quote above points out that a system of gender-based divided campus was grounded in religious thought, although the student was critical of how the UA has gone about its implementation.}, but Abdullah’s fury about the shift
system was also influenced by his gendered “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). Most of the female interviewees seemed to subscribe to these “dispositions” too (Swartz, 2013, p. 89), and to “misrecognize” politics (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199) as a natural male domain. The symbolic power of males over this area of knowledge is “exercised with the complicity of [females]” (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p. 164).

UA female students also criticized the shift-based system at their university. Huda UA stated:

The university has an administration system which I hate, very, very much. If you want to go to the administration, you should check whether it is male time, or female time […] . Sometimes, one has an urgency. We tell them: we are not coming to make a relationship. We only need to enter for a few moments and then we will get out. But they are very strict […] . This problem is stupid […] . Once I needed to [use the library] to submit assignments and I was delayed because of [this system] … (Huda UA)

Lizzio, Wilson and Simons (2002), indicate that “students’ perceptions of their current learning environment were a stronger predictor of learning outcomes at university than prior achievement at school” (p.27). Huda felt alienated by the UA’s “symbolic power” to impose restrictions on females in an “antidialogical” manner (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2; Freire, 1996, p. 161). This is consistent with Freire who mentions that “once a situation of oppression has been initiated, antidualogue becomes indispensable to its preservation” (Freire, 1996, p.119).

Surveillance of Females’ Dress

Most UA female students complained about the UA’s surveillance of their Islamic dress. Khadra ofs UA mentioned:

They are very strict about the dress: you don’t have to put any make-up; you don’t have to wear any slightly short jilbaab; your scarf should be made in an Islamic way. I think I and all the girls at the university hate this point
We are university students and we are girls, and girls want to [look good] and do whatever they like… (Khadra ofs UA)

Khadra perceived the UA’s scrutiny of females’ dress as oppressing their personal freedom (Freire, 1996). This is consistent with Morris, Gorham, Cohen and Huffman (1996) who explain that “while the extent of one’s wardrobe and availability of clothing in one’s size might be recognized as having some influence on clothing selection, dress is largely interpreted as a function of personal choice” (p.135).

Samira UA, as another example, stated:

If they want to forbid something, they should be reasonable. If [the UA] has forbidden a kind of jalabeeb, let them convince us of the reason […so we don’t] attempt to break their system. But, you won’t find anyone who would support you in this matter. It’s like this: it’s forbidden and that’s it […]. Sometimes I feel this is as a kind of injustice […]. As female students, we are coming to learn, not to do [other stuff]. If some would put much make-up, then why this would not be allowed is obvious, but [for the university] to prevent colourful jalabeeb or jalabeeb with two sides (connected by buttons), this is not convincing… (Samira UA)

Mahmood (2003) rightly argues that for “Muslim women […] the hijab symbolizes: religious devotion, discipline, reflection, respect, freedom, and modernity. But too often nobody asks them what the scarf means to them” (p.98). However, as Esposito (2002) points out, there is a “multitude of styles, colors, and fabrics worn by Muslim women in countries extending from Morocco to Iran, to Malaysia to Europe and the United States […] based] on diverse customs and interpretations of the Quranic verses” (p.95). Therefore, the UA’s strict surveillance is an act of cultural invasion since it is an “imposition of [the UA’s religious] worldview upon [the students]” (Freire, 1996, p. 141). Its approach is “antidialogical” since it aims to “conquer” the female students and “prescribe” for them not only a type of Islamic dress, but also what counts as such (ibid., p. 161,129). Samira “misrecognized” the UA as having this right, and consequently argued only about the details (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199).
A different example is Samah ofs UA who argued:

I hate this! No one has the right to check me when I enter the university. This is my opinion, but they still check and check [...]. For example, [...] I did not put make up on my face, but they stopped me saying that my lips were so red. I said, Ha ha, this is natural! … (Samah ofs UA)

McLeod (2011) states that “voice is a socially embedded practice, with institutional, collective and cultural histories that shapes not only what is heard and recognized but also how difference and inequality are registered and negotiated” (pp 185-186). Samah did not have the “symbolic power” to have her opinion heard (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). This student was “de-humanized” by her university since she was “dispossessed of [her] word, [her] expressiveness, [and her] culture” (Freire, 1996, p. 119). However, in the interview, Samah UA argued:

When they ask us to close our jalabeeb, they say it in a kind and respectful way. They don’t use forceful ways like ‘you should’ or ‘you shouldn’t’ […] I think, it is bad and not bad at the same time … (Samah ofs UA)

Bourdieu and Thompson (1991) explain that “words can be used as instruments of coercion and constraint, as tools of intimidation and abuse, as signs of politeness, condescension and contempt” (p. 1). Ultimately, what gives meaning to words is the context. Linguistic “form and the information it imparts condense and symbolize the entire structure of the social relation from which they derive their existence and their efficacy” (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p.80). UA’s politeness when accompanied by surveillance of Samah ofs UA’s dress can be considered a case of “symbolic domination” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). This is taking the “weight” of both “agents” into consideration (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, p. 72). Samah ofs UA “had been silenced by […university] practices that rewarded [her] obedience” (P. H. Collins, 1998, p. x). Also, the UA “misrecognized” its limits (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199), and in turn “rationalized” its policy of dress surveillance as a religious practice (Bourdieu, 1984, p.471). Hence as Bourdieu mentions, “misrecognition occurs for both dominant and dominated parties” (Swartz, 2013, p.95)
In contrast, UA male students were not checked at the gate to their campus, which “replicates” a differentiated gendered treatment within their university (Swartz, 2013, p. 100). Moeen UA stated, ‘I wear fashionable clothes [...] and no one has ever stopped me’; and Abdullah ofs UA’s argued:

When the male student goes to a campus, it is not good for him or for the university that he would wear unsuitable clothes. [...] But, whatever the male would wear, he won’t be able to make anything like the female could do. When you see a female wearing pantaloons, this is unacceptable. But, what can the males do with themselves? Sometimes, if some male students came to the university with shorts or something like that, they won’t allow them to enter [...] because he is coming to the university, not to a picnic … (Abdullah ofs UA)

In Muslim culture, the general assumption is that “women need to wear headscarf and abstain from excessive make-up. They should not wear tight clothing that can be seductive” (Abuznaid, 2012, p. 1490). But, as Mahmood (2003) indicates, “specific attire for women is not stipulated anywhere in the Quran, which also emphasizes modesty for men: ‘Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest (24:30)’” (p.95). Abdullah viewed only the restrictions on females as “legitimate” since women were naturally more attractive than men. This supports Sobh and Belk (2011) who state that “in patriarchal societies, men are perceived to be weaker than women in controlling their desires and there is therefore […] more perceived necessity for the separation of women and men in order to help men in their pursuit of moral virtue” (p. 324). Consequently, Abdullah ofs UA argued:

In the first place when [females] have enrolled in the UA, they all knew the system of the university and they have now to respect this system. […] But, when they feel that they are mistreated by the university because they behaved impolitely or wore something that is against the system, they start to complain. […] They have to follow [the rules of the university] … (Abdullah ofs UA)

Abdullah’s “internalized dispositions […] made him view the university’s surveillance system over females as[…] taken for-granted, natural, [and] inevitable” (Swartz, 2013, p.
Interestingly, however, it was this same student who had previously criticized the university’s shift-based system when it excluded him from an important seminar. This shows the “duality” of this male participant\(^\text{154}\) (Freire, 1996, p. 30). Thus, as Leathwood (2004) argues, “those with interest in the status quo will always try to defend it---and often to do so by ridiculing, deriding, and dismissing radical ideas” (p.456). This is also consistent with Freire explaining that a “false perception occurs when a change in the objective reality would threaten the individual or class interest of the perceiver” (Freire, 1996, p. 34).

Moeen UA is a second example:

If a female wears against Islamic rules, it might affect the others […]. It is normal that a female should be conformist […]. I believe that the university should impose its authority to some extent […]. On a family level, if one’s […] daughter chooses to violate the family’s system by wearing something that contradicts with family’s, society’s, and religion’s rules, one would not accept as a parent and would oblige her to wear correctly […]. As for me, I wear whatever jeans I choose, tight, yellow, and colours. […] Males] have freedom as far as it is within limits; Islamic limits… (Moeen UA)

Moeen UA judged females’ conformity and religious commitment as based on their dress. This consolidates the view of Morris et al., (1996) who note that “as with other non-verbal cues, clothing messages can be intentionally or unintentionally (consciously or unconsciously) communicated by the wearer, as well as intentionally or unintentionally (consciously or unconsciously) interpreted by the observer” (p.136). In Moeen’s perception, females were “seen as both vulnerable and threatening” (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987, p.29). This participant “internalize[d] the parental authority” in the context of authoritarian family relations in Gaza especially with regard to females\(^\text{155}\) (Freire, 1996, p. 135). The UA’s supervisory role over females seems to “replicate” this authoritarian

\(^\text{154}\) Abdullah ofs UA’s ‘duality’ is evident as he was critical of the UA’s system when it did not serve his interest, and stood by it when it was in harmony with his gendered assumptions (Freire, 1996, p. 30).

\(^\text{155}\) This also explains further why female students such as Samira UA accepted that the UA should check on what they wear, and only argued about the details of it.
family relationship and thus “reproduce” the traditional “dispositions” of sex (Swartz, 2013, pp. 100, 89). This supports Freire’s argument that “homes […] and schools (from nurseries to universities) exist not in the abstract, but in time and space. Within the structures of domination, they function largely as agencies which prepare the [antidialogical cultural] invaders of the future” (Freire, 1996, p.135)

Women’s Conservativism as a Political ‘Weapon’

In part, the UA’s excessive attention to female’s dress is linked to its orientation towards Hamas, an Islamist movement, and its earlier connection with the Muslim Brotherhood. In that sense, it is a form of political “cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, p. 133). To explain this, according to Mahmood (2003), the ideologies of “Islamism and nationalism […] appear to cast women as the repositories of tradition and culture” (p.837). Consequently, Hammami (1990) mentions that in the late 1970s “women affiliated with the movement started to wear long, plain, tailored overcoats known as shari’a dress […]hence] the hijab […]was used as ] a direct disciplining of women’s bodies for political ends” (p25). In the 1980s, “pressure to wear [the hijab] remained site-specific, for example, at the workplace, within religious families or among students at the [UA] campus” (Hammami,1990, p.25). According to Zuhur (2003), later on, Hamas also declared “the hijab […] as an emblem of loyalty to the Intifada in Gaza […]which led to many women being] attacked or harassed” (p.24). For instance, Hammami (1990) reports that “if there were no soldiers to throw stones at, women without headscarves made good targets […]since] harassing these women […]became for many] a safe way to express nationalist sentiment” (p.26). After “the imposition of the headscarf has been accomplished, a new goal seems to have been set: the imposition of the jilbaab (full-length dress or coat)” (Hammami,1990, p.28). From another perspective, the occupation similarly “manipulated” Palestinian traditional “dispositions” with regard to women’s conservativism for political purposes (Freire, 1996, p.128; Swartz, 2013, p. 89). That said, “Israeli occupying forces also use sexuality as a weapon of political intimidation and domination” 156 […]especially as they were]

156 Haj (1992) notes that “since the Intifada, women’s committees as well as human rights activists (both Israeli and Palestinian) have been recording cases of sexual harassment and attempted rapes by Israeli soldiers and interrogators intended to pressure and neutralize Palestinian activists. […]Furthermore], there had been an alarming number of reports of “fallen women” who had turned collaborators; women who had

Males and Females in the UB

So far I have discussed the UA’s segregation and dress surveillance policy, I shall now move on to shed light on the UB context.

Mr Abdel Rahman UB described the UB campus as ‘mixed’ one (i.e. it includes males and females). Amira UB described her experience in one of these classes:

I did not enjoy having lectures at the male students’ building157. […]. They were seven young men, and we were 40 young women […]. On the stairs, many of the male students would be going downstairs and we wanted to go upstairs; they won't make any space for us to pass. I think it would have been better if the male students would have come to have a lecture with us, in our building, rather than we go to theirs… (Amira UB)

Amira’s quote shows a contradiction between perceiving females as needing supervision over their dress, while showing more confidence in them than in males to enter the other gender’s section. This contradiction was also present at the UA campus.

Khaled UB, as another example, mentions the following about his experience in UB’s mixed classes:

You feel that the lecturer is disgusted by you […]. If you happen to be late for the class for a minute or two, they

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157 From the researcher’s first-hand experience, usually the UB campus included separate buildings for male and female classes, but there was a possibility that female classes would be arranged to take place in the male section and vice versa. It was also possible for the lecturers to arrange for both sexes sometimes to attend the same class.
PART TWO

Chapter Five: The Present HE Experience

would tell you to withdraw from the course [...]. But, when we have a mixed lecture with females and one of them comes late ten minutes, she would say, ‘Excuse me, may I come in?’ in a soft way, […], and he would tell her to ‘please’ come in. So, [in this situation], one feels himself as an ‘insect’ … (Khaled UB)

Despite the UB’s flexibility, Khaled UB judged male-female interaction according to his social “dispositions”¹⁵⁸ (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). Similarly, a few UB lecturers also imposed their personal gendered assumptions on their classes. To elaborate on this with one instance, Ibtisam UB maintained:

Our lecturers of English accept that any female would come without a scarf […], but I find that lecturers of Arabic [namely those teaching Islamic studies], won’t accept [to let in] any female who does not put a scarf on her hair […]. Also, […] our lecturers in Arabic do not accept any relationship between males and females, but our lecturers of English accept [it]¹⁵⁹ … (Ibtisam UB)

According to Esposito (2002) “while many [Muslims] believe that the absolute separation of the sexes is unnecessary, many others believe that modesty requirements can be met through appropriate dress and limiting interaction with unrelated males to conversations such as those concerning professional and educational matters” (p.88). Despite any university policies, lecturers at the UB seem to have the autonomy to “impose[their] ‘worldview upon their students’ ”¹⁶⁰ (Freire, 1996, p. 141). For lecturers to be able to

¹⁵⁸ In the interview, Khaled UB also criticized a male lecturer for directing questions to females only, and ‘if a male student went to ask him a question [after the lecture ends] while he was talking to a female, he would ask him [harshly] to leave’. As a young man, Khaled’s “fear” of embarrassment in the class affected his self-esteem and participation. This supports Crozier (1995) who states that “doubts about one’s ability to contribute effectively to social encounters and the belief that one will be negatively evaluated by others may contribute to the inhibited behavior and social anxieties that […] may in turn reduce self-esteem” (p. 85). In Khaled’s interpretation, the lecturer ‘wanted to feel comfortable with the female’. It should be noted, however, that Khaled’s criticism of his lecturers for being inclined to females might be motivated by his gendered assumptions which made him unable to accept equal treatment of himself and females in the class.

¹⁵⁹ Ibtisam elaborated on the differentiated treatment from lecturers as follows: ‘In our classes […] English teachers] allow us to make dialogue or presentations with male students. […] As for lecturers in Arabic classes, […] they say that a female should talk with a female. There is no relationship between males and females. It is not acceptable in our society.’

¹⁶⁰ For example, lecturers, also Palestinians and Muslims, who had studied in foreign countries seemed to have been influenced by the “cultural invasion” of Western democratic thought (Freire, 1996, p. 133). Even
impose\textsuperscript{161} wearing the scarf on female students shows that they did not consider their act as a violation of the university policy for (if needed), they could argue that it was based on religious and social grounds. In the Palestinian context, “the significance of the hijab arises from the struggle for control between the nationalists and the religious forces”, namely Fatah and Hamas (Sabbagh, 1998, p. 16). Hoffman-Ladd, (1987) states that even polemicists of “the ‘Islamic’ camp which is trying to create a society based on Islamic values or to preserve traditional values that are perceived to be Islamic […] regardless of their position, ultimately make some appeal to Islam” (p.43). Hence, the university might sometimes “manipulatively” tolerate these lecturers’ imposition of the scarf to satisfy political (and cultural) considerations (Freire, 1996, p. 128).

\textbf{5.3.b Co-education: Is It a Better Option for Gaza Universities?}

Hoffman-Ladd (1987) maintains that “it is partly in light of […] daily experience that we must evaluate the relevance of the polemics on the modesty and segregation of women” (p.40). Most participants were “persuaded that Islam offers woman a greater degree of dignity and self-esteem than Western culture offers” (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987, p.40). Despite reservations about their gendered campuses, the majority would not have preferred co-education. I concur with Haj (1992) that while “a sex-segregated society perpetuates female subordination and leaves intact prevailing male prerogatives [; simultaneously] it allows women to be less dependent on men for their self-definition […since they can] foster and maintain their own networks of sociability outside those of men and their marriages” (p.764). Imposing co-education on the Gazan context could be viewed as a “cultural invasion” since this implies “a parochial view of reality, a static perception to the world, and the imposition of [Western] world view upon [the Gazan Muslim culture]” as if it was inferior (Freire, 1996, p.141)

Students reflected on a proposition for co-education as follows:

\begin{quote}
those who did not buy into the Western ideals seem to have enough autonomy to “antidialogically” impose their own cultural “dispositions” on their classes (Freire, 1996, p. 161; Swartz, 2013, p. 89) \\
\textsuperscript{161} Ibtisam explained, ”[It happened two weeks ago] that the lecturer got rid of a female [because of that]. He told her that she had immediately to leave the class, to put on a scarf, and then that it would be up to him if he would decide to let her in or not.”
\end{quote}
Ahmed UA: I don’t prefer co-education. I find it more comfortable to learn with students like me.

Dalal UA: That there is no mix between females and males makes me feel comfortable.

Waleed UB: I think it was a great [opportunity] to exchange ideas and learn about the other, and so on, but for me, it has been the first [time to mix in class] and I wished it was the [last].

Tamara UB: In the UB, male-female communication is a choice. If I want to co-operate with [male students] I can, but […] for myself, I don’t want to do it.

Students from both universities felt ‘uncomfortable’ about learning with the other sex. This is consistent with the view of Bourdieu (2001) who argues that symbolic power as a “gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through […] purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition [which sometimes include] feelings” (pp. 1–2). Tamara UB, as a first example, explained the “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89) behind her discomfort:

I do not find a problem with talking to my colleagues from the other sex. Co-education is now everywhere […]. However, the society [here] and the men themselves would start to think […], ‘oh she admires me, and therefore she is sending me this scholarship link’ […]. They are going to misunderstand you […]. No, this is not a situation that I accept for myself … (Tamara UB)

This female student “feared” the anticipated consequences of co-education in a traditional society like that of Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 29). For Tamara, “the unreserved embrace of the West’s stimulations for modernity [through co-education] entailed simply the exchange of one [problem] for another” (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987, p. 24).

Similarly, Ahmed UA commented:

It will make it better for both females and males to go to the university only to study, instead of [being distracted] by having a co-class […]. I am not against the interaction
between males and females. I interact with females on Facebook, and in [outside the university] centres […]. But I don’t prefer to study with females in class and to walk in a campus [of both sexes]. In our campus, I can lie on the grass, but I can’t do that if females are around […]. I think [this feeling of respect] is affected by my culture. … (Ahmed UA)

According to Sobh and Belk (2011), “Islam requires […] modesty in dress, speech, and behavior by both men and women in order to prevent fitna - temptations that might result from the mixing of sexes and lead to the corruption of public morals” (p.324). The cultural “dispositions” of Ahmed, as a Muslim student, made him feel that co-education was a limiting option (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). Interestingly, even in Western culture, MacLeod (2003) reports that “the student unions of Oxford and Cambridge have launched a campaign to preserve the universities’ four remaining women-only colleges” believing that there are women who do not view a mixed context as a productive study environment (no pagination). This is not only because of learning issues, but also of cultural considerations. As for Ahmed, social media was providing a regulated platform for sex communication that was sufficient for academic purposes.

A third example is Abdullah ofs UA:

In the US, the culture is different. Here, it is a conservative society, so when I try to talk with a female […], people would misunderstand me and her, and this would embarrass [both of us]. But, in the UK or in the US, things are different […]. So, I would keep [the system] as it is, I am not in favour of co-education… (Abdullah ofs UA)

In Abdullah’s opinion, “it is not possible to talk of a ‘one-size –fits all’ educational model or recipe” (UNDP, 2005, p. 178). In the Gazan context, a segregated campus is a cultural

162 For example, MacLeod (2003) reports the following: “Jo Read, Cambridge University students’ union women’s officer said: ‘The continued existence of women's colleges not only represents a women's issue, but also an access issue’. ‘Without these colleges, many women would be unable to attend Oxbridge universities, and this would prove to be a disastrous blow upon university and students’ union access schemes to widen applications to Oxbridge’. ‘Women's colleges enabled women to start attending university in this country, and only their continued existence can ensure that all women can continue to attend the university of their choice.’ ”
convenience. The “symbolic violence” is evident in that Abdullah perceived Gazan society to be a larger supervisory force\textsuperscript{163} over male-female interaction within the university (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133).

Mr Majid UB, acknowledged the difference between the university context in Gaza and in Russia:

Abroad, […the foreign language] teacher used to sing for us. This was strange for me […], but I liked it […]. I tried once in the past [to do the same in the UB…], [but] I have read in the faces of some students that what I have done was a taboo. […] Our society still does not accept such ideas… (Mr Majid UB)

In Gaza, a female would not usually be encouraged to sing in front of a male teacher, even if this was in the class, unless he was a \textit{mahram}\textsuperscript{164}. Thus, many people perceive that “the voice of a woman is ‘awra\textsuperscript{165} and should not be heard” loudly (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987, p.43). Mr Majid UB “feared” that the teaching styles that he experienced in Russia would not fit the cultural context of Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 29).

5.3.c Female Academics’ Participation at Gaza’s Universities

The “symbolic violence” against females can be seen in their limited presence, participation and scholarships at Gaza’s universities (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). I concur with Barnes (2007) that in these HE institutions, “much less attention has been paid to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item I concur with Mahmood (2003) as he explains that it is difficult to have an “individual freedom in a context where the distinction between the subject’s own desires and socially prescribed performances cannot be so easily presumed and where submission to certain forms of (external) authority is a condition for the self to achieve its potentiality” (p.857).
\item \textit{Mahram} is a religious Arabic term that refers to people that a woman cannot marry such as her biological father, brothers, uncles, sons, grandfathers and the like.
\item According to Hoffman-Ladd, (1987), “among the key words related to women's modesty is ‘awra, a word that literally means a weak or vulnerable spot, and that is used in its plural, ‘awrat, to mean the pudenda of men and women. ‘Awra is that which ought to be covered and protected, because of the shame of having it shown. But the ‘Awra of woman is not limited to her pudenda. Rather, Hadith insists that woman herself is ‘awra, and traditional [interpreters of Hadith] state that the entire body of the free woman is ‘awra—even her voice is ‘awra—and must be covered with the same care as the pudenda of men; for woman, like the concept of ‘awra itself, is weak and vulnerable, and the exposure of any part of her to public view causes shame and embarrassment, not to mention the corruption of public morals” (p.28)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
transforming the structures and practices which actively discriminate against women in the academy, and which reproduce combative and exclusionary intellectualism” (p.22). Nonetheless, the discrimination at Gaza’s universities concerns women in terms of both body and mind.

MoEHE statistics (2011-2012) show that the total number of academic staff at the UA was 516 (413 males, 103 females) (2013, الإدارة العامة للتخطيط- قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي). The very structure of this HE institution relied more on males. For this and for cultural reasons, female students, at the UA, were usually taught by both male and female lecturers while their male counterparts could only have male lecturers. When students commented on whether they preferred to be taught by a female at the UA, Talal UA said, ‘I neither prefer nor do not prefer. I consider this as something ordinary’; and Abdullah ofs UA said, ‘I don’t think [the UA] would accept it, but I wish that I can try it’. Other students from the UA were also not against having a female as their lecturer.

At the UB, the percentage of female participation was much lower. The total number of UB academic staff for the year (2011-2012) was 296 (264 males, 32 females) (2013, الإدارة العامة للتخطيط- قسم إحصاءات التعليم العالي). In contrast to the UA, female lecturers at the UB could teach male students.

Most of the UB students enjoyed being taught by a female lecturer. However, Khaled UB compared his female and male lecturers as follows:

> When the lecturer is a female, I feel that I am working more than when it is a male […]. I would think she’s a female, so I should make her look at me as a good student […]. But I prefer male lecturers because [they] always prefer the funny guys even if they have little information … (Khaled UB)

This quote supports Sternglanz and Lyberger-Ficek (1977) when they note that “students seem to choose their courses on the basis of the sex of their teachers and to respond differently depending on the sex of their teachers” (p.350).

Paradoxically, UB female academics preferred teaching male students. For example, Ms Lamia UB, who is in her mid-fifties, stated, ‘At first, I was a bit apprehensive to be
teaching 200 male students in one lecture, but with experience later, I started to feel more comfortable in male classes than in females.’ Ms Lamia UB’s sex, formal position, and age might have increased her “symbolic power” over male students (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). This supports UNDP (2005) which indicates that “domination is not an absolute condition suffered by all women to the same degree and in the same strength and form. Rather, it is a condition that varies depending on age, social status, economic circumstances, […] and other factors that affect a woman’s experience in society” (p.168). For example, implicated in “the pedagogical relationship between [Lamia as a] teacher […] and [her students as young male] learners […] social and cultural inequalities and differentiated power relationship” that have necessarily influenced their interaction, in this case positively (Swartz, 2013, p. 95).

But the account of Ms Etaf UB on her working experience with males is different:

One of the problems that obstructs my [administrative] work is that for a female to tell males to change things to such and such is unacceptable, especially that I am younger than them. The other day, the Head of Services at the UB who is in an administrative position was criticizing that I am a junior. He considered himself as more understanding and experienced in administration than me. He forgot that I am a PhD, that I am in a higher position [at the UB] than him and that I am doing my job … (Ms Etaf UB)

Etaf’s quote shows that “patriarchal relations at home and in the workplace are mutually reinforcing” (Haj, 1992, p.770). Ms Etaf UB was challenged by the cultural ethos of the university, namely the “dispositions” of its members (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). This is consistent with Ropers-Huilman (2003) who notes that “the roles that participants at all levels of higher education play are crafted and performed within an environment that is indeed gendered” (p.2).

Funding was pointed out by Tamara UB as a challenge to women’s participation. In fact, it can be argued that in traditional societies, “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133) against women is, as Bourdieu asserts, a result of “immense preliminary labour that […] worked through funding, for example, to] produce [gender inequalities as] permanent dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 94). Tamara as a student, feared that even if she continued
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her education to study for a postgraduate degree, the UB ‘would not hire [her] because [...] females are expensive to the university’\textsuperscript{166}. This consolidates the UNDP’s (2005) assessment that in Arab countries “some employers prefer to employ men in the belief that they are less expensive, using paid maternity leave as a pretext not to employ women as though such leave were a privilege for women and not a right of the new-born child and a service to society” (p.91).

Surprisingly, UA female academic staff, despite the UA’s strict gender policy, acknowledged their university’s support for women. One example is Ms Randa UA:

\begin{quote}
When I first started at the university, it was possible for a woman to be a member in a committee [or a department], but not a head of it. I became a head of a department later and this was difficult for me, but also was seen by my male colleagues as something strange. Despite this, the administration would deal with me as far as salary is concerned as equal with my colleagues [...]. Nowadays, the nature of my work necessitates that I work as a head for several committees. It would be possible that the whole of the committee are males and I am their head [...]. Sometimes, you would hear some murmuring about that, but these are individual cases. The atmosphere at the university has changed a lot from how it was in the past… (Ms Randa UA)
\end{quote}

The UA seems to be opening up to more positive inclusion of females\textsuperscript{167}. Ms Amna UA also supported this statement:

\begin{quote}
Although some might think that the UA is religiously fanatic, or has some narrow-mindedness, I and my female colleagues in our Faculty and other faculties [...] feel comfortable about the way we are treated and with regard to all our legal rights [at the university… (Ms Amna UA)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{166} Tamara UB pointed out, ‘They would not hire me because they don’t want to hire females since they get married, then get pregnant, and then get a vacation. [Thus] females are expensive to the university’.

\textsuperscript{167} In the interview, Ms Randa UA also stated that at the UA, there are about 15-16 PhD holders among female academic staff, and that the culture of the university (60% of its student body is female) encourages the progress of female academics.
The quote leaves us with the impression that Ms Amna UA and her colleagues were working in a quite liberal environment at the UA, and, relatively, this may be true. Nonetheless, female lecturers’ assumptions regarding these rights need to be considered critically since, as Bourdieu explains, “symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and misrecognition that lies beyond -- or beneath -- the controls of consciousness and will’ (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199).

Ms Jamila UA also stated:

In the Arab and Eastern societies, it is rare that a woman would be a leader. On the contrary […], here they asked me keenly to accept being a vice-head [of the department] […]. If a woman proves that she is qualified […they accept it], but it remains difficult to be one female in a male group [at the Department] … (Ms Jamila UA)

I concur with Jansen (2006) when he explains that “the Islamists have not only enabled more [women] to study, they have also increased their public visibility” (p.483). Despite this, Jamila reflected that in a conservative society working among men was ‘difficult’. Leadership positions in this context represents “false generosity” (Freire, 1996, p. 26). According to the UNDP’s (2005) recommendations, “the rise of Arab women must go beyond a merely symbolic makeover that permits a few distinguished Arab women to ascend to positions of leadership […]. Rather, it must extend to the empowerment of the broad masses of Arab women in their entirety” (p.22).

Ms Randa UA, although previously highlighting the UA’s opening-up to women, mentioned a discrimination problem in her leadership work with male colleagues:

Since they are males, they would sometimes hang out together [and would of course talk at some point about work…]. From a professional perspective, I should know everything related to work because I am part of their team […]. But, when we sit together, I feel that there are things that they talk about [which] I have not learnt about from them. But I consider this is normal. It is just as I would hang out with [my female colleagues] and would discuss some work issues … (Ms Randa UA)
Mavin (2001) argues that the “domination of management as being a male paradigm is that women managers are out of place, in foreign territory, ‘travelers in a male world’” (p.183). Ms Randa UA rationalized this discrimination as natural.

### 5.3.d On Females’ Travel

Female students and academic staff faced limitations with regard to studying abroad for HE, whether in an Arab or a foreign country. Ms Lamia UB complained:

> I have nearly prepared my PhD proposal, but the problem is the difficulty in travel […]. It is difficult for me to spend nine months or a year outside [Gaza] because I have some difficult conditions at home […]. As married women, we need to have an alternative [at Gaza universities]. Females have ambition, determination, and high potentials, but conditions conquer the human … (Ms Lamia UB)

Gerson (1986) explains that “women’s work and family decisions have always been closely connected” (p.2). As a woman, Ms Lamia UB struggled to balance her career prospects with her home responsibilities, which made HE appear practically impossible.

The UA attempted to facilitate matters for their female academics. Ms Jamila UA stated:

> Our university makes things much easier for females. For instance, while it requires that male academics obtain their degrees from a university of international reputation, it allows females to finish their PhD studies from any accredited university… (Ms Jamila UA)

Jansen (2006) mentions that “Islamists have [in fact] participated in the process of taking down the cultural barriers to women entering education” (p.483). Nonetheless, the above UA practice is double-edged. It is one of academic encouragement for females, but simultaneously of “false generosity” as it confines women’s professional ambitions within conservative limits (Freire, 1996, p.26). This is consistent with the view of Gluck (1995) who indicates that any “changes [to gender relations] remain personal, at best, and do not lead to social transformation unless accompanied by institutional mechanisms” (p.13).
But Ms Jamila UA pointed at the same time to discrimination where it came to research opportunities and scholarships at the UA:

Women’s rights are undermined in HE in Palestine. The man attracts scholarships from several sources, but the woman unfortunately not [...]. I have suffered a lot […], especially [when] these scholarships belong to political factions or even to [other] institutions. [...] This is very bad … (Ms Jamila UA)

Political factions’ bias towards males is understandable since men constitute the majority of these factions. According to Sabbagh (1998), “the political representation of Palestinian women lags behind their contribution to the national struggle, and the offices they do hold reflect their traditional roles” (p.14). But so often, “women’s inferior social status [was] legitimatized by the misinterpretation of various religious texts” (Apostolopoulos, 2001, p. 123), and in the case of Ms Jamila UA this seems to affect the awarding bodies’ decision about whom to give the funding to. As the UNDP (2005) indicates, in Arab countries, “the prevailing masculine culture and values see women as dependents of men. Thus, men take priority both in access to work and the enjoyment of its returns” (p.91). This reproduces Gaza’s “symbolic violence” against women (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Consequently, as Haj-Yahia (1998) explains, “in the public sphere [in Arab societies], power is [usually] shared by male patriarchs” (p.536). On the contrary, providing females with HE grants and scholarships, to study both in and outside Gaza would strengthen their participation at their universities and increase their “symbolic power” in the society 168 (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2).

For young and unmarried females, even if such opportunities were made available, some of their families might not allow them to travel abroad for cultural reasons. Samira UA remarked, ‘Even if I got a scholarship, of course my family won’t accept that I would travel alone to continue my studies […]. So, unless the conditions allow for it, [HE

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168 For instance, Alaa UB stated, “My husband is educated and he wanted me to get educated as well, especially that I study on a scholarship, which also provides me with my university’s maintenance”.

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abroad] remains [...] a dream for me’. Likewise, here is my conversation with Dalal UA:

Dalal UA: You asked me if I want to travel. It is my dream to go to Germany.
M: Do you think it would be okay for you to travel?
Dalal UA: No. I asked my father, but he said no.
M: Okay, so what are you going to do?
Dalal UA: The only solution is to travel with my husband.
M: Are you married?
Dalal UA: No

What Dalal UA discussed above was a common barrier for the female participants. This is consistent with the UNDP (2005) report which indicates that “relationships within the family […]are] governed by the father’s authority over his children and the husband’s over his wife, under the sway of patriarchal order” (p.168). There is a “duality” here in which educated women have “self-depreciated” themselves indicating that they are not capable of managing their own future (Freire, 1996, p. 30, 45). Amira UB, for instance, “feared” that even if her father accepted this idea, her brother would not (ibid., p. 29). Ferial UA also explained that ‘[her] condition is like most of the females’ conditions. They wait for their husbands to take them out of Gaza, so this is the first problem’.

Females’ challenges with regard to continuing for HE abroad also included other problems: Samira UA “feared” the difficulty of crossing the border, and the ambiguity of what comes next when a female finds herself alone in a foreign country, and for the first time (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Nora UA explained that, ‘females shouldn’t be studying for more than their four years of [of undergraduate studies]. Some say that a female should be married instead of continuing [their] education’. This supports Ropers-Huilman (2003) who explains that “in our interaction throughout our lives, we subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) let others know what we expect from them as gendered beings” (p.2). In the interview, Nora UA indicated that if she managed to travel, she might be the first in her town to do so. By way of compromise, she was thinking of studying in the UK, as the master’s programme there takes only ‘nine months’ and so she could then ‘take [her] degree so quickly and get back home’ (Nora UA). This female, taking the anticipated consequences into perspective, was attempting to adapt her choice practically to societal restrictions.
Conservatism associated with females’ travel differed. Mr Ashraf UB had agreed to his daughter’s travel only after he ‘became assured [by people who studied in the same HE institution abroad] that her university would take care of her […] and that she would be staying in a female student accommodation where entrance requires a fingerprint’. Thus the family and the network have the “symbolic power” to either encourage or undermine females’ desire to study abroad (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). Taking the “symbolic power” of their families for-granted, at least three of the female students made persistent efforts to gain approval for their study abroad (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). Ibtisam UB mentioned that ‘every day, [she] discusses this idea [of travel]’. Ibtisam was totally convinced that ‘if [she] insisted on this idea, [her family] would accept’. Similarly, Halima UA thought, ‘I think that because my mother is a lecturer, and she accepted, we can push my husband to accept’. Tamara, as another example, took a diplomatic or somewhat a “manipulative” way to achieve her goal (Freire, 1996, p. 128). She seized the moment when her father was feeling emotional during the 2014 war to convince him of her HE travel:

During the war, I was crying to Dad, […] and I told him that] if anything happens to me in this war, he would be the reason for my death, [as] I could have been in the US now rather than being a victim […]. Then my dad said, ‘I want you to live’. And I said: then let me go man. And he said, ‘I swear by God, that I won’t prevent you from going outside and I won't listen to people who would tell me not to send my daughter outside’… (Tamara UB)

From the examples of Ibtisam UA, Halima UA, and Tamara UB, it is clear that HE helped females to become more proactive in negotiating with their families with regard to their

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169 In the interview, Halima explained that she was inspired by her mother who, becoming a widow after high school, went on to study for a PhD and became a lecturer at one of Gaza’s universities. Halima believed that it was her mother’s education that has changed her life and gained respect for herself in her community, and, as such, she wanted to follow her mother’s example. Thus we can see again how the power of example seems to encourage people in Gaza to attempt to doing things despite challenges.
needs and rights, rather than passively “complying” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471) with societal “prescriptions” on their future (Freire, 1996, p. 29).

However, Ms Randa UA defended the restrictions on females’ travel as follows:

I agree with the religion that a female would need a mahram. Life abroad is difficult and one is not all the time working or at the university […] It is good that one would have someone with her to consult […] I felt that having my brother with me during my study abroad was excellent. I needed him at different trajectories in my stay there […]. But there are now also Muslim societies [inside the foreign universities] … (Ms Randa UA)

Randa’s religious dispositions and earlier experience in studying in the USA more than 20 years previously affected her perception. In retrospect, she acknowledged growing Muslim and Arab communities in foreign countries to be a new development. In fact, the proliferation of social media technology, such as Skype, Facebook and WhatsApp could also provide a platform for females abroad to communicate on a daily basis with their families for support and consultations. Hence, “reformers have argued […] for the need for a] reinterpretation [of some Islamic assumptions] in the light of the new social, cultural, and economic realities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries” (Esposito, 2002, p. 90). In Gaza, as a Muslim area, the social “dispositions” are largely based on these old interpretations (Swartz, 2013, p. 89).

5.3.e Inside and Outside Gaza’s Universities: A Contradiction

Esposito (2002) argues that “for several decades women in Muslim societies have been part of an erratic and vacillating process of change that creates many contradictions” (p.99). Despite restrictions on females, the data show an acknowledgment of their HE achievement. At least three participants commented on this issue:

170 Mr Hassan UA suggested, ‘Compared with [the majority of male students], we prefer females [since they are more focused on their studies’; Ms Amna UA stated that in HE, the ‘number of females is much more than that of males and that the distinguished among these are from the females’; Amira UB indicated, ‘in my major, the females are more than the males’; and Moeen UA maintained that ‘females are considered as more effective than [males…] both inside and outside the university’.
Mr Hassan UA: The only opportunity that a female has is education, but for males, they can work in construction or whatever job is offered for him [...]. Also, for ladies, they are mostly staying at home and as such they could study, search and maybe to sit on the Internet every day.

Ms Amna UA: At least among the strata of academics and the cultured, a woman in Gaza is taking her rights and is [respected]. There is an available opportunity for women to continue their HE [...]. A woman is taking here more rights than in other Arab countries.

Mr Ashraf UB: The rate of birth of females is higher than that of males. [...] From another perspective, because females are more achieving than male students, the latter would likely end up in intermediate colleges, but for the females, they have higher averages and so would be able to enter the university.

Despite these claims about females’ advantages, at least two participants described the contradiction in women’s status in Gazan society:

Moeen UA: There is a supremacy for females in academic and career matters, but on the level of the family, it is possible that the man would have his prestige and his power over the woman.

Abdullah ofs UA: If a female made a problem, an X would be put on her, only because she is a female [...]. However, [...] when it comes to [...] jobs, females are preferred. Even taxi drivers, I don’t know why, prefer to take female customers.

This is consistent with what Esposito (2002) refers to, namely, that “while women in most [Muslim] societies have access to education and employment they continue to face obstacles and challenges as they seek gender equality and forge new paths in defining their role in society” (p.100). But any increase in women’s participation in the Gazan labour market is relative. Thus, according to World Bank (2015), in Gaza, the unemployment for women reached 54 per cent in 2014 “despite a staggeringly low women labour force participation of 20 per cent” (p.18). This supports the UNDP’s (2005) statement that, “low economic development does not provide the jobs needed to
absorb increases in the labour force, whether in the number of men or women. Nevertheless, the low number of jobs available has a greater impact on women” (p.91). Therefore, the “symbolic violence” against women can be also seen in the public sphere where both gendered ethos and economic constraints impact negatively on females’ participation and visibility (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133).

Huda UA recognized this contradiction from her own HE experience:

When I am at the university, I feel I am an independent human being. It is a different life […]. There are many things that I enjoy. It is fun, hard work, friends, exams, and learning new knowledge […]. When I am at home, I feel that the university was a page that I turned over… (Huda UA)

HE provided Huda UA with a feeling of self-determination, because she was able to select her own courses, lecturers, friends, and when to go to the library and what to read there. She felt herself to be a human being, who was able to make choices (Freire, 1996, p. 26). According to Freire, this feeling, as expressed by Huda’s is important since “the oppressed only begin to develop when, […], they become ‘beings for themselves’ ” (Freire, 1996, p.142).

Zuhur (2003) explains that “empowerment by means of education [… ] is clearly insufficient to ameliorate the prospects for a higher quality of life for women of the Arab world” (p. 34). Change requires “transforming the prevailing socioeconomic structures to eliminate all forms of exploitation and domination’ that hinders this empowerment”

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171 The Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (2016) reports, for example, that for the year 2014, in the State of Palestine, the percentages of male-female participation were as follows: 84 per cent of judges were male in comparison to only 15.6 per cent female; 75 per cent of journalist were male in comparison to only 25 per cent female; 94.2 per cent of Palestinian ambassadors were male in comparison to only 5.8 females; 58.2 per cent of employees in the public sector were male in comparison to only 41 per cent females, and 96.6 of police officers were male in comparison to 3.4 females (PCBS, 2016, p. no pagination).

172 In the interview, Huda UA explained, ‘At the university, I feel that my friends are able to understand me as they are on the same level of thinking. […] I also feel independent because I can take any decision without consulting others. It is me who decides. At home I should refer to my family, my sisters, and to my brothers’
Thus it is, as Freire suggests, that “while all development is transformation, not all transformation is development. The transformation occurring in a seed which under favorable conditions germinates and sprouts, is not development” (Freire, 1996, p. 142). It should be noted therefore that “patriarchal relations in the Palestinian case must be further situated in the context of Israel’s colonization policies and their impact on Palestinian national, class, and gender relations” (Haj, 1992, p. 765). Yet “symbolic violence” against women is a wider phenomenon that we still see even in well-established Western democracies (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). For example, Abu-Lughod (2002) argues that “all one needs to do to appreciate the patronizing quality of the rhetoric of saving [Arab women] is to imagine using it today in the United States about disadvantaged groups such as African American women or working-class women […] who, still today, suffer] from structural violence” (p. 789).

To conclude, Ropers-Huilman (2003) rightly states that “men and women […] are reminded of their proper sex roles through both formal and informal education” (p. 2). In Gaza (society and universities), both sexes, but especially women, remain bounded by virtue of symbolic violence within conservative limits (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). Despite an acknowledgement of females’ higher academic achievements, they were perceived as second-class citizens in Gaza. According to Jansen (2006), this “incongruity between an ideology of domestic, obedient femininity and the reality of a small but growing number of women in the public domain, could be the seeds of change in the future” (p. 487). Nonetheless, “because higher education both reinforces and resists society’s norms, what we do in [the] teaching and learning environments [at Gaza’s universities] has the potential to exacerbate, replicate, or challenge gender constructions that exist in society writ large” (Ropers-Huilman, 2003, p. 3). In the meantime, the UA and the UB, despite efforts, continue to reproduce the existing symbolic violence in the wider society (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). This warns that the “appeal of modernity [at Gaza’s universities… continues to be] in tension with the appeal of authenticity” in the Gaza Strip (Hoffman-Ladd, 1987, p. 43).
Section 5.4 The War Experience

I noticed something about my students: a lot of them don’t smile […] While I am driving, I am [also] watching the people who stand on both sides of the road [and wonder] why none of them smile or maybe laugh … (Mr Hassan UA)

Explaining the present HE experience of students at Gaza’s universities without discussing the war experience does not make sense. In the Gaza Strip, violence is not coincidental. According to Bouris (2015), the 2014 war on Gaza “was the third” since only 2008 (p.111). However, this recent “[Operation Protective Edge] as […] codenamed by the Israeli military […] was unprecedented on many levels” (Shehadeh, 2015, p.278). It was “the longest and most vicious, leaving over two thousand Palestinians dead, mostly civilians, over eleven thousand injured, and whole-scale destruction of neighborhoods, and infrastructure” (ibid., p.278). The destruction hit even “United Nations personnel, premises and operations”, including UNRWA schools (United Nations, 2015, p. 1). Under “de-humanizing” conditions, despite their “fear” and “fatalism”, the participants strove for resilience (Freire, 1996, pp. 26, 29, 43).

5.4.a Gaza Educationalists in an ‘Action Movie’

To give the reader a sense of educationalists’ ‘thrilling war adventures’, explaining why four students perceived themselves as if they were in a horror ‘action movie’, I include the following seven episodes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening Scene …. Some Bombs (reported by Tamara UB)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tamara UB was attending an Amideast workshop at her university, when she heard an explosion. Tamara stated, ‘We thought it was only an explosion, […] some bombs’. The teacher in this workshop was British and so hearing the explosions, she panicked, but did not show her face’. Tamara asked her teacher, ‘Are you scared?’. The teacher replied, ‘I am okay’. Soon, ‘a car came and picked the foreign teacher from the university […]’. Tamara reflected, ‘They took her to a safe place and asked us to leave on our own. We left our stuff on the tables, so that we can come tomorrow and continue our work. We did not know that this was the war starting and that was the end of our course’ Tamara UB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Episode I …. A Flying Door

‘Imagine that with the bombing of [this] tower, a leaf door\(^\text{173}\) reached us from there, although my house was not located on the main street. Imagine, an iron leaf door, let’s say of 2.40-2.80 m height and 45 cm length got to our house’ Mr Abdel Rahman UB

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Episode II…. Artist in a Bloodshed

(Note: This episode contains graphic description that the reader might find disturbing)

‘If I was closer three metres, exactly three metres, I would have died. I was coming out from the mosque when a car came. The Israelis hit the car with a rocket and I was close to it. All the other cars that were around were severely damaged. I went home and showered: I had blood, pieces of clothes, and some flesh on me from the person who was killed. Passing through this, everything has become normal afterwards [...] : the aircraft hovers, the rockets fall, life is on fire, but I go out and walk normally in the streets’ Mr Omar UB

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Episode III…. Goats on the Run

‘The bulldozer started to hit [...]. People, young and old, were running. They left their houses carrying what they could. I have seen people carrying with them their goats. They took their goats with them to schools [which acted as a shelter during the war]. They wanted to run with their financial assets’ Mr Ashraf UB

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Episode IV…. In and Out the Rubble

‘I had my cousins (my wife’s two brothers who came from the UAE to study in Gaza) staying in my house during Ramadan. It was then the first day of Eid al-Fitr (a Muslims’ celebration), when the first left to go to his home, and then the second followed him a while later. We were listening to the news 24 hours because we were confined to home [...]. There was no electricity, but we had a radio working on battery [...]. Suddenly, I heard the name of my family mentioned among [the houses which were] bombarded. I rushed [to the site] and found the F16 has destroyed the home of my cousins. These young men were from outside Gaza and they were coming only to study at the university. It is Allah’s will, that one of them [...] got out of the rubble walking as if there was nothing, while the other has become a martyr’. Mr Majid UB

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\(^\text{173}\) A leaf door is a single, independently moving panel of a door. In Episode I, Mr Abdel Rahman UB uses the term ‘leaf door’ to refer to one of the two panels of a double leaf door.
‘The war happened two weeks after I got married, so I was just a newly wedded bride [...]. I live on the border, so rockets continuously hit the tunnels there. [...] This made me at first feel very afraid, because there was [nothing] in front of our house except the Egyptian border. Afterwards, it became something usual, [...] but the very, very bad experience was when I woke up, and there was a gunpowder smell and the Israelis wanted to destroy the house next to us. We just ran away, but we inhaled smoke, and I did not have time to wear my jilbaab [traditional Islamic clothing]. I was very afraid as I was seeing the ambulance and the people running. It was a very bad experience’. Halima UA

‘They called [us] and asked us to evacuate [our] home and [we had] certain minutes, not more than ten minutes. It came like a shock; we didn't know what to do; we just rushed. I tried to get my certificates, my papers, my little sister and my little brother. I took them, carried them and just ran. And then, my older brothers, my father, my mother and my grandmother came running behind us [...]. The house was slightly destroyed: we lost windows; some doors and some other stuff has been demolished’. Yasser UB

‘The Israelis warned our neighbour that they would bombard his house and asked him to leave. So the man went to the street and shouted to let the neighbours know. We went running into the street [...]. It was a red night as the Israelis threw lighting bombs; the radio warned us that they were doing that because they wanted to invade this area [...]. I felt just confused. I did not feel anything because I was asleep [...]. I did not wake up until I was in the middle of the street. It was very bad. [...] The man whose house was bombarded was laughing with people as if nothing happened [...]. I thought what a patient man. I could not believe he was a normal man’. Amira UB

Commentary

According to Monitor (2015) “for 50 days, more than 6,000 air strikes, 14,500 tanks shells and 45,000 artillery shells were fired on Gaza as Israel decimated the Palestinian enclave” (no pagination). About 1.8 million lived in this 365 km area with “no possibility of escape or adequate shelter to avoid the life-threatening situation” of the 2014 war (Shehadeh, 2015, p. 284). In the above ‘movie’ extract, the Opening Scene highlights how Tamara
“naturalized” the bombardment of Gaza (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). It also indicates a qualitative difference between the foreign teacher and his/her Palestinian students, with the value of their human lives not being equal\(^\text{174}\). The following provides brief comments on the other six episodes:

In ‘Episode I’, Mr Abdel Rahman UB, “feared” an iron door flying into his house which indicated chaos and implied danger to people even inside their homes (Freire, 1996, p. 29). In ‘Episode II’, Mr Omar UB, a painter, was sprayed with blood after performing his peaceful prayer in the mosque. This consolidates Shehadeh’s (2015) view that Gazans were repeatedly exposed to “gruesome scenes of dead bodies, and body parts, lying in pools of blood after being torn apart by high-intensity explosives” (p.284). This horrific incident desensitized Mr Omar UB, as afterwards, he practised his life normally with a “fatalistic” attitude to danger (Freire, 1996, p. 43).

In ‘Episode III’, Mr Ashraf UB, described how people and animals having to live in an educational institution had disturbed the nature of what a school was. People, running away, attempted to take with them whatever they could from their belongings. For those in rural areas, goats seemed to be the only ‘movable’ financial asset and so they carried them to shelter at UNRWA schools. This is consistent with the view of Hubbard (2014) who reports that “life in these shelters [was] full of deprivation and discomfort […] where garbage overflowed from trash bins near the school walls, adorned with murals of smiling children, and horses gazed on the waste” (No pagination). Furthermore, “laundry hung from window grates, and families had rigged up sheets on patios to create a bit of privacy”

\(^\text{174}\) In Tamara’s description, the teacher was immediately rescued from the Gaza Strip; Tamara and her colleagues were left to face the appalling war and its consequences. In a way, this also supports my argument in the introduction of this thesis about the need for the Palestinian experience from the Palestinian perspective rather than from that of foreign visitors.
Palestinians had to live under “de-humanizing” conditions in “fear” of their lives and their families’ safety (Freire, 1996, p. 26).

In ‘Episode IV’, Mr Majid UB was close to his cousins whose house was later bombarded on the first day of Al Eid. According to B. B. C. News (2014), “17,200 homes [were] destroyed or severely damaged by Israeli attacks” (no pagination). Consequently, Solberg (2014), for example, reported that “a broken metal wheelchair stood in the ruins, crushed by the massive force of an explosion, its owner dead or in hospital […] and that elsewhere in the rubble were traces of the lives […]: a hair brush, a fan, a pencil case, a copy of [the children story] Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” (p.389). ‘Episode V’ describing the honeymoon of Halima UA is like the story of Mr Majid UB, an example of how the Israeli war has destroyed not only lives and homes, but also important occasions in peoples’ lives. Halima UA described how she was a newly married bride and yet at this special time for her, she found herself in “fear” of a real danger (Freire, 1996, p. 29). To express this metaphorically, Halima’s case implies “de-humanization” since stability was replaced by instability, joy by fear, celebratory fireworks by killing rockets, and the scent of perfume by the smell of gunpowder for this student bride (ibid., p. 26).

In ‘Episode VI’, Yasser UB panicked, as he received the Israeli warning telephone call. The BBC News (2014) also mentioned that “Israel has been criticized for using the so-called ‘knock on the roof’ method-warning people of impending airstrikes by launching a non-explosive missile before the main strike. Some airstrikes have occurred less than a minute later” (no pagination). Although Yasser had only ten minutes to evacuate the house, he picked up his certificates and papers. This shows how Yasser perceived education as an assurance of survival in case he lost everything else. This “de-humanizing” experience (Freire, 1996, p.26) caused Yasser feel a “sense of complete loss of safety or control over [his] fate” (Shehadeh, 2015, p.286).

In ‘Episode VII’, Amira UB woke up from her sleep to find herself in the street surrounded by lighting bombs, the screaming of her neighbours, and awaiting a catastrophe: the destruction of her neighbour’s home by explosives. According to Shehadeh (2015), the disturbance of Amira’s and other people’s sleep was intended as a
form of “mass disruption” (p.286). The author explains that during the war, Israel followed a “policy of collective sleep deprivation across all of the Gaza Strip [...] they exposed them to] noxious sensory stimulations, across various modalities, including visual (illumination flares), auditory (deafening explosions), and tactile (ground-shaking explosions that rattle even the sturdiest of buildings)” (Shehadeh, 2015, p.286).

5.4.b Participants’ Reflections: Between Vulnerability and the Illusion of Resilience?

Participants’ reflections showed an entanglement in the appalling war circumstances on a deeper level than the physical one; for them it was also psychological. Nonetheless, I concur with Shehadeh (2015) that that there is “no distinction here between physical and psychological torture. While the methods of torture may differ, subjectively the experience of severe pain and suffering for the victim is one and the same” (p.287). Hence, in reviewing participants’ accounts, “neither objectivism nor subjectivism, nor yet psychologism is propounded [in their experience of oppression], but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship” (Freire, 1996, p. 32).

Students’ (and Lecturers’) Fears

Students “feared” three things; firstly, to lose a body part; secondly, to lose one or all of their family; and thirdly, to lose their house (Freire, 1996, p. 29). During the war, at least three students were constantly feeling afraid of becoming disabled: Ferial UA mentioned that she and other students had ‘[horrifying] nightmares of [their] bodies dismembered and [their body] parts scattered all around the road [...] and that this] made [them] feel distracted from their studies’; Abdullah ofs UA stated, ‘I was [...] afraid that my hands would be cut or my legs or my eyes would be hurt [...] I was worried about how to live [afterwards if this happened as] it is very hard’. Tamara UB had combined “fears” (Freire, 1996, p. 29), as she explained:

I was scared that I'm going to live with one hand, one leg, or that I would become blind [...] I was afraid of losing one of my family members. I was afraid of being homeless and I was afraid to be disabled for the rest of my life. Death itself? No, it wasn’t scary. Sometimes, I thought that I wish I could die [...] I wish that there would be a bomb that would kill us all, all the family, once and together and
forever [...]. Because, [...] deep down you still know that this is not the last war; [...]and that] next time, you might lose something important to you… (Tamara UB)

McCafferty, McCafferty and McCafferty, (1992) explain that “for those individuals who feel powerless or helpless, suicide may be a means of taking control over their helplessness” (p.233). In Tamara’s case, expecting death and destruction as a “fate”, she attempted to exercise her agency by imagining what kind and manner of death she would ideally hope for (Freire, 1996, p. 43). Like Tamara, at least four other students expressed their “fear” of being alone if they lost their dear ones175 (Freire, 1996, p 29).

Lecturers, however, were more reserved when talking about fears for themselves. Ms Amna UA, Mr Omar UB, and Mr Mehdi UA pointed out their concern about their children. Mr Abdel Rahman UB also stated:

I was thinking about where [the Palestinians,] are going. I cannot see any future for us. Hope? I cannot have any. Am I optimistic? Not that much [...] During the war, one used to say là ʾilāha ʾillā-llāh, muḥammadur-rasūlu-llāh (the testimonial word) every ten minutes. Also, one had to accept whatever happened: it might be your relative; it might be your neighbour; it might be this or that one who would be killed next… (Mr Abdel Rahman UB)

This lecturer is in his late sixties. Mr Abdel Rahman’s old age, which he had spent mainly in the Gaza Strip, meant that he had more experience as well as more frustrations and painful memories of being under occupation. According to Schnurr, Spiro, Vielhauer, Findler, & Hamblen (2002), “the prevalence of traumatic exposure could be higher in older adults than that in younger adults simply because the passage of time presents more opportunities (i.e. more years) to be exposed,” especially under conflict circumstances (p.176). Because of his traumatic experiences, it is realistic that Mr Abdel Rahman UB “self-depreciated” himself and other Palestinians as he internalized feelings of vulnerability and pessimism about the future in a “fatalistic” way (Freire, 1996, pp. 45,

175 For instance, Halima UA mentioned, ‘If my family should die, I should die with them. I do not want to be alone’, and Lubna UB, indicated that during the war, she was ‘numb’, but that ‘everything else [other than her family did] not matter’.
43). But, using the testimonial words shows how religion has also provided assurance for people during the war.

Another academic, Ms Randa UA pointed out:

There is no one who has not felt afraid in the war […]. However, no one wanted to leave his house. No one. […] We have not left except for five days only. We were obliged to leave because everyone around us left, and […] we had bombs dropped in our house, destroying part of it […]. On my way out, I was very scared and it was very, very painful to see how people looked like. I started to remember my grandfather’s reporting about 1948 war. He used to tell us about how they were forced to leave their homes. I used to hear these as stories, but when I saw in my eyes people carrying their plastic bags, and walking, some of whom were barefoot, […] coming out from all areas [….] in groups and groups, this has emphasized the old historic stories of my grandfather. I was as if seeing a flash of the past photos of the 1948 […]. They said they wanted to take our house. Can you imagine what a suffering this is […]? Imagine that in a moment everything, all your work, and all your life comes in front of you as nothing! […]. This has strengthened in me that our life battle is not with anyone else; it is with the occupation. … (Ms Randa UA)

Abondoning their areas during Al Nakbah of 1948, Palestinians were criticized harshly by other Arabs as this was thought to have facilitated the Israelis’ advance on, and subsequent occupation of the land. They were exposed to “horizontal violence” from their Arab neighbours (Freire, 1996, p.44). For example, El Abed (2004) explains that “the state media [in Egypt] projected negative images of ‘ungrateful’ Palestinians and accused them of having brought about their expulsion by their greed and willingness to sell their land to Zionists. Thus, many Egyptians [came to] believe that Palestinians are rich, economically powerful and influential and deserve neither sympathy nor assistance” (p.30). In the interview, Ms Randa UA made a link between these past events and the 2014 depopulation scenes and used her own case to defy the old claims of “horizontal
violence” because of the decision of some Palestinians’ to leave their homes to Zionists\(^\text{176}\) (Freire, 1996, p.44). In this, Randa not only showed “a deep concern for [what happened in] the past, but [through the interview, attempted to correct the] meaning of past events to the next generation” by adding an insight from her own first-hand experience (Ricoeur, 1999, pp.9-10). From another viewpoint, Ronald (2008) argues that “‘home’ is the centre of individual and family life, and forms a special domestic ideal. Homes provide a refuge from the world, a place of personal investment and play, and the backstage of personal life [...Also] houses can also constitute assets and investments” (p.11). In fact, “they are normally the biggest or only investment a household has” (Ronald, 2008, p.11). For Ms Randa UA to be forced to leave her home was “de-humanizing”, and instilled in her feelings of “fear” and insecurity (Freire, 1996, p.26). In these circumstances, Ms Randa UA had a flashback. The identification of her situation with the Al Nakbah exodus caused her to view her own oppression from a historical perspective, as the “fate” of Palestinians (ibid., p. 43). Paradoxically, “fatalism” here has endowed Randa with a sense of resilience as she engaged in a ‘life battle’ against the occupation (ibid., p.43).

Most participants\(^\text{177}\) had evacuated their homes or hosted others who had. Returning to his house after the Palestinian-Israeli truce came into effect, Khaled UB felt exhilarated:

> I went kissing the walls of our house. Yes, I kissed the ground. I kissed my desk. I kissed everything in my house that, Alhamdullilah, it was not damaged. I am fond of my house; it is the only shelter for us. We are ten persons so if our house was damaged, where we shall go?… (Khaled UB)

In this quote, Khaled personified the objects. This is consistent with Keefer, Landau, Rothschild, and Sullivan's (2012) view that “adults display emotional attachments to

\(^{176}\) For example, Ms Randa UA reported that ‘everything was displayed in front of me. I felt the injustice that [the old generation] have suffered [...]. No one has actually left his home. What I saw changed my conception and showed the violent measures that the Israelis have taken to force people to leave’.

\(^{177}\) To illustrate on this with few examples, Samira UA mentioned that she and her family ‘used to run from one place to another and yet find the one [they] went to more dangerous than the one [they] left earlier’; and Nora UA, ‘we started to laugh, to sit, and think about the past days when we were in our house’.
material objects” (p. 912). Conversely, in many ways, the war “de-humanized” and objectified Khaled (ibid., p.26).

Students’ (and Lecturers’) Reflections

The Israeli operation lasting 50 days caused at least three students to perceive their lives as futile, and another three felt alienated, holding a “fatalistic” view to life (Freire, 1996, p.43).

To illustrate with one example, Samira UA explained:

We were promising ourselves that we would not be angry about the little things in our lives any more. The war days were the most difficult days we have ever lived. Our highest dreams were only to have a moment of calm, a moment of peace and safety, […] without any sounds, so that I could sleep without putting the headphones on my ears to listen to the news about whose turn it would be to have his house bombarded or to be announced as a martyr … (Samira UA)

Samira’s highest dreams were reduced to ‘a moment of peace and safety’. This consolidates Maslow's (1943) explanation that “human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of pre-potency. That is to say, the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need” (p.370). Thus, as Samira became dominated by the need for security, “all other needs may [have] become non-existent or pushed into the background” (Maslow, 1943, p.370). This includes “metaneeds [such as] the motivation of self-actualiz[ation]” (Maslow, Frager, Fadiman, McReynolds, & Cox, 1970, p. 66). Recurrent wars “de-humanize” the youth, and divert them from investing their energy in improving their lives, not to mention from contributing to world dialogue over universal concerns (e.g. climate change, space exploration, and/or cancer treatment) (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Nora UA also stated, ‘Before the war, one was fighting for big dreams and over big issues, but [suddenly] we were fighting only to survive, and this shows how trivial life is’.
The majority of students coped with their ‘worthless’ lives by putting their hopes in the future, or in the afterlife. This can be seen in the reflections of Nawal UA and Khadra ofs UA:

Firstly, Nawal UA mentioned:

> The lesson I learnt from the war is that everything in life is trivial, because everything could vanish in a moment. Everything is in the hand of our God. We could die in a moment; we could lose anything in a moment […]. The only thing we should work on in our life is that to work for our afterlife. […] I tried to write on Facebook statements that would increase the morale of my friends. To remind them, for instance, of the Final Day, to tell them, ‘As you might be meeting Allah, go and read some pages of Quran or pray […]’. So, I was trying to distract myself by these things so I do not feel afraid … (Nawal UA)

Freire explains that “fatalism in the guise of docility is the fruit of an historical and sociological situation, not an essential characteristic of a people’s behavior” (Freire, 1996, p.44). Nawal’s war experience made her inclined to religiosity (ibid., p. 43). This inclination was “fatalistic” in that she looked to the afterlife as a solution to Palestinian problems (Freire, 1996, p. 43). This is consistent with the view of Barakat (1993) that “one of the basic functions of religion […] has been that of reconciliation of the deprived and oppressed to their harsh reality […] where] one element of such submissiveness is the portrayal of this world as insignificant, and the life hereafter as blissful, for the meek and docile” (p.131). According to Freire, however, the oppressed who seek liberation should not live “apart from reality […]since any revolutionary] movement[s] must begin with the human-world relationship” (Freire, 1996, p. 66).

Secondly, Khadra ofs UA stated:

> Everything we have done in our life is in vain, because now we are going to die. What did we do for our afterlife? I started to message my friends and we talked to make the time pass, because we did not want to feel the situation. Truly, one at such a moment feels that he has not done enough to his Afterlife. Yeah, we’ve worked, we’ve done so and so, but what have we done for our afterlife? This is
the thinking that comes to you at such moments… (Khadra ofs UA)

Abū ‘Amr (1994) rightly indicates that “the majority of the Palestinian people are Muslims, and Islam plays a basic role in Palestinian society” (p.xvi). Inviting Muslim colleagues to read Quran or to pray is a socially acceptable/favourable practice in the Gaza Strip. But, Khadra ofs UA and her friends regretted investing efforts in their everyday life. This contradicts Freire’s explanation that “to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it” through reflection and action (Freire, 1996, p. 69). In that sense, an increased religiosity was less a nurturing of faith, and more a coping mechanism. To “fatalistically” abandon everyday life as undeserving seems inconsistent with Islamic teaching (Freire, 1996, p. 43). For example, Ragab (1980) notes that “Islamic beliefs […] are far from being antithetical to development” (p.519). Ali and Al-Owaihan (2008) also emphasize that “work in Islam […] is situated in the core of the faith and is considered an integral part in life” (p.7).

Waleed UB and Khaled UB are different cases. Although during the war, Waleed ‘kept reading the Quran, and praying’, he was simultaneously thinking hard about the future:

I was thinking about the future. What I would do after the war, because I could not control [what was happening anyway]. I could not do anything. I was not able to fight. I was not able to lend people money. I was not able to [assist people to] build their houses. So, [I was thinking about] what I would do for them in the future… (Waleed UB)

Perceiving oppression as a “fate”, this student dreamed of an agency in the future. This seems to support Ragab’s (1980) explanation that predestination works to “encourage rather than to retard positive action” (p.514).

Khaled UB, the second example, was also focused on the future. He was reading lots of novels and even when evacuating his house, he took his novels with him. This was how he aimed to restore his “humanity” amid bombardment, killing and destruction (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Moreover, he maintained:
I am trying to make something of myself. I am always reading books, watching movies, and videos, and trying to improve my English. This is what I can do now. I hope I could do something to contribute in the future… (Khaled UB)

In the interview, Khaled explained that he was similarly reading the Quran and praying. This participant was less “fatalistic” as he combined both religious and other worldly activities to provide himself with sources of encouragement (Freire, 1996, p. 43).

To downplay the present in hope of a better future, as a habit, is counterproductive since it encourages in young people “compliance” and “fear of freedom” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471; Freire, 1996, p. 29). This was rationalized by Waleed and Khaled as a means of resilience. This is consistent with Freire’s argument that when “the fact and what may result from it may be prejudicial to the person, […] it becomes necessary, not to deny the fact but to ‘see it differently.’ […] Hence] this rationalization […] is a defense mechanism” (Freire, 1996, p. 34).

Social Support and Pressure

As indicated earlier, participants had either moved from their houses in search of a safer shelter or hosted others who had had to move. This resulted in a double-edged social atmosphere: for some, it created a supportive environment for people during the long days of Israeli bombardment, but for others it caused them inconvenience and increased the pressure on them. Below are examples:

Lubna UB was happy to unite with her relatives at her brother’s house. She stated:

> Whenever there was electricity, I used to work online […] to distract myself with YouTube, blogs or videos. That was at the beginning when we were at our house, but when we were at my brother’s apartment, there were my family, my aunts, all my brothers with their wives, our uncle and his wife, and my cousins. There wasn’t electricity all the time, so we were playing Shadah cards … (Lubna UB)

Kraut et al. (1998) explain that “although social technology [is] used for communication […] the paradox is that […] it is associated with declines in social involvement and
psychological well-being that goes with social involvement” (p. 1029). The impossibility of using TV or the Internet at all the times during the war provided a better opportunity for family interaction. Under traumatizing conditions, this much-needed social life provided a good distraction and support for Lubna UB. According to Hobfoll et al. (2011), “having greater social support [was] associated with being in the relatively more favorable or improving trajectories” towards resilience (p.1406).

Unlike Lubna UB, other participants were not fond of this social atmosphere. Ahmed UA argued:

Fortunately, we didn’t have anyone visiting us or staying with us. We did have some relatives staying with us in our house, in the war in 2012. It was only eight days, but you know [...] it was hard to have our house full of people. I was talking with a friend of who had 100 people in his house during the 50 days [...]. He was telling me how difficult it was for them to feed 100 mouths, to cope with 100 in one house with this bombardment, with everything… (Ahmed UA)

According to Sobh, Belk and Wilson (2013), “Arab hospitality is one of the tropes that defines Arab cultures” (p443), but “there is also a general consensus among Muslim scholars that hospitality and generosity towards guests are integral part of faith in Islam” (p.446). In Gaza, it is a social taboo to refuse one’s relatives if they come for refuge in one’s house, especially if they are from one’s immediate family. This is consistent with Barakat's (1993) explanation that in Arab culture (especially that of a Bedouin lifestyle) there is “attachment to […] values […]including making] sacrifices and the protection of those seeking refuge” (p.53). For this, Ahmed UA, “feared” the unavoidable disadvantages (Freire, 1996, p. 29), and the anticipated consequences of social relations during the Israeli operation. That said, the pressure comes not only from an individual being deprived of his/her private space, but also from struggling to be hospitable in difficult circumstances. On this point, Mr Ashraf UB reported:

I was not only under the pressure of war; I was also under pressure from those who were in my house. Every day, I would need a packet of bread, but it was difficult for me to provide this as the bakeries were closed and in our area, the
bakery shop is modest [and many people needed to queue] [...] The people whom I hosted were considering themselves as if in a five-star hotel. When they woke up in the morning, they wanted to drink coffee, to have nibbles, etc. [...] I will give you an example: One day, a truce was announced, so I was happy and I thought I could go and buy some chicken. I went to [different areas, but I couldn’t find any]. One of my sisters [instead of attempting to save me embarrassment and danger by saying, ‘no need to’], suggested an additional area for me to try! [...] So, they did not want to pass this Friday without eating chicken as usual. [...] I pretended to look as if I was not affected… (Mr Ashraf UB)

Almaney (1981) explains that in Arab culture, “a guest is considered almost a sacred trust”. This “legendary […] hospitality […] as indicated above] has its roots in nomadic Bedouin lifestyle” (p. 12). Despite including a Bedouin population, similar to the other Arab societies, Gaza is of a “mosaic” nature178 (Barakat, 1993, p.12). However, emergencies and recurrent wars emphasize the values of the Bedouin culture in Gaza179. On the one hand, the hosting of his relatives by Mr Ashraf UB during the war put him under additional pressure. On the other hand, in the interview, Ashraf indicated that he was also invited to move into the apartment of one of his relatives when he needed to. In Gaza, “public face, and social approval are of paramount importance and moral worth is largely judged by others” (Sobh & Belk, 2011, p. 323). Consequently, Mr Ashraf UB’s social “dispositions” made him want to present a good image of himself as a host (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). This put this lecturer under financial pressure and placed him in situations where he might be risking his life to offer a hospitable ‘chicken’ meal. In the interview, Ashraf explained that he was keen not to embarrass his sisters in front of their husbands, to show respect for their visit, and to give a good impression of their family of origin’s socio-economic status. He feared horizontal violence from within his family (Freire, 1996, pp.29, 44). This supports Almaney (1981) who indicates that “in cities, […to be

178 According to Barakat (1993), “the emerging Arab society has been in flux, pulled constantly between opposite poles: past versus future, East versus West, tradition versus modernity, sacred versus secular, ethnicity versus class solidarity, unity versus fragmentation, and so on” (p.12).
179 According to Almaney (1981), “Arab hospitality […] grew in part out of human helplessness in the desert, the utter dependence of man upon man […]where] the stranger you offer coffee to today may feed you tomorrow if you lose your way in the bleak and dangerous desert” (p.13). Similarly, in the Gaza conflict context, the guest you host today, might be the one who offers you refuge tomorrow.
hospitable] is a symbol of man’s status and personal quality […] and that] city dwellers display their hospitality by providing their guests with lavish dinners” (p.13).

Part of the war, moreover, took place during the Holy Month of Ramadan. All participants, including, Mr Ashraf UB and his guests, had been fasting from dawn until sunset during this period. This, Khaled UB stated, ‘comforted…them] for their losses’. But, it was also very hard as the participants fasted under the “de-humanizing” conditions, including increased hours of water and power cuts (Freire, 1996, p. 26). According to UNCTAD (2015), the Israeli “operation resulted in severe damage to Gaza’s water and sanitation structure […]and] damaged Gaza’s single power generation station” (p.12). On this, Ahmed UA commented, ‘Imagine yourself living in summer in August without any electricity at all, without even cold water to drink, without a fan to have some fresh air. These things, besides being in a war, made 2014, the worst year ever’.

Furthermore, Amditis (2012) states that during the 2008-9 attack on Gaza, Israeli used “white phosphorous (WP) shells180, not only against Hamas militants, but also against the civilian population of Gaza” (p. 15). Mojabi, Ghourchi, and Feizi (2010) add that “using [WP in 2008-9 operation] also caused […] environmental pollution” (p.125). Alaa UB, was directly affected by the war chemicals which polluted the air:

I was pregnant during the war and I had a miscarriage during that period. I had a miscarriage because of the war consequences, the gases, and such things. I went in for an operation during the war. Alhamdullilah, may Allah compensate us… (Alaa UB)

In this situation, “fatalism” helped this student to come to terms with her loss (ibid., p. 43). Undergoing an operation in war time in Gaza, when movement was dangerous, and hospitals were struggling to cope with the dead and injured was a “de-humanizing” experience for Alaa and her family (ibid., p. 26). In fact, hospitals and health facilities

180 According to Amditis (2012), “WP munitions contain highly volatile chemicals that burn at extremely high temperatures (often reaching approximately 5,000°F) and produce thick smoke that can be used to conceal tactical movement. The devastating effects that WP shells have on human flesh and bone, however, have earned them a spot on the list of weapons and projectiles prohibited by international law” (p.15).
were also targeted by Israeli air strikes (Solberg, 2014). Alaa UB was convinced that the gases and the explosions were the cause of her miscarriage. Similarly, Mr Abdel Rahman UB, “feared” these conditions would cause epidemics in Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 29).

Earlier War Experiences … and Psychological Knowledge

According to King et al. (1999), “responses to highly stressful negative life events may derive from a complex interplay of factors that stretch backward in time from the focal experience and forward in time to the present” (p.169). Participants’ earlier experiences of Israeli operations and violence provided them with informal education. They influenced their “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89), and consequent reactions to the “de-humanization” of the 2014 war (Freire, 1996, p. 26), and strengthened their resilience.

Talal UA mentioned:

> It makes a difference whether this is the first, second, or third war that we are exposed to. In the first, and maybe in the second time as well, we would be examining the situation, but in the third, we would feel that there is nothing new in it … (Talal UA)

For Palestinians, violence has become natural. This made Talal UA less shocked by the war’s horror\(^{181}\). The war lost its “symbolic power” over at least, a few educationalists (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). This is consistent with the view of Funk, Baldacci, Pasold and Baumgardner, (2004) who explain that “repeated exposure to real-life and [even] to entertainment violence may alter cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes, possibly leading to desensitization” (p. 23).

The impact of earlier war experiences was largely noticeable in the academic staff, particularly, the older generation. To illustrate with a few examples, Mr Omar UB stated:

> From the start of our lives, we are living in a war atmosphere. If someone dies, it means that his lifetime has

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\(^{181}\) For example, Tamara UB reporting that, having witnessed two other wars, she felt ‘bold enough to hear [the difficult] news’; and Nawal UA indicated that ‘in the first two weeks of the war, [she] was hysterically afraid, but after seeing all these massacres, [she] felt stronger, stopped feeling afraid, and the [explosion] sounds did not matter to her any more’.
simply come to an end […]. 90 per cent of the people did not even bother that there was a war going on. This is because many wars have happened in this place, which made people’s nature become as such. You would find the aircraft firing, but people say, Hit more. They won’t hide… (Mr Omar UB)

Most people in Gaza have become “fatalistic” and accept predestination\(^{182}\) regarding one’s death when happened (Freire, 1996, p. 43). According to Ragab (1980), “such a post facto acceptance of a mishap […] is beneficial] for the psychological adjustment of the individual […] as] this should help clear the mind for constructive action” (p.515). However, there is a difference between fatalism, and desensitization as the latter might be “associated with low empathy and proviolence attitudes” (Funk et al., 2004, p. 33).

A second example is Mr Majid UB who explained:

The war has increased my […] acceptance. I became more experienced in protective measures to prepare for the war that would come next, to be able to manage things better and learn from the mistakes we encountered as a family to avoid it in the future… (Mr Majid UB)

Mr Majid UB was a lecturer in educational psychology, which helped him to observe his earlier experiences in the war and benefit from them. This supports Hobfoll et al.'s (2011) view that “higher education” was found to be “associated with more favorable outcomes following trauma exposure” (p.1401). Majid developed a technique to help his children survive their “fears” of the bombardment, if they were on their own (Freire, 1996, p. 29). He stated:

Co-operating with my wife, I succeeded in making our children, one of whom is only 3 years old […], to close their ears, and stretch on the floor whenever they hear the rocket sounds, and then to clap, dance, and sing when this is over […]. This is for them to feel safe […] and to

\(^{182}\) According to Ragab (1980), “predestination is understood by Muslims as the ‘prior’ knowledge of God that is revealed to no human being in advance” (p. 514).
discharge their negative emotions immediately rather than to keep them trapped into themselves… (Mr Majid UB)

However, Majid’s children did not voice their “fears” (Freire, 1996, p. 29), but their desensitization should not be mistaken for resilience. A specialization in psychology gave Mr Majid UB, and a few other academics, the “symbolic capital” to enable them to support other people beyond their families, and this was empowering for both during the war and afterwards183 (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

Comparative Suffering

Educationalists seem to have become more accepting of their “fate” when they compared their suffering to others (Freire, 1996, p. 43). Amira UB, for example, ‘learnt to always say Alhamdullillah184 for any problem, because there is always worse than what [she has]’. Also, below is my conversation with Waleed UB:

M: Did you have to move out of your house during the war?
Waleed UB: Twice.
M: How did you feel about that?
Waleed UB: I did not care.
M: Why not?
Waleed UB: Because I was seeing people suffering more than me, so I thought there was no comparison.

Waleed UB took the war oppression for-granted, as natural. He felt grateful that his fate was one of less suffering than others. Mr Hassan UA is another instance. He mentioned

183 In the interview, Majid mentioned that he was asked for psychological advice by his neighbours and distant relatives on, for example, how to overcome depression. Conversely, this contribution of Mr Majid UB empowered him amid the war circumstances. Similarly, Mr Mehdi UA specialized in educational psychology and so he was invited by media channels to provide guidance for Palestinian families in Gaza on how to protect themselves and their children in these conditions. The paradox here is that Mr Mehdi UA himself was traumatized. The participant pointed out in the interview, however, that this helped him to be ‘more understanding of the psychological conditions and psychological crisis that people are going through’ (Mr Mehdi UA). For Mr Riyadh UA, and Mr Suleiman UA, also educational psychologists, their expertise increased their awareness of students’ suffering. In their classes, they allowed the students a time to release their “fearful” emotions before any teaching could take place (Freire, 1996, p. 29). They also organized at the UA a few educational seminars on post-war rehabilitation.

184 Alhamdullillah is a religious Arabic term which means ‘Praise God’. Generally, it indicates contentment, and gratefulness to Allah.
that ‘for adults [to live under war conditions] is okay: No problem. But, for the kids?! This was a bad experience’. This is because “tragically, the protective shield that is essential for children’s mental health is dramatically destroyed when their families are faced with the shelling and demolition of their homes” (Qouta & Odeh, 2005, p. 79). In comparison to children, Mr Hassan UA “naturalized” suffering for adults (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471).

Ms Jamila UA is another example. Just as she returned from her PhD study in Syria, her husband was killed in the Israeli war. In the interview, she was very sad, but also thanked Allah for what had happened. On this, she said:

I told the students that the Gaza war is much less intense that that in Syria. Here, you would be shot dead by a bullet or killed by a bomb, but, in Syria, you would be slaughtered [...]. Also, in the war on Gaza, we are confronting an enemy, the Israelis, but in Syria, people are killing others from their own community… (Ms Jamila UA)

Wolf (1986) explains that “the lack of perceived alternatives or options in the closed world of deprivation is of […] importance to the growth of both habituation and accommodation” of the oppression (p. 221). Because Jamila had spent all her life in conflict areas (Gaza and Syria), she internalized oppression as a “fate” (Freire, 1996, p. 43), and as natural. According to Wolf (1986), what Jamila has expressed can be viewed as a ‘group conservatism’ that fosters accommodation to further oppression. She preferred “clinging to what the oppressed group [in Gaza] has, little as it might be, and in preserving their situation as known and manageable [when compared to Syria]” (p. 222). In the interview, Jamila explained that this comparison helped her to empower her students. That said, a “sense of relative advantage limits the sense of deprivation, and thus the oppressive system as it is felt or as it envelops group life is used as a positive frame of reference” (Wolf, 1986, p. 222). However, resilience that is promoted because of comparative suffering, is based on “fear”, “fatalism”, and “silence” towards the oppression (Freire, 1996, pp. 29, 43, 87).
Student-Lecturer Interaction

In the quote below, Ms Etaf UB indicated how during the war, her relationship with students proved empowering to both. Etaf stated:

I was surprised that I have written a research paper, got it reviewed, and published it […]. I was trying to escape [the war], and to feel that I was still alive […]. My master’s students used to call me and ask me about what to do with their theses and these students lived on the borders […]. Because, I have seen my students working, I told myself that I should work too. Also, […] there is a Hadith for Prophet Mohammed which says: ‘If the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, then let him plant it’ […]. As lecturers, we are [also] obliged to continue despite the circumstances, because this is our work and this is our message… (Ms Etaf UB)

At least three other academics, Mr Zeyad UB, Mr Abdel Rahman UB, and Ms Randa UA perceived themselves to be on a similar mission of educating the new Palestinian generation. Their religious and social “dispositions” in relation to their lecturer’s role empowered them with a sense of responsibility (Swartz, 2013, p. 89).

Resilience or an Illusion of Resilience?!

To recap, participants’ reflections on the war experience showed an unstable tension between the positon of “fear” and vulnerability and that of empowerment (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Educationalists clung to any possible means to survive a situation of oppression as a ‘fate’ (ibid., p. 43). Some of these were linked to education, formal or informal. For example, learning history, religion and psychology was helpful. Social tradition, assumptions and solidarity, earlier experiences of violence, technology, novels and academic work and interaction were helpful too. This is consistent with Bonanno's (2004) view that “resilience […] can potentially be reached by a variety of different pathways” (p.26). Nonetheless, it remains highly contested whether these educational ‘antibiotics’ have created resilience or only an illusion of resilience. Thus “researchers and theorists
need to move beyond overly simplistic conceptions of [resilience] to embrace the broader costs and benefits of various dispositions and adaptive mechanism” (Bonanno, 2004, p.26). So far, the data on the war experience have shown that, students and lecturers remain deeply torn between their actual vulnerability and their struggle for survival and “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2).

5.4.c A New Post-War Life Demarcated by Violence

After the attack on Gaza was halted, universities were able to resume their work as Gaza returned to normal life, but, for most participants, things were not as simple as this when the war ended. Ahmed UA stated:

It was […] difficult, because it was as if we were not in this city and now we are here again. I felt that we were somewhere else, if I may say, in hell, and then after more than one month, we get up with the sunshine and go to the university […] to go back to normal! I think it is never going to be normal until this difficult situation is solved […]. In the first days, I felt like I was a new student […]. Surviving the Israeli war, to me, meant that I have been gifted a new life because everyone was expecting to die…

(Ahmed UA)

Rancière (2011) explains that “ethical constraints do operate on aesthetic appreciation” (p.213). Ahmed’s perception was clouded by memories of “fear” and “de-humanization” that impacted on his ability to enjoy the sunshine (Freire, 1996, pp. 29, 26).

From another perspective, Khaled UB also stated:

I did not go to the university except after a whole week […]. I called my friends […] and we […] visited the places, which were bombarded and started to laugh at ourselves; we realized that our areas were less damaged compared with what we have seen. But, wherever we went,

185 Daraghmeh & Laub (2014) mention that “the ceasefire included an Israeli agreement to ease its blockade to allow relief supplies and construction materials in the territory” and to start talks with Hamas on more complex issues within a month (no pagination). The authors also mention that in response to this ceasefire agreement, “Hamas declared victory […] and massive celebratory gunfire erupted” in Gaza (Daraghmeh & Laub, 2014, no pagination).
we would find the latter place more damage than its preceding one. So, this distracted us … (Khaled UB)

Comparative suffering made Khaled and his friends ‘laugh’ at themselves. Feeling helpless, they “manipulated” their sense of pain and sorrow by tough laughter (Freire, 1996, p. 128). This is consistent with Bonanno's (2004) indication that “one of the ways [repressive copers] and others showing resilience appear to cope well with adversity is through the use of positive emotion and laughter” (p. 26; see also Casey, 2013; Le Naour, 2001; Moran & Hughes, 2006; Sheftel, 2011; and Sosa, 2013)

On their way to Gaza’s universities, marks of violence surrounded educationalists. For example, Mr Hassan UA commented:

The teachers, the students, and the administrators, everyone is disappointed and discouraged […], because if you go from Rafah to Gaza, on both sides of the road, you find a lot of demolished houses. Campuses, roads, everything is ruined […]. Even constructions in Gaza right now are not good. Also, there is no clean drinking water. This affects me because I am not living on a star, or another globe. But, I am feeling […] what others are feeling … (Mr Hassan UA)

According to UNCTAD (2015), “the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, during a visit to Gaza in April 2015, […] observed that […] as shocking as the devastation of the buildings might be, ‘the devastation of people’s livelihoods is 10 times more shocking’ ” (p. 9). The destructions of facilities and businesses acted as a constant reminder of the horrific and “de-humanizing” war experience as well as creating a feeling of empathy among Mr Hassan UA and others from his community (Freire, 1996, p 26). Therefore as Krause and Bastida (2009) assert, “pain and suffering may perform a wider social function […] as they] help people better understand the suffering that is experienced by others” (p 118).

Some buildings were levelled to the ground. The erasing of these was an act of not only physical, but also of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). The following quotes illustrate this:
Khaled UB: Our neighbourhood consists of 18 houses, but now you can see only seven or eight.

Lubna UB: It is horrifying to see that a big building like that just goes and it’s not there any more

Tamara UB: I don’t feel safe yet. […] I do still have nightmares and every single time, I pass by the Italian tower they bombarded […]. I can remember [that] night […] how the sounds of explosions were huge […]. Every time, I go to the school for my practical teaching training and I see the place where the tower used to be, I remember that night. It left a scar in my heart […]. Nothing is going to heal something like that

These students’ accounts are consistent with Audergon's (2004) argument that “the experiences of traumatized individuals include […] the violent reply and intrusion of events in flashbacks, nightmares, visceral experience of the events and body symptoms” (p.19)

Displaced people in schools have also acted as reminders of that oppressive experience, emphasizing people’s dispositions of “fear” and vulnerability (Freire, 1996, p. 29). To illustrate with one instance, Waleed UB reported that:

Where I live, I can see the displaced people living in the schools […] so] the war still has its impact, a far-reaching impact on those who lost their parents, who lost their homes […]. So, I am seeing [those displaced people] every day and they are reminding me of their places and their problems […]. This affects me… (Waleed UB)

In fact, “over 500,000 Palestinians were displaced during the [Israeli] operation, with some 100,000 continuing to be displaced by mid-2015” (see UNCTAD, 2015, p.9) . In the interview, Waleed pointed out that this had caused him to place no value on money

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186 These numbers of the displaced in Gaza are based on statistics from the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNRWA.
as the basis of security, since ‘life is [an exchangeable] cycle’ between wealth and poverty. For him, ‘love’\textsuperscript{187} is more sustainable.

Beyond Physical Destruction

The above analysis has provided some insight into the war’s psychological impact and here are more examples of how the devastation has touched educationalists’ mental maps, that is, their values, memories, hopes and sense of self. Ferial UA stated:

\begin{quote}
People are just survivors; they are not living normal lives […] I do not think they are living normal life because there is something inside their minds from the past and this thing hurts very badly… (Ferial UA)
\end{quote}

Post-war construction should target not only the iceberg of destruction, namely, the physical (visible) damage, but also what is underneath it, that is, the invisible and “symbolic” impact\textsuperscript{188}. Like Ferial, Mr Mehdi UA also indicated that the war ‘had a clear negative impact on the youth in terms of their academic achievement and [...] concentration’.

People wanted to desperately forget the past war “fears” and memories (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Halima UA stated:

\begin{quote}
Here in Gaza, the people act as if there was no war. They try not to speak about it. They try not to remember it. They try to not write about it on Facebook […] People want to live their lives. They don’t want to just remember and remember what happened to them. I was shocked as […]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{187} When I asked Waleed UB about what he has learnt from the experience, he answered as follows, ‘Love! You know now I respect all people. Even if they are rich or poor and even if they are arrogant, because I know, they will not be arrogant for a long while, because you know life is a circle and today if you are rich, you will be poor. So I need to respect both of them and all people, so I will be able to be with them when the circle changes’.

\textsuperscript{188} For example, in the interview with Moeen UA, this participant mentioned that he had some psychological problems as a consequence of the war; he did not know what they were and yet could see that they were pushing him towards isolation. Similarly, Yasser UB pointed out that between now and then, he would find himself getting into ‘some bad emotions and feelings [as he] always remembered his friends [and neighbours] who were murdered’. Also, Samira UA maintained that even after the war ended, she ‘continued to have nightmares, bad dreams, and illusions’ as ‘the idea of death was haunting [her]’. Hence, students were internally occupied by torturing memories and worrying thoughts.
when I went to the university, everyone tried to avoid speaking about the war […] they just wanted to end this memory… (Halima UA)

Similarly, Samah ofs UA pointed out that ‘when one of the lecturers asked [students] to speak about the war, all students refused to speak [about it]’. Educationalists tried to “manipulate” their memory by keeping “silent” about their war experiences (Freire, 1996, pp. 128, 87), but, deliberately repressing one’s memory in order to forget, rather than allowing the self to heal naturally, is a form of memory “abuse” that should not be mistaken for resilience¹⁸⁹ (Ricoeur, 1999). According to Ricoeur (1999), “memories have not only to be understandable, they have to be acceptable” (p.7). In fact, Audergon (2004) explains that trauma in Gaza has become a “collective dynamic” (Audergon, 2004, p. 16). Nonetheless, “those staying in the war region […] are much less frequently the focus of research” (Rosner, Powell, & Butollo, 2003, p. 42)¹⁹⁰. This warns that, “trauma will remain in [educationalists’] memories, in [their] consciousness, and it would affect [them] in all aspects of [their lives]” (Mr Mehdi UA), although this differs between individuals¹⁹¹ (Bonanno, 2004; Sagi-Schwartz, 2008)

5.4.d Back to Gaza Universities: The Dilemma of ‘Who Should Comfort Who?’

In the context of the blockade in which “Gaza’s airspace, maritime space and land crossings” are controlled by Israel, these HE institutions rely mainly on the human resource (UNCTAD, 2015, p.9). The paradox is that living in an occupation context, the

¹⁸⁹ That educationalists did not work though their memories does not mean that these have dissipated (Ricoeur, 1999). This repressed pain becomes part of their “soul”; they simply develop in new and yet divided ways, as they enter a state of ‘melancholia’ (ibid., p.7). Thus “what is preserved in mourning and lost in melancholia is self-esteem, or the sense of one’s self […] as in melancholia there is despair and longing” for reconciliation (ibid., p. 7).

¹⁹⁰ Mr Mehdi UA also explained that there is no ‘study [that] has been conducted on Gaza on the latest war, and that [even] information on the 2012 war has not yet been made available by any researcher […so far] to explain the consequent scale of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)’.

¹⁹¹ Mr Riyadh UA indicated that ‘all people have been traumatized to different degrees […], but [they] have also coped with [this trauma] to different degrees’. This is consistent with Bonanno's (2004) explanation that “not everyone copes with […] disturbing events in the same way” (p.20; see also Sagi-Schwartz, 2008). Mr Mehdi UA, also explained that there are several factors that affect the relationship between trauma and suffering such as age and gender. Hence, “there is a great deal of individual variability in the capacity of children and adolescents to adapt despite adverse experiences with political violence” (Sagi-Schwartz, 2008, p. 334). Another lecturer, Mr Majid UB, elaborated on this as follows, ‘if we were both walking in the street together and a tiger suddenly jumps on our way, although we have lived the same situation, our reactions would be different based, for instance, on our thoughts, and previous experiences’.
academic staff and students “have [largely] been ‘determined from above’ by a culture of domination which has constituted them as dual beings: these professionals, however, are necessary to the reorganization of [a] new [Palestinian] society,” especially now (Freire, 1996, p. 139). Nonetheless, after the war, this human resource was itself “sinking in darkness” (Tamara UB).

The Targeting of Gaza Universities

At least six UA participants reported the targeting of their university. Below are two examples:

Ms Amna UA stated:

The administration building was subjected to bombardment. Our offices in the Faculty of Education were affected; my office in the Faculty was also affected… (Ms Amna UA)

And Talal UA reported that:

The administration building was bombarded. There was rubble. Also, the conference hall was also affected. Even the UB was affected as it had its windows broken when they targeted something near it … (Talal UA)

Amna’s and Talal’s quotes consolidate the IUG's (2014) assertion that “Israeli war planes bombed a major building […] which was] located at the heart of the university campus […]and that this] caused damage to some adjacent buildings” (no pagination). This affected academic offices, such as that of Ms Amna UB, which resulted in a real mess and caused her great inconvenience. Thus the report of IUG (2014) states that as a result of the bombardment, “many computer sets, office furniture, and equipment were […] destroyed” (No pagination). Similarly, the AZU report on the consequences of this war for the UB indicates cost of the damage of 2,730,049.73 US dollars (وحدة المشاريع & دائرة تكنولوجيا المعلومات و المكتب الهندسي, n.d).

Ms Randa UA, an academic working in an administrative position, gave a vivid description of her return to the university:
PART TWO

Chapter Five: The Present HE Experience

I went to the university during the two truces that happened. We sat together and started to discuss what we were going to do and how we were going to deal with the situation. Because we love our work, the university president, his vice-presidents and I were all there. We have a big challenge, as there is an educational mission that needs to go on. We need to educate our students, to rehabilitate them. But, we cannot do that without rehabilitating ourselves first. So, the first thing we tried to do was to see our buildings and check on each other’s safety. It was very painful. I was walking in the street with my eyes full of tears about Gaza … (Ms Randa UA)

Desjarlais (1996) points out that “world mental health is first and foremost a question of economic and political welfare […including] the environment in which a person lives, and the kind of resources that he or she can draw upon” (p.15). Ms Randa UA indicated that the luxury of mental health support provided by professional practitioners was not available at her university. As such, she and her colleagues took their suffering for-granted, and took practical measures to adapt to the difficult conditions. In her quote, Ms Randa UA seemed also to weave her personal suffering, as an academic, into a wider nationalistic perspective, maintaining Gaza as a symbolic entity that needed to be preserved.

Similarly, Mr Zeyad UB explained:

We need to rehabilitate people because as we are the well-educated ones. We need to transcend ourselves to look after those who would follow us, to encourage them by pointing out that this is life and that one should be always strong, and continue one’s education to become more capable of managing their circumstances … (Mr Zeyad UB)

According to Salim (2011), “Palestinian people have strived as a society to elevate education as a top priority in order to counteract a situation of military occupation, deprivation, neglect and poverty” ( p. 56). But the quote from Mr Zeyad UB has a paternalistic tone to it that subscribed to the traditional assumptions regarding old versus
young in the Arab world (see Barakat, 1993). This is consistent with the view of Freire who asserts that some “well-intentioned professionals […] use ‘invasion’ not as deliberate ideology but as the expression of their own upbringing” (Freire, 1996, p. 137). Zeyad’s paternalism seems to have been influenced by his “dispositions” with regard to being a lecturer (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). Zeyad’s academic role caused him to perceive student empowerment as an imposition that he had to accept. In the interview, this lecturer was totally “convinced that it is [lecturers’] mission to […] act as] ‘promoters’ of the [young Palestinian] people” (Freire, 1996, p.137).

In contrast to what Mr Zeyad UB hoped to achieve in empowering the new generation of Palestinians though his teaching, Khaled UB, as one student, perceived some of his lecturers to be “manipulative” (Freire, 1996, p. 128). Below is our conversation:

Khaled UB: When we […] started taking our lectures, each lecturer would come and you would feel that he wanted to make you cry […]. They would start to tell you the situation is difficult and that you, the youth, should work hard and build the country and such things […] but] I think they are just liars. This is what I feel inside me.

M: Why?

Khaled UB: Because lots of [those] people just come to the university and give their lectures […] only to get an income […]. But some lecturers even without saying these [nationalistic] words, I deeply feel that they are looking for building our homeland. They are working honestly. They are giving something valuable. […] They are making something, not saying something.

Consistent with Khaled’s argument, Mr Abdel Rahman UB indicated that as a lecturer he started his first post-war class by asking students to read ‘Surah Al-Fateha’, from the Quran, to pray to Allah for mercy for the martyrs, and to be patient, before shifting to informal and even humorous conversation. Because Khaled observed a “disjunction between [some of his lecturers’] stated aims and claimed educational practice”, he rejected these lecturers as sources of nationalistic empowerment, thinking of them as materialistic people who were not authentic (Murray & MacDonald, 1997, p.331).

Two academic participants, namely Ms Etaf UB and Ms Jamila UA, mentioned that they did not always share their true thoughts and feelings with their students. Firstly, Etaf explained:
HE has a role in Gaza, but what matters is to what extent HE succeeds in achieving it. Life in Gaza is paralyzed. You try, for instance, to make efforts and insert hope in yourself and the people around you [...] and then something devastating, like the last war, happens, which makes people lose hope significantly. Our role dictates that we tell people that there would be hope, life and future, but in fact we are deluding them and ourselves … (Ms Etaf UB)

The intense war experience made Etaf’s efforts to instill hope into her students more challenging as the destruction everywhere was very depressing. This could partially explain why Khaled UB criticized the lack of authenticity of some of his lecturers. The academic staff including Ms Etaf UB seemed to perceive it as a nationalistic duty to “manipulate” their voices and show resilience even when they did not feel it (Freire, 1996, p. 128).

Ms Jamila UA, as another example, stated:

I went to the university for a week and it was an excellent opportunity for me as a lecturer to inject students with high morale […]. But, to tell the truth, after my husband became a martyr, I say may Allah help me […]. I do not have courses this semester […], but I worry about how I am going to face the students next semester. People look at me that I am a member of the academic staff, and therefore should always have a high morale […]. I am afraid not to appear in the same image, which I have impressed the students with earlier. This point affects us as an academic staff psychologically … (Ms Jamila UA)

Seeman (1966) points out that “status stereotypes, as ready-made and socially compelling answer systems, come to rule behavior” (p.73). Jamila’s concerns about peoples’ expectations of her as an academic staff member caused her “fear” and increased anxiety (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Appearing resilient was a model of how a lecturer should be in such circumstances, to which Ms Jamila UA had to aspire.

From the above examples, even when it came to empowerment, lecturers assumed that they were the authority whose role was “the gradual addition of declarative [empowerment] knowledge to [students as] an essentially blank state or tabula rasa”
They did not “listen to the [students], but instead plan[ned] to teach them how to ‘cast off the laziness which creates underdevelopment’ ” (Freire, 1996, p. 137). These lecturers worked to “deposit” rather than to negotiate with students how, in the aftermath of the war, they might find the courage within themselves and in their own way (ibid., p. 53). This consolidates Freire’s argument that “internalizing paternal authority through the rigid relationship structure emphasized by the school, […] young people tend when they become professionals (because of the very fear of freedom instilled by these relationships) to repeat the rigid patterns in which they were miseducated […and so] adhere to antidialogical action” (ibid., p. 136).

Perplexity at Gaza’s Universities

Ramsden (2003) rightly argues that “deep at the heart of effective teaching is an understanding of how students learn; deep at the heart of effective academic leadership is an understanding of how academics work” (p.13). However, the return of students and their lecturers to academic life at Gaza’s universities was fraught with conflicting expectations that fostered “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996, p. 44). For example, Tamara UB argued:

I expected that the university would […] be dealing with us with some ease. […] But, after the war ended, the lecturers were demanding us to attend all the classes […]. This made me feel horrible […]. Aren’t [they] human [s]? Haven’t they lived the war? Aren’t they feeling the tragedy of others? […]. What was [even more] shocking is that they gave us huge amounts of the textbook. One of the teachers gave us like 400 pages to study […]. But when [a lecturer] brings me an exam with ten multiple-choice questions that I haven’t read about before. This means that as a lecturer, you have a problem […]. And we were just out of a war, so [he] should [have been] careful… (Tamara UB)

This same semester that Tamara mentioned was described by Ms Lamia UB, as the ‘most difficult semester in her whole academic life’ which spanned more than 20 years. Ms Lamia UB indicated that as lecturers, they ‘started teaching, and then, [they] had to stop, then they got back, then [they] had to stop again as the war resumed and finally they got
back again’ when the attack came to a halt. Thus the post-war return to the university was “de-humanizing” for both students and their lecturers (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Nonetheless, Tamara UB was convinced that her lecturers were inhumane, and insensitive. According to Ramsden (1979), “students’ perceptions of their departments and their teachers […] exert important influences on their approaches to learning” (p.411).

It is of course understandable why Tamara UB, even though she was a first-class student, would need this ‘ease’ in the aftermath of the war experience, but lecturers’ strictness, despite the war circumstances, is also understandable. Mellin-Olsen (1981) indicates that “instrumentalism192 produces instrumental understanding […] of education which is] usually […] related to the practical use of the knowledge” (p.351). Tamara UB thought that the university should have treated students with ‘ease’. But, what does ‘ease’ mean in this context? As the quote indicates, it is studying fewer than 400 pages, and tolerating class absences. This compromise with regard to quality encourages an approach to learning that focuses on marks as an indicator of success. However, I concur with Freire that “apart from inquiry, […] students] cannot be truly human [since] knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention” (Freire, 1996, p.53). A “banking” concept of education ‘reinforces students’] fatalistic perception of their situation’ (ibid., p 66). This is not helpful for the future since “the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to [their] situation, the more easily they can be dominated” (ibid., p.55).

But the limited length of the semester did not allow for these summer courses to be completed to a good standard. At least three UB students complained that they did not have enough time to revise for their examination. The university’s administration required that the summer semester should finish soon so that they could open the registration for the first semester of the new academic year. Ms Lamia UB explained this in more detail:

The university did not consider [us]. They wanted to hurry and open the new semester for registration, because the

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192 According to Mellin-Olsen (1981), “instrumentalism can be defined as the tendency to construct knowledge, without relating it to some structural scheme of internal actions” (p.351).
university has also financial and economic pressures. Thus the war has put overload on all of us [...]. At schools, the teaching has not started immediately, but the university is different from schools. The administration thinks the students are adults and can endure. Consequently, everything depends on the lecturer; it is for the lecturer then to see how to help the students… (Ms Lamia UB)

Gaza’s universities, despite their peculiar context, remain, bound by the expectations on them as “institutions of higher education […] to be] devoted […] to universal learning” on a quality standard (Kerr, 1990, p. 18). Lecturers felt they had the responsibility to support their students, as well as offering them a quality HE. Combining these at once was an impossible task for lecturers who were also feeling pressure from their universities. This affected lecturers’ approach to teaching. For example, Amira UB made the critical observation that ‘one day during the truce, [students] went to their class and there was bombing around the university, but [despite the explosion sounds] the lecturers did not stop explaining the course material!

After the war, UA students also expected their lecturers to deal with them tolerantly. Dalal UA and Samira UA are examples:

Dalal commented:

We thought the exams would be easy […]. But, they were so hard and the marks were not good and this made us feel shocked […]. Maybe the [lecturers] had the exams ready before the war… (Dalal UA)

And Samira stated:

They promised us to take care of us in the marking process, but these promises were false […]. They should have been more humane with us […]. Both of us have seen and lived the same conditions [of war] […]. If [they] are strong, they should not assume that we are as strong as [them…]. There is a lecturer who gave us bad marks. He failed half of the class and most of the students whom he failed have already had their homes destroyed or have been displaced from one place to another… (Samira UA)
Students had to undergo an additional frustration as a result of the war, which was their failure in one or more of their university courses. Both Dalal and Samira “feared” about their marks (Freire, 1996, p. 29). These students’ over-concern about marks was also related to their concerns about widespread unemployment in the Gaza Strip.

Contrary to students’ complaints, Ms Etaf UB, stated:

> After the war, my teaching strategy had to change. I am not able to deal with my students as before, […] or ask them for assignments. […]. One of the students argued with me that their house has been demolished and that she does not have a laptop or computer any more. Another one told me she was still in shock as her family were killed… (Ms Etaf UB)

According to Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newstead and Mayes, (2005) “teaching intentions […] reflect a compromise between teachers’ conceptions of teaching and their academic and social contexts” (p.537). Ms Etaf UB adjusted her teaching in consideration of students’ conditions. Other lecturers also argued that they tried to support their students as much as they could and ‘not fail anybody’ (Ms Lamia UB), but in large classes, it was difficult for lecturers to verify the information about students’ special circumstances, and so the difficulty for them was how to balance this support for students after the war with achieving a high quality educational system. The support offered for educationalists by their universities differed significantly between the

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193 Withdrawing credit hours was not a good option for all students since this would mean not only being delayed in graduation, but also forfeiting the paid course tuition.
194 I know this link between marks and fear of unemployment from my first-hand experience at Gaza and from the interviews with the student and academic participants in this research.
195 Mr Kamal UA accepted students’ valid reasons for not studying and modified the exams. Mr Hassan UA similarly pointed out that ‘sometimes [he] had to accept student excuses when they come late, when they did not participate, and when they did not do any presentations’; and Ms Lamia UB stated that she ‘tried to help all [the students in their marks], because [she] wanted to stand by the students in this difficult period for them. [She] did not fail anybody’.
196 Khaled UB, for example, “manipulated” his lecturers, playing on their sympathy so that they tolerated his absence from the class and he could then work in a shop during the day (Freire, 1996, p. 128). Khaled regretted that he became a ‘liar’ because of necessity, as he “feared” to lose a job that could pay for his university tuition fees (ibid., p. 29).
197 The UA’s response to the war crises shows that more, although not sufficient, effort was exerted at the administrative level to support its educationalists than occurred at the UB, where the support was more about the lecturers’ individual efforts. UA’s more focused efforts to support its lecturers and students in the aftermath of the war could be also linked, inter alia, to its political orientation since that war was launched against Hamas as a government.
UA\(^{198}\) and the UB\(^{199}\), but in both cases, was not substantial. The challenges that both the UA and the UB had to face because of the Israeli operation were greater than their capacity as HE institutions. For instance, Mr Hassan UA has pointed out that now at Gaza’s universities, there were many, especially female students who had become orphans or widows and this had ‘caused [more generally] social problems in education’.

To recap, Shehadeh (2015) argues that “this [ 2014 attack on Gaza implies] a shift in the colonial paradigm, from managing and controlling resistance, to attempts at destroying it psychologically: mainly by breaking the Palestinian psyche and the social fabric from which it draws its resilience” (p.283). As far as Gaza’s universities were concerned, they found themselves in a perplexing situation\(^{200}\) which they still ‘do not know how to manage’ (Mr Hassan UA). Consequently, who was to blame and how reconstruction could be started in and through Gaza’s universities remained a controversial matter. Ms Jamila UA wondered, ‘if you have a burden and I have a burden, then who should comfort

\[^{198}\] As for the UA, Mr Riyadh UA mentioned that study did not start seriously until after the first week. This was ‘so as for [students] to have a period of catharsis (emotional discharge)’. Furthermore, Mr Suleiman UA indicated that the psychology department at the Faculty of Education held a seminar. It was also preparing for a conference to discuss the educational and psychological impact of the war, although there seemed to be disagreement among the academic staff about whether the conference should refer to the ‘impact’ or the ‘repercussions’ of the war due to its aggravating consequences. Mr Kamal UA also pointed out that the UA had offered administrative help with regard to ‘payment of tuition fees’ instalments’. Furthermore, individual lecturers including Ms Amna UA had offered psychological support to students. In the interviews, participants from the UA predominantly confirmed this UA support.

\[^{199}\] In contrast, UB participants did not mention any substantial administrative support offered by their university after the war. To illustrate with a few examples, Tamara UB explained that her friend who lost her father in the Israeli operation was unable to afford to pay the tuition fees, but the administration and some of her lecturers’ response was as follows, ‘This is not our problem. We cannot help you’. Lubna UB also described the first day after the war as a ‘normal [university] day [...] nothing new has happened’. Alaa UB, moreover, stated that ‘as soon as the war has ended, the university has set or [them] an exam time which was in three days’ time. It did not give [them] even the opportunity to breathe’. From another viewpoint, one academic, Ms Lamia UB, complained, ‘we ask the administration that the administration should be more flexible, more understanding about psychology of the academic staff because we are also human beings’.

\[^{200}\] The perplexing situation can be summarized as follows: students, the academic staff and these HE institutions have all witnessed/been subjected to destruction, disruption and disempowerment by the war experience. Consequently, the universities were struggling with a dilemma that continued to paralyze them and prevent positive development: The need for students to have a good and supportive HE experience was justified, but was unlikely to be met with the current capacity of their institutions and the pressure imposed on their lecturers as a result of that. Lecturers, despite being affected themselves, seemed to have attempted to balance the demands from their universities and the expectations of students as far as they could. In this, however, they referred to their assumptions of what might work, and how things should be done, although this did not seem to have a positive resonance among the student body.
who?’ One might argue, it would be better if all comforted each other. Although this might seem an ideal compromise, it was very difficult to put into action in a complicated situation like that of the universities in Gaza. The result was the “duality” of these HE institutions which acted as both a supporter and an oppressor of their academic staff and students as, at times, they prioritized financial considerations over lecturers and students and in the process “de-humanizing” them (Freire, 1996, pp. 30, 26). In brief, the Israeli war of 2014 added more insult to injury as it undermined further the already existing structure of “de-development” at these universities (Roy, 1995, p.110). In fact, the UNCTAD (2015) report indicates that as a result of this “most recent military operation […] development is not merely hindered but reversed” (p.7). Thus, I concur with Samira UA who was convinced that the war continued even after the Israelis had halted their attack. Its consequent damages and repercussions proved that on the ground the war ‘has not ended yet’ (Samira UA).

To conclude this difficult account of the war experience of educationalists, (Section 5.4), I include the reflections of Ms Etaf UB on her first post-war meeting with students who, in an attempt at resilience, combined a mixture of humour and tragedy in their interaction with each other:

I asked the students firstly about the funniest situation which they have encountered during the war. They were surprised by my question […], but I insisted that there should have been someone who passed through a funny situation. Suddenly, I have seen a student who burst laughing and laughing, so all the students started to get curious about what he had to say. The student described: ‘We were in our room when a cat jumped on us from the street window, so we started to run and run and shouted a lot as we thought that which has fallen on us was a missile!’ After that, I asked them [the lecturer continues] a difficult question that I wished I had never asked. I wanted them to talk about the saddest situation that they have been through […] when all the faces in front of me instantly changed and many student eyes became full of tears… (Ms Etaf UB)
Summary of Chapter Five

In Chapter Five, I discussed four themes: Section 5.1 described how the HE journey of the student participants is ‘without aim; without hope’. Section 5.2 argued that students study for their HE in a ‘gendered campus’ at Gaza’s universities. Section 5.3 explained the ‘political’ context of these HE institutions and how the majority of students, as well as their universities, were more inclined to moderation and less to factionalism. Finally, Section 5.4 presented an account of participants experience of war in 2014 and how it impacted on their academic life. In the next chapter, I shall explore the perspectives of Gaza educationalists towards the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world and what current or future impact they think it will have on the education context at Gaza’s universities.
Chapter Six

The Future HE Experience

Do not tell me:
I wish to be a baker in Algeria
In order to sing with the revolutionaries
Do not tell me:
I wish to be a shepherd in the Yemen
To sing for the uprising of the age
Do not tell me:
I wish to be a waiter in Havana
To sing for the victory of the poor
Do not tell me:
I wish to be a stone carrier in Aswan
To sing for the rocks
My friend:
The Nile will not pour into the Volga
The Congo and Jordan Rivers
Will not serve the Euphrates
Each river has its own
Our land is not barren
Each land has its own rebirth
Each dawn has a date with revolution

Mahmoud Darwish

Figure 6.1 An Overview of Chapter Six
Introduction to Chapter Six

Pace (2013) explains that “Palestine has been a challenging case for academics attempting to explain the lack of political change in the Middle East” (p. 44). Although “conditions vary from country to country, […there is] a common thread [that] runs through popular protests in the entire region” (Shlaim, 2014, p. 36). However, the Western “conceptual toolbox on authoritarian resilience and transition to democracy [is found] lacking when applied to the [Occupied Palestinian Territories] OPT” (p.56). Hence, as Dabashi (2012) argues, it is important to “see the events [of Arab uprisings] as an open-ended course […]and] be able to read them in the language that they exude and not in the vocabularies we have inherited” (p.63). According to Gerges (2014a), the “focus [should be] on understanding the sources of vulnerabilities facing the transition in separate Arab societies” (p.8). As far as the Palestinian case is concerned, this chapter hopes to establish itself as a very early attempt to achieve this. Overall, the data shows that the future Palestinian HE experience, namely students’ voice, is constrained by a “de-humanizing” present\textsuperscript{201} in Gazan society and universities (Freire, 1996, p. 26).

Section 6.1 Perspectives on the Arab Revolutions

Commenting on the Arab Spring revolutions, my participants seemed as if they were commenting on a football match that they were watching not live, but on their television, cocooned at home. This is because they were ‘luckily’ isolated by the blockade from the nearby turbulent Arab countries, especially Egypt. That said, at least seven participants (five females; two males) viewed the revolutions in the Arab world as not of immediate interest to them. The following are a few responses:

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\textsuperscript{201} This present is characterized by students’ “self-depreciation”, “silence”, “fatalism” and “fear of freedom” (Freire, 1996, pp. 45, 87, 43, 29). Such characteristics are a result of the societal and HE context in Gaza which is mainly one of “prescription”, “antidialogics”, (Freire, 1996, pp. 29, 161), and “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133).
Samira UA: I am not interested in politics.

Mr Riyadh UA: In fact, I don’t have knowledge about it.

Yasser UB: The Arab Spring? I’ve never talked about it before.

Nawal UA: I don’t give much attention to politics.

That young people are disengaged from politics is “conventional wisdom” in countries such as the UK (Henn, Weinstein, & Wring, 2002, p.167), but, in the Gaza Strip, this feels strange because students are affected on a daily basis by politics. Females’ lack of interest could be explained in terms of the traditional gender “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p.89). Particularly, the “convention [that] tended to define women and politics as mutually exclusive”202 (Randall, 1987, p. ix), but if “politics [was] understood as a public activity dominated by men and requiring typically masculine characteristics” (ibid., p. ix), then in a traditional society such as Gaza, Mr Riyadh UA and Yasser UB’s abstention can be explained as part of a “culture of silence” not of disinterest (Freire, 1996, p. 87).

At any rate, all participants eventually had something to say about what they had learnt from observing the Arab revolutions, in the - half-jokingly - safe Gaza. The following is a review of some of their views:

6.1.a On the Causes

Participants referred to both internal and external causes for the revolutions:

Samira UA: The regimes were as if enslaving people.

Ms Lamia UB: The economic factor [including] poverty and unemployment […]. When all these come together, a

202 In traditional societies, women and politics are perceived as “occupying different spheres […] where women were identified above all with the private world of the family and domestic life” (Randall, 1987, p. ix).
revolution is a natural result whether in the Arab world or elsewhere.

Mr Kamal UA: No democracy [...]. This naturally have led to corruption.

Dalal UA: It is not made by Arab people [...]. These were strange people [...] who only wanted to destroy the Middle East [...] and attack our Islam.

Ms Etaf UB: This is a Zionist-American project

These views\textsuperscript{203} are consistent with those expressed in the wider discussion on the causes of the Arab revolution, namely “the demand for economic opportunity, social justice, human rights, political reform, and above all national dignity” (Campante & Chor, 2012; see also Dupont & Passy, 2012; Gelvin, 2015; Saleh, 2013). But Dalal UA and Ms Etaf UB referred, moreover, to a conspiracy or a “manipulation” by the West against Islam as a religion, or by the USA in support of Israel in relation to its Arab neighbours (Freire, 1996, p. 128). In a way, this supports Abdallah's (2003) assertion that “many Arabs see U.S economic, political and military aid to Israel and its biased policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict as the main cause of anti-American sentiment in the Arab world” (p.71). It also consolidates Makdisi's (2002) view that “anti-Americanism is [...] civilizationally rooted [...] nor does it stem primarily from Islamic philosophy or exegesis, even if it is sometimes expressed [...] in Islamic idioms” (p.557).

According to Pipes (1996), “conspiracies do occur”\textsuperscript{204} (p.9). It is also true that “grand conspiracies [...] seek to destroy religion, subvert society, change the political order, and undermine truth itself” (Pipes, 1996, p. 9-10). However, “deeply ingrained beliefs [among Middle Easterners] about the enmity to Arabs and Islam of imperialism, [...]
Zionism, [...] Westernism, [..etc.] tend to make these ‘ism,’ and individuals that represent them, stock characters in ready-made conspiracy dramas” (Zonis & Joseph, 1994, p. 458). For example, Dalal UA and Ms Etaf UB “self-deprecated” Arabs as if they were forever on the receiving end of conspiracies (Freire, 1996, p. 45). Consequently, at least four participants viewed the Arab revolutions with “fear”, suspicion and “fatalism”, regarding the Arab youth as incapable of action and reform (ibid., pp. 29, 43). This contradicts studies such as that of Bracher (2013) which refers to the Arab Spring revolutions as “the first steps towards an Arab cultural renaissance”, acknowledging “the future is […] in the hands of today’s Arab Youth” (p. 80).

Edward Said “critiqued [what he called Occidentosis] – the tendency to blame all ills on the West - and rejected conspiracy theories” as an answer to colonialism (Traboulsi, 2009, p.180). In Freirean terms, “the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity […] become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both” (Freire, 2003, p.44). Furthermore, Zonis and Joseph (1994) explain that “conspiracy thinking is conducive not to liberating action but to crippling passivity, and what makes conspiracy thinking so soothing and gratifying is in large part its great capacity to rationalize, even valorize, passivity” (p. 458). However, this potential can be simultaneously used as a tool by oppressive governments to “silence” people’s calls for change (Freire, 1996, p. 87). For example, Rubin (2002), an American-born Israeli, suggests that “self-interested manipulation by various groups within Arab society […]used] anti-Americanism as a foil to distract public attention from […] serious problems within those societies […]such as] political and social oppression and economic stagnation” (p.73-74). Taking all into consideration, I concur with Biko (1973) that “the most potent weapon in the hands of oppressors is the mind of the oppressed” (p.78), as we shall see shortly in the following subsections.
6.1.b On the Consequences

In anticipating the Arab revolutions’ consequences, the overwhelming majority\textsuperscript{205} of the participants were inclined to “self-depreciation” and pessimism (Freire, 1996, p. 45). The below are a few examples:

Ms Amna UA: There will be chaos.

Mr Omar UB: It is an autumn on both the Arabs and the US alike.

Ibtisam UB: There is no advantage of the revolutions.

Amira UB: The outcome will be bad and another revolution will happen.

Ms Jamila UA: For Arab and Muslims communities, the end is usually bad.

Tamara UB: The future is dark. […]It is] completely unknown.

With similar pessimism, several writings\textsuperscript{206} considered “the phrase ‘Arab Spring’ […] a misnomer” (Totten, Schenker, & Abdul-Hussain, 2012, p. 23). According to Berman (2013), however, this “widespread pessimism about the fate of the Arab Spring is almost certainly misplaced” (p.74). The author argues that although “the bloom is off the rose […] most countries that are stable liberal democracies today [such as France, Italy, Germany] had a very difficult time getting there” (pp.64, 73). It is striking to see that Ms Jamila UA perceived it as the “fate” of Arab and Muslim communities to have bad

\textsuperscript{205} Only a few participants were optimistic about the Arab revolutions, for example, Ms Randa UA commented, ‘Alhamdullilah, there are some outcomes, but these need time to blossom’. Yasser UB referred to the current situation as “a transitional period” to democracy. Mr Kamal UA maintained a sense of long-term religious optimism, since for him, ‘all these [unsettled events] are harbingers towards the coming Caliphate […] The new century will be the century of Islam’. Mr Hassan UA perceived the outcome of the revolutions as unpredictable; he answered, ‘God knows alone’.

\textsuperscript{206} See, for example, Cannistraro (2012), Fahmy (2012), Khalidi (2011), Wiarda (2012).
consequences (Freire, 1996, p. 44). This lecturer took “turmoil, violence, and corruption […] as evidence […] of the immaturity or irrationality of [the Arab and Muslim] population, rather than as a sign of the previous dictatorship’s pathologies” (Berman, 2013, p. 65). As such, Ms Jamila UA appeared to have internalized the logic of imperialism and dictatorship or, to use Freirean terms, the “fear of freedom” from the oppressors (Freire, 1996, p. 29). She was “submerged in [the reality of oppression], and […] bear[s] the marks of it” (ibid., p.40). This coheres with the view of Smith (1999) who argues that “the reach of imperialism into ‘our heads’ challenges who belong to colonized communities […and that] to understand how [domination] occurred […we firstly] need to decolonize our minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity” (p. 23).

6.1.c Justification

The data show a degree of ambivalence about whether this socio-political change should have happened or not. Those who were inclined to support the Arab revolutions (see Column A) focused on the impetus. Those who were sceptical (see Column B) were concerned about the failures of this Arab change. More details are in the table below:

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207 Participants’ answers were either a “yes, but…”, or a “No, but…”.
Table 6.1 Justifications of the Arab Revolutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A Impetus for the revolutions</th>
<th>Column B Aftermath of the revolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ferial UA:</strong> To refuse being oppressed is a right thing to do.</td>
<td><strong>Amira UB:</strong> Because of what we are seeing nowadays, they shouldn’t have happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mr Zeyad UB:</strong> It should have happened, but in a thoughtful way.</td>
<td><strong>Lubna UB:</strong> In some countries, the revolutions were successful, but in others they were a waste of blood and just not the right thing to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moeen UA:</strong> Of course, it should have happened [...]. The past was much worse [than now].</td>
<td><strong>Abdullah ofs UA:</strong> Arab Spring? I don’t believe in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mr Ashraf UB:</strong> It should have happened but as peaceful revolutions.</td>
<td><strong>Huda UA:</strong> It did not achieve any success [...]. This is in addition to [causing] destruction and killings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nawal UA:</strong> Whether it happened or not made no difference.</td>
<td><strong>Nawal UA:</strong> Whether it happened or not made no difference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The views in Column A represent an abstract and somehow romantic outlook\(^{208}\) of the socio-political change in the Arab world while those in the second show a pragmatic perspective\(^{209}\). The participants who criticized the Arab revolutions on the basis of the outcome seemed to “set absurdly high benchmarks for success, ones that lack any historical perspectives” (Berman, 2013, p. 66). According to Berman (2013), critics of the Arab revolutions so often treat “new democracies as blank slates, ignoring how much of their dynamics and fate are inherited [from the authoritarian predecessor regimes] rather than chosen” (p.65). The table above also shows a degree of ambivalence that is largely understandable. For example, Dupont and Passy (2011) comment that “the final

\(^{208}\) The participants in column A perceived the current instability and violence as necessary to achieve liberation from oppression. Although the current situation is difficult and could have been avoided, when compared with the past oppressive atmosphere in many Arab countries, these participants thought it was worth going through, nonetheless.

\(^{209}\) As for Column B, the responses were inclined to think of the Arab revolutions as a loss based on what they have seen from the outcome so far. These participants did not object to the rationale behind the revolution, but rather to the manner in which it was conducted, which led to further destruction and misery for people without significant benefits.
outcome of the [revolutionary episodes] is very much uncertain, as are their consequences on both the national and international levels” (p. 450; see also Pappé, 2014). Bloom, (2009) also explains that, in general, “uncertainty appears to jump up after major shocks [...especially since] in the medium terms […there are usually] sharp [consequences]” (p.623). Hence, the status quo in the Arab region is still susceptible to contesting narratives and consequences which entail both advantages and disadvantages.

### 6.1.d Assessment

The participants discussed their assessment of what went wrong and what should have been done for the Arab revolutions to succeed in a sort of ‘to-avoid’ and ‘to- do’ list. A sample of these mistakes and the recommendations are included in the table below:

**Table 6.2 Assessments of the Arab Revolutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mistakes</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dalal UA: There is no good [Islamic] leader.</td>
<td>Nora UA: If one wants to make a revolution, one should have a plan for what is going to happen next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lubna UB: Everyone wants authority […] for their own personal welfare.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Omar UB: Democratic atmosphere does not work for Arabs; they are helpless people.</td>
<td>Moeen UA: If there were more organization and if there was a real leader for these revolutions, things would have turned out better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibtisam UB: People were not co-operative among themselves.</td>
<td>Talal UA: Even if the governments have changed, this might not have an impact without changing the other systems especially cultural institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Abdel Rahman UB: There wasn’t a unified principle.</td>
<td>Mr Omar UB: If people [want to] govern, they should have a degree of culture and awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Ashraf UB: Not everyone should want to become heads and ministers. Let’s leave politics to its people, and only care about finding an affordable and decent living.</td>
<td>Mr Zeyad UB: The revolutions should have been done in a thoughtful way and by us as an Arab world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Etaf UB: The people intruded into history-making in an illogical and thoughtless way. They changed the philosophy of life in all institutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants mainly acknowledged the weaknesses, the obstacles and the complexities involved in the liberation process. According to Freire, “freedom is acquired […] not by
gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly” (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Column A shows participants’ lack of trust in their own Arab governments as well as their “self-depreciation” of themselves as Arab people, and their ability to change these governments\(^\text{210}\) (ibid., p. 45). This is consistent with the view of Freire who argues that “domination is itself objectively divisive […] and results in] the individual […] being] divided between an identical past and present, and a future without hope” (ibid., p.154). Column B outlines a few issues that needed to be addressed for these revolutions to succeed\(^\text{211}\). Conversely, this ‘to-do’ list can be added to the current determinants of historic failures in the Arab world, of which my participants knew well they were a part.

To sum up, most participants were pessimistic as they “feared” how the Arab Spring events might unfold in the future (Freire, 1996, p. 29). This is consistent with Freire’s argument that the oppressed have a “dominated consciousness [that] is dual, ambiguous, full of fear and mistrust” (ibid., p. 147), but, there was also a pessimism that is related to Arab and Muslim people more generally.

In his Orientalism, Edward Said has warned that “to be Orientalized […] implies Orientals themselves internalizing the dominant Orientalist discourses” about their own inferiority in relation to the Occident - the imperialist West (Traboulsi, 2009, p. 180). Freire also explains that “everything has its opposite, if those who are [culturally] invaded consider themselves inferior, they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders. The value of the latter thereby become the pattern for the former” (Freire, 1996, p. 134). Educationalists had “fatalistic” assumptions particularly about Arab (& Muslim) people\(^\text{212}\) (ibid., p. 43). They “self-depreciated” themselves as they have internalized the stereotypical opinions of them (ibid., p. 45). For example, Salehnia and Pirnajmuddin (2012) indicate that “the images of Muslims in media, literature and politics have been

\(^{210}\) In Column A, the participants viewed at least three spheres as determinants of failure in the Arab revolutions: (1) ineffective and corrupt leadership, (2) Arab division, and the (3) inherit helplessness of Arab people.

\(^{211}\) In Column B, participants’ main recommendations for Arab revolutions to succeed included a need for: (1) planning, organization, and awareness; (2) change on all levels especially the cultural; and (3) guarding against the hijacking of the Arab World from outsiders.

\(^{212}\) For example, Arabs were stereotyped by my participants as being: (1) ‘helpless’ lacking ‘culture and awareness’, and unable to function in a democratic atmosphere; (2) ‘thoughtless’ victims of conspiracy; (3) divided; (4) disorganized; and (5) incapable of achieving change or fruitful consequences.
mostly black and white portrayals of a people alien to modernity, technology, civilization and progress” (p.171). Barakat (1993), argues that not only has “Western scholarship [constantly portrayed] Arab society as constant and static […but also] Arab intellectuals have themselves deplored the lack of change and lamented the futility of struggle” (p.22), just as we can see in the case of these participants.

However, the “dehumanization, [of Arabs] although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order” (Freire, 2003, p.44). That my participants, nevertheless, had internalized such negative dispositions as “taken-for-granted […and] inevitable” facts seemed to have affected their perspectives towards socio-political change in the Arab world (Swartz, 2013, p. 83). The majority were “conservative […as if they were] lament[ing] the turbulence of the new era and look[ing] back wistfully to the supposed stability and security of its authoritarian predecessors” (Berman, 2013, p. 64). Paradoxically, it is this “fatalistic” consciousness which serves the oppressors (Freire, 1996, p. 43). Of course, Arab self- criticism is healthy, but only if it does not remain as a form of self- destructive “verbalism” (Freire, 2003, p.126). To mention all this above, does not negate the fact that Gaza university students, like other youth elsewhere, have been empowered, at least to some extent, by “the spirit of these ‘revolutions’ [which] has been travelling very fast in the Arab world” (Pace, 2013, p. 55), as we shall see soon.
Section 6.2 The Possible Current and Future Impact of the Arab Revolutions on Gaza

Teaching and learning in HE does not happen in a vacuum (Trigwell & Prosser, 1997). Gaza educationalists and their “world are internally related through the individuals’ awareness of the world” around them (Trigwell & Prosser, 1997, p. 242). To understand critically the socio-political changes in the Gazan educational context, I firstly map the impact on the Gaza Strip, then move forward to examine how Gaza’s universities have been affected, if at all.

A few participants ruled out any Arab revolution impact. For example, Huda UA commented:

   The siege is still imposed; life is still difficult for people; the borders are still closed; nothing new has happened. What we were living before, we continue to live it again today. We haven’t seen any change … (Huda UA)

To Huda’s disappointment, these ‘out-of-the blue’ revolutions did not lead to lifting the prolonged misery and “de-humanizing” siege in the Gaza Strip (Freire, 1996, p.26). It is from this perspective that any impact was discounted by other participants as well.

Most of my interviewees asserted that the turbulent conditions in the Arab world had affected their daily lives in Gaza. The following are sample responses:

   Nora UA: It affects us clearly because we are surrounded by them.

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213 Dalal UA, similarly argued, ‘If the situation has changed for the better and all the Arab countries have become unified maybe this will change our circumstances’. Living under the Gaza blockade, these students seemed to be waiting for a miracle to save them from this ‘prison’ (Khaled UB), which the Arab revolutions failed to fulfil. Mr Mehdi UA, also suggested that ‘when [people in Gaza] compare between the past and the present, they find the past, which was an Arab autumn or winter, proved to be better than the Spring. They did not benefit anything.’
Mr Majid UB: It impacted Gaza in a direct way [...]. It impacted it negatively; and offensively [...]. It impacted it on all levels with no exception.

Ms Jamila UA: The situation became bad not only with Israelis, but also with our neighbours who are Arabs and Muslims like us. The revolutions have surely impacted on us.

Ms Amna UA: Of course, the impact is clear, which is more degradation for Gaza.

Abdullah ofs UA: Yes, the Arab revolutions affected us especially the changes that happened in Egypt.

The Arab revolutions increased feelings of “horizontal violence” between Gaza people and other Arab and Muslim countries (Freire, 1996, p. 44). As Abdullah ofs UA suggested, the changes within Egypt had the most salient impact on Gaza. This view was unanimously confirmed, and here are a few examples:

Mr Hassan UA: It affected [Gaza] 100 per cent - the daily life and the economy.

Mr Suleiman UA: Yes, […] the election of] El Sisi had an impact […]but] only from an economic perspective and maybe from a social one.

Mr Omar UB: Gaza is affected by any change that happens in the Arab world and especially in the countries which are of direct influence on our culture such as Egypt.

Alaa UB: Egypt is the only exit from Gaza. Egypt punished Gaza as responsible for the incidents that happened.

Nora UA: Whatever happens in Egypt affects us.

Alaa UB perceived the relationship between Gaza and Egypt as one based on power. Egypt had the “symbolic power” to oppress Palestinians (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). To explain this, Gaza, in the past, was under an “administration by Egypt from 1948-1967”
Since Egypt is also near the Gaza Strip and in control of the Rafah crossing, this affects Palestinians’ mobility and economic activities. For example, in the aftermath of the revolutions “the border crossing has largely been shut since President Mohammed was toppled by the Egyptian army in 2013” (Al Jazeera & Agencies, 2015, no pagination), but, as explained in Chapter Four (Section 4.1), and as Mr Omar UB above also reminded us, the relationship between Gaza and Egypt, is one of “cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, p. 133). This made Gaza more susceptible to an Egyptian impact. However, as Ms Randa UA stated, ‘not only for Gaza, but even with regard to the whole Arab world, Egypt has always been the centre for political matters’. This is consistent with Hassan's (2015) view that “under Mubarak, Cairo was no longer a trendsetter in the middle East, but a bedrock of regional stability” (p. 172).

6.2.a The Impact on the Gaza Strip

This section provides an overview of selected aspects of the economic, social and psychological repercussions of the change in the Arab world, and particularly the Egyptian revolution, for the general context for educationalists in the Gaza Strip.

On the Economic Impact

To start with economics, Abdullah ofs UA maintained:

In the days of Mubarak we were living a decent life and the days of Morsi, we were living the best life, but now we are living the most miserable life… (Abdullah ofs UA)

In the interview, Abdullah explained how the economic conditions in Gaza had significantly shifted across the three Egyptian successive governments. This supports Dickstein's (2014) view that “once a relatively reliable arbiter of Gaza- Israel conflicts, and then a supporter of Hamas, Egypt is now defining a new role for itself” (p.11). For Abdullah, Mubarak’s era was somehow satisfactory because the tunnels of Gaza were tolerated214 and so different materials could enter despite the siege conditions, and this

214 According to Hassan (2015), “the tunnel economy created vested interests on both sides [i.e. the Egyptian and the Palestinian] of the border. Although Egyptian authorities suspected that the tunnels were used to smuggle weapons into Sinai, they tolerated them to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, which
helped Gaza to ‘flourish’, albeit slowly. This consolidates the information in the UNCTAD report (2015), namely that “to mitigate the impact of the blockade on Gaza, a tunnel economy evolved and peaked between 2007 and 2013”\(^{215}\) (p. 13). Thus Hamas “built huge tunnels across the border into Egypt’s Sinai through which they smuggled foodstuffs, fuel, and livestock […] in addition to] guns, ammunition, and rockets” (Danahar, 2013, p. 167; see also Hassan, 2015; Pace, 2013). This changed after the revolution with a noticeable difference between Morsi’s time and Al Sisi’s\(^ {216}\). According to Hassan (2015), “the Palestinians factions’ alignment with the brotherhood, Sisi’s sworn enemy, has brought Egypt’s threat assessments [of Gaza] even closer to those of Israel” (p. 170). Consequently, Al Sisi’s “Egyptian government closed the Rafah border crossing, stopping the flow of goods and individuals that travelled between Egypt and Gaza” (Dickstein, 2014, p. 10). This statement was also supported by most participants\(^ {217}\). Hence, the participants perceived the Arab revolutions to have impacted upon people’s lives in Gaza with more “de-humanization” (Freire, 1996, p. 26).

Furthermore, Khaled UB angrily commented as follows:

They closed the border; nothing enters to us […]. The prices increase and decrease based on the border. So, currently; for example, the vegetables are very expensive, while the chicken, which is a local product, is affordable. But tomorrow, you might find the chicken has become very expensive and you cannot control anything. You just get up in the morning, and if you like it, you know the price, could lead to a potential escalation. More importantly, this dangerous policy was designed to maintain leverage over Palestinian factions in Gaza” (p.156). Mubarak’s relative solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza was also motivated by “a sense of rivalry since the meteoric rise of the AKP and Erdogan in 2002 […] especially that, Erdogan’s regional ambitions and active foreign policy, particularly with regard to Gaza and the Palestinian cause] were infringing on what Cairo has long considered its domain” (Hassan, 2015, p.164).

\(^{215}\) The UNCTAD report (2015) states that that during 2007-2013, there were ‘more than 1,532 underground tunnels running under the 12 km border between Gaza and Egypt’ (p.13)

\(^{216}\) As for Morsi’s era, it was characterized by increased possibilities for Gaza in terms of travel, trade, and according to Waleed UB, in weapons for Hamas as well. Thus, “border restrictions at Rafah eased substantially, leading to significant, if short-term, improvements in the quality of life in Gaza” (Robinson, 2014, p. 94). On the contrary, as Abdullah ofs UA said since the election of Al Sisi, Gazans now ‘live the most miserable life ever because there are no tunnels, and no open borders. [They] are living in a big jail.’

\(^{217}\) For example, Waleed UB said, ‘Al Sisi is killing us’; Khaled UB, ‘He made once again Gaza as a prison’; and Ferial UA, ‘The economy is falling down […] and the amount of depression is increasing’. Also, Mr Ashraf UB pointed to an increased economic ‘inflation’. This resulted in ‘a power cut […] and a petrol cut and so [people were forced to move their cars] on [used] cooking oil’ (Mr Suleiman UA).
and if you do not, go away. These things affect our life not only our education… (Khaled UB)

Instability and border restrictions caused Khaled to react with frustration, irregularity, “fear” and a sense of “fatalism” with regard to the market (Freire, 1996, pp. 29, 43). Similarly, at least four of my participants (one member of academic staff, and three students) described Gaza as a prison. Dalal UA, moreover, pointed out how this border closure had a “de-humanizing” impact on Palestinians (ibid., p. 26). This student stated, ‘we live as animals- They just open the border and rush through the food for us, and then they close it’. This is in line with Li’s (2008) argument that “Israel now treats the Strip [not as a prison, but] more like a zoo […] the concern is how to keep those held inside alive, with an eye to how outsiders might see them [while] the question of freedom is never raised” (p.1).

On the Social Impact

From a social perspective, Halima UA, as one case in point, stated:

I live […] close to the Rafah border. I was feeling how they destroyed the houses in Sinai, in Egyptian Rafah. My husband’s family […] live there. They are very afraid that their house will be destroyed. They [currently] live with me […]. They came to visit us for two months and when it was time to leave, the border was closed. Now they are stuck here… (Halima UA)

According to Dyer and Kessler (2014), after “the 2011 revolution [in Egypt], the Sinai[218] peninsula has experienced a downward spiral in security” (p.5). Consequently, “a series of military operations in the Sinai’s northern governorate” were launched by the Egyptian authorities on armed groups (Dyer & Kessler, 2014, p. 6). Halima was married to an Egyptian whose family lived in Sinai; this affected her as well as her husband’s family.

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[218] According to Dyer and Kessler (2014), “The Sinai is a triangular peninsula of 60,000 square kilometres –around three times the size of Israel – that bridges North Africa and the Levant. To its east is Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the Gulf of Aqaba; to its west is the Suez Canal and Gulf of Suez; to its north is the Mediterranean; and, to its south, the Red Sea. […] The Sinai is divided into two of Egypt’s 27 governorates – North and South Sinai – with district capitals in el-Arish and el-Tor, respectively” (p. 12)
In the interview, moreover, Halima indicated that the relationship between her and her Egyptian husband continued to be good only because he chose to support Palestinians, but she added that ‘anyone in Gaza will tell you how much we’re suffering from Egyptians and the change in their treatment for us, which became very bad’. Tamara UB similarly mentioned that after Al Sisi’s election, some Egyptians have ‘started making these Facebook pages to insult Palestinians. [She] and [her] friends who had Egyptian passports broke up with them’. Hence, the changes caused inconvenience, and “horizontal violence” between Egyptians and Palestinians which intensified Palestinians’ feeling of isolation in the Gaza Strip (Freire, 1996, p. 44).

On the Psychological Impact

The data show conflicting views on the psychological impact. For instance, Lubna UB explained:

People in Gaza are hating everyone who is an Arab […].
It’s not just in our university, but also everyone in our university is […] proud to be a Palestinian more than they are proud to be Arab … (Lubna UB)

People in Gaza “self-depreciated” themselves as Arabs (Freire, 1996, p. 45), and in an attempt to maintain their dignity, they stressed that they belonged to a different national group. In a way, this implies that the old colonialist strategy of “divide and rule” in the Middle East has worked in the long run (ibid., p. 125). Like Lubna, almost all my participants were more proud of being Palestinians than of being an Arab. For example, rejecting the idea that the Arab revolutions might inspire a Palestinian revolution, they argued:

Kamal UA: Excuse me! Gaza is the inspirer of nations.

Mr Mehdi UA: The Arabs were the ones who have taken from us.

Mr Suleiman UA: It was we who triggered the Arab Spring. We initiated it when we had the hasm- [meaning Hamas-Fatah conflict].
Mr Ashraf UB: We were the initiators through the first Intifada and the second Intifada and so they were the ones who learnt from us.

Ms Jamila UA: We were the ones who taught the world how to demonstrate.

These responses are consistent with Pace's (2013) that, unlike people in other Arab countries, “Palestinians have felt sovereign for a long time […] from the beginning of their conflict with Israel, […] they mobilized themselves […] masters of their own destiny” (p.45). Of course, the data shows signs of “fatalism” which somehow contradict this description (Freire, 1996, p. 43). Nonetheless, Palestinians’ resistance to oppression can be still seen in comparison to that of Arab countries, for example, Palestinians initiated the first and the second Intifadas against oppression long before the Arab revolutions (Mr Ashraf UB). (see also Pace, 2013). Participants’ proud accounts imply that these popular uprisings which were “made [by Palestinian] people […]are] in turn making them” (Freire, 1996, p. 111).

Mr Riyadh UA showed a different psychological impact.

One feels sad that people are living […]in] difficult conditions. Out of the 51 days [of war in Gaza], we are traumatized, how about people in Syria then? May Allah help them […]]. We are affected psychologically by the people, children and women who migrated and left their homes… (Mr Riyadh UA)

According to Black (2016), in Syria, “11.5% of the country’s population have been killed or injured since the crisis erupted in March 2011[…]. The number of wounded is put at 1.9 million. Life expectancy has dropped from 70 in 2010 to 55.4 in 2015. Overall economic losses are estimated at $255bn (£175bn)” (no pagination). This caused Mr Riyadh UA to empathize with his Arab neighbours. He considered the Syrian war more dramatic than the 2014 Israeli operation on the Gaza Strip. However, at least one student, Moeen UA saw matters differently:

Maybe they have felt what we were suffering such as killing or other things that are happening in their countries
now. Until now, there appeared solidarity [with us] and *inshallah* (i.e. God willing), if a real government is achieved for them, there would be a true support… (Moeen UA)

In Moeen’s perception, the “de-humanization” of the revolutions had instead pushed other Arabs to feel more empathy with the Palestinian cause than before, as they had now experienced similar instances of “de-humanization” and violence (Freire, 1996, p. 26).

Mr Omar UB is another example. Omar worried that some of the *political affiliations that happened in Syria [...] would appear in Gaza*, and that this would bring them more misery to be added to that resulting from the Israeli occupation. Akbarzadeh (2015) explains that “the Arab upheaval has morphed into sectarian warfare, championed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS]” (p.44). According to Alijla (2015), the current difficult conditions resulted in an increased number of Palestinians joining “ISIS” and “the Salafi[st] groups […] which are] funded by Saudi Arabia” in Gaza (p.66). Zelin (2014) points out, for example, that “jihadists in Gaza/Sinai […] have posted pro-ISIS propaganda” (p.6). Omar “feared” the ramifications of this for Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 29). With respect to this, he commented, *‘we do not want them; we are normal people [...]. Our conditions are different from everyone’*. From another viewpoint, Yasser UB considered that the Egyptian revolution had created “horizontal violence” in Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 44). For example, people had *‘bad arguments [...] for example] about the eligibility of Brotherhood to rule over Egypt’* (Yasser UB). Similarly, Khaled UB pointed out the restrictions imposed by Hamas to “silence” demonstrations if these were not in support of the Brotherhood (Freire, 1996, p. 87). According to Milton-Edwards (2013), as “the Arab Spring has significantly altered the Arab world […]Hamas] faced growing pressures both within and without the movement to reassess its ideological and symbolic foundations as well as its political stances and regional alliances” (p.71). Therefore Hamas wanted to avoid being put to the test of popular opinion that might threaten its position (Milton-Edwards 2013, p.71).
To sum up, the Arab revolutions resulted in a dissonant symphony of emotions\textsuperscript{219} among Gaza educationalists. According to Sutton and Wheatley, (2003), “the subjective experience of emotions is a distinct type of private mental state”. Thus, “teachers who report experiencing much joy and little anger have a different experience of teaching than those who experience constant frustration and little joy” (p. 330). This affects, for example, students since “emotions can be communicated involuntarily and voluntarily” (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003, p.340). The impact of the social context is “incorporated into the body and produces corresponding thinking, feeling, and behavior” and therefore in many ways “domination [of teaching and learning practices] is achieved through ‘symbolic violence’ ” (Scheer, 2012, p. 207). On this Bourdieu (2001) states:

Symbolic force is a form of power that is exerted on bodies, directly and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but this magic works only on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body. If it can act like the release of a spring, that is, with a very weak expenditure of energy, this is because it does no more than trigger the dispositions that the work of inculcation and embodiment has deposited in those who are thereby primed for it (Bourdieu, 2001, p.38).

In brief, “although the Arab Spring has not manifested itself in the Palestinian territories […] its effects have still reverberated locally”\textsuperscript{220} (Milton-Edwards, 2013, p. 60).

\textbf{6.2.b The Impact on the Educational Context of Gaza’s Universities}

Here, I provide more direct examples of the economic impact of the changes in the Arab world on Gaza’s universities, namely, structural issues, such as exchange, quality, and funding.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{219} Conflicting feelings included isolation, “self-depreciation”, “fear”, “fatalism”, and a sense of superiority and “horizontal violence”, but also empathy towards their Arab counterparts (Freire, 1996, p. 45, 29, 43, 44).

\textsuperscript{220} The data show that the changes in the Arab world have affected several aspects of educationalists’ daily life in Gaza, economically, socially and psychologically. For Ms Jamila UA, the impact was so clear that she said, ‘I feel that Gaza has become […] the microscope which they see through. If the Arab revolutions succeed, things go okay for Gaza; if the Arab revolutions result in bad systems, restrictions are imposed on Gaza with no power except from Allah’ … (Ms Jamila UA).
Exchange

An intensified siege had a very drastic and “de-humanizing” effect on my participants (Freire, 1996, p. 26). For instance, Alaa UB said, ‘It is death, death. In fact, death is more merciful’; and Ahmed UA stated, ‘We [are locked in] without being able to breathe’. The siege also affected participants’ mobility and academic exchange, including their attendance of conferences\(^\text{221}\). Nora UA, for instance, described ‘the situation [at her university as] paralyzed’\(^\text{222}\). An intensified siege also affected students’ access to study materials since “organizations are to an extent dependent on their environment for so-called critical resources, such as raw materials, personnel, monetary resources and so on” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 6). Ahmed UA is one example:

Even if I want to get a book, a copy from a book. I can’t get it until it is online. And, if I want to [either] get […] a book that is not online or to buy a book online, I can’t easily get it here in Gaza. Nothing can leave or enter Gaza these times […]and the electricity system is also moving backward […]. You will be spending a day instead of learning, waiting for the electricity to come back… (Ahmed UA)

The twenty-first century is characterized by enhanced ICT, which facilitates knowledge production and dissemination. Smith (2002) explains that “a key difference between developed and developing economies lies not in the structure of activities but in their technological levels” (p.28). However, the Gazan context is a different case. Owning a laptop, a computer or an Internet line or having access to advanced programs is not the

\(^{221}\) At least six of my participants perceived that the siege restricted their professional development. Mr Kamal UA explained that it affected academic staff mobility since they were not able to participate in conferences as they ‘feared’ being trapped outside Gaza (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Similarly, Ms Jamila UA cancelled three conferences last year because she was not able to cross the border. Abdullah ofs UA also indicated that he ‘knew several students who lost unique opportunities’ because of the siege. This has reflected on the participants’ universities, especially on the UA where, as Ferial UA said, ‘The situation is kind of paralyzed right now’.

\(^{222}\) Nora UA, for instance, explained that her university used to have collaborations with other universities outside Gaza and ‘send students from here to there to study on scholarships […but now] some might be suspended’. Ferial UA also mentioned that her university used to ‘hold different seminars and conferences […] that allow the students to employ their creativity, to participate and to learn new experiences from the people that live out of Gaza [but that] the situation is kind of paralyzed right now.’
end of the story. There has been a “chronic electricity deficit [in Gaza for nine years which has] disrupted the delivery of basic services and undermined already vulnerable livelihoods and living conditions” (OCHA OPT, 2015, p. 2). For example, the United Nations (2012) states that “the cuts affect private businesses and homes, health services, waste water treatment plants, and schools. Many of these rely on back-up generators” (p.10). According to OCHA OPT (2015), the “situation has further deteriorated since June 2013” (p. 2). This significantly limits the knowledge resources and communication possibilities available for students and academic staff, which in turn gives way to practices of “banking education” and “prescription” at Gaza’s universities (Freire, 1996, pp. 53, 29). It also creates further local and international partnership and “dialogue” challenges (Freire, 1996). This is consistent with Duque et al. (2005) who argue that “collaborative benefits of new information and communication technologies” might be undermined by contextual conditions (p. 755). An intensified siege has also meant power cuts for longer hours, and this caused my participants anxiety and affected their study schedule.  

Quality Challenges

Mr Ashraf UB pointed out that, after the revolutions, parents, using their “symbolic power”, have become more “fearful” of sending their daughters to study even in Arab countries (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2; Freire, 1996, p. 29). The participant explained:

Today, it is difficult to send my daughter, [even if she] has a scholarship, to study in Egypt, because I won’t feel it safe for her. So, it is impossible for someone to send their daughter to Egypt or to Yemen [...] for example], and what would be the alternative then? The local universities … (Mr Ashraf UB)

223 For instance, Ahmed UA felt that the power cut disturbed his work schedule. This negatively affected my participants psychologically. Samira UA also indicated a stressing impact of daily 14-16 hours of power cuts, saying, ‘I would start postponing, and postponing everything that I need to do, and things would accumulate and then I would feel pressured. [...] The power-cut is a huge obstacle.’
PART TWO

Chapter Six: The Future HE Experience

Ashraf’s account is consistent with that of Johansson-Nogués (2013) who points out that “democratic revolutions […] constitute a moment of high risk for […]women] as they may become subjects of new or renewed and/or (re) structured [gendered] violence from the state and/or their fellow citizens” (p.409).

In the interview, Mr Ashraf UB suggested that, on the contrary there was an inward mobility of Palestinian students from other countries to the UB. Ironically, he justified this move as follows, ‘It is impossible for them to study under the difficult conditions in which they live’. He regarded Gaza as safer and less “de-humanized” than other turbulent Arab contexts (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Ms Jamila UA also confirmed this inward move since she knew of a Palestinian student in his fourth year of BA study in Syria who was dismissed from the country on political grounds. According to Fargues and Fandrich (2012), migration “from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria have been increasing” since the Arab Spring (p.3). This also supports Jammal's (2015) report that a group of “Syrians made the dangerous trip across the Sinai and into the Gaza through smuggling tunnels […]where they] have quickly got established in Gaza, setting up businesses and starting families” (no pagination).

Mr Zeyad UB also pointed to increased enrollment at Gaza’s universities, especially on the master’s programme, for the following reasons:

There is siege, people are bored, and the economic situation is weak […]. All this resulted in more opening and licensing of private universities. It has affected the quality of learning […]. If there were jobs, people would not have gone to universities. They have free time that they want to kill, so they prefer to take a few hours in HE. The universities have become institutions for certificates. They do not contribute to sustainable development… (Mr Zeyad UB)

Lee (2000) argues that the “primary role of higher education is increasingly to transform students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities while simultaneously empowering them as lifelong critical reflective learners”, although it should simultaneously contribute to employment (p.3). According to Zeyad, neither of these reasons, however, is why students are currently enrolling on master’s programmes
at Gaza’s universities, rather it was due to boredom and the “fear” resulting from a deteriorating economy (Freire, 1996, p. 29). This shows yet another example of the intersection between oppression and empowerment in my participants’ lives.

However, that an increase in enrolment appears to have occurred simultaneously within increasingly difficult circumstances for Gaza universities has meant further challenges to HE quality. Thus, as stated in Chapter Five, section 5.1, between the years 1993 and 2011, “the enrollment rate of students in higher education increased by 940 [per cent]” (UNDP, 2014, p.4). According to United Nations (2012), “the Gaza Strip has one of the youngest populations worldwide […] and this also] poses particular challenges” (p.9). For example, “the number of school-age children is projected to increase […] in 2020] by an average of 14,000 per year […, which] requires a greater investment in teacher training and supervision” (United Nations, 2012, p. 15). That said, “university education needs to be expanded and its quality improved” (ibid). Nonetheless, I concur with Zusman's (2005) view that the unavailability of funding “to construct, renovate and maintain classroom […] and campus infrastructure […] is a] big a constraint on institutions’ ability to accommodate enrollment growth, recruit faculty, and conduct research” (no pagination).

Consequently, as Mr Zeyad UB stated above, Gaza’s universities have become ‘institutions for certificates’ in competition with newly opened private universities. According to Romero and Rey (2004), “public universities have […] higher quality and admission standards than their private competitors” (no pagination). However, the “search for new sources of revenue, the intense competition for more students, and the ongoing need to cut costs” seems to be pushing these public HE institutions in a neo-liberal direction (Giroux, 2002, p. 442). Thus, “If a student is a customer of education, then what is the product of that education? […] a customer-oriented approach to instruction [for example...] reinforces […] superficial goals over the educational benefits of education” (Clayson & Haley, 2005, p. 4). Nonetheless, Giroux (2002) rightly argues

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224 In the interview, Mr Zeyad UB explained that this was particularly true for those PNA employees who, as indicated in Chapter Four, section 4.3, were instructed to leave their jobs when Hamas took over Gaza, although many of them continued to take their salaries.
that “universities do not simply produce knowledge and values for students, they also play an influential role in shaping their identities” (p.446). A banking education, moreover, “is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it” (Freire, 1996, p.59). There is extensive evidence in the data\(^\text{225}\) which shows that the students from both the UA and the UB hold instrumentalist “dispositions” with regard to their learning in HE (Swartz, 2013, p. 89), viewing their degrees as beneficial mainly for gaining employment and/or as a source of social and “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23).

Funding

According to Mr Mehdi UA, since the Arab revolutions, Gaza’s universities have faced a financial crisis:

Now […] we do not take a full salary; we only take 70 per cent of it […]. This has started from about ten months prior to the [2014] war. There was also a siege by that time. The siege does not make the university function normally […]. Financial assistance is also unavailable. Even the Ministry

\(^\text{225}\) For example, Tamara UB regretted that she got 80 per cent and graduated with the Second Honour Rank because she wished to be ‘the first member of [her] family to get the first rank, and that Jawal Mobile Company would [...] grant her a laptop’. Also, because she hoped to ‘increase her chances for obtaining scholarships’. Talking about their future ambitions, Khadra ofs UA also said, ‘I want to be a “Dr”, never mind in medicine, or in any other subject. I want to be a lecturer, [...] because in Gaza, this is something that you would be proud of’; and Abdullah ofs UA said, ‘People here in Gaza believe that if you are a doctor, you will be respected, you should be a good person, and you will have lots of money’. In fact, not only students, but also their lecturers appeared to subscribe to this superficial approach to HE. To illustrate with two examples, Mr Suleiman UA, on obtaining a professorship, stated, ‘There is nothing left for [him] to obtain’; and the regret of Mr Ashraf UB in his academic life under occupation was that he had not achieved the professorship yet. Here is my conversation with Mr Ashraf UB:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{M:} & \quad \text{What do you regret in your academic life under occupation?} \\
\text{Ashraf:} & \quad \text{I wished that I could have taken the PhD earlier than I did.} \\
\text{M:} & \quad \text{Why do you regret that?} \\
\text{Ashraf:} & \quad \text{Because I would have reached professorship by this time.} \\
\text{M:} & \quad \text{Why is this important for you?} \\
\text{Ashraf:} & \quad \text{Of course, it is important. What benefit is there if someone would remain an assistant professor for all of his life […] To be an associate professor is better than to be an assistant professor.}
\end{align*}
\]
of Higher Education in the West Bank does not give the UA its financial allocation … (Mr Mehdí UA)

Similarly, UB participants indicated a financial crisis in their university, although not as serious as that in the UA. The siege and the ascendancy of Al Sisi to presidential power in Egypt had impacted on the flow of financial assistance to Gaza’s universities. To deal with this situation, the UA had to cut the salaries of employees by 30 per cent. If we hold the assumption of a link between the UA and Hamas, then the argument of Pace (2013) might offer some insight into the UA’s financial crisis. The author indicates that with a “new landscape of the MENA region”, Hamas aimed to “reposition its movement […] away from the Iranian-Syrian axis” that has sustained it for decades (p.54). In response, Iran has cut off its funding to Hamas as a “punitive measure” (Pace, 2013, p.54). However, the relevance of this for the UA’s financial structure needs to be verified.

One academic participant, Mr Kamal UA, emphasized that although ‘the financial aspect is considered an obstacle; it does not affect [the academic staff’s] motivation or the quality of work they offer’. This consolidates Malka and Chatman’s (2003) argument that “although earning more rather than less money does make people happier, the impact of income on [subjective well-being] is minor when basic needs are satisfied” (p. 737). In the interview, Kamal’s commitment to his academic job seems to emanate mainly from his religious “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89). For example, Mr Kamal UA explained that, ‘what motivates me for research and publications is one thing, that it entails a big

226 To illustrate with two instances, Ferial UA stated, “The [Egyptian] revolution caused the donations to stop and this led to some lecturers being dismissed from the university. […] we […] also lost some projects”; and Mr Suleiman explained, ‘The universities are stable […]. There is no money for development. In the past, this was available’.

227 Previously, the base of Hamas’s “exiled leadership [including its leader] Khaled Mishal” was in Syria (Pace, 2013, p. 54). With the outbreak of the Syrian revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood fought against Bashar El Asad’s regime, which is supported by Iran. In this context, Hamas became stuck between “the Muslim Brotherhood, which Hamas belongs to ideologically, […] and] Iran, which has provided financing for years” (Hashem, 2016, no pagination). Consequently, the “Palestinian group’s support for the Syrian revolution against Iran-backed Assad regime and its resultant move to Qatar has strained relations” (Lambert, 2016, no pagination). However, the situation is not as simple as this. According to Helfont (2009), despite the Sunni-Shia tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and its nationalism, Iran’s “championship of political Islam” and it being “steadfastly anti-Israel and anti-American”, has at times brought “the Brotherhood closer to Iran” (p.298).

228 According to Malka and Chatman (2003), “subjective well-being […] refers to people’s cognitive and emotional evaluations of their lives” (p.737)
oblation. This is knowledge that will continue to benefit people after my death. One must disseminate his knowledge\textsuperscript{229}. This shows the potential of “religion […]to act as a] source of social integration”, since Kamal felt motivated to contribute to his institution and society in Gaza, particularly at times of adversity\textsuperscript{229}(Barakat, 1993, p. 130). Similarly, Salim (2011) stated that under the difficult financial conditions in Gaza, “Palestinian society has developed a social safety net [that relies on indigenous resources and funding] based on \textit{inter alia} social values […]and] religious motivation”\textsuperscript{230} (p. 62).

Mr Hassan UA gave a different and yet vivid account of the economic constraints resulting from his university’s financial crisis:

Without money, you can't achieve whatever you want to achieve. If you should borrow from someone else, you need to return the money back maybe at the end of the month, but you figure out there is nothing in your account... ha-ha! This is the major problem facing us right now at the university […]. We do not know if this […]problem would be solved] very soon or not… (Mr Hassan UA)

According to Brown, Taylor and Wheatley Price (2005), “debt is associated with increased levels of psychological distress” (pp. 658-659). Sweet, Nandi, Adam, and McDade (2013) also explain that “high financial debt relative to available assets is associated with higher perceived stress and depression, worse […] general health, and higher diastolic blood pressure” (p.94). What made the situation more distressing for Mr Hassan UA is that he could see no light at the end of the tunnel as the financial crisis of the university was not likely to be resolved soon. As such, student tuition fees constituted

\textsuperscript{229} This seems consistent with the translation of the Holy Quran, for example in Surah At-Tawba: The Repentance, (09: 105): “And say: ‘Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers: Soon will ye be brought back to the knower of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did” ’. It is also consistent with the hadith of Prophet Mohammed: “the best person is the one who benefits all human beings” - Source of translation: ‘Ziaislamic Books - English’ (n.d.)

\textsuperscript{230} Salim (2011) explains that “the Islamic practices of Zakat and charity, as an example of these values, are considered the solid foundation for generating resources [for Gaza universities] and sustaining them” (p.57).
the most reliable source of funding for Gaza’s universities, but in a “de-humanizing”
economic blockade students were not able to pay\textsuperscript{231} (Freire, 1996, p. 26).

Hill, Lomas and MacGregor (2003) maintain that “students’ views on all aspects of their
higher education experiences are now being widely canvassed and regarded as essential
to the effective monitoring of quality in universities” (p.15). A financial crisis at Gaza’s
universities seems to have affected university scholarships, which in turn have an impact
on the quality of their academic practice. Samah ofs UA pointed out that the lecturers
were ‘unfair’ because they tried to ‘lessen [students’] marks in order not to give
[distinction] scholarships’. Similarly, Nora UA stated that ‘whenever [she went] to the
Dean of the Faculty to revise [her] paper assessment, he would tell [her] that [she was]
close to the 90s and as such he was unable to help her’. As for Samira UA, she argued:

As I hear it, and everyone knows it, […] you would be very
confident that you would take a distinction […]. Then you
get surprised that your mark is just on the edge, i.e. 89 per
cent […]. The university want to reduce the number of
distinction scholarships they award for students, so they
reduce the marks. We do not want scholarships, let them
give us our marks! … (Samira UA)

In the interviews, several students including Samira UA explained that with increased
unemployment, obtaining high averages became necessary to give them as a competitive
advantage in order to obtain a job.

From the above, universities were perceived as providers of future security (i.e.
employment and credentials), and they in turn seemed also to look at their students as
providers of income, that is, as customers in a growing HE market in Gaza and a source
of funding. But as Clayson and Haley, (2005) explain, “If a student believes that a high
GPA is desirable in and of itself, then selecting the easiest professor or class to ensure
maximum gain for minimum effort is a wise choice” (p. 2). As a result, education

\textsuperscript{231} To illustrate with three examples, Alaa UB explained, ‘\textit{My family’s condition is very, very bad. If I have
ever got [a] scholarship, I would not have been educated}’; Khaled UB indicated that he and other students
had to pay more money for transportation, ‘\textit{because the drivers pay more money when they fill gasoline}’;
Ms Lamia UB commented, ‘\textit{People are very tired as there are no salaries}’.
becomes a “commodity” (Clayson & Haley, 2005, p. 4) rather than being focused on “authentic thinking […] that is concerned about [people’s] reality” (Freire, 1996, p.58). This is a serious challenge for HE in Gaza as it threatens to “regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ students”, orientating them towards materialism (Freire, 1996, p. 57). Thus unemployment feeds into a neo-liberalist direction whereby “many students […] no longer believe that higher education is about higher learning, but about getting a better foothold in the job market” (Giroux, 2002, p. 435). In this market context, and with increasing financial pressures on Gaza’s universities, it is easy to understand why Talal UA referred to ‘an excessive capitalism’ at his university. The paradox is that the students might not be able to afford to pay.

To summarize, “education has a key role to play in shaping an appropriately skilled, creative and innovative workforce and is a pre-requisite for driving a modern, knowledge-based economy” (Andersson and Djeffal, 2012, p.49). However, a tightened siege on Gaza in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions has incapacitated and demobilized Gaza’s universities, freezing them into a position of no choice but to operate locally and prioritize immediate needs over quality and prospects.
Section 6.3 New Campus Dynamics? Student Discontent and Barriers to Voice

This section is grounded in both students’ and their lecturers’ perspectives, with a focus on students’ voice and the situation at Gaza’s universities. Voice is perceived here as a “slippery term” (McLeod, 2011, p.181). It “is not simply speech […] voice mean[s] identity or agency, or even power, and perhaps capacity or aspiration; it […] represents difference, […] and sometimes] connotes] a democratic politics of participation and inclusion […] it is students’ right (to be heard, to have a say)” (ibid.). The discussion here explores student discontent after the Arab Spring, barriers to their voice and the impact of this on campus dynamics in Gaza.

6.3.a Signs of Student Discontent

According to Kotter and Schlesinger (1979), “all people who are affected by change experience some emotional turmoil” (p.3). Despite a growing dissatisfaction among UA and UB students, they were, at the same time, for and against change, that is “divided” (Freire, 1996, p. 125). Their responses showed ambivalence between “compliance” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471), and the “fear of freedom”, on the one hand, and resistance, on the other hand (Freire, 1996, p. 29). Thus only a few instances of protest occurred at

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232 A focus on student voice in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions is important not only because the Arab Spring were “youth revolutions” (Hoffman & Jamal, 2012, p.168), but also since these students, as pre-service teachers, represented the new generation of Gaza educationalists. Thus, I concur with Ropers-Huilman (2003) that “higher education has far-reaching consequences for the construction of [the Gaza] society” (p.3). Analysing the impact on students gives, therefore, an insight into how the changing socio-political conditions might influence the HE experiences in the future.

233 McLeod (2011) explains that there are “at least four common and overlapping uses of voice in educational discourse: voice-as strategy (to achieve empowerment, transformation, equality); voice as participant (in learning, in democratic processes); voice-as-right (to be heard, to have a say); and voice-as-difference (to promote inclusion, respect diversity, indicate equity)” (p. 181). According to Fielding (2004), “student voice covers a range of activities that encourage reflection, discussion, dialogue and action on matters that primarily concern students, but also, by implication, [university] staff and the communities they serve” (p.199).
Gaza’s campuses, which my participants classified as influenced by the revolutionary spirit of the Arab Spring. Below I discuss these in more detail.

Gaza Youth and the Spirit of the Arab Revolutions

Both students and their lecturers wanted reform. One example is Ms Amna UA who commented:

Whenever any discussion happens between me and the students that is related to education or to educational policy, I feel that everyone wants a change, a general change […]. Maybe this is what the students have learnt from the Arab situation or maybe it is their own thinking. But I feel that everyone longs for […] a positive change to happen to affect the Palestinian reality… (Ms Amna UA)

Ms Amna UA perceived in her classes a desire for change at both the educational and the societal level. In the interviews, the majority of students showed awareness of their role in making this change happen. For instance, Ahmed UA stated that after the Arab revolutions he and his colleagues came to believe that ‘young people can [in his words] do “stuff”’. Samira UA also reflected:

This is one life, so why should one accept it to be unfair? Why should one accept that he would be just a number? Why don’t you make something different from other people? I want to be a leader… (Samira UA)

Freire rightly argues that it “is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as Subjects of the transformation” (Freire, 1996, p. 108). After the Arab Spring, Samira UA felt the passion to lead and contribute. This is consistent with the view of Hoffman and Jamal (2012) who explain that “the [Arab] youth generation […] seems to be highly optimistic about what ordinary citizens can do”(p.186).

Although most students thought that they had learnt empowering lessons from the Arab revolutions, their lecturers expressed different opinion on this point. The table below provides a sample of students’ and their lecturers’ perspectives:
Table 6.3 Lessons Learnt from the Arab revolutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What students have learnt [A]</th>
<th>What lecturers thought students have learnt [B]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amira UB</strong>: I should keep silent as this is sometimes better than to speak up against the unfair people.</td>
<td><strong>Mr Ashraf UB</strong>: Students demonstrations at the university are a waste of time and life without any result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nawal UA</strong>: No right is lost for one who demands it.</td>
<td><strong>Mr Abdel Rahman UB</strong>: No impact on the students at Palestinian universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ferial UA</strong>: One should revolt against wrong doings.</td>
<td><strong>Mr Zeyad UB</strong>: Laziness […] as things have turned from bad to worse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Huda UA</strong>: One should not keep silent when there is injustice […]. It is better to confront it from the start rather than leave it to grow.</td>
<td><strong>Ms Etaf UB</strong>: That if you shout ‘Hey’, this would work: Roistering […] brings benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nora UA</strong>: One should plan well before acting.</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ibtisam UB</strong>: If one lives in corruption, one should not accept it.</td>
<td><strong>Ms Amna UA</strong>: That students have the willpower to change […] and this should not be underestimated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alaa UB</strong>: One should not keep silent or feel afraid to express oneself.</td>
<td><strong>Ms Randa UA</strong>: That students might have a role in changing society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yasser UB</strong>: Determination.</td>
<td><strong>Mr Kamal UA</strong>: Students learnt to live with honour and dignity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing both columns shows a gap between students’ and the majority of lecturers’ perspectives. One participant from the academic staff, Mr Riyadh UA (Column B), kept “silent”, about this question as if it was none of his business (Freire, 1996, p. 87). This is consistent with what Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) state, namely, that

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234 In Table 6.3, Column A indicates how students apart from one, have learnt emancipatory lessons from the Arab revolutions. These lessons included resistance to injustice and corruption, self-expression, perseverance, and the importance of initiation, planning and reflexivity for change. On the contrary, the lecturers in Column B were convinced that these revolutions had a negative or no influence at all on their students.
“individuals or groups can react very differently to change—from passively resisting it, to aggressively trying to undermine it, to sincerely embracing it” (p.3). For reasons we do not know, the majority of views of UA lecturers were focused on productive aspects of students’ learning, while those from the UB were more negative.

Students’ Attempts at Change

In the aftermath of the Arab revolutions, the focus of protests at Gaza’s universities have ranged from minor to larger issues. A few student participants mentioned that they and/or other colleagues at their universities have attempted to arrange protests and campaigns to voice their discontent regarding both academic and political issues. For example, Samah ofs UA stated:

Students made problems and the student council closed the [university] buildings [and stopped] us […and our] lecturers […from entering] the building […]. The problem was related to money […]. But, […] it was the first time for the students to complain and […] to do something against the university. However, this was the only incident and nothing like this happened afterwards […]. The university responded to them and accepted what they wanted… (Samah ofs UA)

Since it was an increase in tuition fees which prompted a student protest, the university tolerated this action, and also returned the fees to the former rate. A few other interviewees also mentioned this incident. Nora UA, as one case in point, commented on this response of the UA as ‘something new, and unique that does not usually happen at all’. The student perceived the UA’s response, moreover, as ‘something good, and a sort of victory’. This points towards the importance of adequate funding for the encouragement of student voice and mobilization and the role this might have in shaping the future HE experience at Gaza’s universities.

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235 While UA academic staff emphasized that students have learnt that willpower, contribution and principles were necessary for a dignified life, UB lecturers referred to frustration, laziness, chaos as the revolutions’ impact on students.
Halima UA, as another example, commented, ‘I think some lecturers treat me badly, I think I should make a revolution against them’. Halima was not joking. Her use of the word ‘revolution’ as synonymous with protest in this context is significant. It represents the lecturers as dictators that the students should topple as the youth had done in the Arab revolutions. Later, Halima “feared” that making a protest was not a sensible thing to do because she wanted to graduate (Freire, 1996, p.29). Similarly, Yasser UB reported:

We were planning a carefully orchestrated campaign in order to ask for everything […we wanted to change at our university], but students were afraid. My friends and I were the ones who came up with this idea of protesting, but other students were afraid. They were scared to death… (Yasser UB)

The idea of a campaign or/and a protest here was for educational not financial reasons. Consequently, this initiative was defeated internally, among the student body, before it came to light. Being “divided” by “fear” from the university, students remained ‘silent’ (Freire, 1996, pp. 125, 29, 87). However, Amira UB stated that protests did happen at her university, for example, ‘the students at the English Department protested against the university’s administration in support of a lecturer whom the university fired [because he criticized them in one of his articles]’. This student protest occurred after 2011. Nonetheless, the UB did not respond to this student demand and the lecturer is now ‘no more at the Department’ (Amira UB).

Using Arab Spring Slogans

The Arab Spring’s influence was apparent on student protests as they used the same slogans that the youth in Egypt’s Tahrir Square used requesting the downfall of Mubarak, especially, ‘the people want the fall of the regime’. According to Sowers and Toensing (2012) ‘unlike the more ironic -- humorous or bitter -- slogans, this one is sincere (p.50). Similarly, Gaza universities’ students would start their protests by chanting ‘the people want….’, and then complete the couplet by adding their requests such as ‘justice’, ‘revision of the exams’, or a ‘new lecturer’. I have witnessed this in a few instances at the
In the interviews, a few of my participants also reported hearing the Arab revolution slogans. For example, Yasser UB saw some campaigns under ‘the people want mid-term exams’.

However, “there is more at stake in these couplet-slogans than [...] a purely semantic meaning” (Sowers and Toensing, 2012, p. 50). For example, in the Egyptian revolution, “the act of singing and shouting with a large groups of fellow citizens has created a certain and palpable sense of community that had not existed before” (ibid.). Using slogans collectively, therefore, “satirizes feared public figures [...in which] the impact [is powerful], for learning to laugh at one’s oppressor is a key part of unlearning fear” (ibid.). To illustrate this with one instance, Ms Etaf UB said that ‘a group from the University students went calling upon the university’s president [...] by saying “Irhal”’, as they wanted the tuition fees to be reduced’. The slogan Irhal was also used by the youth in Tahrir Square. For UB students to call upon their university president to leave indicates a level of courage or risk, which largely draws upon the experience of the Egyptian revolution. Students’ repetition of Arab Spring slogans on this and other occasions within the UB’s campus has connotations. It reflects the protestors’ hope or maybe intention to capitalize on the momentum of the youth revolutions elsewhere in the Arab world in order to mobilize a kind of student disobedience within their university’s campus that can be influential. This is possible since as Freire suggests “humankind [have the capacity to] emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled” (Freire, 1996, p. 90). Surprisingly, none of the students or academic staff participants at the UA mentioned the use of such slogans at their university.

Although the research data do not offer clues to the number of protests at Gaza’s universities, almost all the UA and UB participants had either witnessed or participated

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236 One of these protests was organized by the UB’s employee syndicate, and one by students at the Humanities and Social Sciences building who felt angry about their examination results and wanted to ask for a reconsideration on a collective level.

237 From my first-hand experience at two of Gaza universities, I know that many students prefer to have mid-term examinations so as to avoid leaving 100 per cent to the final examination. This usually helps students to get a sense of their lecturers’ examination style as well as distributing their marks over two examinations instead of one, so that they do not fail in case they, for any reason, did not do well in their finals.

238 Irhal is an Arabic word which means ‘leave or go away’. The youth in Tahrir Square used it to call upon their Egyptian president to step down.
in campus protests after 2011, that is, the Arab Spring. Halima UA, for instance, pointed to ‘students calling Fatah and Hamas to unite and end the Palestinian separation’. Khaled UB mentioned that the UB Student Union organized a sit-in inside the university in which both students and the academic staff had joined with chanting and holding posters. Khaled also added that similar to the manner in which the Arab revolutions had spread out, these students’ sit-ins were advertised a few days earlier through the distribution of leaflets within the university campus of the UB. At one of these political gatherings, Khaled UB was ‘holding a lecturer on [his] shoulders’. Thus, we can see how when student protests aim to address less-contested (political) issues, such as ending Palestinian separation, both the Student Council and the academic staff participated fearlessly in them, and the university allowed the distribution of the protest leaflets within its campus. Furthermore, Khaled UB pointed out that such sit-ins were also advertised on Facebook. This “young […Palestinian] generation […] works to benefit from a new wave of unifying innovation” to advance political activism (Bracher, 2013, p. 56) According to Khondker (2011), “the new media played [a supportive, and yet] a critical role [in the Arab revolutions] especially in light of the absence of an open media and a civil society” (p.675). Thus Gaza university students became more aware that the “ICT and social media networks” have a “mobilizing effect” (Stepanova, 2011, p.1; see also Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

Nonetheless, students political protests have not always continued peacefully. A “poll conducted by the Guardian [at the UB showed that] most students […] would support a protest against political division, although many feared the response of the security forces” (Sherwood, 2011, p. no pagination). This is consistent with what Tamara UB reported:

Students went out in [peaceful] protests maseerat to stop the Palestinian division […]. But, the [Hamas] policemen

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239 In fact, I have received one of these leaflets for the 15th of March Movement. While I was inside the lecture hall, as a university lecturer, I was invited personally to participate in their demonstration in the Unknown Soldier Square in central Gaza.
[...] came and spread the people all around and took the guys who organized these to jail... (Tamara UB)

According to Sherwood (2011), “the revolutionary unrest sweeping across the Arab world has spurred [students in Gaza in the 15th March Movement] to try to translate their ‘Manifesto for Change’ into street protests. But they face[d] formidable obstacles” (no pagination). Thus, as Saleh (2011) explains both Hamas’s and Fatah’s reactions to the 15th March Movement was that they “tried to swim with the tide […to] appear as a champion of unity and national reconciliation. In reality, [however, they] used [their] security forces to undermine the movement’s fundamental objectives through repeated interrogations and arrests of its organizers and participants” (Saleh, 2011; see also Human Rights Watch, 2011). Hence, Palestinian factions’ endorsement of this movement was a “false generosity” which aimed to instil “fear” in the young people and “silence” the voices of change (Freire, 1996, pp. 26, 29, 87). Nonetheless, Rosen (2011), an Israeli blogger, points out that “despite the challenges facing the March 15 movement it is a welcome sign that a new generation of Palestinians is seeking to hold their leadership accountable […] as these developments are eminently worthy of […] attention” (no pagination).

Students’ Relationship with their Lecturers and the University

Four students thought that the Arab revolutions might have impacted positively on their relationship with their lecturers and the university administration. Moeen UA, for example, indicated that there ‘became more appreciation for the youth and one could feel that lecturers started to encourage us. [To a large extent, this is different from before] because our society usually depends on the elderly’. Khaled UB also argued:

I used to feel that most of the lecturers […] are careless about the students who were supposed to get information from the lecture. But after [the Arab revolutions], I felt that they have improved their sense of students; they started to feel us more… (Khaled UB)

Khaled’s quote is important because “the development of student participation […] depends on teachers being prepared to ‘see’ young people differently” (Rudduck &
Fielding, 2006, p. 225). In the interview, Khaled doubted that this change in lecturers’ perception towards students could be a result of ‘the various training courses which they undertook lately at Gaza’s universities’. Huda UA believed that a change in her university was influenced by the Arab revolutionary events as she explained that ‘our university’s administration started to submit to the decisions of the Student Council. At the start, they were very strict with them, but now whatever the Student Council demands, they would at least take it into consideration’. These observations occurred, more or less, within the time span of students’ four years of study, which coincided with the start and the peak of the revolutions, that is, 2011-2014. Therefore a change in lecturers’ approach to students might have been triggered by the empowerment of the youth and their call for democracy in the Arab world. For example, at the UA campus, Nora UA commented, ‘You can know that [this influence] is there’.

Students’ ‘Misapplication’ of the Arab Revolutions at Gaza’s Universities

Sometimes students had attempted resistance, but in relation to minor issues. Although students have learnt useful lessons from the Arab world revolutions, not all of them seemed able to implement them favourably as far as their educational context was concerned. For instance, Samira UA regretted that some of her colleagues understood revolution in the wrong way. A few female students had strong reservations about the UA inviting a journalist who was, in his youth, supportive of Israel. In the middle of his seminar, they stood holding a poster which said, ‘You are not welcome in Gaza’. Samira UA described these students’ behaviour as ‘rude’, especially when, even after they were disciplined by the UA for their action, they posted on Facebook that they were proud of what they had done. Ms Etaf UB also reported an incident which showed students’ misapplication of the lessons they had learnt:

In the lecture, if you tell the students that, for example, they will have a quiz, students will burst shouting loudly and in one voice that they do not want to. But, I am expecting that this would happen because I can guess they are still influenced by the Arab revolutions… (Ms Etaf UB)
Students wanted to assert themselves in Etaf class regarding academic assignments. Nonetheless, this lecturer seemed prepared to assert herself too and “silence” this minor student disobedience (Freire, 1996, p. 87).

Students’ inability to change simple things at their universities caused the majority of them resort to passive-aggressive behavior, that is, showing discontent in indirect ways, as discussed below. On the productive side, in an unsafe context of political protests, Abdullah ofs UA explained that he and other students found an alternative platform for voicing their dissatisfaction without direct confrontation:

> Last semester, we performed a play at our Faculty. I was an actor. This play was about the division. We performed Hamas and Fatah as if they were two siblings who became separated. When their father died, both became united again. This was a way for us to ask the two factions to unite together… (Abdullah ofs UA)

Performing a play could be seen as a symbolic form of political activism which reflected students’ desire to contribute to political decision-making in Gazan society. This consolidates Bracher’s (2013) argument that after the revolutions “Arab people appear to be […] re-imagining their warrior identity in new guises that promotes peaceful discourse and reconciliation” (p. 36).

On the negative side, Huda commented:

> Between us, it is very normal to talk, to revolt, and to do whatever we feel like. We would not, however, stand and object to something in a formal way, and in front of everyone. This is difficult. You only hear murmurs… (Huda UA)

Gossip and murmurs were how students could express their discontents, although the interviews showed that there were formal channels available at their university.

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240 Lind, da Silva, Andrade Jr, and Herrmann (2007) explain that “as opposed to rumours, a gossip targets the behaviour or private life of a specific person, i.e., a target node (victim) in the network” (p.1)
According to Huda UA, to resist “silently” is natural for the student body (Freire, 1996, p. 87)

Lecturers such as Ms Jamila UA were aware of existing students’ dissatisfaction. On this Ms Jamila UA commented that ‘in fact, behind the lecturers’ back, there is bad naming, and other things. But whatever the students say, the lecturer is not hearing it anyway’. In the interviews, a few academic participants mentioned that they also express their discontent through murmuring. Hence, gossip and murmuring were perceived as a way of catharsis and an alternative to action. I concur with Candela (2005), however, that “murmuring […] should not be taken as] a misbehavior, but rather a counterscript consisting of a different version of what was seen. […] an ‘exercise of power’” (p. 198), albeit in a passive-aggressive way.

To sum up, the Arab revolutions have triggered more awareness of student grievances. But, the few instances in which students made demands were confused attempts between “compliance” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471) and resistance. In a context of continued university and societal constraints, despite students feeling a sense of agency, they often end up sabotaging and “silencing” their own voices (Freire, 1996, p. 87). This is consistent with the view of Barakat (1993) who states:

Arabs […] have become powerless, not just in relation to the state, but even in relation to their own institutions. They are alienated from, and within […] their] institutions of learning […] and] excluded from participation in the making of their own futures and the shaping of their own destinies; hence the growing gap between dream and reality… (Barakat, 1993, pp.26-27)

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241 To elaborate with one case on lecturers’ murmuring, Ms Lamia UA mentioned, ‘There is frustration and extreme psychological pressure which we are unable to withstand. On the stairs, we would be conversing among each other, but no one is able to change anything’.
6.3.b Barriers to Voice

Ideally, “all young people […] should be able] to influence the processes and outcomes of their own education” (Cremin, Mason, & Busher, 2011, p. 586). Nonetheless, the student participants “self-depreciated” their voices, partially due to barriers from within their universities that hampered any unified revolutionary action (Freire, 1996, p. 45). The overall result is a “divided” cacophony of voices, which lacking nurture and organization, remains powerless (ibid., p. 125). Two of the strongest university barriers include (1) HE not being a priority, and (2) universities’ control.

HE Not Being a Priority

For most participants, Gaza HE was not a priority for reform in a “dehumanizing” conflict and political context (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Explaining the rationale behind this, Mr Abdel Rahman UB stated:

“We have enough troubles inside the Gaza Strip [such as frequent wars, electricity cut, and the schism], but in addition to that, [there is the] occupation’s [expansion in] the West Bank. And there is the issue of whom am I going to confront? The university’s administration? This would result in strikes and suspensions of study, which will reflect negatively on students’ level of scientific achievement. Thus students evaluate all these matters simultaneously [before they consider protesting against their universities] … (Mr Abdel Rahman UB)

Students’ nationalistic “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89) made them “fear” that revolutionary action for university reform would be counterproductive to Palestinian welfare under occupation (Freire, 1996, p. 29).

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242 For example, Tamara UB suggested that the Arab revolutions ‘might affect the way students look to the Palestinian political situation: calling for the end of division and Palestinian reunion, but it may not affect the way students respond to [educational problems such as the undesirable treatment of some] lecturers’. Mr Mehdi UA also pointed out that ‘the young people are unified around Palestinian issues and the Palestinian case’, but not around educational matters.
For “Palestinian […] youth in the West Bank and particularly in the Gaza Strip, […] every facet of their lives is informed and shaped by political history and current political dynamics and realities of which they are very aware” (Barber, 2002, p. 211). Mehdi UA explained that since ‘their struggle is with the occupation. [...students contemplate the] impact of the Arab Spring or Autumn [...] mainly from a political and military perspective’. Nawal UA also stated, ‘students are supposed to fight over the things which they should fight for; Palestine, Jerusalem, Al Aqsa mosque - not over trivial matters’. From Nawal’s viewpoint, HE was a minor issue compared to other national concerns for Palestinians. Nawal’s understanding of HE is instrumental, since she “misrecognized” the transformative role of HE and its possible impact on the political sphere (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 199). Similarly, Ahmed UA downplayed the potential of education to exert an influence:

I can't tell exactly whether this is a problem in our education, or a problem in our education because of the Israeli occupation. However, I think B is the right answer because if we didn’t have this occupation, we would be enjoying a better education at least, let alone a better life … (Ahmed UA)

Of course “an organization does not and cannot exist in a vacuum but has to interact with its environment for achieving its basic objectives” (Gornitzka, 1999, p.6). Nonetheless, Ahmed UA viewed education as passively responding to the occupation context – as a by-product. But if the participant accepts this as a starting point for his experience at the university, then all educational problems become tolerated as natural and the postponement of reform justified until the occupation ends.

Another example is Ferial UA who argued that the educational problems ‘regarding the professors themselves and the classroom [...] can be found in any other university of the world and so they are not a big deal [...] students are usually satisfied’. Because Ferial UA believed in the imperfection of the HE world, she “naturalized” problems at her university (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). With this logic in mind, educational change was not an urgent matter requiring student action, especially in a conflict context. For example, Ms Randa UA suggested:
The conditions in which we live are not normal. [...] They are unbelievable and are very difficult [...]. So things take time. The university [...] faces infinite [problems]... (Ms Randa UA)

Nonetheless, using the context of occupation to justify any administrative deficiencies has led to a “fatalistic” perspective towards development, which is not helpful to the future of Gaza universities (Freire, 1996, p. 43).

University Control

Palestinian universities can be viewed as “mini-states inside the occupied territories” (Interviewee: PAC243, in Jebril 2006, p.76). Having established this analogy, university administrations can simultaneously be considered as the ruling regimes of these students’ campuses. With this in mind, the data show that in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions, there has been a degree of “fear” from, and “silencing” of, students’ voice and agency that is far from democratic (Freire, 1996, pp. 29, 87).

Here, Mr Omar UB gives an interesting description of the administration’s reaction to students’ protest:

The university here does something strange. Administration people would be standing near the windows counting the number of rebellious students [in the campus]. Suppose they were 150. This is not enough as those who would want to rebel against the university should be more than [...] 250 [...]. If they were 300, know that the university’s decision will be changed [...] I have seen them when they were counting the students [...]. As they reached only 200, the person said, ‘Forget about them. Let them go away to hell. They have no value [...]’. I once was among those who counted them one by one, and then I told them that these students would be the reason for

243 In Jebril (2006), Interviewee: PAC argued, ‘We find the universities a good place or a big place to practise whatever we want in it, to practise nationalism into it, to practise religious ideas, to practise whatever we like to. It is like the mini-state inside the occupied territory. This conception actually developed or became an overwhelming conception rather than the real mission for a university which is to develop the intellectual and the social and the cultural dimension of people’s life. However, this is our life anyway. We cannot actually separate ourselves from our environment’ (p. 76).
counting the number of students as a measure of their power reminds us of the scene of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Thus it was “the occupation of Tahrir Square, day and night, by mass numbers of peaceful protestors […] of an important urban space in the major city that brought down a repressive and tenacious government” (Elshahed, 2011, no pagination). This is consistent with Rose (1999) who explains that “numbers determine who holds power, and whose claim to power is justified” (p.196). They are important in both democratic and non-democratic regimes (Rose, 1999). In the interview, Mr Omar UB stated: ‘students have the potential and the ability to stop the whole university if they had the necessary numbers. If not, their protest won’t have any impact’. Altogether, this shows that the UB’s administration had a ‘dual’ reaction; when students’ numbers were increasing, it listened to their demands, but when they were only 200, the response was “let them go to hell”.

Mr Zeyad UB explained this administration’s caution from student mass protests as follows:

Yes, there are things that happen, but these are usually individual, not collective. This might be a beginning, though, because if something happens within the

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244 Elshahed (2011) explains that “the occupation of Tahrir Square, day and night, by mass numbers of peaceful protestors, had an over-arching purpose: to bring international attention to the demands of the people, to force the government to step down, and to pressure the military — constitutionally obligated to protect the people not the regime — to take action and topple Mubarak. And ultimately it was this peaceful occupation of an important urban space in the nation’s major city that brought down a repressive and tenacious government” (p.no pagination).

245 For example, Rose. (1999) explains that “in Nazi Germany the policy of killing those whose lives were deemed not worth living was justified by detailed calculations about the costs to the German Reich of maintaining the mentally ill and others deemed socially unfit. […]From another perspective] Democratic power is calculating power, and numbers are integral to the technologies that seek to give effect to democracy as a particular set of mechanisms of rule” (p.200).
university, […] it will spread over to the level of the society … (Mr Zeyad UB)

This supports Sampson's (1967) argument that “the university […] could act] as a major vehicle of organized dissent” (p.1). Hence, the inter-relatedness between the educational and the political context in Gaza makes it important for Gaza universities to “conquer” its student body (Freire, 1996, p. 129). This is consistent with Freire who argues that the “existential duality [of the oppressed] may facilitate the rise of a sectarian climate leading to the installation of bureaucracies” (ibid., p. 108).

This also reminiscent of the example of Nasserite universities in which “the young educated individuals [were reduced to…] passive subjects” (Erlich, 2005, p.173). For higher education institutions to be “committed to successful institutional change, [they] should be […] fearless in examining the institution in the context of its environment” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 133). However, around 1955 and after, the “abolition of the parties, policing of the campuses, centralization of academic control […] institutionalization of state-controlled universities’ unions and the like, destroyed the students in Nasserite Egypt as a unique political community” (Erlich, 2005, p.185). Consequently, these Egyptian universities became mainly an “extension of an authoritarian state” (Erlich, 2005, p.179). They were “manipulated” for political aims (Freire, 1996, p. 128).

An Inherited Traditional System

However, “a sense of agency about one’s life is [also] both nurtured and discouraged in and through the educational process” (Mcintyre, 2006, p. 629). That said, the data provide a more complicated scenario, which shows that such control over students’ voice was also a result of an inherited traditional system of education at Gaza’s universities. Halima UA, for example, pointed out that her university’s administration ‘don’t change themselves […] because] the idea [of doing that] is non-existent at [her] university’. Halima’s

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246 Because of the alleged connection of the UA and the UB to political factions, an educational protest on campus is anticipated as having political repercussions. In addition to Mr Zeyad UB’s quote above, the interaction between education and politics was also clear in Waleed UB’s argument, ‘We’re actually one hand against those who are against the university’. Since, Gaza society values education and HE, Waleed’s remark refers to political groups other than that of the UB, that is, Hamas. Another student, Samira UA perceived that ‘the nature of the UA does not allow for such things [meaning protests] to happen in it […] because the UA […] is linked to Hamas’, and Hamas is now in control of the Gaza Strip.
criticism resonates with Boyce's (2003) argument that “the challenge of successful change is less planning and implementing and more developing and sustaining new ways of seeing, deciding, and acting” (133). Nonetheless, Talal UA perceived it as a “fate” for students that they ‘won’t be able to change the system of [their] university’, while Ibtisam UB complained that ‘the administration do not listen to them [...and do not] give [students] a chance to criticize them’. Here is an example that Ibtisam UB mentioned:

Two years ago, the students at our Department protested against the Head of the English Department. The supervisor from our department told us that anyone who would participate in this protest would have at least ten marks omitted from his final grade. So, why should I participate in this protest? [...] and my colleagues also said.] ‘we do not have to participate in any protest to avoid punishment’… (Ibtisam UB)

Using a ‘carrot-and-stick’ approach to control student voice is “antidialgoical” (Freire, 1996, p. 161). This UB practice is again consistent with the example of Nasserite universities: while restrictions were imposed, these Egyptian institutions became as “a youth camp” in which intensive “social and sport activities” were used as a ‘carrot’ to distract students from politics (Erlich, 2005, p.181). Similarly, Brynen et al., (2012) note that prior to the Arab revolutions, “a plethora of [...] awards were created [by the bureaucratic regimes] to domesticate large swathes of the intellectual class” (p.289). As Ibtisam UB indicated, the UB used an authoritarian means of solving problems that aimed to “divide” and “silence” students’ voices (Freire, 1996, p. 125, p. 87). Similarly, Tamara UB witnessed the following:

There were mid-term exams. They just told us three or two days before and that was not enough. So the literature students didn’t go to the exams and their Dean said all the students who did not go to the exams would not pass and will not be able to score more than 60 out of 100 in the final exam. There were big problems and most of those students failed that course… (Tamara UB)

Freire rightly states that “in order to dominate, the dominator has no choice but […] to deny [people] the right to say their own word and think their own thoughts” (Freire, 1996,
The Deanship worked to “manipulate” students’ voice through making them afraid about their marks (ibid., p. 128). Although Tamara was an education student, some of her lecturers were teaching at this Department and so this incident had a “silencing” impact on her247 (ibid., p. 87).

Democratic Channels

Cremin et al. (2011) argue that educational “institutions [...] are required, to engage with young people’s voices in order to shape and evaluate the quality of provision” (p.600). Believing that “students are central to the educational process” (Jackson, 2003, p. 597), Ms Randa UA argued that her university offers several channels for students to shape their HE experience:

Our students have freedom. This is demonstrated by students being able to evaluate the lecturer [...]. Based on this evaluation, each Department would hold a meeting or two each semester with its students to have their feedback on the teaching process [...]. So we have feedback and we have constant channels of communications with students [...]. We also now have a box called Fadfa (i.e. Catharsis) in which we receive complaints from students as well as from the employees on a daily basis [...]. These complaints could be submitted anonymously. For any problem [...], we go directly and discuss with the person under concern in the Deanship [...]. In addition, we have students’ clubs, students’ council [...], and there is an employees’ syndicate… (Ms Randa UA)

Ahmed UA agreed with the quote above, saying, ‘I don’t have to revolt. I only have to fill this questionnaire and I think they will respond to us”. In contrast, all the other students from the same university perceived the UA’s channels of communication to be a “false generosity” (Freire, 1996, p. 26). For example, Talal UA indicated that except in the case of tuition fees where the university would work to ‘solve [the problem] partially or

247 In the interview, Tamara UB mentioned that complaint was not an option for her because the ‘university won’t keep [her] privacy and so [she] will be in a bad situation’. For this, Tamara UB stated, ‘No, I’m smart enough. I won’t go to complain’.

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wholly’, the administration’s response would be ‘we cannot change the university’s system’. Ferial UA also stated that complaining was not helpful because of the following:

The professors came to [the students who complained] and made them very scared. They threatened them and then my friend was so scared of getting a low mark in that course. Another friend […] was embarrassed [by her lecturer] in front of the classmates. After all, I know that whether I complain about the teacher or not, I will still be taking the course with him this semester […]. Maybe I can complain to my friends, but I have never tried to complain to the management or to the Dean of the Faculty… (Ferial UA)

The UA’s channels of democracy were undermined by some lecturers’ authoritarian “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013, p. 89), and the exercise of “symbolic violence” over students (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). According to Halima UA, her university is to be blamed for this. Below is our conversation:

Halima UA: The UA gives [the lecturers] a chance. Some teachers are bad with students. Students can't do anything for them.

M: But I heard that there is now an evaluation system? Does this give you more freedom of expression?

Halima UA: If he is an appointed lecturer at the university […] has a good position here, even if he becomes bad, there will always be an explanation about his behaviour. [He would argue,] ‘I do that for students’ welfare; they misunderstand me, or the teacher has the right to do so and so.’

McLeod (2011) explains that “a belief in the intrinsic value of respecting student voice informs the promotion of student participation and recasts the position of learners, granting them expertise on their learning” (p. 181). In contrast, as Halima indicated the UA was applying biased or somewhat “manipulative” criteria when assessing students’ evaluation of lecturers (Freire, 1996, p. 128). This caused students such as Ferial UA and Halima UA to “fear” being “conquered” by their well-established lecturers (ibid., pp. 29, 129). Likewise, Samah ofs UA stated that the university ‘will accept my complaint if the lecturer is new to the Department while a senior lecturer […] won’t be affected by the
report’. Ironically, the senior lecturers seemed to be aware of their “symbolic power”\(^{248}\) (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1–2). This is consistent with Rudduck and Fielding (2006) who state that “power relations between teachers and students is one of the ‘big issues’ […] that underline the credible development of student voice” (p. 219). Hence, I concur with McLeod (2011) that “the challenge for […] higher education […] is not in inciting student voice, but in converting that opportunity into meaningful and practical recognition” (p.188). However, for this to be achieved at Gaza universities, there is a need for “learning [to value voice] collectively so that institutional consequences, outcomes, and inquiry change” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 133). This is the “true generosity” that Gaza universities should work towards (Freire, 1996, p. 27).

A Lack of Alternatives

Freire argues that “culture as superstructure […] can maintain ‘remnants’ of the past” (Freire, 1996, p.140). Because of these remnants, the oppressed “as dual beings […] accept […] power which becomes bureaucratized [within their own society] and which violently represses them” (Freire, 1996, p. 140). Despite feeling dissatisfied, my student participants “self-depreciated” their agency and preferred to remain “silent” about their discontents and accept them as a “fate”\(^{249}\) (ibid., pp. 45, 87, 43). What contributed to this further was that students’ few attempts at protest were frustrated. For example, Tamara UB viewed these as ‘a big mistake’, and Khaled UB explained that, as students, they felt that they did not achieve anything and that ‘we were just going around [themselves, …they] stopped and [their] participation became less and less’. However, according to

\(^{248}\) To illustrate with one instance, Dalal UA mentioned that when one of her lecturers heard from his daughters at the university that Dalal and her colleagues were gossiping about his teaching, he came to them and said, ‘You are talking about me, but I’m still stronger.’

\(^{249}\) From Waleed UB’s perspective, students were afraid that ‘if they make a revolution against the university, [they] will lose everything’. Thus, despite limitations, students ‘get some freedom of being and talking [inside the university that is still] much better than the outside’ (Waleed UA). From Ahmed UA’s perspective, ‘the university is trying to make everything easy for [students]’ and ‘if a group of students managed to change or to influence the situation, it will be worse than this’. So students ‘would rather accept the tough situation that is imposed on [them], instead of rebelling whether politically or educationally’ (Ahmed UA). From Samira UA’s perspective, the Arab revolutions made it clear that ‘the environment in which [students] live is frightening […]. Facts started to get uncovered; they were hidden […and] ambiguous. This made students feel shocked […and then] afraid, […and then] cautious.’
Ms Etaf UB, students’ “compliance” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471) was prompted mainly by universities’ good control over the campus. Here is what she said:

Students were not given a big space […]. They found it uneasy that they would come with any ‘destructive’ idea […]. This is an institution, which is governed by a system and a law. As a student, it is you who should either comply or Irhal (leave) … (Ms Etaf UB)

This lecturer “manipulated” the Arab revolution slogan Irhal as she used it not for the ruling regime (i.e. university’s administration), but for students (Friere, 1996, p. 128). However, I concur with Freire that “the discipline necessary to any organization must not be confused with regimentation. […]Discipline can never justify treating the people as [things]” (ibid., p. 158). In fact, “authority can avoid conflict with freedom only if it is ‘freedom-become-authority’ ” (ibid., p. 159)

In such a “fearful” context, Halima UA explained that students felt confused as to whether they should ‘make a protest or just sit, shut up and be patient [until they] graduate […]where many] prefer[red] to be patient’. Ibtisam UB was also unwilling to participate in any protest at her university since there were ‘limited students and it is easy [for the administration] to know [those] who […] participated. Therefore, as [students] find that participa[tion] will hurt [them], [they] will [choose to] stop’. Lecturers will also choose to stop since as Mr Omar UB indicated ‘the lecturer has [even] more responsibility than the “boy” ’. Thus, if a lecturer was ‘dismissed by the university, he would find nothing to go to except his home’ (Mr Omar UB).

To sum up, universities’ control in a traditional teaching-learning environment, and HE not being a priority are the main barriers to student voice in Gaza’s HE institutions. Thus, like the rest of people in Gaza, “young people are as much the product of social, personal and economic relations and presumptions” (Fielding, 2004, p. 213). Nevertheless, I concur with the view of Czerniewicz, Williams and Brown (2009) that “the students are influenced by, but not determined by, the barriers they face […]conversely] while conditions can profoundly influence the attitudes and behavior of actors, all students do not experience an equal measure of freedom to respond” (p.86). Thus students’ responses
to the impact of the Arab revolutions varied, although at the best estimate, they are as Freire suggests, “Subjects in expectancy”.  

6.3.c Campus Dynamics: On the Cacophony of Voices

The many failures and few successes of the Arab revolutions made students cautious about testing their voices rather than acting upon them; they wanted to “play it safe” (Xu, 2015, p. 69). Talal UA summarized this strategy as follows: ‘This is the status quo, so do not oppose [...]. Wait until a change happens, and then change your direction’. Talal UA recommended that students should firstly wait “fatalistically” for change to come from above and then respond proactively to it (Freire, 1996, p. 43). This strategy is passive, but it is not completely so. Thus, taking the barriers into consideration, “compliance” is perceived here as a practical strategy (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471) of resistance since opposing the ‘current’ directly might lead to destruction. This is consistent with the view of Bourdieu (1990a) who argues that “resistance may be alienating and submission may be liberating” (p.155). Freire also rightly argues that “those who perceive the infeasibility or inappropriateness of one or another form of action (which should accordingly be postponed or substituted) cannot thereby be accused of inaction. Critical reflection is also action” (Freire, 1996, p. 109). Change was perceived by Talal UA not as a destination, but as a process. For example, Khaled UB stated that for change to happen in Gaza, people need to be self-critical and rediscover themselves, because he had learnt from the Arab Spring that “Allah does not change a people’s lot unless they change what is in their hearts” (a translation from Quran: Surah Ar-Ra’ed: The Thunder (13:11)). In fact, Brynen et al (2012) argue that “many decades [...of] Arab regimes [attempting] to deny their

\[250\] Freire argues that “it would indeed be idealistic to affirm, by merely reflecting on oppressive reality and discovering their status as objects, [the oppressed] have thereby already become Subjects […Nonetheless,] thinkers […]can still be considered ‘Subjects in expectancy’, an expectancy which leads them to seek to solidify their new status” (Freire, 1996, p. 112).

\[251\] For example, Ahmed UA explained this process of change further when he stated that ‘I think we need to change our educational system so that our next generation will [...] understand the real meaning of change – a change that can be to the better not to the worse’. Yasser UB also maintained that before students can ‘make a change, [they need] to trust in [their own and people’s abilities].’ Tamara UB added that ‘one hand can’t clap alone [...]since the Gaza HE institutions and the society] need to support [students] and be with the change’.
citizens agency by manufacturing subservient political cultures and docile subjects suddenly collapsed as [young people] discovered their own capabilities” (p.291).

So what does all this mean in future for the HE experience in Gaza? Sampson (1967) explains that “youth has always been a period of restlessness, of searching, of unbounded energy […] and that when students commit themselves to change they [can be] the triggers that release […] a barely tapped reservoir of national energy” (p.1). But, a cacophony of voices at Gaza universities showed that students have not reached anywhere near ‘boiling point’, nor are they seen likely to reach it in the near future. Sensibly, students were weighing their discontents with the barriers they face in calling for change. Thus, “while acquiring new understandings, [students found] themselves in growing dilemmas because they realize that reality does not necessarily accommodate their new understandings” (Xu, 2015, p. 69). The Arab revolutions made them feel even more confused about “compliance” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471), and rebellion. Of course, the reasons for this confusion go way beyond the barriers mentioned. In fact, the contemporary Arab world, more generally, was defined by Barakat (1993) “as an association of contradictions”, and complexities (p.22)²⁵². Nowadays, “the Middle East in many respects stands out as perhaps the region facing the most intensive contrast between old and new” (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012, p. 6). Despite differences, students in the Gaza Strip are part of this cultural context. According to Freire (2003), a traditional educational experience contributes to this confusion further, at least temporarily, since:

Those who use the banking approach, knowingly or unknowingly […] fail to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality. But sooner or later, these contradictions may lead formerly passive students to turn against their domestication and the attempt to domesticate reality. (Freire, 2003, p. 75)

Taking all this into consideration, the data show that students remain in a neutral condition that is similar to that of a ‘Brown Dwarf’, a substellar or an astronomical object that might

²⁵² According to Barakat (1993), the contemporary Arab world is “neither traditional nor modern, old or new, capitalist or socialist or feudal, Eastern or Western, religious or secular, particularistic or universalistic in its cultural orientations” (p.22).
be classified as either a sub-star or a super planet for it holds some of the characteristics of both. So far, students’ conflicting voices make it a challenge to discern whether students’ dissatisfaction will lead to reform in the future or their barriers will silence them before they achieve any “meaningful transformation” (See Freire, 2003, p.161). Hence, “in working towards liberation, one must neither lose sight of [the oppressed] passivity nor overlook the moment of awakening” (ibid., p.46).

Summary of Chapter Six

In this Chapter, I outlined firstly, the perspectives of the Gazan universities’ academic staff and students towards the changing socio-political context in the Arab world. Secondly, a discussion of the possible current and future impact of the Arab revolutions on the Gaza Strip and the HE experience was presented. Then I examined the new campus dynamics at Gaza’s universities with a particular focus on students’ discontent and barriers to their voice. Chapter Six concluded with a reflection on how students, displaying a cacophony of voices, remain split between compliance and resistance.
I embarked on this study to explore the past and current HE experience of educationalists at Gaza’s universities and how this experience may be evolving in the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world. This thesis has sought to contribute to knowledge about HE in the Gaza Strip, and beyond that, and the South more generally by answering three questions:

1. What are the perspectives of academic staff in the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities on their own past HE experiences?
2. What are the perspectives of students and their lecturers (academic staff) in the Faculties of Education on students’ current higher educational experiences?
3. How do educationalists in the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world, and what current or future impact do they think it will have on the education context at Gaza’s universities?

i. **Empirical Findings**

The empirical findings were explained in details in Chapters (Four, Five and Six). The following section will summarize these findings:

*In the past*, educationalists seemed relatively more passive in terms of shaping their HE experience. They tended to accept whatever opportunities were available to them. A ‘demobility’ structure restricted their movement not only from and to the Gaza Strip, but also within it. This, has “enframed” their imagination within what was possible (Mitchell, 1990, p.571), as well as increasing their social dependency on each other. A social network was necessary to access the different opportunities for HE and employment. On
the negative side, however, this sometimes has given way to practices of nepotism and *Wasta* in the Gaza Strip including the university context. The challenging circumstances in which my academic participants lived strengthened solidarity and co-operation at times, but weakened it at others. In many ways, this has impacted on their HE institutions and affected academic relations. Throughout my participants, albeit individually and socially vulnerable, worked to empower themselves in the hope of a better future.

**In the present,** students have been studying for their undergraduate degree under conditions of siege and a deteriorating economy. Consequently, for the majority, a specialization in education has been a practical choice. Females in particular have favoured working as teachers in “compliance” with societal gendered preferences (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). The overall result is that students’ HE journey seems to have started ‘*without aim, without hope*’ (Ms Etaf UB). The political culture at Gaza’s universities continues to negatively impact on students’ academic study. This has caused students and (a few lecturers) to be inclined towards neutrality, especially as their universities seem also concerned to present themselves as moderate HE institutions. Gaza’s universities also were found to suffer from contradictory impulses and practices, especially with regard to gender issues. Females, both students (and lecturers), were treated differently from males who seemed to enjoy more autonomy and freedom within their university campuses. Despite female students’ high academic achievement, their representation in the public sphere in Gaza remains limited. As for the Israeli war on Gaza of 2014, it was found to have added more insult to injury. It undermined further the functioning of universities in Gaza as well as impacting on my participants traumatically. The war has also negatively affected students’ academic achievement and their perspective on the present as they perceived themselves surrounded by loss, damage and violence. In these circumstances, their resilience remains questionable.

**In the future,** the “Arab Spring has clearly brought a change in the way that particularly young people engage in societal issues, and also in the way governments and public authorities [including HE institutions] view themselves and their constituents” (Andersson & Djeflat, 2012, p. 1). That said, the Arab Spring revolutions have had an impact on Gaza’s universities. Firstly, young students learnt from the revolutionary experience of the youth elsewhere, their successes and failures. After the Arab Spring, educationalists
also experienced a variety of emotions ranging between pessimism and optimism about the Palestinian case. Thirdly, the turbulence in Egypt reflected negatively on living conditions in Gaza and tightened the siege further on educationalists and their HE institutions. This resulted in students having antagonistic attitudes towards other Arabs, including Egyptians. Fourthly, on a few occasions, the students attempted to capitalize on the spirit of the revolution to call attention to their discontent. They held protests on educational and political matters and used some of the slogans that were used by the youth in the Egyptian Tahrir Square. Nonetheless, students sometimes misapplied the lessons from the Arab Spring to minor issues at their universities instead of calling for basic rights and freedoms.

Overall, although the revolutions in the Arab world seem to have triggered more awareness of students’ grievances and discontent, these are challenged by the traditional university contexts. Because of educational and political barriers, students voices are a cacophony; they remain split between “compliance” and resistance (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). How the HE experience will evolve in the future is uncertain. In the meantime, three themes seem powerful and are likely to influence the experience of HE in Gaza in the coming years: (1) Gaza’s universities will continue to struggle in a context of occupation and tradition to achieve a quality experience that is democratic; (2) funding is the main regulator of stability or instability at Gaza’s universities that can be used for and/or against students; and (3) the culture of these HE institutions will, albeit very slowly, open up as a result of increased female participation in HE. The interaction of these themes is unpredictable, therefore these developments are best looked at as a tray of colour beads in which the beads can be fused in different ways to create mosaic and envision contrasting realities of Gaza’s universities in the future.

ii. A Conceptual Reflection on the Findings

This study positions the Palestinian HE experience as part of a wider context of “violence and legitimate violence […] which according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, xi-xii) are] interchangeable since they are all rooted in a fundamentally arbitrary characteristic of human existence, namely, that relations of hierarchy and inequality are essentially power
relations in that they lack objective foundation in some universal principle of justice” (Cited in Swartz, 2013, p.99). Freire’s and Bourdieu’s selected concepts together provided an insight into the nuances of the Palestinian HE experience at Gaza’s universities on a deeper level allowing the analysis to move from the concrete to the abstract.

In Part two, the three findings chapters (Four, Five, and Six) address the various injustices which have shaped and continue to shape the HE experience of students and the academic staff in the past, present and future. Throughout the analysis I provided examples of how the sources of oppression and empowerment interacted in educationalists’ lives. The study focused on the various instances in which educationalists were dehumanized mainly by the Israeli occupation, but also by other parties, including their own community, Arab and Palestinian, even when this was sometimes camouflaged by “false generosity” (Freire, 1996).

Palestinian against Palestinian oppression was viewed as an indicator of the “duality” of the oppressed and the oppressor that manifested itself in the form of “horizontal violence” (Freire, 1996). In all the finding chapters, “symbolic violence” wove its way through my participants’ accounts, resonating with Freirean perspectives on oppression, and thickening the description of the Palestinian HE experience in the Gaza Strip (Bourdieu, 1990b). Symbolic domination was evident through educationalists’ “dispositions” (Swartz, 2013), which revealed their “fear of freedom”, “self-depreciation”, and “fatalism” (Freire, 1996). However, a decade’s history of occupation seems to have made this violence “misrecognized” (Bourdieu, 1996), “naturalized” (Bourdieu, 1984), and “reproduced” (Swartz, 2013, p. 100), sometimes under the guise of religion, tradition, or factional politics.

Shaped by overt and covert oppression, educationalists’ actions, despite attempts to develop resilience, were largely characterised by prescribed behaviour and a culture of “silence” (Freire, 1996). In their HE experience, students and their lecturers, on several occasions, were exposed to “banking education” and the practice of “antidialogics” (ibid.). These have contributed to their relative invasion by the logic of the oppressor, friend or foe. Consequently, the oppressive experience has been reinforced at Gaza’s universities across time.
iii. Theoretical Implications: Back to the ‘Invisible’

When I started this research, I had a feeling that there was something ‘invisible’ undermining academic work at Gaza’s universities. This started to be revealed through the interviews with my participants. Educationalists’ HE experiences pointed towards two layers of oppression: the external and the internal. The external oppression was evident as in the quote from Mr Omar UB below:

Currently, the West Bank is closed and there is no connection with them. In Gaza, we are considered as if in a prison, albeit a large one. The airplanes and bulldozers are surrounding us from all sides. The sea is for a long time restricted. Everything here is hit with frustration […]. All the world is against us. No one can leave or enter. The Rafah border is closed. The Israeli border is closed. Everything is closed, and our internal resources are zero …

(Mr Omar UB)

Internal oppression is much harder to elicit, however; the conflicts and contradictions with which my participants seemed to struggle pointed towards a degree of internal domination that is produced by the oppressor (Israeli occupation), but simultaneously is increased by inter alia Palestinians themselves as the oppressed. The invisible is best summarized in Freirean terms:

The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and recreate, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account…(Freire, 1996, p. 30)

The two layers of oppression, the external and internal, are interactive and influence each other. In this sense, educationalists contribute to counterproductive dynamics at Gaza
universities or what Mr Zeyad UB pointed out as a ‘*simultaneous process of construction and destruction*’.

To explain this, there is a physical construction (e.g. projects, teaching and learning) and destruction (e.g. bombardment, power cuts, lack of resources) happening at Gaza’s universities. Educationalists, as citizens of the Gaza Strip, are affected by this context. For instance, they live in multiple sieges (the occupation as well as the limitations and the “prescriptions” imposed on their freedoms and life choices, sometimes by their society, family and even universities). Edward Said, also points out that, in general, Palestinians themselves are “constructed and destructed […] since [they] authorize no part of the world and can only influence increasingly small bits of it” (Said, 1998, p. 37). However, as Freire asserts “one of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating” (Freire, 1996, p.33). This negative personal context reflects back on Gaza’s HE institutions through, for example, reproducing “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b), “silence”, “horizontal violence”, “banking education”, and “antidialogics” within the campuses of these universities (Freire, 1996).

It is therefore, as Freire argues, “the concrete situation of individuals conditions their consciousness of the world, and […] in turn this consciousness conditions their attitudes and their ways of dealing with reality” (*ibid.*, p. 111).

A simultaneous process of construction and destruction that is both external and internal implies a traumatizing experience of teaching and learning at Gaza’s universities for educationalists. It is one that in the short term is characterised by conflict, anxiety, exhaustion, frustration, wasted time, and disturbed effort, while in the long term it results in slow, limited and interrupted development, if at all. This complements Roy’s (1995) observation on an inherited structure of “de-development” in the Gaza Strip (p.110). This study, however, has explored this structure further as far as the educational context is concerned. It has also indicated its hybrid nature in which both the construction and the destruction emanates from within as well as outside educationalists. Hence, “the role of subjectivity in the struggle to change [oppressive] structures” is as important as “the objective transformation” (Freire, 1996, p.32). The de-development structure, is inherited
from the past as a result of successive occupations of the Gaza Strip and, as such, reflects a dynamic relationship between ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ oppression. The theoretical findings of this research also enhance our understanding of why the outcomes of some international projects have not been as successful as was hoped in the Gaza Strip (for example, see Le More, 2008). I believe that articulating the problem is the first step towards finding a solution that would lead reform and development efforts in the right direction in Gaza, and this is what my research has attempted to do.

iv. Research Contribution: A ‘Zoom-Out’

Audience and Marketplace

This research is important within the contemporary educational and developmental sphere. The primary academic audience for this study is ‘educational sociologists’. In particular, the research builds on conflict sociology. Nonetheless, the findings of this research could be useful to, at least, four other potential users: firstly, academics and analysts working in the fields of education, culture and politics; secondly, consultants or policy-makers working in the fields of education and development, including those in quality assurance units, project managers, and HE policy specialists; thirdly, historians; and fourthly, researchers working on education and conflict resolution which is “a grossly under-analyzed area” (Davies, 2004, p. 7)

Contribution to the Literature

This study draws on conceptual insights from Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed as well as on Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 133). It develops these theorists’ work by applying their concepts to the Gaza Strip, an Arab and Muslim culture, as well as an area of siege and conflict in the twenty-first century.
Nonetheless, the contribution hopefully extends beyond its academic disciplinary purpose. The lack of research in several areas of this topic makes my study a valuable addition to knowledge that has the potential to stimulate further scholarly studies in different fields. To the best of my knowledge, the last book that has discussed this sector in Gaza in sociological depth was written by Anabtawi in 1986. This study is also the first research on the impact of the Arab revolutions at Gaza’s universities.

From another perspective, this research has an ethical and human dimension. It attempts to give voice to Palestinian people who are oppressed under siege. This is very important from a historical, political and cultural perspective in order to understand and document Palestinians’ experiences. It is also important from an educational and development perspective, especially since the researcher is knowledgeable about the community in Gaza. As Watson (1994) points out:

> The problem is that so often outsiders/consultants spend brief periods in a country, believe they know the answers, write their reports on the basis of semi-preconceived ideas and then depart. [...] These reports lack [...] ‘internal’ understanding [...] which can only come from local personnel trained in the art of critical analysis (p. 94)

The study also builds on efforts towards strengthening the literature on the South from an indigenous viewpoint rather than the dominant Western theorizations about it. To sum up, this PhD project is a meaningful, original and significant academic study.

v. Implications for Practice, Policy and Future Research: A ‘Zoom-In’

So, given the research findings point to a dynamic of (internal and external) construction and destruction, three questions arise: (a) What does this mean for academic practice at Gaza’s universities? (b) What can be done to deal with this complex structure? (3) What

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253 This research operated in the midst of several under-theorized and under-analysed areas: conflict and education, oppression, experience, HE (in many of its aspects), the Arab Spring, ethical codes in conflict areas, and the Gaza Strip which is in itself a unique context.
future research is needed to tackle the problems identified? For the purpose of clarification, I visualize this dynamic in Figure C.1 below as similar to ‘an up-and-down swing’ where construction occupies one side and destruction occupies the other in never-ending motion. I also visualise this image as existing on two levels; the external (the university as part of the Gaza Strip), and the internal (the educationalists).

![Figure C.1 A Simultaneous Process of Construction and Destruction](image)

**Implications for Academic Practice at Gaza’s Universities**

A simultaneous process of construction and destruction that is both external and internal to my participants has a drastic impact on their teaching and learning practices at Gaza’s universities. The following suggestions may be helpful with respect to improving academic practice:

There is a need for (1) **Awareness**: students and the academic staff should be made aware of this problem of construction and destruction and their role in increasing their own oppression and that of others. Holding a set of relevant seminars\(^{254}\) may be a way to go forward; (2) **Authentic Dialogue**: Faculties of Education should work to create mutual

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\(^{254}\) These seminars on awareness could include; for instance, (a) workshops that explain works such as that of Paulo Freire, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; (b) discussions on issues such as ‘wasta’, conflict, social traditions, and their impact on the academic context; (c) well-being seminars, and (d) lectures which offer a comparative perspective on teaching and learning practices and on student agency.
platforms for educationalists to share their perspectives on the teaching-learning process in a safe environment where authentic dialogue can be promoted; (3) **Constructive feedback**: Faculties of Education should seek to take regular feedback from students on their classes that is confidential. The academic staff should encourage this feedback and benefit from its input; (4) **Sharing of resources**: Faculties of Education should work to create exchanges of students and academic staff between the different universities in Gaza through joint seminars, classes, and other activities; (5) **Responsibility for learning**: students and the academic staff should be encouraged to take up opportunities for professional and personal development. In a besieged context, the university should also encourage them to use their own resources and expertise in making these available for others as well as supporting the functioning of a National Teacher Development Centre that works to improve and monitor the quality of academic practice; and (6) **Engagement and co-operation**: the university administration should create more spaces for students and the academic staff to participate in governance issues at their HE institutions. They should also negotiate opportunities with other social institutions in which the students and the academic staff can get involved.

**Implications for Policy: Recommendations**

In order to move the ‘up-down’ motion to the advantage of construction, we need to empower Gaza’s universities, externally and internally. In an occupation and siege context, this empowerment cannot always be achieved from within the universities only. There is a need for an intervention that would connect these HE institutions to a lifeline, that is, international sources of academic and personal support. However, these links, projects or interventions should be tailored to the context and the experience of HE at Gaza’s universities in order to be successful. For this to be achievable, such efforts should not aim at “cultural invasion” (Freire, 1996, p. 133). Instead they should be established in mutual co-operation with the universities themselves, and with the aim of fulfilling an agreed vision. My research, in this respect, can potentially act as a memorandum of understanding on the Palestinian university experience in the Gaza Strip since it combines both the local and international perspectives of HE. Based on the findings of this study, I would offer nine policy recommendations:
To achieve reform, Gaza’s universities need to address the following: (1) **Develop a research culture**\(^{255}\): this is to reinvigorate the academic environment with new ideas, enhance co-operation, as well as increase universities’ reflection, transparency, relevance and accountability to the Gazan and the international community of HE; (2) **Build a technological infra-structure**: in a siege context, this would facilitate research and co-operation with local and international partners and connect educationalists to online libraries to compensate for the lack and out-of-date nature of resources. This infrastructure is also important for enhancing democratic practices at Gaza’s universities. It includes providing the universities with technological equipment, as well as offering IT support and training courses designed to update skills, especially for the older generation of the academic staff; (3) **Encourage student-led initiatives**: encouraging students’ involvement in their universities would help to improve their learning experience and informing the teaching practices at the Faculty. Giving students a voice would also contributes to a more democratic governance of Gaza’s universities, and this would empower them as agents of change in their community; (4) **Offer student scholarships**: most student participants would not have been to study at a university in Gaza without assistance in funding. International scholarships are also necessary to encourage them to study abroad, encourage better female participation in HE, and provide Gaza’s universities with a pool of well-qualified graduates in the future; (5) **Employ highly qualified junior staff**: this would allow Gaza’s universities to benefit from the new generations’ readiness to learn, enthusiasm to contribute, flexibility to adapt, as well as from their internet skills and connectivity in comparison to the older generation of the academic staff. The university should particularly aim to attract staff from a wider range of HE educational backgrounds, and mainly those who have studied in a liberal environment so as to balance the accumulated influence of traditional (Egyptian) universities; (6) **Restructure the Faculty**: reviewing the website of Gaza’s universities, it is clear that the Faculties of Education are structured according to a ‘tribal’ formation (i.e. separate departments of psychology, foundations of education, teaching and learning, religious education etc.).

\(^{255}\) A senior academic from the Quality Assurance unit at one of Gaza’s universities has now started researching how to promote a research culture at Gaza universities on the basis of this research recommendation.
The Conclusion

(Becher & Trowler, 2001). Restructuring the Faculty around research teams would encourage dialogue relating to areas of research interest and would refocus the Faculty less on bureaucratic administrative concerns, and more on knowledge production; (7) **Work in local and international partnerships:** Gaza’s universities need to find a unified platform to encourage co-operation with each other despite different political or ideological orientations. International partnerships would also connect these HE institutions to a wider community of knowledge and encourage them to go beyond their immediate role as universities concerned with teaching. This would reflect positively on the quality of HE in Gaza; (8) **Make institutional counselling available:** in a conflict area, universities’ counselling services are necessary to support students and the academic staff. These could be provided by local professionals or through international agencies and mental health charities; and (9) **Support students to obtain online employment opportunities:** unemployment impacts negatively on students’ psyche and academic practice. Any HE policy for construction should address this problem by making creative use of the Internet to support the graduates with online opportunities for employment in a place that is besieged from air, land and sea.

To summarize, as a result of the decades-long occupation of Gaza, destruction is an everyday fact on the ground. Of course, I am aware that some of these construction policy strategies are in place at Gaza’s universities. In fact, my own previous work experience instinctively seems to fit within these recommendations. However, I would like to stress that there is a need to accelerating and triangulate efforts, particularly in the areas mentioned above, so that, Gaza’s universities can accomplish change that is both sustainable and influential. The feasibility of these policy recommendations depends largely on human and material resources, some of which may be available locally (in the society) and within Gaza’s universities, but others may not, and here an external circle of

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256 For example, I founded and coordinated a scholarship programme for females. I also helped students establish a student club. I authored a winning proposal of 100,000 USD to establish a National Teacher Development Centre at one of Gaza’s universities. I also invited a European Union delegation to visit Gaza’s universities and dialogue with HE students. Furthermore, I participated in welcoming several foreign delegations to one Gaza university in which I was asked by the university administration to explain the mission of this university and introduce the delegates to the Palestinian HE experience in Gaza.
“true generosity” and “cultural synthesis”\textsuperscript{257} is desperately needed as a lifeline to support the local circle in the face of continuing destruction (Freire, 1996, p 161). In the long run, both local and international circles can together achieve a difference and push the ‘swing’ upwards to the construction side. Nonetheless, I concur with Freire that “every entity develops (or is transformed) within itself, through the interplay of its contradictions. External conditioners, while necessary, are effective only if they coincide with those potentialities” (Freire, 1996, p. 117).

**Future Research Directions**

The scale of what needs to be done in order to increase the weight of construction in comparison to destruction at Gaza universities is huge. To produce effective policy plans and decide on the development foci of this construction, there is a need for more data on Gazan universities. To achieve this goal, I suggest that it is important to explore the following as future research areas: (1) **Agency and governance**: What is the participation of the academic staff in university governance and how does this reflect on the teaching and learning process? How do different areas, such as funding, conflict, and politics affect university’s governance? How is it possible to promote student involvement in university governance? How do we link university governance to other social institutions? How do we enhance women’s participation in university governance? How can we promote the role of technology in university governance? How can we establish cohesion and cooperation among the different governances of Gaza’s universities?; (2) **Class and gender**: What are the issues affecting student participation in HE in Gaza? To what extent does class and gender affect the culture of professionalism at Gaza’s universities?; (3) **Teaching and learning**: What is the comparative experience of pre-service teachers at their universities and at their practical training at schools? What is the experience of students studying for their master’s degree at Gaza’s universities? What are the opportunities and the barriers to dialogue between the academic staff and students at

\textsuperscript{257} According to Freire, “in cultural synthesis, the actors who come from ‘another world’ to the world of the people do so not as invaders. They do not come to teach or to transmit or to give anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people’s world” (Freire, 1996, p. 161)
Gaza’s universities? What is the gap (if any) between scientific faculties and social science faculties at these universities?; (4) **Trauma:** How does trauma reflect on academic interaction between the different actors at Gaza’s universities? How does trauma affect the teaching and learning process at Gaza’s universities?; (5) **Policy and projects:** What projects have been conducted so far? To what extent were they successful? What were the obstacles, the successes and the failures? What are some of the possible areas for innovation and mutual co-operation at Gaza’s universities?; and (6) **The experience(s):** (Oral history) How does the oral history of academic staff inform their academic practice?; (Females) How does the experience of females at the university compare with their experience at home?; and (Study abroad) What is the HE experience of Gazan university students abroad?

vi. **Limitations of the Study: ‘Borders, Diamonds, Rocks, and Earthquakes’**

This thesis was exploratory and was conducted in multiple under researched contexts and in a conflict area; as such, several limitations need to be considered. Firstly, security issues and the difficult access to the Gaza Strip has meant that this research was conducted within imposed ‘borders’. That said, a few methodological and sampling choices were possible for this research project. The study could have benefited from employing, for example, focus groups where academic staff and students could have shared their perspectives in an open environment, participant observation of classes at Gaza’s universities, as well as the inclusion of a more wide-ranging sample. Secondly, the PhD designated time and word count framework limited my ability to include more themes on the past, present and future HE which could have enriched the analysis. Thirdly, looking for information on HE in Gaza was like diving into the ocean to look for rare ‘diamonds’. The scarcity and the

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258. "The bottom of the world's ocean contains vast supplies of precious metals and other resources, including gold, diamonds, and cobalt" (Howard, 2016, no pagination). However, "deep sea mining" is still an under-experimented area (ibid.) "A project off Papua New Guinea could begin as early as 2018, serving as a test case for an industry that could be highly lucrative. If it proves successful, it could kick off a boom of deep-sea mining around the world" (ibid.). Metaphorically, this is similar to the case of this research on the Gaza Strip in which HE is a significantly under-researched area and that this study is in many ways a pioneer in exploring this field from a sociological perspective.
out-of-date nature of resources on HE in the Gaza Strip have rendered taking a multi-disciplinary approach to the literature review absolutely necessary. None of these multi-disciplinary readings, however, could inform the research questions in any direct ways. Therefore I had to link the fragments together to build up an argument that is ‘educational’, and this felt almost as if I was rowing in stormy weather among the ‘rocks’. As such, I am conscious that I had sometimes to be creative in the analysis, since these links were not stated anywhere in the literature. Fourthly, the turbulent context in Gaza and the Arab world resulted in continuous changes over the years of conducting this study. Some of these were so dramatic in their implications for this work that I received them as an ‘earthquake’. For example, theousting of former Egyptian president Morsi in July 2013 by the current president Al Sisi’s takeover in May 2014 not only shattered the earlier analysis of the Arab Spring implications for the Gaza Strip, but also affected my access as a researcher. So this study has been conducted at a time when these events were still uncertain and evolving.

vii. An Open-Ended Note

So to conclude, a simultaneous process of construction and destruction has frustrated reform efforts in HE in Gaza and, in particular, international projects. If we are to achieve “transformation [that is] development”, this problem needs to be addressed (Freire, 2003, p.161). Above, I have suggested recommendations on how this can be approached. During my PhD in Cambridge, I myself have at least started working towards one of these suggested policies, namely, establishing a social enterprise, a ‘Remote Employment Agency’ to help graduates in the Gaza Strip. This study is in itself making a contribution towards liberation from oppression. Through “coding” and “decoding” educationalists’ accounts259, it also offers a “critical perception of [the participants’] concrete” experiences

259 According to Freire, “the coding of an existential situation is the representation of that situation, showing some of its constituent elements in interaction. Decoding is the critical analysis of the coded situation” (Freire, 1996, p. 86)
and a “total vision of [their] context” (Freire, 1996, p.86). Such a holistic picture can be helpful in “revers[ing] their starting point” of understanding their reality as well as informing Gaza’s universities’ reform in the future 260 (ibid., p.86). That said, there is an increasing literature on politics in the Gaza Strip, but there is little written on the devastating impact of siege and conflict on Gaza’s educationalists. This thesis has worked towards unravelling the social injustices and the complexities of academic life under occupation in the Gaza Strip. Turning my “research tool inward” to examine Gaza’s universities, including my fellow educationalists was an initiative to “reclaim […] the centrality of academic work in development” and the right of social engagement to shape the HE experience in Gaza. My critical stance, therefore, was “embedded in a sense of belonging and of commitment to [my community’s] transformation” (Barakat, 1993, p.13).

260 I concur with Freire when he asserts that, “when people lack a critical understanding of their reality, […] they cannot truly know that reality. To truly know it, they would have to reverse their starting point: They would need to have a total vision of the context in order […] to achieve a clearer perception of the whole” (Freire, 1996, p. 85)
Post-Study Reflection:
Researching at the Crossroads

In conducting this study, I felt privileged. I was researching at the crossroads between North and South; East and West; Muslim and Western civilizations; interdisciplinary sociological contexts, multiple theoretical insights; three time-spans (past, present, and future); two universities; two genders; and two generations. But, as a person, I was also researching at the crossroads between my subjective feelings as a Palestinian and the objective understanding of my HE based on the research conducted (Freire, 1996, p. 32).

Like my participants, I struggled for education under occupation. Between construction and destruction, I was at the crossroads. Unlike many, I had this unique opportunity to reflect on my own HE experience, to work through my own memories, and the collective memory of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (Ricoeur, 1999). In many ways, I was researching myself at the crossroads. Finishing this self-“conscientização” project (Freire, 1996, p.85), I realize that between oppression and liberation, again, I am now at the crossroads.

What impacted on me most was interviewing two generations of Palestinians. The inquiry with academics about their past was a discussion looking backward, and that with students facing forward. The former mostly reflected on a life that ‘had gone’, and the second about the present and a future that is yet to come. As someone in middle age, on the one hand, participants’ reflections on the past pushed me to think about my prospective years,
learning from their insights and regrets to improve my future. On the other hand, the students’ longing sometimes for agency and voice, made me wonder whether I have done enough in my youth as an educationalist.

In all, I was striving to find some common ground which would allow a more productive vision of the future to be possible for Gaza’s universities, as well as for me as a person. By the end, however, I realised that in our knowledge search, we all remain at the crossroads. It is, as T.S. Eliot states:

*We shall not cease from exploration,*  
*And the end of all*  
*Our exploring will be to arrive where we started and*  
*Know the place for the first time.*  

T.S. Eliot
APPENDIX 1 Research Questions, Aim, Objectives, and Goals

Research Question

Q1. What are the perspectives of academic staff in the Faculties of Education at Gaza’s universities on their own past higher education experiences?

Q2. What are the perspectives of students and their lecturers (academic staff) in the Faculties of Education on students’ current higher education experience?

Q3. How do educationalists in the Faculties of Education at Gaza's universities perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world, and what current or future impact do they think it will have on the education context at Gaza’s universities?

Research Aim and Objectives

Research Aim

Exploring the HE experiences of academic staff and students at the Faculties of Education at Gaza's universities and the ways in which this experience may be evolving in the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world.

Objectives

1. To highlight the main themes and challenges that run through the different HE experiences of Gaza’s educationalists, past and present.

2. To explain how Gaza’s educationalists perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world in relation to their universities’ educational context in the present and the future.

3. To provide an analytical perspective on how the Palestinian HE experience might have evolved from past to present and how it may evolve in the future.

Research Goals

1. To unravel the oppression and social injustices which might have impacted/continue to impact the HE experience of Gaza’s educationalists.

2. To support educational reform efforts in the university sector in the Gaza Strip.

3. To inform reform at other educational levels in the Gaza Strip by giving an insight into the experiences of students at the Faculties of Education, who are pre-service teachers.

4. To contribute to the history of Palestinian HE in the Gaza Strip.
5. To document the perspectives of the generation of academics who have witnessed the emergence of the Palestinian universities under occupation in Gaza and who are aging or retiring soon.

6. To give a voice to Palestinian educationalists in Gaza who are currently under siege.

7. To inform research on oppression, experience and how education is experienced in a conflict-affected area.
APPENDIX 2  A Review of Freirean Concepts

Oppression:

The figure below is a copy of Figure 2.2. It shows the selected concepts from Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which I have chosen in Chapter Two Section 2.2, as ‘landmarks’ in the oppressive HE experience at Gaza’s universities:

![Conceptual Tools From Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed](image)

Characteristics of an Oppressive HE Experience

The table below provides a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* insight into the selected Freirean concepts:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Concepts</th>
<th>Freire’s definition in the <em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em> Reference (Freire, 1996)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> De-humanization</td>
<td><em>De-humanization</em> is “a distortion of being more fully human”. This distortion ‘marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it” (Freire, 1996, p.26). It is “the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed” (1996, p.26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> False Generosity</td>
<td><em>False generosity</em> is “any attempt to ‘soften’ the power of the oppressor in defence to the weakness of the oppressed” (1996, p.26). “In order to have the continued opportunity to express their ‘generosity’ the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this ‘generosity,’ which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty” (1996, p.26). “True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity” (1996, p.27).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Prescription</td>
<td><em>Prescription</em> is “one of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed” (Freire, 1996, p.28-29). “Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness. Thus, the behaviour of the oppressed is a prescribed behaviour” (1996, p.29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Fear of Freedom</td>
<td>“The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom” (Freire, 1996, p.29). They “are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires” (1996, p.29). As such, “they refuse to appeal to others, or to listen to the appeals of others, or even to the appeals of their own conscience” (1996, p.30).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong> Oppressed-Oppressor “Duality”</td>
<td>“The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at the one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised” (Freire, 1996, p.30).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Self-deprecation</td>
<td><em>Self-deprecation</em> is “another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them” (Freire, 1996, p.45). “As long as their ambiguity persists, the oppressed are reluctant to resist, and totally lack confidence in themselves” (1996, p.46).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong> Fatalism</td>
<td>“Until [the oppressed] concretely ‘discover’ their oppressor and in turn their own consciousness, they nearly always express fatalistic attitudes towards their situation” (Freire, 1996, p.43). Thus, “under the sway of magic and myth, the oppressed […] see their suffering, the fruit of exploitation, as the will of God” (1996, pp.43-44). As such, they “are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation” (1996, p.46).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Horizontal Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Culture of Silence</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Banking Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Antidialogics</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.a</td>
<td>Conquest</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.b</td>
<td>Divide and Rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.c</td>
<td>Manipulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.d</td>
<td>Cultural Invasion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3  Dual Positionality: A Justification

As indicated in Chapter Two, Section 2.3, my dual positionality in this study was uniquely relevant. To explain this further, the literature shows that to be an outsider to the researched area is less problematic. Thus the concern about more trustworthy findings and the elimination of bias and value-laden interpretations seems to have been falsely attributed to the researcher’s ‘unfamiliarity’. However, this unfamiliarity could in fact cause a set of hidden vulnerabilities, such as cultural blindness (Bolak, 1997), and ethnocentricty (Osborn, 2004). My insiderness to the Gaza Strip in terms of avoiding these problems was helpful. Being a native speaker of the Arabic language and, moreover, familiar with the cultural norms and connotations of the community have facilitated the research in terms of gaining social access and establishing rapport, which are aspects that remain major challenges for outsider researchers (Ely & Anzul, 1991).

Since I am a Palestinian, I am considered by the community to be a legitimate researcher when it comes to studying the Gaza Strip. That said, outsider researchers are often seen as ‘Westerners’ who are not to be trusted to investigate colonized communities (Osborn, 2004), and are almost considered as suspect (Radsch, 2009). But this xenophobia could also result in generating further bias since people from the local community might engage in “impression management” in front of those they consider a foreigner (Sullivan, 2013) if the researcher is an outsider. More importantly, outsiders’ ‘unfamiliarity’ might also indicate an unpredictability (Radsch, 2009). This point is particularly a concern with regard to security and ethical issues in conflict areas, such as the Gaza Strip. My insiderness was an advantage since I did not have to encounter any of the abovementioned challenges which are usually experienced, even by the most scholarly outsiders (Smyth & Robinson, 2001; Liamputtong, 2010). This is not to claim that insiders come without problems, but rather to indicate the advantage of not needing to do the “preliminary work” necessary to “delve deeply into the research” (Ely & Anzul, 1991, p. 124).

It is acknowledged that familiarity may limit the reflexivity of the insider researcher and result in bias in the findings (Bolak, 1997, p.97). To avoid this Erikson (1986; cited in Wittrock, 1986, p. 121) recommends that the researcher should attempt to “make the
familiar strange and interesting again” (p. 121). I have taken this point seriously and was not in contact with any colleagues from Gaza's universities nor with relatives (except for primary family members) for almost two years before the time I interviewed them.

Nonetheless, I was aware that research conducted by managers on their institutions, or doctors on their hospitals, or teachers on their schools is fairly common (Ely & Anzul, 1991). For instance, in her book *Class Work: Mother's Involvement in their Children's Primary Schooling* (1998), Reay (1998) states that she conducted this research on a school which her own two children attended. Furthermore, the researched school was located in an area where she had lived for 25 years and thus some of her interviewees were actually her friends (Reay, 1998). Thus, although recognizing that these insider positions may include a range of psychological and social issues as the study will perhaps overlap with the researcher’s “professional obligations”, insider research remains valid (Hermann, 2001). With regard to this, Ely and Anzul (1991) rightly argue that one's familiarity has limits to its legitimacy. That is, even if I am to be considered an insider to Gaza, I should not assume knowledge of another educationalist's experience, however close I may be to that person. Having spent my childhood outside the Gaza Strip and also several years of study in the UK means that I can use a comparative and critical perspective to enrich this research.
APPENDIX 4 Reflexivity Measures

The measures I took to enhance reflexivity include the following:

1. Conducting **READING** of the literature on reflexivity, and on positionality (see Appendix 3).
2. Reflecting on the researcher’s HE experience as presented in the **PERSONAL ACCOUNT** of this study.
3. Using a **REFLECTIVE JOURNAL** to reflect on the research process, data and analysis (see Appendix 5).
4. Conducting a **SELF-INTERVIEW** for the researcher (see Appendix 5).
5. Designing a **TRIANGULATION** of sites, interviews, and participants and between theory and empirical data (See Appendix 17).
6. Discussing the **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES** of the mode of interviewing (see Appendix 6).
7. Reflecting on the fieldwork experience in the **FIELDWORK VIGNETTE** (see Appendix 11).
8. Contemplating power relations (Appendix 12), and designing a **POWER RELATIONS ANALYSIS SHEET** (see Appendix 13).
9. Designing **PRE-FIELDWORK SECURITY ASSESSMENT FORMS** (see Appendix 18), and a **SAFE COMMUNICATION AND DATA STORAGE SYSTEM** (see Appendix 19)
10. Writing a **POST-STUDY REFLECTION ACCOUNT**
11. Reflecting on scenes of academic life under occupation in the **PHOTO ESSAY** (see Appendix 23).
12. Including a researcher’s **ART BOOK** in which I reflect on the PhD research journey (See Appendix 24).
## APPENDIX 5 Supportive Research Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-interview</td>
<td>Pre-fieldwork</td>
<td>This is a semi-structured self-interview that I used as an earlier assistive mechanism to ensure a better quality research. A self-interview was helpful to discern any preconceptions that I had regarding this research topic on Gaza and to enhance reflexivity in this study.</td>
<td>I conducted a written interview for myself which aimed to provide answers to the different research questions. This made me more aware of my assumptions and alert to any surprises during the interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research reflective journal</td>
<td>With the start of fieldwork</td>
<td>This reflective journal was used to document thoughts, incidents and decisions throughout the research process. It was perceived as important for reflective and validity purposes.</td>
<td>The journal took the form of digitalized notes on Scrivener software (word documents/memos). Three sets of notes/memos were needed: memos about methods, memos about the interview data, and memos about any other thoughts or emerging ideas (Richards, 2009, p. 81).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Websites and CVs</td>
<td>Before the research interviews were conducted with the participants</td>
<td>Having prior background information about the participants’ CVs and universities' websites was assistive in asking the relevant questions for each participant. I could also include any newly arising issues, which was enriching to this research. This also helped me establish a better rapport at the start of the interview situation.</td>
<td><strong>Step (1):</strong> Reading participants’ CVs for general information to select the sample. <strong>Step (2):</strong> Browsing universities’ websites before conducting the interviews and delineating any issues into a set of research questions. <strong>Step (3):</strong> Reviewing each participant's CV before the interview was conducted to select/formulate the most relevant questions to be asked as pertaining to each participant’s case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Revisiting the literature</td>
<td>Throughout the research process, but more intensively at the end.</td>
<td>This was to (1) revisit theory, (2) update information on the Arab Spring and Gaza; (3) conduct a further critical reading of any newly published documents or reports from the selected universities or the Palestinian MoEHE, and (4) inform, as well as support the data analysis and the final thesis writing.</td>
<td><strong>Step (1):</strong> Conducting another literature search and retrieving digital resources. <strong>Step (2):</strong> Reading and taking notes as relevant; <strong>Step (3):</strong> Reflecting back and forth between data and the literature. <strong>Step (4):</strong> Integrating the literature with the analysis of the empirical data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.

These steps occurred simultaneously.
APPENDIX 6 The Mode of Interviewing and Gaza Information Society Statistics

This appendix was written in preparation for the fieldwork. It presents, firstly, a discussion of the research mode of interviewing in terms of advantages and disadvantages and, secondly, the Gaza Information Society statistics.

a) Research Mode of Interviewing: Advantages and Disadvantages

With the current technological advances, Sullivan (2013) argues, Skype and other social media are increasingly used for research and interview purposes. Similarly, Rogers (1976) explains that in “the last decade […] there has been a shift to the use of the telephone, and now telephones are being used for local and long-distance interviews with specialized and non-specialized populations” (p. 51). Thus there are different ways in which research interviews can be conducted at distance. However, researchers, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) recommend, should select the appropriate method based on its “suitability [which] needs to be considered in light of the particular research endeavor” (p. 108).

For this research, using Skype and telephone was both a necessity and a convenience. The literature points out some of the advantages of telephone interviewing that apply to Skype as well. Firstly, the restricted physical access to the Gaza Strip requires finding a way of conducting the interviews from a distance. As Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) argue, interviewing participants in conflict areas by telephone or Skype is also a precautionary measure in the design of research on conflict areas in order to ensure the safety of the researcher and the researched. From another perspective, this is likely to “increase data quality” for it gives the participant a feeling of anonymity and hence encourages participation and disclosure (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 108; see also Oppenheim, 1992, as cited in Gray, 2009, p.391). Moreover, interviewing by telephone, or Skype (no video), reduces bias that might be generated as a result of the interviewer and the interviewee becoming involved in conscious or unconscious self-impression management that may occur in face-to-face communication (Sullivan, 2013). The suggested mediums of interviewing give participants a “sense of freedom” and convenience as they can control when and where to be interviewed (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p.110).
Telephone interviewing may occasionally be favoured over face-to-face interviewing for cultural and religious reasons since some of the male participants might find it inconvenient to be interviewed in person by a female researcher. The same advantage is offered by Skype since participants can control whether to turn on the video based on their preference and comfort. Administrative and financial reasons are also among the important considerations since telephone and Skype are thought to be less time-consuming, can enable access to participants in different geographical locations, and usually involve lower costs than conducting fieldwork that requires travel (Rogers, 1976; Gray, 2009). For myself, as a student researcher, although both telephone and Skype are in fact good options, using Skype for interviewing remains less expensive than using the telephone. Having an increased interest in technology, young people usually prefer Skype (Sullivan, 2013). In case young (or old) participants would prefer a face-to-face interview; this option remains available in Skype.

According to Cooper (2009), however, “the online interview presents both methodological and ethical challenges” (p. 250). This means that the telephone needs to be presented as an option since the ownership as well as the use of a telephone or mobile technology is much more common than computers, the Internet, or Skype (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). This issue is sensitive when it comes to interviewing elderly academics (Minocha et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2013), or students from a low socio-economic background. Furthermore, using Skype is susceptible to more technical problems (technology failure, unclear recording, unstable connection) than the telephone (Simeonsdotter Svensson, Pramling Samuelsson, Hellström, & Jenholt Nolbris, 2013), or lack of electricity supply may prove problematic as there is an almost daily power cut in the Gaza Strip. From another perspective, Sullivan (2013) indicates that “it is possible to track conversation, locations, and identities on the internet […] and that] Skype even has the right to record […] conversations” (p.58). Despite this, however, Skype, as mentioned above, is increasingly used in social research, and similar issues over privacy are also associated with telephone and other interview mediums.

263 The age of retirement from full-time positions in Gaza universities is usually 65, but academic staff may continue to teach at these universities on a part-time or hourly basis even after 70 years of age.
The alternative medium of telephone is not without its challenges either. The main criticism of this mode of interviewing is that it “lacks […] visual cues […] which may make the interview more mechanical” and less motivating (Rogers, 1976, p. 63). Nonetheless, experiments and fieldwork research comparing telephone with face-to-face interviewing found “no significant differences in responses” between them (as cited in Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 110; see also Rogers, 1976, p. 65). Another argument regarding telephone interviewing and Skype is the concern about how to obtain informed consent from the participants (Sullivan, 2013). But, as Liamputtong (2010) indicates, “written consent can be intimidating to many cultural and ethnic groups” (p. 54). People from Arab nations (including the Gaza Strip) are more used to an oral culture and do not feel comfortable “leaving a paper trail” that could have repercussions for them in the future (Radsch, 2009, p. 95).

In brief, the advantages of using Skype and the telephone as interview mediums outweigh the disadvantages in the case of this particular research. In the first place, Skype will be offered as the primary interview medium, with the participant being given the choice between a video or no-video interview. A democratic approach (offering telephone as an alternative choice), however, will be used only when necessary. A similarly flexible approach was adopted by Minocha et al. (2013), for example, when they gave their elderly participants the right to select the medium of interviewing. Thus I am of Smyth’s (2001) opinion that “many of the problems can be alleviated by democratizing the process of research itself” (p.11).

b) The Gaza Strip Information Society Statistics

Since the modes of interviewing in this research are both Skype (primary) and telephone/mobile (alternative), it will be useful to keep in mind relevant statistics on the Gaza Strip as an information society.

The sections below have retrieved information, with adjustments to format, from tables available on the website of the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics. These include statistics for the year 2011 on the Gaza Strip in terms of the following: firstly, the availability of ICT equipment at home; secondly, the availability of household computers by type of governorate and locality; and, finally, the percentage distribution of persons of 10 years and above who use the Internet in the Gaza Strip.

First: Percentage of Households Who Have ICT Equipment at Home in the Gaza Strip, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet at Home</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Line</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Phone</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second: Percentage Distribution of Households by Availability of Computer, Governorate and Type of Locality, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Computer</th>
<th>Internet at Home</th>
<th>Telephone Line</th>
<th>Mobile Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaza Strip</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Gaza</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza City</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deir Al-Balah</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khan Yunis</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafah</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The main research sites are located in Gaza City

---

### Third: Percentage Distribution of Persons of 10 Years and Over Who Use Internet as Related to Selected Background Characteristics, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Characteristics</th>
<th>Internet Use</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses</td>
<td>Does not Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Territory</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bank</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza Strip</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palestinian Territories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Locality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camps</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

APPENDIX 7  The Interview Guide

Contents of the Interview Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Interview Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Themes for Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Indicative Research Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Notes on the Interview Guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Interview Aims

The aims of the interviews with academic staff are to:

- Explore how academics' experiences of HE have been influenced by the life events in the Gaza Strip.
- Examine their college experience and the way in which it has contributed to their current professions as academics at Gaza's universities.
- Identify academics' perspectives on themselves and their evaluations of their HE experiences.
- Elicit academics' views on their students' current HE experiences.
- Listen to how academics compare their own past HE experience with the present HE experience of their students.
- Explore academics' views on the Arab Spring and whether they expect the shifting socio-political context in the Arab World to reflect (if at all) on the educational context at Gaza Universities.

The aims of the interviews with students are to:

- Explore how students' experiences of HE have been influenced by the life events in the Gaza Strip.
- Identify challenges faced by students in their current college experience.
- Listen to students' reflections on how their HE experience may influence their future career in society.
- Identify students' perspectives of themselves, their lecturers, and their evaluation of their universities.
- Explore students' views on the Arab Spring and whether they expect the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world to reflect (if at all) on the educational context at Gaza's Universities.
B. Themes for exploration

In answering the three main research questions, the researcher will, in the interview questions, briefly refer to the four thematic categories: firstly, life events and the HE story; secondly, college life; and thirdly, self-perception (Wengraf, 2001). The fourth category is concerned with the perception of the impact of the Arab Spring on the universities in Gaza. For more details, see a copy of Figure 3.5, the Interview Wheel, below:
C. Indicative Tables (1,2,3,4) of Interview Questions

The four thematic categories mentioned above have provided the basis for the interview questions in the following four indicative tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question Category</td>
<td>Can you tell me what/where you have studied for your HE?</td>
<td>Overall, how do you find your experience of study at this university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What factors influenced your choice?</td>
<td>- What/who motivated you to study for HE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What/who motivated you to study for HE?</td>
<td>- What factors influenced your choice of university/major?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Overall, how was your HE experience?</td>
<td>- Would you be interested in pursuing post-graduate studies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To what extent have you enjoyed/benefited from you earlier HE? Do you regret anything about this experience?</td>
<td>(Why?/ Why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How easy was it for you to get an academic job at the university afterwards?</td>
<td>- Do you plan to travel abroad for your postgraduate studies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do the general life (political and cultural) conditions in Gaza affect you/ your students’ HE opportunities today?</td>
<td>(Why/ Why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What should be the role of HE in Gaza?</td>
<td>- How do the general life (political and cultural) conditions in Gaza affect your HE experience today in Gaza?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do you experience any restrictions from the university, family, society, political context etc.?</td>
<td>- Are there any restrictions from the universities, family, society, political context etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How does the experience you had previously in HE compare to the one your students are having today at Gaza universities?</td>
<td>- Has the university changed in any way since your first year of studying here? (How? Why not?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What are the difficulties that you have/currently encounter in pursuing your HE?</td>
<td>- Are there any difficulties that you have/currently encounter in pursuing your HE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Would you advise your students to continue their HE within Gaza’s universities or abroad?</td>
<td>- What are the opportunities for your study at this university in Gaza?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Why?/ Why not?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How has the university in Gaza changed (if at all) in the past 10-15 years?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Life</td>
<td>Table (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you describe your college life during HE?</td>
<td>- Would you advise your friends/other family members to study at the same university? Why/Why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What were the conditions of access and finance etc.... for you?</td>
<td>- What do you enjoy/don’t enjoy about studying at the university?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What were some of the other difficulties you faced during your college life at the university?</td>
<td>- How would you describe college life at the university?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you describe your social life during university (relationship with colleagues, extracurricular activities etc.)?</td>
<td>- What type of relationship do you have with your colleagues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What type of relationship did you have with your lecturers at the university?</td>
<td>- How would you describe your relationship with your lecturers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are your views of these lecturers (in terms of fairness, openness, encouragement, responsibility etc.)?</td>
<td>- What do you think of the pedagogical style at the university?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To what extent were you allowed to practice your identity as a Palestinian inside the university campus?</td>
<td>- Are you encouraged to discuss and participate inside class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What was the pedagogical style followed? Do you think it was effective?</td>
<td>- To what extent are you satisfied with your HE at the university today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To what extent was dialogue encouraged inside the class?</td>
<td>- What is your evaluation of the lecturers at your university (fairness, openness, discipline, qualifications etc.)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How much did your HE experience prepare you for your current work as an academic at the university (skills/knowledge, etc.)?</td>
<td>- How much do you think your HE studies will prepare you for your future career as a professional educationalists?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you prefer to teach your students today? Why?</td>
<td>- How do you describe the relationship between students and university management staff?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are students' expectations of you as a lecturer?</td>
<td>- To what extent are you encouraged to participate in academic co-operation with your colleagues and lecturers at your university and other universities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you describe your academic relationship with university colleagues and management working at the same university?</td>
<td>- To what extent are you able to contribute with your feedback or opinion to inform improvements in the teaching-learning process and management at the university?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To what extent do you think your students are able to become successful educationalists in the future? Why/Why not?</td>
<td>- What changes do you wish to introduce to your students as an educationalist in the future?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you have any co-operation in research etc. with academics from other universities in Gaza or abroad?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To what extent does the university encourage you to continue your HE studies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To what extent does the university encourage your students to continue their HE studies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Perception Table (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the typical characteristics of an academic/educationalist in Gaza today?</td>
<td>- Who is/are your model lecturer (s) at the university? What do you appreciate about him/her?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do you think of these characteristics?</td>
<td>- What are the typical characteristics of an academic/educationalist in Gaza today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why have you chosen to work as an academic at the university?</td>
<td>- What are the typical characteristics of a student in Gaza today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What role is expected from you with regard to the university/ the community in general?</td>
<td>- What preference do you hope to pursue in the future?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you see yourself contributing to the university/ community in Gaza?</td>
<td>- Will you consider an educationalist job in the future? Why / Why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do you consider to be your strengths/ areas for improvement as an academic/ educationalist working at the university today?</td>
<td>- Do you think it will be easy for you to get an academic/ educationalist job in the future? Why/ Why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What opportunities do you have for continuing your HE/ personal and professional development?</td>
<td>- As an educationalist, what role is expected of you with regard to the university/ the community in general?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What limitations do you encounter in pursuing these opportunities?</td>
<td>- How much do you think you are willing to / can fulfil these expectations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you compare these opportunities with those of academics at other universities outside Gaza?</td>
<td>- What do you consider to be your strengths/ areas for improvement as a student/ a future educationalist?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Will you consider transferring your work somewhere abroad? Why / Why not?</td>
<td>- What opportunities do you have for continuing your HE/ personal and professional development?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is your strategy for overcoming/dealing with these limitations?</td>
<td>- What limitations do you encounter in making use of these opportunities/ improving yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What can you do to enhance your opportunities for personal developments?</td>
<td>- What can you do to deal with these limitations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do you compare with other students at the universities in Gaza (from a social, economic, or academic perspective)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do you compare with other students at universities outside Gaza? (from an academic and professional perspective)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do you have any personal strategy for your own academic and professional development?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## D. Notes on the Interview Guide

- This interview guide is not a conclusive edition: The above questions will be subject to further revisions and adjustments based on the fieldwork progress and each interview situation.

- From the above indicative list, the research questions are selected as relevant to the context of the interviewee's experience.

- The themes for exploration are not necessarily covered in one participant interview; the collected idea from of all of the participants' interviews conducted should feed into the three research questions and achieve the research aims.
APPENDIX 8  Research Invitation Letter

Dear __________

I am writing to invite you for an interview as a part of my research on 'Academic Life Under Occupation: The Impact on Educationalists at Gaza's Universities'. I am a PhD student at the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University. This research has been reviewed by, and received ethical clearance from, the Faculty in the University of Cambridge.

In researching this topic, I am interested in looking at the past and current higher education experience of educationalists at Gaza's universities and how this experience may be evolving in a shifting socio-political context in the Arab world. The participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. All transcripts of interviews will be kept confidential. For more details on the research and your participation, please see the Research Factsheet attached.

I hope that you would be interested in participating in this study's interviews and that I may contact you by telephone/e-mail within the next few days to make an appointment.

Thank you for your help,

Kind Regards,

Mona Jebril

PhD Candidate in Education
Supervisor: Prof Diane Reay
Faculty of Education
University of Cambridge
mj409@cam.ac.uk
APPENDIX 9  Participant Research Factsheet

Participant Research Factsheet

Research Title: Academic Life Under Occupation: The Impact on Educationalists at Gaza's Universities

Researcher's Name: Mona A.S. Jebril
Researcher's Supervisor: Prof. Diane Reay
Student Affiliation: Faculty of Education- University of Cambridge

Dear Participant,

This factsheet provides important information with regard to your participation in this interview research, so please make sure you read it. If you have any further inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me on this e-mail: mj409@cam.ac.uk.

Thank you very much for your help,

Kind Regards,
Mona

1. What is this study about?

This study explores the past and present HE experience of educationalists at Gaza's universities and how this experience might be evolving in a shifting socio-political context in the Arab world.

2. What does this research aim to achieve?

This research aims to: firstly, highlight the main themes and challenges that run throughout the different HE experiences of Gaza educationalists' past and present; secondly, explain how Gaza educationalists today perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world in relation to their universities' educational context in the present and the future; and thirdly, provide an analytical perspective on how the Palestinian HE experience might have evolved from present to past and perhaps into the future.

3. Why is this research important?

Understanding the HE experience of academics and students under occupation is important for informing future reform, educational policy and the documentation of Palestinian HE history in the Gaza Strip. The research is also...
important for enriching the wider dialogue on the Arab Spring with regard to the Palestinian HE context. Communicating the Palestinian experience to a wider international audience is important for enhancing world cultural understanding, as well as for informing the sociological field of knowledge with perspectives indigenous to the Gaza Strip.

### 4. What are the research questions?

The research has three main research questions:  
Q1. What are the perspectives of academic staff at the Faculties of Education on their past HE experiences?  
Q2. What are the perspectives of students and their lecturers (academic staff) on students' current HE experience?  
Q3. How do educationalists in the Faculties of Education at Gaza's universities perceive the shifting socio-political context in the Arab world and what current or future impact do they think it will have on the education context at Gaza's universities?

### 5. Why have I been chosen?

The selection of all participants is based on how well they fit the research sampling criteria. Thus you have been chosen because your experience and participation is seen as uniquely enriching for this study on HE in the Gaza Strip.

### 6. How many people are participating in this study?

In total, this research will interview 30 participants, 15 academics and 15 students

### 7. What rights do I have as a participant? (anonymity, confidentiality, withdrawal, no harm)

As a participant in this research, you have several rights that will be protected at all times.

- **Anonymity:** Your name and biographical information will not be shared with anyone except the researcher; it will not be displayed in any research drafts or subsequent publication.

- **Confidentiality:** Any request you make for information to remain confidential will be strictly adhered to; it will be anonymized and presented as aggregated and unidentifiable data.

- **Withdrawal:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview or shortly afterwards (within 3 days), in which case, your decision to withdraw will be respected and your information and data will be immediately destroyed.
d. No harm: as all your biographical information will be anonymized and protected at all stages of the research and afterwards, so that no harm is caused to you or to your university. Any issues related to your university will be discussed as themes and no stigmatization of your institution will result from conducting this research. All interview audio data will be destroyed shortly after the PhD research has been conducted.

| 8. | **How will the interview be conducted? (Interview protocol)** |
| 9. | **What is the duration of the interview?** |
| 10. | **Can I choose the mode of interviewing?** |
| 11. | **While in the Skype interview, can I turn off the camera?** |
| 12. | **Will the interview be recorded?** |
| 13. | **Will I have a copy of the recording or to be able to review the transcripts of the interview afterwards?** |
| 14. | **How will the data be analysed?** |

- The interview will be conducted by Skype.
- On average, the interview will last between 60 and 90 mins. If you have any problems with this, please contact the researcher.
- The primary interview mode is Skype. However, if you have any difficulty or concerns with regard to Skype interviewing, please inform the researcher in order to work out an alternative.
- You are absolutely free to choose between a Skype phone or a Skype video, in which case, the researcher will choose the same as your preference.
- For the sake of analysis, it is important to record all interviews. However, shortly after the completion of the PhD study, the audio-file of your interview will be completely destroyed. If you have any further questions about this point, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.
- I am sorry, but it will not be possible to distribute copies of the recording or transcripts of the interviews to any participants.
- The data will be analysed through coding and thematic analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Will my Skype video be analysed as part of the research data?</td>
<td>No, your Skype video will not be analysed as part of the research data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>What voice does this research represent?</td>
<td>This research represents the Palestinian voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>How will the information I provide be used?</td>
<td>The information you provide will be coded and then categorized according to themes for subsequent analysis and interpretation so as to inform, as appropriate, the three main research questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Will this study get published?</td>
<td>This study is conducted for the fulfilment of the PhD in Education degree at Cambridge. It is possible, though, that this study will get published in the future. In such a case, participants’ confidentiality and anonymity will be completely protected. At this point in time, however, there is no plan to publish this research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Why is my contribution important?</td>
<td>Since you are an educationalist, your contribution to this study is very important. Your insights and discussion of your HE experience will enhance the understanding of Palestinian HE in general, including its challenges and potentials. This is valuable for enriching the history of Palestinian HE as well as for educational reform in Gaza in the future. That your unique experience as an educationalist in the Gaza Strip is communicated to a wider audience and that your voice from a situation under siege is heard will also make a significant contribution to world knowledge of an area under occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>How will I benefit from participation?</td>
<td>There is no financial benefit associated with participation in this research. However, it is hoped that the interview situation will be a friendly conversation and an opportunity for reflection and exchange of ideas. In the PhD research and in any publication afterwards, the co-operation of Palestinian participants and their valuable contribution to world knowledge on HE in the Gaza Strip will be appreciated and acknowledged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 10 Tracking the Past HE Experience of the Academic Staff: ‘A Sample’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Historical Timeline</th>
<th>Educational Timeline</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Career Info.</th>
<th>Notes/Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Al Nakbah: Gaza occupied by Egypt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-First Intifada erupted while she was studying for her BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Travelled to Egypt when Gaza was under Israeli rule. What were the conditions/processes of this travel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>First Palestinian Intifada in Gaza</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Worked under occupation rule in Gaza witnessed the shift to the peace process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Hamas emerges; Palestinian declaration of independence (by Yasser Arafat)</td>
<td>1989 B.A</td>
<td>Cairo University -Egypt-</td>
<td>Teacher at Governmental Schools - Gaza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Oslo agreement; the return of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)/ Withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces from Gaza; closure policy began</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1994-2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Al Aqsa Intifada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Worked at the UA before and after the revolutions in the Arab World.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Arafat dies</td>
<td>2004 M.A</td>
<td>UA - Gaza Strip/ Palestine</td>
<td>Lecturer of Education at the UA - Gaza</td>
<td>…etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Israeli ‘Disengagement’ of settlements in the Gaza Strip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Hamas wins elections and forms government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip; dissolution of Hamas government by President Abbas; emergency government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Gaza War (codenedamed as Cast Lead Operation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Arab Spring Revolutions</td>
<td>2006 PhD</td>
<td>Nottingham University -UK-</td>
<td>(2006-Present)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Israeli 8-day war (codenedamed as Pillar Could); Cairo Agreement and Doha Declaration for reconciliation between the PLO movement (Fatah, and the Islamic movement (Hamas);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Agreement reached between Hamas and Fatah to form a unity government; Israeli War (codenamed as Operation Protective Edge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Palestinian’s upgraded status at the UN
This is a review of some selected aspects of my fieldwork experience that give an insight into the specific cultural and political context in which this study has been conducted. It includes a discussion of communication: its challenges; its rapport; its fun, its culture; and its humanity.

**Communication and its challenges**

Communicating with my participants was not without challenges. Firstly, in order to be able to send the research invitation and factsheet, I had to communicate by e-mail. Not all participants, especially those who were academic staff, had their e-mails included in their CVs, and some had invalid e-mail addresses or no e-mail address at all. When I called Mr. Omar UB to inquire about his e-mail, for instance, he answered, ‘I don’t deal with e-mails and such things’. Mr Abdel Rahman UB gave me a wrong e-mail address for his daughter. This meant that I had to keep calling him back and forth until I could send him the documents. But finally, this lecturer did not even check them. Ms Lamia UB seemed not to have an e-mail address at all. To save her embarrassment, I preferred to cut it short and do the research briefing on the phone.

The interviews with participants from Southern Gaza were very often interrupted because of bad internet or mobile connection in comparison to those from Gaza city. This necessitated that I would call and recall several times, and in the worst cases, postpone the interview. As far as Skype was concerned, my participants fell into one of two categories: those who were very familiar with the program, and those who had not heard of it before, but wanted to learn. Those from the second group needed extra effort. Nonetheless, I viewed this as an opportunity to help them use this technology to be able to connect for this interview as well as to use it for other family and academic purposes afterwards. At least, one academic and three other students used Skype for the first time in their lives through this research interview. Two more academics mentioned that they were encouraged to instal it and learn about it in the very near future.

Because of frequent power cuts in Gaza, I had to adapt to my participants’ circumstances. However, neither of us was sure when we could actually have the interview conversation. Although it was inconvenient for me, I had to accept conducting the interviews in a
spontaneous manner for a few participants. This meant that I had to keep checking my e-mail and mobile for any text messages from Gaza. Furthermore, regardless of wherever or how I was, I had to go back to my college room and call my participants as I could not carry my laptop and the recording equipment with me at all times. This also disturbed my daily schedule. The interview with Mr. Zeyad UB, for example, finished after 12:00 am; the interview with Ms Etaf UB started at 05:00 am, and one student gave me two provisional appointments.

Expecting this context of interviewing beforehand helped me to maintaining a flexible approach without affecting the quality of the data collected. Thus I had my desk ready all the time with equipment, research questions, blank sheets of papers, the participants’ other contact details in addition to batteries and recorder chargers. I also set an automatic fill-up of my Skype phone so as to use it easily whenever necessary. Furthermore, I contemplated an alternative plan/s for each interview situation so as to handle any interruption in the best manner possible, but there were still some situations over which I had no control. For example, Mr. Hassan UA had his right arm broken at the time of the interview. We could not connect except by mobile. Therefore Hassan had to open the speaker function which meant the voice was not very clear, and I could not ask him to hold the mobile either. In the end, this was okay, as the transcription was done only by me and so I could recall these small inaudible parts of our conversation. In general students were more competent at using Skype than their lecturers (see appendix 20).

**Communication and its rapport**

Interestingly, the difficulties in communicating with my participants actually facilitated rapport and trust between the researcher and the interviewees. That said, calling the participants, emailing them, as well as texting them informally on their mobile phones exposed me to the circumstances of their social lives. When I called Ms Lamia UB to inquire about whether she had an e-mail, she was in the hospital waiting for her daughter to give birth, and so later on, I had to congratulate her on the newborn baby; Ms Jamila UA was still in grief over the death of her husband and expecting to have her labour in the coming few weeks, and so I consoled her and wished her a safe delivery soon; Ibtisam UB was undergoing a divorce in the same week that I called and because she knew me previously as a lecturer, she was looking to me for support which I could not but give. It was neither human, nor feasible for this study for me to ignore these circumstances. Sometimes, participants’ relatives had also
picked up their mobile or assisted them in the Skype connection. All these coincidences meant that the interview situation was a friendly encounter.

**Communication and its fun**

I will mention three episodes in which I had considerable fun. Firstly, one of the most annoying yet funniest situations I encountered in the course of my fieldwork was with a potential candidate whom I did not, in the end, interview. This lecturer was an old man who lived in Southern Gaza and although he had an e-mail address, he did not seem to use it ever. Whenever I called him on his mobile, his wife would reply to me first. Then he would mention that the mobile network was bad because of the power cut, and that was in my opinion understandable. Skype seemed out of question and so I did not discuss it as an issue at all. Finally, the man gave me a time when there would be electricity. He asked me to call him the next day precisely at 10:00 pm Gaza time. I was so excited that we could finally have the interview, and the next day had prepared everything on my desk, set the recording ready, and called him at 10:00 pm precisely as he suggested. This time, it was not his wife, but his son who replied to me, so I felt optimistic with the change. He told me that there was electricity, but his Dad was sleeping!

The second situation was with Mr Ashraf UB. This academic had not used to Skype before. When he turned the camera on, the participant seemed very formal and was moving his eyes around which indicated that there were others sitting in the room behind his computer. I had the feeling that Ashraf’s family were expecting this occasion to be special. Being aware that this participant was new to Skype, I realized quickly that the participant and his family were expecting something like a TV broadcasted interview. In order not to fail their expectations, I took up the role of the broadcaster at the beginning in terms of voice tone. I also had no problem formally showing formally my gratitude for him for this opportunity and highlighting the importance of his contribution to my research, as this was of course true.

Having a ten-minute break towards the middle of each interview, moreover, helped to create a relaxed and fun atmosphere. For example, as a warm-up after this short interval, I would usually start by asking my interviewees whether they had had any chance for tea or dinner etc. One of them mentioned that he had a *baklava*, a traditional ME confectionary, and immediately took a mobile shot of it and sent it to me by e-mail. This was a male student from the UA and I saw in responding to him an opportunity to increase rapport in the interview, and so I replied
to him, ‘Wow, I really miss it, lucky you!!!:)’. But chatting about dinners was personally beneficial for me as well. Since I was so involved in my researcher role, I noticed that a recurrent theme among the different female participants was that they were all on a diet. Unlike them, I was usually eating tasty cakes in the break, and so the interviews made me think that perhaps it was time for me to start a diet too.

**Communication and its culture**

My insider positionality made me aware of culturally sensitive issues which I took into consideration through the interviews. For example, male academics who turned on the video in Skype, seemed to avoid direct eye contact since the researcher was a female. This is a common religious and cultural practice in Gaza. I tried to help the participant by shifting my eyes sometimes so that he could look comfortably. In the interview with Mr Omar UA, moreover, the weak internet connection on his side made it difficult for him to turn on the camera even though he wanted to. In this case, I had also to keep the Camera off from my side as well. As part of the same culture, I did not feel comfortable that he would look at me while I was not able to see him at all. Omar mentioned towards the end of the interview that he wished to visit the UK, and as a compliment I indicated with enthusiasm, since he was my colleague, that he was welcome. In our culture, for an unmarried woman to show such enthusiasm towards a married man might be taken seriously by his wife, who might have been present around. So I had quickly to readjust my reaction to save my participant embarrassment.

Another instance was with Khaled UB. This student offered to be interviewed at 09:00 pm (Gaza time) for two hours. Through the camera, I could see that he was sitting on a desk in his room. Towards the middle of the interview, Khaled started to get irritated and kept looking around. He was happy to continue the interview. All of a sudden, I noticed his father walking behind him. In Gaza, it is socially unacceptable, especially in rural areas where Khaled lives, to Skype with (an unmarried) woman from one’s room at night. I realized then that his father was roaming around in order to indicate to me that the interview should end. If I had done so immediately, this would have embarrassed my participant in front of me as it would have shown him to be under the control of his father and this would usually end up with a fight between the father and his son. I also felt intimidated to be thought of in that way. So, I tried
to ask one or two short questions and then ended the interview, thanking the student and sending my regards to his family.

A similar situation was encountered in the interview with Talal UA. I was asking the participant whether he had changed the way he dressed or behaved when he went to train as a teacher in the school when someone entered the room from behind the Camera. I noticed that Talal felt nervous as it was culturally sensitive that he would be discussing clothes with a female in the presence of others. Talal reacted by shifting the conversation to something else in an abrupt way. My familiarity with the Gazan context made me understand why he did so. I followed the topic he has chosen until that person left the room and we could get back to our discussion on the dress code. From another perspective, when on Skype, I made a deliberate effort to choose my own dress code, taking the culture into consideration. For instance, I wore darker colours and more formal clothes in my interviews with male academics. With male students, I tried to combine darker colours and a less formal outfit to have a friendlier appearance that would minimize the power relationship, especially since they knew I was a lecturer.

To sum up, it was immensely helpful that the researcher was an insider to the Gaza Strip. This facilitated a better and more sensitive communication, as well as lessening any social harm to my participants. Skype was very useful in this regard as it introduced me to part of my interviewees’ world.

**Communication and its humanity**

Although I made it clear in the interview factsheet that there was no financial benefit associated with participation, some of my interviewees seemed to look for other ways of benefiting from this opportunity. I felt it unethical to treat my participants, whom I knew were living under conditions of war and siege in Gaza, as objects who had no expectations. Thus, although I was able to decline their demands, I tried to put them into a wider human perspective and help as much as I could. For instance, a few students asked me afterwards for information on scholarships, inquired about life and study in the UK, or showed interest in seeing my college. In these cases, I chose to respond positively. Similarly, although it was not planned, I have benefited from the interviews in that I was offered research co-operation with academics, as
well as a job - which I have not taken. Nonetheless, a by-product of the interviews was that it acted as a networking opportunity for both the researched and the researcher.

Communication and its postage

Interviewing participants from Cambridge by Skype and by phone made me feel like a translator who is working in the zone between Gaza and the world trying to make sense of local stories and experiences by using a broader lens and a wider range of understanding. Some of the academic participants asked me to convey messages to the world on their behalf. Their hopes and confidence in me to do so made me feel both privileged and responsible. Nonetheless, at the stage of interviewing, it was difficult for me to know whether I would be able to include their messages in my thesis or not. In this, I often perceived myself as the postman of former days who used to travel on foot from one place to another carrying traditional messages, trying to keep them safe along the way, and sheltering them from the rough weather, until they reached the assigned destination. At the end, I could integrate some of these messages in the data, while having to leave out others which were not relevant.

To recap, the fieldwork included challenging, friendly, enjoyable, active, humorous, and responsible encounters with my participants, that served as a source of empowerment for both of us during the interviews and afterwards.
APPENDIX 12  Pre-Fieldwork Reflection on Power Relations

This reflective account on power relations was written in preparation for the fieldwork, Before I start any interviews, I am aware that the researcher, when in the field, moves within a variety of selves that I should aim to understand in order to enhance reflexivity throughout the research process (Reinharz, 1997). As shown in figure APP 12.1 below, (based on the explanation and distinction of selves suggested by Reinharz (1997), I map my thinking of who I am in a diagram as follows:

The varieties of my ‘possible’ selves presented above interact with each other in many creative ways. The interview situation, nonetheless, is not influenced only by who I am, but rather by who I could be in relation to the different participants. Thus power relations consist of a two-way analysis that should consider who my participants are as well. Examining this point, I have summarized, in Figure APP 12.2 below the major contentious
areas that could possibly affect the relationship between my interviewees and myself in the case of this research. This figure shows that the same factors may play differently with different participants (males or females, academics or students, colleagues or non‐colleagues, younger or older etc.). However, it is quite superficial to assume that my gender, age, marital status, the lack of political affiliation, HE study abroad and career will be seen in identical ways by those among even the most similar group of participants (e.g. women). Bolak (1997), researching the ME, for example, has noticed that while she was viewed by some women as vulnerable due to her unmarried and childless status, “there were others who admired and envied […] her autonomy and mobility” (p. 111).

**Figure APP 12.2 Contentious Areas of Power Relations**

From another perspective, the participants may also have some power over me by virtue of ‘symbolic dominance’ (Bourdieuian term). Hence, as Swartz (2013) mentions, “symbolic meanings and classifications are constitutive forces in organizing power relations in stratified social order” (p.42). Being a single woman studying abroad, for instance, may not conform with the cultural norms in the Gazan context, especially from the perspective of some traditional religious male participants. However, my study for a PhD in Cambridge, taken
with other factors, such as age and professional career as an academic, may reposition me, in a similar way to what Bolak (1997) describes, namely as an “honourary male” (p.103). That I am the interviewer also implies a kind of power as the interviewer is usually the one who is “steering the course of the interview” conversation (Kvale, 1996, p.126). But it is also not as simple as this because the researcher also needs the interviewees’ participation to complete her PhD study. Alternatively, the participants also may need this opportunity to be interviewed about their HE experiences so as to ‘express their suppressed feelings’ (Marvasti, 2004, p.21). Realizing the complexity of power relations, I developed a “Power Analysis Sheet” that can be seen in Appendix 13. This is to help me to achieve a more balanced interview situation.
## APPENDIX 13  Power Relationship Analysis Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant No./ Info. (   )</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Date / Time:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contentious Area (s) with the Interviewee</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Possible Power Relationship

### Suggested Response

### Post-Interview Comments
APPENDIX 14  Data Transcription Guide

a. Transcription Code-Book

b. Transcription Protocol

---

**APPENDIX 1**

**Data Transcription Guide**

**a. Transcription Code-Book**

*Section Reference:* (Lapadat, 2000)

---

**Transcription Paradigm**

*Ontology: Social Constructionism*

*Epistemology: Interpretivism*

---

**Transcription Purpose**

- **Implications:** Transcription is a 'constructive and interpretive act in which the researcher positions him/herself' (*ibid.*, p.209)

- **Content Transcription:** A focus on meanings and concepts with 'minimal contextual information' (*ibid.*, p.214)

---

**Transcription Quality**

- **Quality assurance:**
  - Putting forward in the research design a project transcription guide
  - Using high-quality recording
  - The researcher is the transcriber.
  - Relistening to the audio and revising transcription (*ibid.*)

---

**Transcriber**

- **The Researcher**
  - **Reason:** To avoid an overlap of analytical paradigms/To avoid additional research expenses (*ibid.*)

---

**Transcription Language**

- **Arabic or English**
  - The transcription will be in the same language in which the interview is conducted

---

**Transcription Software**

- **Advantage**
  - Unlike other softwares, HyperTranscribe includes the possibility of transcribing interviews in Arabic if needed.
Data Transcription Protocol

Section References: (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003; Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Formatting (McLellan et al., 2003)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Times New Roman (11 point-normal font)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Margins: top-bottom 1 inch (2.54cm), left-right: 1.5 inch (3.17 cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Right-hand with no indent (for Arabic ); left-hand with no indent (for English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Left-justified layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Line spacing: 1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript Labelling (McLellan et al., 2003)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant ID : ## (ID )##</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Group:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Site:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Level:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Interview:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Interview:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer/Transcriber ID: ##MJ##</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Conversation Example

--START OF THE INTERVIEW--

## (participant ID)##
--------------------------------------------------
## MJ##
--------------------------------------------------
## (participant ID) ##
--------------------------------------------------

--END OF INTERVIEW—

Content  (Oliver et al., 2005)

Being familiar with Gaza conversation, I have the capability to understand to a large extent the different pronunciations, as well as other cultural response tokens and non-verbal vocalization. However, if during the interview, I encounter any difficulty in that, then I can immediately ask the participant to clarify the meaning.

Pronunciation (Slang, diction, and geo-ethnic language)

The pronunciation of the participant will be transcribed as it is, including any slang, diction and geo-ethnic language.

Involuntary vocalizations, response tokens, non-verbal vocalization
Involuntary vocalization such as coughing or laughing will not be considered unless thought meaningful. Although response tokens (e.g., O.K, uh etc.) are intentional and would perhaps be informative to the content, as Oliver et al. (2005) state, they are also distracting. Thus the researcher will make a judgment on what to include and what to exclude based on its value to the content. As for non-verbal vocalization (body language), these (if in a Skype video), will be noticed for confirmatory purposes, but will not be transcribed or analysed as main research data.

**Grammar**

Since the interviewer's minor grammatical errors will be corrected in the transcripts, participants' minor errors should be corrected too (Oliver, 2005). A major editing of the transcripts is avoided so as to eliminate bias in the data.

### Others (McLellan et al., 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inaudible Text (inaccurate)</th>
<th>[Inaudible segment]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionable Text (inaccurate)</td>
<td>?(text)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauses (silences)</td>
<td>[…..]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross talk (the interviewer and the interviewee talk at the same time)</td>
<td>' Cross talk'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Sensitive Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee's name</th>
<th>If mentioned in the interview, this will be replaced by interviewee ID in the transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other names, or sensitive locations and organizations</td>
<td>If mentioned, these will be placed between an equal sign: e.g. = (sensitive info)=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transcript Revision** (McLellan et al., 2003)

With reference to the audio-file, the transcripts will be “audited for accuracy” (McLellan, 2003, p.80). To ensure complete anonymity and confidentiality for participants, all revisions will be made by the researcher.
APPENDIX 15  Research Coding System

In their article, *How and What to Code*, Taylor and Gibbs (2010) explain that there are different types as well as approaches to coding. This research coding system benefits, in general terms, from their explanation. As Figure APP 15.1 below shows, the interview data have been coded into four main categories: first (1) Descriptive coding; second (2) Analytical Coding; third (3) Theoretical Coding; and fourth (4) Methodological and Writing Coding (*ibid.*).

![Research Coding Categories](image)

**Figure APP 15.1** Research Coding Categories

Each of these categories include sub-themes. The main subcodes are presented in in Figure APP 15.2 as well as more details on these sub-codes later on.
Figure APP 15.2 Research Subcodes
An overview of this research coding system:

**Category 1: Descriptive Coding**

This descriptive coding “is used to describe what is in the data” (Taylor & Gibbs, 2010, p.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.A HE Time Period</th>
<th>Past Experience</th>
<th>Present Experience</th>
<th>Future Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In more than one Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Foreign Countries</td>
<td>UK; Russia; US; Romania; Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Arab Countries</td>
<td>Egypt; UAE; Sudan; Tunisia; Kuwait; Syria; Sudan; Saudi Arabia; Iraq; Gaza; West Bank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Palestine</td>
<td>Sectarian conflict in Iraq; Gulf War; Cold War; Syrian War, etc. In Egypt: Anwar El Sadat Era; Gamal Abdel Nasser Era; Mubarak Era; Morsi Era; El Sisi Era; Others; Nakba 1948 &amp; 1967 War; First Intifada; Second Intifada; Peace Process; Palestinian Schism; Israeli Wars on Gaza 2008; 2012; 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.B Study Location</th>
<th>Study Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In more than one Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Foreign Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Arab Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Palestine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.C Life Events and HE Story</th>
<th>Events Mentioned</th>
<th>Mood/ Tone when telling the HE story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External to Gaza/ Palestine</td>
<td>Internal to Gaza Palestine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.D College Life</th>
<th>Social Life</th>
<th>Material Life</th>
<th>Moral Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship with society; Lecturers’ relationship with students; Relationships between academics; Relationships with family; Relationships with colleagues at work/ study; Relationship with management</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Academic and technological resources; Living conditions and accommodation; Class and study conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Economic and Finance</td>
<td>Employment; unemployment; Scholarships; Tuition fees; Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobility and Transport</td>
<td>Siege; Difficulty of travel; Difficulty of communication with home; Transport; Tunnels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admission and Communication</td>
<td>Human contacts Media</td>
<td>Traditional media; Internet and social media, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Life</td>
<td>Faith and Religion</td>
<td>Perceived role and aspirations; Societal limitations; Inter-generational communication; Male-female interaction; Justice and fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Societal Values</td>
<td>Political Life</td>
<td>Prison experience; political parties and factions; Political participation; Academic boycott of Israel; Political views; Nationalism and belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedoms</td>
<td>Freedoms</td>
<td>Freedom of political expression; Freedom of speech; Freedom of academic choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Knowledge and Skills | Teaching and Learning  
Comparative Perspective  
Conferences and Exchange  
Research and Publication  
Competence, training and practical experience;  
Academic degrees |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| I.E Perceptions      | Perceptions of the impact of the Arab Spring  
Views towards the Arab Spring  
Possibility of a revolution in Gaza/ or at the university  
Perceived causes of the Arab Spring revolutions  
Perceived consequences of the Arab Spring  
Revolutions  
Gaza after the Arab Spring  
Revolutions impact on the educational context  
Revolutions impact on academics and students |
| Perceptions of the self | Perceived weaknesses  
Perceived opportunities  
Perceived limitations  
Perceived strategy for professional and personal development  
Perceived contribution  
Perceived strengths  
Perceived regrets |
| Other perceptions    | Lecturers' perception of students  
Students' perception of lecturers  
Others' perception of Palestinians  
Participants' perception of Arab countries  
Participants' perceptions of foreign countries  
Participants' perceptions of other Palestinians  
Perceptions of the difficulties in Gaza |
| I.F On the Educational Sector in Gaza | Non-formal Education  
Formal education  
Comparative perspectives between the educational system in Gaza and abroad.  
Teacher training  
Gaza universities  
International educational projects  
Ministry of Education; Schools (governmental & UNRWA)  
UA; UB; and other universities (if mentioned)  
History and development; Attributes and characteristics; Views from each university on other universities |
II. Analytical Coding

This category is concerned with analysing the data in terms of its general trends. To illustrate with an instance, section II. B ‘Professionalism, Power and Leadership Style’ has been used to identify practices/expressions of bureaucracy, democracy, and authoritarianism within the interview transcripts.

II. Theoretical Coding

This code section is for theorizing the data segments based on my early theoretical reading. Here are more details on the subcodes under this category:

III. A Oppression
(Humiliation and indignation; factuality; lack of solidarity and cooperation; oppressor-oppressed dualism; privileged and oppressed; lack of criticality; symbolic violence; habitus etc.).

III. B Reactions to Oppression
(Resilience; silence; confusion; voluntary compliance; moral justification; hope and optimism; helplessness; confusion etc.).

III. C Interviewees’ Behaviour
(Bragging and impression management; hesitance and disclaiming; low self-esteem and seeking affirmation; over-confidence; other behaviours)
IV Methodology and Writing Coding

Any data segments that are related to research methodological issues are coded within this section. Moreover, data that could act as good supporting material in the thesis-writing process have also been included here. I have also added a reflexive subcode which enables me to write definitions or take notes on the coding process if needed. Here are more details on section IV:

IV.A Research & Reflexivity
(On the research: participation; messages to be conveyed; any other comments) \ On the researcher: insider-outsider; power-relations)

IV.B Supporting Materials for Writing
(concepts; quotes; examples; symbols; hadith, sayings and proverbs; emerging ideas)

IV.C Notes on Coding
APPENDIX 16  Levels of Interpretation: An Interactive Model

This is a copy of “Interaction Between Different Levels of Interpretation”: Figure 7.2 Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000, p. 255).

This model of interaction is suggested by Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg (2000) in their discussion of a reflexive methodology of interpretation. The authors describe how “the movement [in this model] can go in various directions” (p.254) and as the figure above, APP 16.1, shows, is also “possible in the opposite direction” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 255). For this research project on Gaza, I did not adhere to any model of interpretation. Nonetheless, I found the model above helpful as a general theoretical reference and a reminder of the importance of criticality and reflexivity in the interpretation process.
APPENDIX 17  A Note on Triangulation

Embedded in the design of this research project is triangulation. This applies to the research strategy, methodology, sites, participants and processes as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Triangulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Strategy</td>
<td>This research is inductive; however, theory and the literature on this topic have been reviewed prior to any research fieldwork for general conceptual insights. A revisiting of theory and literature have also followed empirical data collection and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>The data collection method in this research was interviews. Nonetheless, supportive activities such as self-interviewing, revisiting the literature, reflective journal and reviewing CVs and websites have indirectly informed the data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Sites</td>
<td>In sampling the research participants, I included two universities: the UA and UB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Participants</td>
<td>Research participants included academics and students. As mentioned in the section on sampling, screening academics and students has taken into consideration a variety of characteristics as appropriate to each case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Processes</td>
<td>The different processes involved in conducting this research were triangulated with each other. For example, I visited the literature before and after the analysis, and started writing and then went back to the analysis and to the literature and so forth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, my understanding of triangulation in this research project is that it is a dynamic, continuous and interactive process, as shown in Figure APP 17.1 below:
Such a dynamic approach to triangulation meant a continuous interaction not only between the main categories mentioned in the table, but also within these categories and within their subcategories.

To demonstrate with one example, *triangulation with the main categories* implied that a good choice of research participants was linked to research sites; an analysis of research participants' data was informed by theory and other supporting activities; and the analysis as a process was better triangulated with other processes of data collection, revisiting the literature etc.
Nonetheless, for a better analysis, a *triangulation within the same category* of research participants was equally important. For instance, triangulating the perspectives of academics with those of students enriched the research with critical and comparative insights.

Furthermore, a *triangulation within the sub-category* of students (third- and fourth-year students, males and females, students across the two universities) was also necessary to gain a wider perspective on the different research issues.

In brief, I thought of triangulation as an interactive orbit in which all elements of the research design fed constantly into each other and contributed together towards a more informative and insightful study on the HE experience in the Gaza Strip.
APPENDIX 18  Pre-Fieldwork Security Assessment Forms

When I started this study, I was not sure whether it would be necessary for me to visit the Gaza Strip - in case the borders were to open at a later stage. As such, these forms were prepared pre-fieldwork to assess vulnerability of the researcher in conducting this study on the Gaza Strip. Here, I contemplated both the external and internal vulnerabilities as well as the precautionary measures that I could take to deal with any unexpected conditions, if I had been able to go to Gaza.

### External Vulnerabilities

**EXTERNAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT: (FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF GAZA AS A CONFLICT AREA)**

As a Palestinian who lives in the Gaza Strip and, as evident from Chapter One: The Context Review, I am knowledgeable about Gaza as a conflict area. I am sufficiently aware of external factors related to my place of research, including the following: history and causes of violence, politics and the current political elites in the Gaza Strip, regional and international players influencing life in Gaza. From another perspective, I am also familiar with the social system, the culture, the religion, the civil aspects and institutions, economy and resources as recommended by King (2009). Moreover, I speak native Arabic and understand the cultural local language of the Gazan community. The latter is particularly important in researching conflict areas. Thus, as Roy (1995) states, one “cannot understand Gaza without understanding its politics - not only what is said, but what is meant” (p. 21). In summary, a background knowledge and external “risk assessment”, King (2009) explains, “not only helps to inform the decision of whether or not to go into a country, but also helps to reduce the risk once researchers find themselves in a dangerous environment” (King, 2009, p.170), be it literally or virtually.

### Internal Vulnerabilities

**II. INTERNAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT: (VULNERABILITY OF THE RESEARCHER)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>a. Are you at risk of military or terrorist activity?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, I do not think I am at risk from any military or terrorist activity. Hence, firstly, I plan to conduct the interviews from Cambridge by Skype/telephone with Gaza. Secondly, my family and I are currently residents of the Gaza Strip. In case, I decide to go to Gaza at a later stage for a confirmatory follow-up of fieldwork, such a decision will be based on consultation with my supervisor. It will also be based on a close analysis of the political news in the region and of the detailed updates on the general situation from my friends and family who live there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>b. Are you at risk of targeted political action?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, I do not think I am at risk of targeted political action. Firstly, I belong to the Palestinian community in Gaza. Secondly, neither my family nor I are politically involved with any political group. Moreover, I am known by fellow community members as professionally focused since I have always been working as an educationalist at schools and universities in the Gaza Strip. Thirdly, I have never published any political statement that would put me at risk of hostile reaction from any political group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. Are you at risk of criminal act?

No, I am not at risk of any criminal act. Currently, I live at the University of Cambridge where I plan to conduct my interviews by Skype or phone. So I do not plan to go to Gaza during my PhD studies at all. In case I find it necessary to travel to Gaza for any reason, there is no direct flight there from the UK. Thus I would need to fly to Egypt first and then cross the Sinai desert to the Rafah border crossing through which I can then enter the Gaza Strip. I have tried this route several times before: it is usually a popular route with many travellers going back and forth each day. There are also cafés and several police checkpoints along the way. Contemplating a visit to the Gaza Strip, however, would require taking the political situation in Egypt into consideration. When in Gaza, I live with my family in one house located on a main street and in a generally safe residential area in Gaza City. The main universities included in this study are also centrally located and surrounded by many offices, schools and other universities. The journey from my house to and from the universities is easy and direct.

d. Are you at risk of angry and aggressive actions?

No, I do not think I am at risk of angry or aggressive actions. I am a student who is doing a PhD study at the Faculty of Education in Cambridge and, as indicated in section (b) of this form, I am educationally focused. Furthermore, my research is an educational research study and the people whom I am interviewing are academics and students, who constitute an educated and generally open-minded group to research. The interview questions focus on educational experiences and the study as a whole is designed according to academic, ethical and security guidelines.

Notes

- This list of questions was suggested by Van Brabant; “a leading scholar whose work has shaped the direction of the security discipline” (King, 2009, p.169).
- The answers in this form discuss the main points of concern raised by (King, 2009, p.169, cited in Sriram et al., 2009), in relation to Brabant’s questions.

Third: Precautionary Measures

**PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES:** (In Case of Any Unanticipated Travel to the Gaza Strip)

There is no plan for me to visit Gaza at any time during my PhD study in Cambridge. In case of any unanticipated need to do so, however, I shall aim to take the following steps: firstly, consulting with my supervisor with regard to any necessary administrative, academic or methodological steps; secondly, informing the Faculty, the Registry and the Gates Scholarship Foundation about this decision; thirdly, ensuring a copy of my passport and any other important documents are left with a trusted individual; fourthly, retrieving some useful books and PDF resources so I can benefit from my time in Gaza in case of any border closure; and finally, arranging with my supervisor to Skype from Gaza for supervision meetings during that period. Any other measures are to be considered at the time as relevant and necessary.
APPENDIX 19  A Safe Communication and Data Storage Guide

This appendix was written pre-fieldwork. It is a guide to the research communication and data storage system. As Figure APP 19.1 shows, a discussion of this system includes three sections; firstly, audio files and transcripts; secondly, anonymizing research sites and; thirdly, anonymizing individuals (Clark, 2006).

![Figure APP 19.1 A Safe Communication and Data Storage System](image)

A summary of the main points in relation to each section is presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>Audio Files and Transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.a</td>
<td>Audio-files will not include any participants’ names or biographical information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b</td>
<td>Data will be anonymized in the early stage of transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.c</td>
<td>Three copies are to be made of each audio-file and transcript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.d</td>
<td>Each of the three copies will be kept in a different safe place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.e</td>
<td>Computer and any external hard-drives used will be password-protected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th>Anonymizing Research Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I concur with Clark's (2006) argument that “understand[ing] the illuminary capacity of this space (as more than ‘background context’) may disappear into a fictive or imaginary geographical context”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
That is, the research is a constructionist study and therefore the Gaza Strip and the universities researched constitute a crucial part of constructing participants’ interaction and social reality (Mauthner, Parry, & Backett-Milburn, 1998). Thus, mentioning the research sites might have been important for future historical records on Palestinian HE.

However, for ethical and security reasons, the universities will be anonymized in this document as well as in all transcripts, subsequent reporting and any future publication of this research. Thus, I will always use pseudonyms. In fact, employing thematic analysis allows for a shift of focus from ‘stigmatizing’ individual institutions to discussing aggregated data, common issues and trends regarding the Gazan university sector in general (Clark, 2006, p.4). Furthermore, anonymizing universities is likely to give the participants from these universities more freedom of expression and guarantee the confidentiality of their information.

3. Anonymizing Individuals

3.a Securing communication with the participants

3.a.1 For correspondence with participants, the researcher will always use the Cambridge safe e-mail system.

3.a.2 When communicating by telephone, the researcher will contact the interviewee(s) directly.

3.a.3 Interviewees will not be informed of others who are participating in this study from the same or different universities.

3.a.4 To protect Skype communication and computer data, the researcher has, as recommended by Cambridge Computing Services, installed protective software and spy cleaners on her computer. The researcher will also revisit the Cambridge University Computing Service for regular checks and updates. Furthermore, once this research interviewing has been completed, the contact details of research participants will be deleted from the Skype (or telephone) address list.

3.b Securing snowball sampling (in the case of student participants):

3.b.1 The researcher will contact a trusted network for a few suggestions (contact details) of participants.

3.b.2 The researcher will emphasize to the trusted person (s), the confidentiality of this communication.

3.b.3 The researcher will contact the candidate interviewee (s) directly.

3.b.4 The researcher will not share information on the research with the trusted person (s).

3.b.5 The trusted person (s) will not be informed of the participants who were eventually selected and contacted for interview.

3.c Anonymizing names and biographical information

3.c.1 Participants’ names will be anonymized using codes.

3.c.2 The anonymizing codes should not be recognizable by anyone except the researcher.

3.c.3 As soon as the codes have been applied to participants’ names and biographies, the generated code list will be destroyed.

3.c.4 Biographical information that could identify the participant interviewees will not be shared with anyone, not even with the researcher’s supervisor.

3.c.5 All reports, drafts, thesis and future publication of this study will include anonymized data
APPENDIX 20  Participants’ Characteristics

In this appendix, I present some of the main participants’ characteristics, firstly of the academic staff and, secondly, of students.

Notes
- Academic participants’ allocations within age category is a general estimation as based on reviewing their CVs, and my own experience of some of them. Age category A is between (25-40 yrs old); B (41-56); and C (57-70).
- Academic participants’ places of study were included as aggregated data so as to protect the anonymity of the participants, who in the context of the Gaza Strip might become then recognizable.

Academic Staff Characteristics

a) Gender, age, interview mode and language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UA Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Jamila UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Randa UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Amna UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Mehdi UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Kamal UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Suleiman UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hassan UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Riyadh UA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UB Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Lamia UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Etaf UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Omar UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Abdel Rahman UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Majid UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Zeyad UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ashraf UB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) Place of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Study</th>
<th>Number of Academics from the UA and the UB</th>
<th>Countries Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab countries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kuwait, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Egyptian universities and through Gaza-Egypt programmes which involved travel to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Countries</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>USA, UK, Netherlands, Russia, and Romania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second: Students’ Characteristics

a) Gender, Study year, Faculty, Interview mode and Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Study year</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Main Interview mode</th>
<th>Interview language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nora UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samira UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalal UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawal UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferial UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr*</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huda UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halima UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadra ofs UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd yr</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samah ofs UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talal UA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moen UA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed UA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah ofs UA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Study year</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Main Interview mode</th>
<th>Interview language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lubna UA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (no video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amira UB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibtisam UB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaa UB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3rd yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara UB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waleed UB</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Just graduated</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasser UB</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaled UB</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4th yr</td>
<td>Edu</td>
<td>Skype (video)</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Note

- Only the main mode of interviewing was included here. Due to power cuts and bad internet/mobile connections, I had sometimes to change between different modes of interviewing. In the table above, I include the main method in which the interview was conducted with the participant.
APPENDIX 21  Sites and Participants: Pseudonyms

As indicated in Appendix 19, the participants and their universities were anonymized. The universities’ names were replaced by UA for the first university and UB for the second. As for participants, they were assigned different names. Nonetheless, the pseudonyms selected to represent common names in the Gazan culture.

To distinguish between participants who are academics and those who are students, the pseudonyms for those from the academic staff will start with the relevant title; ‘Ms’ for females, and ‘Mr’ for males - without any reference to their academic degree, that is, Dr, Prof etc. For students, however, such titles are not used at all. Furthermore, each participant has a surname that represents his/her university: UA or UB. This is to make it easy for the reader to link the participants’ comments to their university’s context. In addition, for the out-of-sample student group, their pseudonyms will carry a further identification in the middle, which is ‘ofs’. The following Figure 3.7 from Chapter Three is a Pseudonym key:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>[Mr/ Ms] ‘name’ [University]</td>
<td>(male)- Mr Mehdi UA (female)- Ms Etaf UB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>‘name’ [UA/ UB]</td>
<td>(male)- Khaled UB (female)- Nora UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Sample Group</td>
<td>‘name’ ofs UA</td>
<td>(male)- Abdullah ofs UA (female)- Samah ofs UA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are two lists that summarize the UA and UB participants’ pseudonyms. Each comprises two columns, one for academics and one for students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UA Academics</th>
<th>UA Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Jamila UA</td>
<td>Nora UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Randa UA</td>
<td>Samira UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Amna UA</td>
<td>Dalal UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Mehdi UA</td>
<td>Ferial UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Kamal UA</td>
<td>Huda UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Suleiman UA</td>
<td>Halima UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hassan UA</td>
<td>Khadra ofs UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Riyadh UA</td>
<td>Samah ofs UA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talal UA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moeen UA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed UA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah ofs UA</td>
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This appendix provides a justification for the presentation mode of this inductive study as well as the occasional use of metaphors, humour, and lines of poetry in this thesis.

a) Presentation mode

According to Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), qualitative research can be written and presented in two different ways. Firstly, the findings are reported according to themes and/or categories while being supported by “appropriate verbatim quotes” (Burnard et al., 2008, p. 432). These findings chapters are then followed by a “linking, separate discussion chapter in which the findings are discussed in relation to existing research” (ibid., p. 432). Secondly, from the outset of presenting the qualitative data, the researcher can “incorporate the discussion directly into the findings chapters” (ibid., 432). This PhD thesis follows the second approach. Thus the discussion and the literature are integrated into the presentation of findings, since this is thought to provide a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the research data.

b) The Use of Analogies and Figures of Speech

When writing the findings, I sometimes found myself expressing what I wanted to say using a literary style, including analogies, and figures of speech, particularly metaphors. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain “truth is relative to our conceptual system” (p. 134), hence I am naturally impacted by my Arab culture which is “more literary than scientifically oriented” and which places “great stress on symbolism, imagery, and metaphor in everyday ordinary communication” (Barakat, 1993, p. 26). The Quran also includes metaphors and imagery. Furthermore, studying a BA in English Literature, might have also had an influence on how I came to perceive, describe and construct meanings as a social science researcher.

This is a positive contribution to the study at hand. That said, I agree with Law (2004) that “if the world is complex and messy” (p. 12), there is a “need to rethink our ideas about clarity and rigour, and find ways of knowing the indistinct and the slippery without trying to grasp and hold them tight. Here knowing would become possible through techniques of deliberate imprecision” (Law, 2004, p. 3). Thus occasional poetics, analogies, and metaphors have been adopted as the “principal vehicles for understanding” (ibid., p. 133), and the ‘most important
tool[s] for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally’ about the past, present and future of Gaza’s universities (ibid., 134). It is my hope, therefore, that the literary inclination of the researcher has enhanced the analysis and yet simultaneously enlivened the presentation of this educational study.

c) The Use of Dark Humour

Further to the above, I surprisingly found myself sometimes using humour to describe frustrating situations or traumatic events. My participants occasionally used it too. In general, the use of humour in these situations is seen as controversial. Thus as Le Naour (2001) explains:

The need for laughter and denunciation of laughter [are] two antithetical and irreconcilable positions, but there [exists] a connection between them nonetheless. The fact that laughter is not actually forgetting, but is a temporary effort to forget, and perhaps, quite simply an escape, a momentary flight from an unendurable reality. (p. 272)

Hence as an insider to the community in Gaza, reporting the difficulties and the tragic stories of my participants’ experiences was emotionally very hard. It is in response to this difficulty that a sense of humour has emerged. According to Moran and Hughes (2006) there is a distinction between sick humour “which makes fun of people in an aggressive way” and “gallows humour [which is] a laughter at one’s own circumstances”(p.504). Writers, such as Sosa (2013) in her research on the decedents of the disappeared in post-dictatorial Argentina, have noted that “dark humour sticks” (p. 84); it is a means of empowerment and of resistance to “persistently constructed […] victimizing narratives” (p.75). Similarly, Sheftel (2011) has discussed how the Bosnians, in post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina, have used humour as a “powerful […] tool” to speak about the war and “counter dominant narratives” (p. 158). To sum up, in this research, sharing humour or ‘laughter’ with my fellow Palestinians on traumatic events is an attempt to “create a space where pain and suffering can be acknowledged […] and remembered] in a constructive way […]that] provides a basis to support healing” from continued traumas under occupation (Casey, 2013, p. 21).
d) The Use of Poetic Lines

At the opening of chapters on the past, present, and future experience, I include a few lines of Palestinian poetry from Mahmoud Darwish, a renowned Palestinian Poet (1941-2008), and also from Tawfiq Ṣāyigh (d. 1971). As Salti (2010) argues, poetry has both a “privileged standing in Arab culture” and also a primary role in shaping Palestinian imagination and representations (p.39). Furthermore, poetry is acknowledged as a “medium of expression […] of the human experience” more generally (Ismael, 1981, p. 43). The included lines of poetry are not summaries of the chapter; nonetheless they correspond with one or more of the issues discussed in each chapter, while also adding a local cultural sense to this PhD project. Although the selected lines by Mahmoud Darwish about Palestine were not particularly about the Gaza Strip, it should be noted that Palestinian poetry was “the form least encumbered in travelling across the occupations’ barbered wire fences” (Salti, 2010,p. 39). Hence, it provides insight to this discussion on academic life in the occupied Gaza Strip.
Appendices

APPENDIX 23  A Photo Essay

1. Scenes from Israeli Cast Lead Operation on Gaza, 2008

1.a General conditions of life for academics and students

The Cast Lead Operation continued for three weeks (December 27-January 18). This was an extremely hard time for almost everybody in the Gaza Strip. Some families and buildings were harmed physically; other people suffered fear, bereavement, and trauma.

Photo Source: http://levantnotes.blogspot.co.uk/2010_07_01_archive.html (accessed 20/06/2014)

Among others, academics and students grieved for the loss of their family members or close relatives. Some had their houses demolished (fully or partially), with the loss of memories, study notes, and equipment.

1.b Damage to Gaza Universities

These photographs are of the University of Palestine (UP). This university was one of those in Gaza that were affected largely by the bombardment of the Israeli Cast Lead Operation in Gaza in 2008. These pictures might not be available online since I retrieved them in person from the university. I was working at Palestine university at that time and witnessed the repair process that followed this damage when academic staff and students returned to work as normal after the operation which lasted for 22 days.

**Photo Source:** I retrieved these from the University in person.
2. Scenes of the siege on Gaza
   a) Everyday life for academics and students

   In the Gaza Strip, whenever there is a shortage of fuel, academics and students, *inter alia*, have to wait for long hours in long queues so as to be able to get some highly priced fuel for their families. That queuing time might be before or after their classes at school or at the university necessarily has implications for academic life in the Gaza Strip.

   **Photo Source:**

   From my first-hand experience of living in the Gaza Strip, I can state that there are approximately six to eight hours of daily power cuts, and sometimes even up to 12. Like the children in this photograph, I so often used to study and prepare my lectures in darkness (mostly using a battery torch, but also candles).

   I also used to rearrange my schedule based on the hours of power in the Gaza Strip so as to be able to access the Internet. While submitting PhD applications, once in an attempt to meet a deadline, I had to call my brother abroad, give him my password, and ask him to press the submit button for me!

   The few ‘light’ hours in Gaza were unpredictable. This creates difficulty for academics in using PowerPoint in their classes. It also creates difficulty for students and their lecturers during examinations. Although institutions (including universities) and people now increasingly use fuel-electricity generators, this is not an option for many because of the high cost, difficulty in operation, and risk of fire accidents and other considerations.

   **Photo Source:**
"Hamas security forces stand guard outside a bank in Gaza City on June 5 after scuffles broke out between Palestinian Authority employees who were paid their usual monthly salaries and Hamas-appointed employees who were not."
(Mohammed Abed / Agence France-Presse / Getty Images) - Photo Source.

Since university students are usually dependent on their families, the lack of pay for employees has always affected their living standards and their ability to pay for university tuition and transport.

Photo Source:

2.b Conditions of travel from and to Gaza for academic staff and students

Getting out of Gaza
In 2005, to start my MSc course at Oxford University, I had to be in one of these extremely crowded buses. The border opened for three days only and so this was my only chance to leave Gaza or else I would have lost my chance of admission and the scholarship to Oxford. Many students have lost, declined or did not consider opportunities for study and academic participation because of the Gaza border closure. Obtaining a UK visa for Palestinians, as international students, is not the end of the story!

Photo Source:
Getting into Gaza
Back from Oxford in 2006, in order to be able to enter the Gaza Strip, I had to wait like other Palestinians in this photograph, in humiliation. I had also to incur the cost and trouble of living for an extra three weeks in Egypt-Al Arish. For my personal photograph, see below.

This photograph does not represent the border condition at all times since it is sometimes more regulated (easier to cross) than others. Nonetheless, feeling the risk of being locked out of Gaza for a prolonged time, with few resources and (so often) with no passport to any other place in the world, naturally discourages academic and student mobility.

This photograph shows the Al Azhar University 2011 graduation ceremony. At that time, I was working at Al Azhar and so have attended this event in person. Almost everyone in this picture is Palestinian. The graduating students were proud to be honoured in front of their friends and families.

However, students seemed also worried about the future. They have seen their predecessors remain unemployed for a prolonged time. In fact, I know for sure that one of my good students finished his B.A in Education, but could not get a job afterwards. To support his family, he had to change his career from an educationalist to that of a daily-wage worker in painting and construction.

Photo Source: http://elagha.net/?do=2&id=7501
(accessed 20/06/2014)

This photograph shows the 2014 fourth Islamic University exhibition of school and university students' talents.

Palestinian universities host several exhibitions on different themes; nonetheless the majority of these remain local in scope and inaccessible to a wider audience.

Photo source http://www.iugaza.edu.ps/%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1 (accessed 20/06/2014)
This is ‘A Palestinian student walks past a mural depicting late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (r) and late Hamas spiritual leader Ahmed Yassin, in Gaza City’ (photo source).

On the walls of most homes and also of Gaza universities such as Al Azhar, there are always drawings commemorating martyrs or carrying political messages. On my way to and from Al Azhar, I used to pass by this same picture every day. Clearly, the mural in hand calls on Fatah and Hamas in the WBGS to reconcile and achieve Palestinian internal unity.

Photo Source:

This photograph was taken on 15/06/2014 for the Islamic University of Gaza. The meeting topic was ‘Initiating* the Process of Strategic Planning (the third session) and evaluation appraisal’. (photo source).

*The Islamic University was established in 1978

Photo Source:
This is a Palestine University internal football match. Palestine University is a private university mainly funded by Palestinian business men.


There are some of academic exchange activities between Gaza’s universities and other universities. The Islamic University, for instance, was involved in the following activities:

**Photo -1-** (June, 2014) Co-operation with NORWAC for a postgraduate diploma for clinical supervision.

**Photo -2-** (Oct. 2012) the First International Conference on Applied Linguistics and Literature. The person wearing the neck scarf is Noam Chomsky.

**Photo -3-** (March. 2012) ‘Students from the Islamic University, Gaza, and Westminster University and Imperial College, London, met for the first time in a very successful Skype chat’ (Photo Source).

By virtue of ICT, there is an increased opportunity for academic exchange. However, such activities are quite limited and their frequency varies between faculties and universities. Visits by foreigners to the Gaza Strip can happen, but would require special political or institutional arrangements.

Photo Source: [http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/21/267874/1st-international-conference-on-applied-linguistics--literature-held-in-gaza/](http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/21/267874/1st-international-conference-on-applied-linguistics--literature-held-in-gaza/)
I am not a painter. I am not a photographer either. However, the research experience was so intense for me that I had to find a way of getting out all the thoughts, feelings and stress of writing a PhD on HE in my home place, Palestine - the Gaza Strip. Painting was one of the things I enjoyed when I was very little. For years, it disappeared from my life as my voice became silenced, witnessing and listening to narratives of oppression on a daily basis, of which I was a part. The research experience over five years helped me to recover some of my past memories, and reinvigorated my love of painting and photography. For me writing, speaking, listening and painting are one art - the art of knowing oneself, being oneself, acting oneself and remaking oneself with dignity. In this art book, I share some of the sketches I produced through the process of researching HE under occupation in Gaza. It includes some of the reflective moments I had not only on my topic, but also on myself. Although my pictures are artistically basic, and some are not in good shape any more, I feel proud of them. I also include a few photographs I have personally identified with and pondered about, or simply see as related to my study journey. I hope the reader will enjoy my precious research ‘Art Book’.
Feeling and not knowing what!

Queens’ College from my window
Day and night on my desk.

Work hard, drink coffee, accept lemons (difficulties),
enjoy flowers (opportunities), and
Keep smiling

Putting the challenges into perspective
Author’s photo at The Shard, London

Searching for meaning

A moment of love and remembrance
To my uncle, Mohammed Al Madani who passed away in Gaza in 2015 without me being able to visit him while in hospital.
The supervision meeting
‘Learning to fly’

The Literature review: A multi-disciplinary approach

Why both my research and I seem very different?
Author’s photo
At the Hyde Park, London

The interaction between sources of oppression and empowerment in the researcher’s life
Conceptualizing everything… even the tree!

**Thesis secret ‘recipe’**

*Photo Credit: 14 International Year of Crystallography*

Crystallography ©Simon C page

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**Emotional self:** Almost there!

**Rational self:** Are you sure?

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In the last stage, drive well!
My precious pearl: Ready to submit!
Research original contribution: Mona’s Apple

Author’s photo
at Regent’s Park London

Time for research dissemination!

Optimistic, open, and loving of the future

Self-Dawn
A new beginning is on the rise


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