EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND CONFLICT:
THE USE AND PERCEPTIONS
OF THE INTERNET IN
PALESTINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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To the city of light,
To the city of peace,
And the city whose spires dream.

And, of course, to mom and dad who gave me all three.
Abstract

The presence of Israeli military within Palestinian territories has had and continues to have negative effects on Palestinian education. School closures, curfews and checkpoints limit the ability of students and faculty to access education. Higher education has especially been targeted by these restrictions due to the role universities have played in the past as centers of resistance and political activism. Given the context of the occupation, the internet and new Web 2.0 technologies potentially have important educational and political roles to play in Palestinian higher education. E-learning with its promise of “anytime, anywhere” access to education could be a means for bypassing the educational and spatial restrictions imposed by the occupation. The internet also has potential to provide Palestinians with a non-occupied (cyber)space in which they may participate in political activism and electronic resistance (e-resistance). This dissertation investigates these potentialities through exploring how the internet is perceived and used within Palestinian higher education for educational and political purposes. A qualitative methodology was utilized, and student and faculty participants from Birzeit University located in the West Bank, were interviewed, as well as ministry officials from the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

Findings indicate that despite the potential for internet-enabled learning to provide access to education by bypassing restrictions of the occupation, participants do not report perceiving or using the internet in this manner. Rather, e-learning is being used as a “Trojan horse” to improve the pedagogical practices of educators in the classroom. Findings also indicate that the internet is perceived and used for online political activism and e-resistance, but only amongst the younger participants and mostly through Facebook. E-resistance activities include accessing and forwarding political content and information, political party recruiting, mobilization and narration of a Palestinian message and identity. These findings may have implications for MoEHE officials and international agencies planning and implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects in Palestinian education. They may also have implications for the Palestinian people, as e-resistance provides an alternative to violent resistance and thus expands the demographics of who can participate.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Education is our future. In Palestine we only have people. We have nothing; no natural resources. We have the occupation […] education is the only way, the only thing we can do now to improve the quality of life for our people […]. For economic development, for human development, for social development […]. It is the most important thing today.”

-Faculty Member at Birzeit University

The Story of Ritaj

In 2002, as a result of the second Palestinian Intifada which had begun two years earlier, Israeli military forces imposed a curfew in the West Bank city of Ramallah and surrounding areas. The curfew and accompanying military checkpoints limited the movements and travel of Palestinians, including students and teachers trying to get to and from their schools. Restrictions of access to education were nothing new to Palestinian educational institutions. Indeed, during the first Palestinian Intifada—meaning “shaking off” or uprising—which took place from 1987 to 1993, most Palestinian schools and universities experienced various degrees and durations of closures and curfews (Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006). Birzeit University, for example, was amongst those closed during the first Intifada and remained in that state for over four and a half years from 1988 through 1992 (Barghouti and Murray, 2005). When curfews began again during the second Intifada to restrict access to Birzeit University, which is located just outside of Ramallah, students, faculty and administrators were aware of the serious nature and potential duration of such a restriction.

What was new, however, during the second Intifada that was not available during the first, was the availability of internet technology. Uncertain how long the restrictions would be enforced, two members of Birzeit’s Information Technology (IT) department used the internet to create an online portal whereby students and teachers could communicate with each other, teachers could upload lecture notes and coursework, and students could upload their assignments and participate in online
discussion groups and mailing lists; the finished product was called Ritaj, meaning “The Great Portal” (‘Ritaj’, The Great Portal Opens Access to Birzeit University, 2002). Despite the curfews and checkpoints, Ritaj enabled classes to continue to be held with a certain degree of continuity, limited the amount of dangerous travel for students and faculty and saved the academic year for thousands of students.

Palestinian Education and the Internet

In 1994, the Israeli government gave control of the Palestinian education system to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). This marked the first time in the history of Palestinian public education that Palestinians were responsible for their own education system (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). Due to continued violence and political tensions between Israel and Palestine, however, the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have remained occupied by Israeli forces. This military occupation has had and continues to have negative effects on Palestinian education. As described above, for example, curfews and checkpoints not only restrict movement, but they also restrict Palestinians’ ability to access education (Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007). School closures have also been imposed on educational institutions which have severely impacted access and quality of education. Universities and higher education institutions have especially been targeted by these restrictions due to their historical role as centers of resistance and political activism (Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006).

Given the context of the occupation and the challenges facing Palestinian education—namely limited access to educational facilities—internet and Web 2.0 technologies could be used to provide educational access through e-learning. A major advantage to online learning is its flexibility; it can be done anytime, anywhere with an internet connection, thus bypassing time and spatial restrictions of traditional classroom instruction (Holmes and Gardner, 2006). E-learning, therefore, could be used in the Palestinian context to access education by bypassing the spatial restrictions imposed by
checkpoints, curfews and closures. This is exactly what occurred with Ritaj in 2002 when access to Birzeit University was limited. Since this time, however, very little has been written about how the internet is used and perceived by Palestinians in overcoming the educational challenges of the occupation and accessing education. One of the aims of this study is to provide empirical data on this subject.

**Political Activism and the Internet**

In addition to being institutions of learning, Palestinian universities have historically served as important national institutions in the absence of a Palestinian state. This dual function has led to universities becoming arenas for political activism and resistance (Bruhn, 2006). Moreover, they have become spaces for Palestinians to consider, negotiate, construct and articulate a Palestinian national identity and narrative. The articulation and expression of this narrative has become an important method of resistance for the Palestinian people and has taken on a number of various forms and mediums which will be described later in this study.

In recent years, the internet has become a new medium for resistance amongst Palestinians. According to existing literature, e-resistance can include such activities as online narration of the Palestinian message and identity, ‘hacktivism’ and organizing political mobilization (Aouragh, 2008; Khoury-Machool, 2007). The internet thus serves as a cyberspace, outside of and unrestricted by the occupation, for Palestinians to take part in political activism and express their national narrative to a global audience. E-resistance as a non-violent form of resistance also has potential to expand the number of individuals capable of participating (Khoury-Machool, 2007). Literature and research about e-resistance, however, has only recently begun to appear and is still very limited. Due to the dual role of Palestinian universities as centers of learning and centers of resistance, this study not only explores the educational but also the political uses and perceptions of the internet.
Description of this Study

Since the main aim of this qualitative study is to explore how the internet is used and perceived in Palestinian higher education for educational and political purposes, I decided to interview individuals from three different tiers within the higher education system: students, faculty and officials from the MoEHE. I selected Birzeit University as the higher education institution under inquiry and used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to select three faculty and six students who I interviewed over the internet using Skype. I also interviewed three ministry officials face-to-face. A more in-depth discussion on the methodologies of this study can be found in Chapter 3.

This dissertation consists of five chapters in total. Chapter 2 is a review of literature that provides the historical background and theoretical foundations of this study. Chapter 3 details the research strategy and rationale as well as the methods implemented while conducting it. Consideration is also given to ethical and validity issues. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of the research; this chapter contains the bulk of the dissertation as it analyzes and discusses the participants’ perceptions and use of the internet for educational and political purposes as well as their perceptions of the occupation’s effects on education. Chapter 5 is the conclusion and reviews the dissertation’s key findings and discusses these findings in relation to existing literature while exploring the study’s implications for future research and limitations.
Chapter 2: Historical and Theoretical Background

Due to the fact that the nature of this research project is to explore different themes of a particular social phenomenon—namely the use and perceptions of the internet in Palestinian higher education—and to gain “an initial impression of the topic area that [I] intend to understand through [my] research” I chose to conduct a narrative review of literature (Bryman, 2008: 92). I conducted the review in two distinct phases: before/during data collection and post-data collection. The first phase of researching was more general than the second and helped me to understand and become informed about the broader issues pertaining to this study. I started with a combination of keyword searchers on general topics such as “education and conflict”, “education and Palestinian occupation,” “internet and Palestine” and “internet, education and Palestine.” I began the keyword searches with Google Scholar and advanced to cross searching various online academic databases such as ERIC, ASSIA, COPAC and SCOPUS. During this phase I used a snowball approach whereby I found relevant publications and then used the bibliographic references from these publications to find other pertinent literature. As I began communicating with faculty and ministry participants before and during the interviewing process, they often referred me to relevant literature or sent related articles. The second phase of literature review took place after the analysis. From the data, I was able to identify specific themes and patterns which required further research. Keyword searches were conducted in a similar manner and included search terms such as “checkpoints and education,” “e-resistance and Palestine” and “Web 2.0 and narration.”

During both phases I restricted the scope of literature to that written in English. Due to the fact that the internet was not commonly used in Palestinian education until the mid 1990s, the majority of the literature pertaining specifically to the educational and political uses of the internet is self-restricted to those published from 1995. However, it should be noted that there is not a great deal of literature
currently existing on this topic. I also consulted some older documents which provided background information to the educational and political situation in Palestine.

In this chapter I first review the history and existing literature on Palestinian education in context of the Israeli occupation. Then, I discuss some of the theoretical foundations of e-learning and the implications for the Palestinian education. I next review literature regarding the political role of Palestinian universities as centers of activism and resistance. Finally, I present the internet as a viable means for Palestinian activism and resistance and review existing literature on the topic.

**Palestinian Education under Occupation**

Public education in Palestine has a long and turbulent history. In fact, Palestinian education has only recently, in 1994, been brought under control of the Palestinians themselves. Formal education in Palestine was first established under the Ottoman Empire in the latter part of the 19th century. It remained under Ottoman control until 1917 when the British Mandate took over (Velloso, 2002; Affouneh, 2008; Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). The British then gave control of Palestinian education to the state of Israel in 1948. Following the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, approximately 700,000 to 800,000 of the Palestinians living within the boundaries of the newly formed Israeli state fled or were expelled to surrounding geographic areas (Belcher, 2005; Zunat, 2009). The Israeli administration oversaw the education of the Palestinians who remained; Jordan and Egypt took responsibility of the education of those who fled to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively. Following the war in 1967, all Palestinian education fell under control of Israeli occupation including schools in the West Bank and Gaza, with the exception of the UN Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) schools established in refugee camps located in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon (Assaf, 1997; Velloso, 2002; Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003; Affouneh, 2008).
According to existing literature, during the years 1948-1994, Palestinian education deteriorated as the Israeli administration withheld needed funding, supplies and facilities, segregated school systems, only permitted culturally inappropriate and insensitive curriculum and textbooks to be used, maintained complete control over staffing and hiring and limited access to schools (Graham-Brown, 1984; Velloso, 2002; Affouneh, 2008; Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006; Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). As conditions continued to decline from 1967-1987, tensions began to mount between Israeli military and an increasingly political youth population. In December, 1987, with the commencement of the first Palestinian Intifada, school grounds, literally at times, became battlegrounds. Students and youth played a key role during the uprising, and as a result Israeli forces began targeting education by taunting and assaulting teachers and students, invading schools and even using teargas in classrooms (Holt, 2001; Rigby, 1995; Sultana, 2006). Closures during this period were common, and in 1988 all 1,194 schools located in the West Bank were closed for 9 months and again for 8 months in 1989; Palestinians viewed these closures not as a crackdown on violent resistance but rather as an attempt to create an entire illiterate generation (Barghouti and Murray, 2005; Holt, 2001; Affouneh, 2008). Universities, which had first began appearing in the mid 1970s with the establishment of Birzeit University, were especially targeted during this first Intifada and measures taken against them included: limiting the amount and types of books that could be imported for library use, hindering financial assistance from external sources, arresting, interrogating and shooting students, compulsory retirement or transfer of teachers, suspension of teacher salaries and closing the universities for several years (Assaf, 1997; Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003; Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2008).

Following the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the development of the PNA, the newly formed MoEHE was given control over Palestinian education in 1994. For the first time since its inception, Palestinian public education was controlled by a Palestinian administration, and much of the immediate work undertaken by the MoEHE concerned issues of rewriting and implementing new
curriculum and textbooks (Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006; Velloso, 2002). While educational responsibility was that of the MoEHE, the education system itself was still operating under Israeli occupation, and in September of 2000, when the second Intifada commenced—again with Palestinian youth and students heavily involved—Israel reverted back to targeting and disrupting education through, among other tactics, closures, checkpoints and curfews (Barghouti and Murray, 2005; Sultana, 2006; Affouneh, 2008).

According to Ra’ad and Nafi’ (2007), over 800 military checkpoints exist throughout occupied Palestine, and much has been written on the effects of movement restrictions via checkpoints and curfews on Palestinian society (Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2004; Watkins, 2006; Hammami, 2004). The spatial and mobility problems caused by checkpoints and curfews are having particularly negative effects on Palestinian education (Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007; Affouneh, 2008). Checkpoints are often intentionally set up on roads leading to schools and universities (Hammond, 2007; Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006), and according to Ra’ad and Nafi’ a single checkpoint “can shut down for days and weeks the process of teaching and learning” (2007: 35). Few courses, therefore, get through all the course content as the entire learning process becomes disrupted and fragmented by these restrictions. Ra’ad and Nafi’ (2007) additionally point out that checkpoints take an emotional toll on students and faculty who arrive to class exhausted; they also limit the communication and academic collaboration between Palestinian universities, and professors spend so much time at checkpoints that it limits their time for preparing classes, teaching and researching (Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007; Hammond, 2007). Birzeit University’s Right to Education Campaign pronounced an appeal to Israel and the international community “to take immediate action to restore the right of education to Birzeit University students and all students in the Palestinian territory by removing all military obstacles to free and safe access to educational institutions and work places” (Birzeit University’s Right to Education Campaign, 2004). The spatial immobility and restrictions on movements caused
by checkpoints and curfews, according to the literature, have damaged the quality of and limited the access to Palestinian education.

Potential of E-learning

One of the greatest advantages of electronic and internet-enabled learning, or e-learning, is its flexibility regarding space and time (Ally, 2004; Hiltz and Wellman, 1997). Indeed, Holmes and Gardner define e-learning as “online access to learning resources, anywhere and anytime” (2006: 14). Traditional, face-to-face education requires that an instructor and students simultaneously be physically together—to be located at the same moment in space and time. E-learning, however, has the capability to bypass these spatial and temporal limitations of face-to-face courses (Newby, et al., 2006). For example, students and instructors who are bound by travel or geographic limitations or cannot meet at an appointed time could still have the opportunity to take or teach courses if they are online. Asynchronous, online coursework allows individuals to access the course anywhere they have an internet connection and does not require that all be online simultaneously (Holmes and Gardner, 2006). Variations are also possible, such as synchronous online learning wherein students and instructors are simultaneously online. While this approach does not get outside limitations of time, it still enables all involved to participate wherever they are located geographically. Blended learning which combines the traditional face-to-face method of learning with the online approach is also possible and gives instructors and students the benefits of both (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). Thus, the internet has great potential for bypassing spatial barriers by providing students with online access to education.

In addition to providing learning that is “anywhere, anytime,” the internet and technology can also enhance the quality of learning. Literature suggests that e-learning and computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) research demonstrates how technology and the internet can be used to create collaborative, knowledge-constructing learning activities for students (Lehtinen, 2003; Stahl,
Additionally, a growing body of literature argues that Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, wikis, tagging, social networking, multimedia sharing and podcasting can also improve education (Richardson, 2009; Schrum and Solomon, 2007; Anderson, 2007). These issues and ideas will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The ability for e-learning to bypass limitations of time and space and provide quality learning experiences has potential implications for the occupation-inhibited, Palestinian education system. During the first Intifada the internet was a new phenomenon to the world and was not being used in schools or universities in Palestine. When universities were closed, students and teachers risked being arrested by meeting illegally in churches, mosques, clubs, homes and even grocery markets (Assaf, 1997; Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007). Physical travel to such meetings was often dangerous and restricted by curfews and checkpoints. When the second Intifada began and heavy restrictions were again imposed on Palestinian education, universities, especially Birzeit University, looked to the internet for possible solutions (Halileh and Giacaman, 2002; Mitnick, 2004; Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007). As described in the introduction, when Birzeit University was closed for another indefinite amount of time in 2002, Ritaj, the online portal that was then being created as an administrative tool, was immediately adapted into a type of virtual learning environment (VLE) whereby students were still able to communicate with each other and their lecturers, access course content, turn in assignments and take exams (‘Ritaj’, The Great Portal Opens Access to Birzeit University, 2002; Halileh and Giacaman, 2002; Khoury-Machool, 2007). Thus, rather than meeting illegally and risking arrest and physical harm, Ritaj enabled students and teachers to continue with their courses from home or anywhere they had an internet connection. Palestinian education had access to space during the second Intifada that it did not have access to during the first; space that was not closed, occupied or cordoned off into sections by checkpoints: cyberspace (Aouragh, 2008). Given the turbulent history and context of Palestinian education, the internet and e-learning have great potential to help Palestinians bypass limitations of the occupation and access education (Khoury-Machool, 2007).
Palestinian Higher Education and Political Activism

When discussing Palestinian higher education in the context of the occupation, one must consider the unique role of the universities. Since their establishment in the 1970s, Palestinian universities have functioned not only as institutions for higher education and learning but also as hubs of political activity and resistance (Bruhn, 2006; Rigby, 1995; Hammond, 2007; Graham-Brown, 1984; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2008). Indeed, Abu-Saad and Champagne state that Palestinians view universities as “centers of political struggle and national resistance” and have “played a leading role in the resistance to the occupation and nation building” (2006: 1044). Bruhn (2006) expounds further on this phenomenon by explaining that due to the non-existence of a Palestinian state, universities have served as types of national institutions for their communities. The communities themselves must remain subject to the state of Israel, but the universities, being private, are independent of the occupying state (Bruhn, 2006). That independence is, of course, quite limited due to the fact that Israel can impose various restrictions on universities, as described above. However, the idea remains that “Palestinian universities exist in opposition to the state, that is to Israel, because the state of Israel continues to challenge the expression of Palestinian identity within a Palestinian state” (Bruhn, 2006: 1126; Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). Students who view the role of the university in this light may share the opinion that “university enrolment signifies a renewed sense of hope and the possibility for organised resistance” (Lunat, 2009: 7). Lunat (2009) also argues that in addition to their educational role, Palestinian universities serve an important function for the socialization of students into the national struggle. Universities, therefore, function not only as spaces for higher learning, but also as spaces whereby Palestinians may become politically active and involved in various resistance movements.

One type of resistance pertinent to this project that has been particularly well-situated within universities is that of voicing and expressing the Palestinian narrative. Bruhn explains why
universities have been so crucial to creating and narrating a Palestinian consciousness: “The unique status of Palestinian universities as nonstate institutions and their accessibility to students made them a natural facilitator of national consciousness” (2006: 1128). She further explains that these independent, private universities have served as incubation spaces in which Palestinians could consider, reflect upon and articulate injustices of the occupation, Palestinian national identity and the story of what it means to be Palestinian; thus simultaneously creating and communicating a national narrative (Bruhn, 2006). The central role of the universities to narrative resistance was apparent during the first Intifada. When the uprising caught the attention of Israel and the international community, it was university students and faculty who articulated and narrated the Palestinian message to them (Bruhn, 2006).

This issue of expressing or narrating a Palestinian identity, consciousness, story or narrative is best captured in the title of a landmark article by Edward Said, a world-renowned scholar and Palestinian spokesman, which is called, “Permission to Narrate” (1984). Much has been written on the myriad of methods Palestinians have used to narrate this message. Traditional forms of media, such as Palestinian newspapers, television and radio have been used to counter the pro-Israeli narrative told to and by the West (Said, 1984; Khoury-Machool, 2007). Palestinian literature and poetry, including a particular genre of poetry called *shi’r al-muqawama* or “poetry of the resistance” have been important means of narration, as have political symbols and messages in the form of graffiti (Khoury-Machool, 2007). In a powerfully evocative article entitled “Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian ‘Intifada’: A Cultural Politics of Violence,” Julie Peteet (1994), describes how Palestinian male bodies have become a means of narration. She writes of how the scars upon Palestinian boys and young men who have been arrested and tortured by Israeli forces become political inscriptions with which they are narrating the Palestinian message. These examples show some of the various ways in which Palestinians have attempted to express their national narrative and identity.
Online Narration and e-Resistance

In addition to the various methods of narration mentioned above, Palestinians have begun narrating online wherein the internet is used to disseminate the Palestinian message. One of the first recorded instances of this type of resistance was a website called ‘On the Ground in Ramallah,’ created by Birzeit University staff after Birzeit students and other Palestinians clashed with Israeli troops in September 1996, leaving 88 Palestinians and 16 Israelis killed and thousands of Palestinians injured (Parry, 2003; Khoury-Machool, 2007; Hanieh, 1999). Nigel Parry, one of the creators of the website, felt that news and media reports were only reporting a pro-Israeli depiction of the events and used the website as a way to tell the world the Palestinian side of the story (Parry, 2003). Aouragh (2008) also discusses how the internet is often appropriated and used by oppressed communities to present a counter-narrative to that presented by mass media, such as is the case in Palestine. Khoury-Machool (2007) points out that the internet provides narrative capabilities for Palestinians in that it gives them uncensored space to communicate their experiences to an international audience. Hanieh (1999) discusses how internet technology, including multimedia capabilities, enables Palestinians to create and present news rather than merely consuming it. He also describes how using the internet for political narration allows for quick dissemination and a wide distribution (Haneiah, 1999). Despite the potential for Palestinians to use the internet to present their narrative to the rest of the world, very little empirical data exists on this topic.

Online narration is one form of a reportedly greater Palestinian political phenomenon occurring online called e-resistance. E-resistance, also referred to as electronic resistance, cyber resistance and cyber intifada, is a term describing a combination of Palestinian resistance methods online and moves political activity and discussion into the cyber realm (Aouragh, 2008; Khoury-Machool, 2007). In addition to online narration described above, e-resistance can include other resistance methods such as ‘hacktivism’ and political mobilization. Hacktivism occurs when individuals of one
group intentionally hack and sabotage the websites of the opposition, causing chaos, embarrassment and often financial loss. Online mobilization refers to using internet communication to organize and mobilize large demonstrations or gatherings (Khoury-Machool, 2007; Auty, 2004). Aouragh (2008) and Khoury-Machool (2007) discuss the potential of the internet for organizing political mobilization. This type of mobilization can occur in the form of physical gatherings and meetings or virtual mobilization where political action is taken online.

Khoury-Machool (2007) also argues for the importance of using the internet for political activism; he says that because of the non-violent, accessible means of online activism, e-resistance enables those who could not resist physically to resist electronically. The idea that e-resistance, including online narration, has the potential to increase the number and scope of those who can participate could have huge implications for political activism in Palestine. It is possible, therefore, that gender, age and geographic location become less restrictive during online political activism.

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

Given this context, the overall aim and purpose of this study is to explore the role and perceptions of the internet within Palestinian higher education. Given the context of the occupation and the limitations of accessing education due to curfews and checkpoints, the internet has great potential for improving access to Palestinian higher education. Despite this potential and the success story of Ritaj, I found very little literature since that time describing Palestinians’ perceptions and uses of the internet to access education. My first research question, therefore, is:

**Research Question #1: How is the internet perceived and used by Palestinian students, faculty and ministry officials for educational purposes?**

As described in the literature, Palestinian universities are not only institutions for learning but are also centers for political activism and resistance. While some articles presented above discuss the
potential role of the internet in perpetuating this political activism, there is an overall lack of empirical data on the matter. Thus, my second research question:

**Research Question #2: How is the internet perceived and used by Palestinian students, faculty and ministry officials for political purposes?**

While the two questions above are the two, main theoretical questions guiding and directing this study, I do pose an additional, preliminary question intended to inform them:

**Research Question #3: What are the participants’ perceptions of the current situation regarding the occupation and its effects on higher education?**

This question is intended to help provide a conceptual framework of the current situation surrounding the occupation with specific reference to checkpoints, curfews and school closures. The manner in which participants perceive the occupation is also extremely important to this study as it has possible implications for internet use. For example, if a participant does not perceive the occupation as having negative effects on education, then the way they use and perceive the internet for educational purposes may be affected by such a view. It is important, therefore, to understand participants’ perceptions of the occupation.
Chapter 3: Research Methodologies

This chapter focuses on the methodologies I used during the course of this project. First, I present the rationale for the selected research design and justify the decision for using this approach by drawing from research literature. Then, I discuss the sampling approach and data collection methods. Next, I describe the data analysis strategy I used while analyzing and interpreting the data. I conclude this chapter by giving consideration to issues of validity and ethics.

Research Strategy and Rationale

If research methodology is the manner in which we attempt to come to know and gain knowledge about the world, then methodological choice is inextricably linked and even reliant upon the researcher’s underpinning ontological and epistemological paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Indeed, a constructivist paradigm greatly influenced the formation of the research questions and subsequently the methodology of this study. Rather than trying to accurately capture and represent an external reality, I attempted to construct meaning based on the perceived reality of individuals involved with the social phenomenon of interest—namely the use and role of the internet in Palestinian higher education.

In addition to having constructivist underpinnings, this project seeks to both verify and generate theory. As discussed in the literature review, for example, Khoury-Machool (2007) theorizes that Palestinian youth, especially students in the higher education system, are using the internet for politicization and resistance of the Israeli occupation. This is a fascinating and potentially important theory that could be useful to education policy makers, educators, students and a myriad of other groups of individuals. However, this theory is not supported by any solid, empirical evidence. One purpose of this project, therefore, is to gather meaningful data in order to clarify, build upon and verify (or refute) the existing theories presented in Chapter 2.
Though this study is somewhat deductive as it attempts the verification of pre-existing theories by subjecting them to empirical scrutiny (Bryman, 2008; Punch, 2005; Brewer and Hunter, 1989), it is actually more inductive in nature. While verifying the theory of e-resistance in Palestine is one purpose of this project, I am more interested in gaining a holistic view of the perceived role of the internet in Palestinian higher education. I feel an inductive and holistic approach would better inform and be more valuable at this time due to the current lack of research in this area. The research questions are therefore intentionally posed in such a way as to be inductive in nature so that that new theory surrounding this topic may be generated from them (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005). Additionally, I feel this approach encompasses both issues of education and politicization and has potential to provide meaningful data on these issues.

While not all constructivist and inductive studies are qualitative, Bryman (2008) suggests these are two typical features that distinguish qualitative from quantitative studies. Additionally, much of the literature regarding research design suggests that the appropriate design and methodologies should be selected as the best fit for the research questions being posed (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 1994). LeCompte and Preissle state that research design involves deciding “what information most appropriately will answer specific research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it” (2003:30). The research questions I pose are qualitative in nature as they probe deeply into participants’ opinions, perceptions and experiences. Thus, given this project’s constructivist underpinnings, predominantly inductive purpose and the qualitative nature of the research questions, I determined that a qualitative research methodology and methods, including semi-structured interviews, would be most appropriate and applicable for this study. These methods will be further discussed later in this chapter.
Sampling

The manner in which I have posed the research questions automatically posits three different groups or ‘tiers’ of participants: ministry level, faculty level and student level. It was necessary, therefore, to obtain a sample of participants from each of these three groups. Due to geographic and travel constraints, I knew that I would not be able to conduct fieldwork in Palestine and had to take this into consideration while drawing up the sampling strategies and methods.

As for participants involved in higher education at the ministry level, I wanted to interview individuals specifically involved in the planning and policy making processes as well as national programs involving ICT and the internet. At the time of data collection, I was involved with an international workshop regarding education in conflict situations and knew that three Palestinian educational planners from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) would be attending the workshop. Using a purposive sampling strategy (Silverman, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Stake, 2008), I invited each of them by email to participate in the study. Not only did they all agree to be interviewed during the course of the workshop, most of them also provided valuable articles and information about ICT projects in Palestinian education which proved extremely useful to the research.

For the faculty and student level sampling, I decided that the scope of sampling for this study should be limited to one university. This was, of course, due partly to constraints on time and resources; additionally, however, I felt focusing on one university would allow me to increase the detail and richness of the data (Punch, 2005). I selected Birzeit University, located in the West Bank, as the focus of the study for several different reasons. First, as mentioned in the literature review, Birzeit was one of the first educational institutions to use the internet to bypass occupation-imposed restrictions in order to provide access to education for its students solutions (Mitnick, 2004; Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007; Halileh and Giacaman, 2002). Second, I chose Birzeit because of its key, historical role as a center for political activism and resistance, also discussed in the previous chapter (Ra’ad
and Nafi’, 2007). Finally, I chose this university for sampling purposes. Following the purposive sampling strategy to obtain participants at the ministry level, I used a snowball sampling technique to get faculty participants (Bryman, 2008). When I asked the group of ministry participants I had already selected if they knew any university faculty in Palestine interested in my topic of inquiry, I was immediately put in contact with two faculty involved in e-learning and educational technology at Birzeit. These two faculty have been active in researching and supporting the development of e-learning and implementation of technology in education at the national level. I also wanted to get the perspective of a faculty member not involved with ICT at the university and was referred to a female faculty member by one of these participants. She then put me in touch with a few students who likewise put me in touch with their classmates. All participants spoke English very well and language was almost never a problem during the interviewing process.

Almost counter-intuitively, I discovered during the sampling process that the ministry officials were much easier to access and schedule interviews with than faculty members and students. This may have been due to the unfortunate fact that the data collection period coincided with the university’s examination and holiday period. So faculty and students were initially somewhat challenging to interview. Once exams concluded, however, I had an overwhelming response rate and had to eventually limit the number of total faculty and students to nine (three faculty and six students), thus bringing the total number of interviews to 12.

Methods

As stated above, the research questions of this project intended to explore the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the participants. As the literature discusses, qualitative interviews focus on interviewees’ point of view, perceptions, meanings and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005; Bryman, 2008). Because this is an exploratory study, I wanted to have the ability and flexibility to
pose follow-up questions and explore new ideas as participants presented them. I therefore employed interviews as my method of data collection.

While recognizing the fact that I had a specific topic and set of questions I wanted to pose to participants, yet not wanting to limit their responses, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews (Fielding, 1993; Bryman, 2008). Knowing I would have three different groups of interviews of participants as described above, I created three different types of interview guides with a list of questions to use during the data collection process. This structure allowed me to keep a certain degree of uniformity throughout all interviews which helped with data analysis and comparison, while also easily allowing me to add, remove or edit questions on an individual basis. As I was interested in the personal internet use of all participants, many of the questions pertaining to individual usage were the same on all three guides. I did, however, modify and tailor questions on each guide pertaining to the participant’s unique position as a student, faculty member or ministry official. For example, when interviewing a student I would inquire as to their use of the internet for classroom-related purposes, but when interviewing an official, I would ask about their use of the internet to accomplish ministry-related tasks. I often departed from the pre-set questions on the interview guide to probe deeper into the responses and tangents respondents gave (Fielding, 1993). I have included examples of the student, faculty and ministry interview guides as Appendix A, B and C, respectively. As the interviews are semi-structured, of course not all questions posed to participants are listed on the guides.

Due to the sensitive and political nature of some questions I posed to participants, I initially decided to do one-on-one interviews (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). The three participants attending the previously mentioned workshop were interviewed face-to-face in Paris, while all students and faculty at Birzeit were interviewed via Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) software such as Skype and Windows Live Messenger. I used a standard voice recorder and Camtasia Audio Editor software to record these interviews, which I later transcribed. Each interview lasted about an hour.
In one instance, I was notified that due to busy schedules three classmates who were willing to participate could only meet simultaneously for the VoIP interview. I decided to modify the interview guide and to conduct a group interview. Despite my earlier assumption that I should avoid the group interview format because politically sensitive questions would be better asked in a more closed and private setting, the group interaction actually encouraged and stimulated the students to open up and share more than in any other interview I conducted during data collection (Punch, 2005; Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Fielding (1993) reports a similar surprising experience while researching domestic violence. Future research may consider utilizing group interviews more.

Conducting qualitative interviews via the internet has become a common practice in recent years and much has been written on the topic (O’Connor, et. al, 2008; Gaiser, 2008; Markham, 2004). Using VoIP software to collect data had several advantages and disadvantages. It not only allowed me to speak to participants distantly, saving time and travel costs, but as some participants only had access to internet and not to landlines, it decreased the inconvenience on participants given the difficulty of travel under the conditions of the occupation (Meho, 2006). Only in one instance was the sound quality of VoIP poor enough that I had to call the participant’s landline. One of the most unexpected advantages of this medium of communication turned out to be the simultaneous instant messaging capability. In several instances during an interview, a participant would refer to an article or website and would then immediately send me an attachment or website link electronically. Some difficulties arose on occasion due to dropped calls, static and feedback which interrupted interviews. In addition, being unable to use and observe body language and eye contact as well as a lack of shared presence made it more difficult to discern the emotions of the participants (Bryman, 2008). I was also made aware (by the confession of one student) of at least one instance when Facebook was being used during the interview, which multitasking could have potential impact on the quality of data. Research conducted in the future utilizing VoIP may be able to bypass some of these difficulties by using video when possible.
Data Analysis Strategy

After transcribing the recorded interviews, I analyzed the data using a qualitative coding and memoing process described in Miles and Huberman (1994) and Punch (2005). I first began with a basic coding process. In reference to basic coding, Punch states, “Codes are tags, names or labels, and coding is therefore the process of putting tags, names or labels against pieces of the data” (2005: 199). The initial codes were mainly descriptive in nature and allowed me to better conceptualize and organize the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I did this by rereading the transcripts for each interview and then summarizing and labeling what was said into several categories. I next did a second round of coding for each interview that was more advanced and which further abstracted the data so that I could better find themes and patterns and “pull together material into smaller and more meaningful units” (Punch, 2005: 200). Thus, the data was further grouped and the categories I had from basic coding were reduced and refined. Next, I displayed the data in tables organized by category rather than by participants by combining the coded data from each interview together according to the labeled groupings. This enabled me to better visualize and analyze the data by themes and patterns rather than individual participants.

During the coding process, I occasionally paused and wrote my thoughts and impressions as I explored what I was learning through coding. This process, referred to as memoing, consists of writing up ideas about codes and their relationships; they can be substantive and theoretical and may suggest deeper concepts than the coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005). This process helped me move from an empirical level of analysis to a more conceptual one. Additionally, the memoing I conducted during the first round of coding helped to inform and improve the more advanced coding.

Still drawing from Miles and Huberman (1994), I implemented several of their analysis tactics in order to draw conclusions. This meaning generating process happened throughout the analysis both
during and after—and often as a result of—coding and memoing. The tactics I used to draw conclusions included noting patterns and themes in the data, seeing plausible conclusions, clustering the data according to what goes together and what does not, making contrasts and comparisons between participant data, subsuming data particulars into the more abstract general, seeing logical chains of evidence supporting conclusions and finally making conceptual/theoretical coherence by tying the findings and conclusions back to constructs, concepts and theories (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Validity

In order to increase the validity of this study, I used a couple of different approaches throughout the research process. One approach I used was data triangulation. By using multiple participants from multiple levels or perspectives of the higher education system—ministry, faculty and student levels—I was able to check for convergent lines of inquiry thus increasing the validity of the data. This “diversity of perception” helps portray “the multiple realities in which people live” (Stake, 2008: 133), while simultaneously looking for shared or convergent meaning within those realities. By interviewing multiple individuals from the different levels within the system, I was able to collect the perceptions, views, opinions and experiences of individuals which either supported or negated those of other participants. There is, however, a potential threat to validity concerning the sampling process itself. Due to the constraints of not being able to physically travel to the West Bank, I had to rely on snowball sampling to find faculty and student participants. This is potentially problematic to the data as people have a tendency to select others who are similar to themselves. For example, four out of the six student participants are studying English literature as their major. While recognizing that I would have preferred to have a more representative sample, I am not attempting to generalize my findings, and I do not feel that this issue posed any significant problems or biases to the research (Silverman, 2005).
I also sought to increase the validity of the study by allowing participants to review the data they gave during the interviews through respondent validation (Bryman, 2008). After transcribing each interview, I emailed the transcription to each informant and asked them to read the transcription and ensure that the data was correct and accurate. This allowed participants not only to correct any misunderstandings or errors made during the interviewing and transcribing process, but it also allowed participants a chance to reflect on their responses and to add details or clarify any information, thus providing more accurate and in-depth data. Additionally, given the political nature of many of the questions, I deemed it ethically necessary for all participants to read their responses and to have the opportunity to withdraw any information they had previously given. It is possible that during the interviewing process that people may divulge more information than they normally would have in a written format (Newell, 1993), so I felt it important for participants to have the opportunity to review the written transcript before it was analyzed. After completing the findings and analysis write-up, I sent a copy to each participant and again asked for their feedback and suggestions. I received helpful, clarifying comments as a result of this respondent validation method and feel this greatly increased the validity of the study.

It is also important to also discuss the possible effects that I, the researcher, and the political climate may have had on the validity of this study. First, the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is an intensely charged and highly political situation. As such, participants may have had several reasons for withholding or distorting information. For example, Palestinian participants may have chosen to exaggerate the difficulties of the current situation in order to demonize Israel; or perhaps some participants chose to withhold information regarding their online activities as a form of self-protection. In fact, at the conclusion of one interview with a faculty member, he wisely informed me that if students are involved in any kind of online political activity, they may be hesitant to talk about it. I personally do not believe this happened to a great extent; nonetheless, in order to overcome some of these obstacles, I attempted during the interviews to establish trust with the participants and
to avoid questions that were too political or self-incriminating in nature. For example, when I asked one student participant if she has ever received any kind of electronic message from a politically-affiliated group calling for a meeting, gathering or demonstration, she informed me that she was uncomfortable answering the question. I immediately rephrased the question in a way that was not self-incriminating and more comfortable for her to answer by asking if she had heard about or knew of any of her friends that have received such messages.

In order to minimize researcher bias, I tried to be self-reflective throughout the entire research process. As I began interviewing, for example, I noticed my initial disappointment in the data I was gathering. It was then that I realized that I had preconceived assumptions and biases of how I wanted participants to respond to my questions. As I became aware of this bias in favor of certain results, I was able to work against it both during the data collection and analysis phases of the research. Despite feeling politically neutral at the outset of this project, during the interviewing process I became aware of a developing political bias in favor of the Palestinian plight. As I heard some of the difficulties and harrowing experiences they have passed through as a result of the conflict and the occupation, I felt myself becoming increasingly emotionally invested in the participants and politically biased towards the current situation in Palestine. Being aware of this bias, however, has allowed me to remind myself and be constantly mindful of the purpose and focus of this project (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This study is not meant to push a personal political agenda and especially not to demonize Israel or the Israeli people. I must note, however, that the purpose of this thesis is to explore personal perceptions of a group of Palestinian people. While I have tried to limit my personal biases while collecting, analyzing and presenting these perceptions, the perceptions themselves are coming from Palestinians who live, work and study in a context of conflict and occupation and are not neutral or unbiased. This dissertation, therefore, is recognizably written about the Palestinian perspective. As I discuss in the conclusion, similar
research in the future should consider incorporating Israeli participants and their perspectives on this topic.

**Ethical Considerations**

Before beginning data collection, I submitted a research ethics application to the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) based on guidance of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). I received approval from the committee to conduct research for this project. Ethical considerations on topics as the physical safety, protection of identity and protection of the rights of the participants were addressed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Bryman, 2008). Recognizing the seriousness of the current political situation in Palestine, throughout the research process I was extremely careful and made every precaution to protect the well-being of the participants. For example, all data was stored under password protection during the entire research process, and I have tried to remove all identifying information pertaining to participants. I originally did not intend to use the name of the university; however, because of Birzeit’s unique role in e-learning and the account of Ritaj, I felt it would be beneficial to the study to use its name. Before doing so, however, I contacted and received permission from all faculty and student participants.

Before conducting each interview participants received a document providing background information for the study. Additionally, all participants signed an online consent form giving their approval to take part in the project. Both the background information and consent form had previously been approved by CUREC. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were promised that all personal data would be kept private and that all efforts would be made to ensure confidentiality and that their names would remain anonymous. Additionally, all data was stored according to the requirements of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and CUREC. I have included copies of both the Information for Participants and the Interview Consent Form documents as Appendices D and E.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of this project. I begin with a brief discussion regarding participants’ individual internet usage. Next, I present and discuss participants’ experiences and perceptions regarding the context of the occupation. Specific attention is given to the dilemma of checkpoints and the perceived impact these checkpoints are having on Palestinian education. Finally, I discuss participants’ usage and perceptions of the internet and Web 2.0 technologies for educational and political purposes. Within both of these themes, I present and analyze results based on the responses given by the three different groups of participants: ministry officials, faculty and students.

Individual Usage

This section is intended to inform the two key research questions for this study by giving a broad overview of how the internet and specifically Web 2.0 technologies are being used by participants.
Table 1: Participant Internet Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1 54</td>
<td>4 48</td>
<td>7 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 53</td>
<td>5 35</td>
<td>8 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 42</td>
<td>6 22</td>
<td>9 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile online</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Use</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>w: dsl h: NA</td>
<td>w: wifi h: wifi</td>
<td>c: wifi h: NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(work, campus and home)</td>
<td>h: dial</td>
<td>h: wifi h: wifi</td>
<td>h: wifi h: dial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant Messaging (MSN)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VoIP (Skype)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking (Facebook)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microblogging (Twitter)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis (Wikipedia)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video sharing (YouTube)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo sharing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritaj</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLE (Moodle)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NH=Never heard of this technology before
**NA=Not Available.
As can be seen from table 1, internet usage, in several categories, is similar for all participants—regardless of age or gender. All participants reported using high-speed wireless or dsl internet at work/university and/or at home on a daily basis. All participants email, most having multiple email accounts, and almost all instant message (e.g. MSN). Regarding Web 2.0 technologies, all participants have used some kind of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service (Skype and MSN being most popular), and most use VoIP on a regular basis. All report using wikis and a video sharing site—Wikipedia and YouTube exclusively. Among those associated with the university—faculty and students—all use the university’s online platform, Ritaj, on a daily basis.

Similarities exist not only in what participants use, but also in what they do not use. Blogging and microblogging, with one exception each, are not done at all. Not a single participant reported ever using podcasts. In fact, several participants stated that they have never heard of these technologies. It appears, therefore, that the types of Web 2.0 technologies being used are very similar amongst all participants.

There is one glaring exception in this pattern, however: Facebook. The age demographics of the participants range from 19-54. All students are approximately the same age (19-21), and one faculty participant is 22. The rest of the faculty and ministry participants comprise an older demographic with ages ranging from 35-54. The younger group—all students and the 22 year old faculty member—are all regular Facebook users. Students also reported that the popularity of Facebook is high amongst the entire student body, “Every student at Birzeit University has an account on Facebook. At least one account. So whenever or whatever you want to do at the university you just use Facebook and everyone will know in one day.” In contrast, amongst the older participants—faculty and ministry officials—not a single individual uses Facebook or any other social networking site. While none of these findings are generalizable, this Facebook finding is important for this research and will be discussed later in this chapter.
The main research questions of this project pertain to how participants perceive and use the internet for educational and political purposes. I explore these two themes individually, beginning with the educational theme. In order to better understand these purposes of internet use, however, I wish to first discuss the context in which participants are using the internet—namely the context of the occupation. This leads to the third research question: What are the participants’ perceptions of the current situation regarding the occupation and its effects on higher education?

**Occupation and Checkpoints**

While participants are still far from calling the situation in the West Bank ‘peaceful’, all participants indicated that the degree of violence in the West Bank, particularly in regards to education, has significantly decreased during the past few years. Most of the recent violence, they recount, has been taking place elsewhere, such as Gaza. They also reported that school closures have become very rare in recent years. Israeli soldiers are now no longer permitted to enter the university grounds. According to participants, this has led to a feeling of improved security and safety at the university.

Despite the improvements and general feeling of safety while on campus, participants expressed frustrations getting to campus. This concern stems from the extensive system of checkpoints scattered on roads throughout Palestine as discussed in Chapter 2 (Bornstein, 2008; Brown, 2004; Watkins, 2006; Hammami, 2004). Participants further explained that there are two basic types of checkpoints: fixed and flying. Fixed, or anchored, checkpoints are permanent stations, usually on main or high access roads. Flying checkpoints, on the other hand, are transitory and move from one location to another on a regular basis. Participants said the latter are particularly problematic as they bring an element of surprise and unpredictability to their lives and schedules. From interview responses, I distinguished two specific ways in which the occupation and checkpoints are negatively impacting Palestinian education. First, the restrictions on participants’ movements are limiting their access to education and educational facilities. Second, limited access is causing a localization
phenomenon to occur in which students and teachers only attend and work at schools and universities in their immediate geographic region. Participants reported that both limited access and localization are having a negative impact on the quality of education in Palestine.

Participants reported that checkpoints continue to make accessing classrooms and places of occupation difficult. This finding corresponds with the discussions on the negative impact of checkpoints on education in Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006) and Ra’ad and Nafi’ (2007). One official explained that a 10 minute commute under normal circumstances can take over 2 hours; he described how the administration has often given employees blankets in order to sleep at the ministry rather than trying to pass through multiple checkpoints at night. Another participant told of the unpredictability of travelling. “Really depends on the mood that day, the situation on that day and the political situation, troubles that might happen […] If I have to meet you in Jerusalem I can say to you, ‘Well, let us meet sometime between 2 and 5’ […] You cannot give an exact appointment […] because there is a probability of […] being delayed.” Such delays, restrictions and unpredictability of travel to and from ministry offices could have potential negative effects on the quality of work of ministry officials as they plan the national education system.

Checkpoints also restrict and delay educators getting to and from their classes. When faculty do not have proper documentation such as the permits described above, movement becomes especially difficult. During an interview with a faculty member, I learned that getting to and from the university is especially difficult for him due to the fact that he has to illegally sneak to and from Birzeit every day:

Faculty: I live in Jerusalem. I am a West Bank resident, and I usually have to have a permit—it’s part of the humiliation. Every 6 months I have to go back for a permit so that I can live at home with my family. And now for the past 3 months I haven’t had a permit. They’ve been delaying it because they’ve been checking things. And now to cross back and forth [to the university] I sort of have to sneak in and to get home every time.
Me: You have to sneak in?
Faculty: I have to sneak in.
Me: How do you do that?
Faculty: [He laughs] Uh, whatever. There are ways to sneak in. If I’m caught I can get arrested. It’s really sickening.

One official further explained, “Checkpoints are […] not allowing teachers to get to the schools […] Jerusalem teachers that have West Bank IDs are given permits, [but] not all of them are given permits to get into Jerusalem. And even […] many of them are not allowed after being given those permits. So the checkpoints […] are causing a bad effect on education in Palestine.” Thus, by preventing educators from having access to their students, these physical limitations are negatively effecting education.

Students also miss classes because of the checkpoints. One student explained, “A one hour ride can turn into a 3 hour ride which affects my whole day, so I can miss a class or two of my classes, and I end up doing nothing on that day because of the checkpoints.” The following is an excerpt from the group interview wherein two of the three female students expressed their frustration with the Israeli soldiers and not being able to get to class:

Student 1: They’re bored!
Student 2: They want to have fun. Talk to girls. Laugh at us.
Student 1: There was an 18 year old [Israeli-American] soldier who came from Chicago; he was on that checkpoint right outside my city. And he pulled us over just to have a chat. He was bored. It was 5 a.m. in the morning. He didn’t have his TV and he wasn’t connected to the internet so he held us for 40 min. just because he was bored and he wanted to chat.
Student 2: Most of the soldiers are young. Some of them are even younger than me, and when you have children serving in the military they do this childish stuff. I mean, I’m in a hurry, I need to get to college and attend my classes and he’s just like playing. For God’s sake, please stop messing around with us!

One of the reasons checkpoints are so physically limiting, according to participants, is because of their potential danger. While speaking with a male student he recounted, “Passing by a checkpoint has become regular to me […] but two days ago I saw this video online of some guy being beat up by the Israeli soldiers at the same checkpoint that I pass through. So when I saw them beating [him] I thought, ‘My God that could be me. One day I’ll pass by that checkpoint and they’ll beat me up.’”
One participant described what it was like to be constantly “humiliated and abused” by being “thrown like a dog in the sun and you have to wait for hours and hours and you have those people barking at you.” Students are also in danger at checkpoints of being recruited by the Israeli military; one student told of his experience with this:

I was once stopped at a checkpoint—this is something that happens to many students from Jerusalem—and they took me to meet an [Israeli] intelligence officer, and I was offered to join them. They told me that if I work, they’ll give me my education. They want information […] they stop almost every student […]. They interview you, the captain of intelligence, they ask you some stuff and say, ‘Come work with us and we will pay for your tuition.’

Thus, ministry, faculty and student participants reported that they are seriously delayed, endangered and limited by the checkpoints as they struggle to get to and from their respective offices and classrooms.

The limitations of movement and accessing educational facilities caused by the checkpoints are also causing a localization phenomenon to occur wherein students and teachers are choosing to study and teach only in their immediate geographic areas. This finding confirms the fear alluded to in Barghouti and Murray that the imposed geographic restrictions such as checkpoints will lead to localization at the university level and undermine “their vital and progressive role in Palestinian society” (2005: 36). One faculty member explained, “Due to the checkpoints, less students [are] coming from different Palestinian cities to participate at Birzeit […]. They prefer to go to a university that is very close to them.” This not only impacts Palestinian education by limiting university students on where they would like to study, but it also limits where teachers can teach and which schools will hire them. Some participants perceive this localization as having negative impacts on the quality of education. A ministry official explained, “Now it is preferred to hire a teacher from the same location rather than outside […] but this affects the quality, because not always [do] you have a good mathematics teacher in Ramallah; you have to bring them from another place, but because of that you’re obliged to hire them.”
As discussed in Chapter 2, the occupation has had serious negative effects on Palestinian education. Such effects often include limited or complete prevention of access to education and educational facilities through checkpoints, curfews and closures. While participants reported a decreased amount of violence in their area and a reduced amount of curfews and school and ministry closures, participants indicated that the occupation, through checkpoints, continues to limit their access to education and negatively impact its quality.

Given the context of the occupation and its negative effects on education, I hypothesized that participants, especially the officials and faculty involved in educational planning and national e-learning strategies, would be using and viewing the internet as an essential, educational instrument for overcoming these limitations. Before exploring this hypothesis further, however, I will first discuss the educational uses of the internet within the three groups of participants.

**Educational Perceptions and Uses of the Internet**

The students I interviewed view the internet from an educational perspective as a valuable source of information and a means for collaboration. All students reported using a search engine (Google/Google Scholar or Yahoo) and Wikipedia for coursework research. One student said she uses online SparkNotes and CliffsNotes for her literature classes. Several students use YouTube to access educational video clips. Another student recounted how he had an instructor who used YouTube clips during lectures, and how he would go home and review the clips before writing assignments about them. Only one student had any experience with collaborative learning through a formal virtual learning environment (VLE)—during a translation course his class had a forum discussion with another class from the American University in Cairo. Instead, students use Facebook for their informal, educational collaboration. For example, one student described how he and his classmates had been assigned a group project by an instructor; they completed the entire project online by individually researching online from their homes and then sharing their research,
comments and ideas via Facebook until the project was completed. A few of the students studying literature also spoke of how they joined literature-focused Facebook groups to discuss literature with individuals from all over the world.

All faculty indicated that the internet is becoming increasingly important to Palestinian education. Due to the fact that two of the faculty members I interviewed are heavily involved in e-learning, reported faculty use of the internet should certainly not be considered representative of the entire Birzeit faculty. One of these faculty members teaches online courses using the VLE Moodle as well as several types of Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, wikis and YouTube. The other faculty involved with e-learning has a more administrative rather than teaching role and therefore does not use the internet in his teaching. The third faculty, who is not involved in e-learning at the university, reported using Google and Wikipedia for research purposes and uses some websites to read literary works.

All faculty and students indicated that they use Ritaj, but the portal has become an administrative tool and has ceased operating as a means for accessing education as it did during the 2002 closures. A faculty participant explained that as soon as the university reopened following the closure:

>a lot of the teachers stopped using it […]. It’s a fantastic administration tool, [but] it’s a perfect example that […] good use of technology doesn’t necessarily improve the quality of learning […]. As a learning tool that helps to support the learning process, it’s not happening. It’s a lot easier for a teacher to go to a classroom and use his or her notes and to do the teaching, to do the preaching.

Students mostly reported using Ritaj to sign up for classes, check grades, review their financial records and receive communications from their teachers. While some teachers occasionally upload lecture notes for students to review, they indicated that Ritaj has ceased functioning as an academic tool.

Ministry participants reported using the internet and other information communication technologies (ICT) to perform a variety of functions essential to planning and delivering education. The
Palestinian Education Management Information System (EMIS), for example, which is responsible for data collection and analysis within the education sector, relies heavily on these technologies to provide immediate and accurate information to educational planners. The MoEHE is now able to send schools electronic questionnaires which are filled out and sent back to the ministry making the collection process less costly, less time consuming and potentially less dangerous given the decreased amount of travel to schools within an occupied territory. ICT and the internet also play a crucial educational role at the ministerial level for communication purposes. Videoconferencing, for example, has become a sort of life-line for the ministry when it comes to educational planning. As mentioned above, the West Bank and Gaza are completely cut off from one another and travel between the two is almost impossible. In order to connect the West Bank and Gaza offices to collaborate on projects, such as the national education five year strategy plan, the ministry uses videoconference. One ministry official explained: “How we build our plan is through the videoconference […]. The five year plan up to launching we’d done it with Gaza! Everything. And parts of it abroad. We have a team here and a team there. For each objective we discuss through a videoconference […] because it’s not easy if I want to go outside […]. Our movement inside our country, with Gaza, with Jerusalem, or with outside is constrained. So the solution of it is to have this internet issue.”

**Pedagogy and the Trojan Horse**

In terms of ministerial work, as can be seen in the examples above, the internet is perceived and being used as a means for bypassing physical limitations imposed by the occupation. This does not explain, however, how the internet is perceived and used as a means to improve access to education. As discussed in the review of literature, one of the greatest educational advantages promised by internet-enabled education and e-learning is that it allows individuals to access education outside the restrictions of time and space; anytime, anywhere (Holmes and Gardner, 2006; Ally, 2004; Hiltz and
Given the unique context of Palestinian education and the spatial restrictions imposed by the occupation, the potentialities of e-learning become even more significant. I therefore wanted to explore a national-level perspective of these potentialities—how the internet is perceived and being used as a means to overcome the educational obstacles of the occupation. Due to the fact that two of the faculty I interviewed have been, and currently are, heavily involved in the creation and implementation of national internet, ICT and e-learning initiatives, programs and strategies, I have combined their responses with those of the ministry to explore this issue.

Surprisingly, what I discovered was that during discussions about the uses, role and potential of the internet in learning and accessing education, participants rarely referred to the negative effects caused by the occupation or checkpoints. Instead, participants focused on using the internet as a means for improving the pedagogical practices of Palestinian educators. Faculty and ministry officials both expressed frustration with the current quality of teaching and pedagogy. One faculty felt that even more important than overcoming closures and checkpoints was the “serious, serious issue—limitation—of quality of faculty and staff.” As explained by one faculty member, “All this […] memorization, you know, chalk and talk methodologies and all of this, this is a problem […]. [Educators] are living in the teaching paradigm and we would like to make them to think in the learning paradigm […]. We use the e-supported methodologies to start thinking about making this paradigm shift […] from teaching to learning.” This quote demonstrates how participants use and perceive the internet as a means for improving pedagogy, rather than as a means for bypassing geospatial restrictions to education, as I had originally hypothesized.

The desired pedagogical shift described by participants is a shift from a teacher-centered, positivist paradigm of learning to a learner-centered, social-constructivist paradigm. Positivist learning theories are based on the assumption that knowledge is ‘out-there,’ external to the learner and something that should be disseminated by one who knows (Marton and Säljö, 1997). Thus, positivist teaching approaches are typically more teacher-centered in nature as teachers are seen as sources of
knowledge and information that then give that knowledge to students. This is what the faculty member described in the quote above as “memorization” and “chalk and talk” teaching methodologies. With the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, alternative forms of learning theories were developed: constructivism and social-constructivism (Illeris, 2002). Unlike positivism, constructivism is learner-centered in nature as it operates on the assumption that knowledge must be constructed by the learner. Teaching methodologies typically implement activities and tasks around which learners can have knowledge-constructing experiences (Simons and Bolhuis, 2004). The work of Vygotsky on social-constructivism emphasizes the important collaborative nature of learning and suggests that knowledge construction takes place within a societal or group context (Vygotsky, 1978). He introduces the idea of the zone of proximal development—the space between a learner’s actual level of development alone and the potential level of development with the assistance of others—and emphasizes that “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (Vygotsky, 1978: 90). Participants indicated that they felt that an important issue for improving the quality of Palestinian education was for teachers to shift from a positivist teaching approach to a more social-constructivist one.

The idea of using technology or “e-supported methodologies” as described by the participant above as a means to engage in social-constructivist pedagogy is also supported by literature. Building on the constructivist and social-constructivist theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, researchers of computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) and other e-learning types of teaching methodologies have analyzed how technology can be used to provide students with knowledge-constructing learning activities and increased opportunity for social interaction and collaboration amongst other students and with their instructors (Lehtinen, 2003; Stahl, 2005). CSCL has typically facilitated collaborative learning through document sharing and communication via methods such as instant messaging/online chat, voice mail, and video-conferencing (Lehtinen 2003). With the arrival of new
Web 2.0 technologies, the opportunities and capabilities of using the internet for constructive, collaborative learning experiences have greatly been increased. In a recent report, Paul Anderson describes the idea behind Web 2.0 as “something more than a global information space; something with much more of a social angle to it. Collaboration, contribution and community are the order of the day…[Web 2.0 technologies] facilitate a more socially connected Web where everyone is able to add to and edit the information space” (2007: 3-4). Two main ideas are worth highlighting from this quote, which I will return to again in this chapter. First, Web 2.0 differs from a more traditional view of the internet in that it is much more social and collaborative in nature. Second, Web 2.0 is about more than just being passive information consumers as was the traditional approach to the internet (Anderson, 2007). Rather, Web 2.0 allows and enables individuals to be information producers, to create and disseminate information via the internet. With its collaborative and contributive capabilities, it is not surprising that Web 2.0 technologies are being used by social-constructivist educationalists (Richardson, 2009; Schrum and Solomon, 2007).

While participants’ views—especially those of the faculty involved with e-learning—that technology can be used to improve pedagogical practices, correspond with the CSCL and related literature, their views pertaining to the strategic methods for implementing this change are entirely different. Rather than focus on using technology as a means for training teachers on how to create social-constructivist, collaborative learning experiences as described above, Palestinian e-learning programs are using the novelty of technology to attract teachers to the programs wherein teachers then receive mandatory, social-constructivist training. In other words, technology is being used as bait to lure teachers into the programs; the teachers are then immediately paired with a pedagogical and a multimedia expert and given training not only on how to create an e-enabled course but also on best-practice pedagogical methods. One faculty member explains:

Our secret here is that we use e-learning as a Trojan horse […]. We are not happy at the quality of learning at different Palestinian institutions […]. We feel that these [educators] lack the methodology of teaching and learning. We’re not happy about
the learning, formal and informal; we’re not happy about the trainers, we’re not happy about the school teachers, we’re not happy about the faculty members at the universities. And if we ask them, ‘Ok, people […] come and we will teach you how to teach,’ they will kill us! They will say, ‘What the—ok, come on, I’m a professor and have been teaching here 17 years; you cannot teach me, I know everything’ […]. What we do actually when we announce for an e-learning training program—and a lot of people apply and want to take this course—and inside the training program about e-learning, a lot of pedagogy is there. So we train them how to teach under a title called e-learning […]. Everyone we train, any faculty member he or she is asked, to develop a course, and this is a chance for us to tell him or her, ‘Sorry, you can’t develop your course alone; you need to work with someone from pedagogy and multimedia in order to produce an e-learning course,’ and by doing this we will have a pedagogy supervisor or coach to work with that [educator] in order to make sure the pedagogical practices and learner central approaches are followed.

Another participant similarly described this strategy for improving teacher quality through e-learning:

For a lot of people, when we talk about technology there’s a novelty to it […] everybody gets excited about e-learning and they’re willing to explore this new thing. So when we get teachers engaged in designing an e-learning course, we work a lot with them in designing just a regular educational work, so they do proper objectives, and how to do learner-centered education and things like that. So at the end of the day, under the umbrella of e-learning you’re really working with teachers on designing proper courses and you’re empowering them, sort of training them how to lead classes that are learner-centric.

According to these participants, the internet is being used and perceived as having an important role in Palestinian education—namely as a means to attract teachers to programs that will improve their pedagogical practices. This finding is different than I had hypothesized, however, in that participants did not appear to perceive the internet as a means for overcoming some of the educational obstacles caused by the occupation and checkpoints. While analyzing the data I found two possible explanations for this.

Firstly, some participants indicated that using the internet to enable students and faculty to access education can be viewed as enabling and supporting the occupation. Participants explained that if one considers e-learning as a type of solution to the barriers of education in Palestine, then it normalizes e-learning as an acceptable alternative and desensitizes Israel and the international
community to the rights of Palestinians to have *physical*—rather than *virtual*—access to education. While these participants recognize and utilize the pedagogical benefits of e-learning, they see it as an unacceptable solution to school closures and checkpoints. One faculty powerfully stated this idea:

> I always say that we don’t want to find solutions for the occupation but we want to find solutions of the occupation […]. We don’t want to have e-learning because of the occupation because this might make life easier for the Israelis to continue with their occupation. They say, ‘Yeah, technology helps them [access education]’ so they can continue their occupation […]. The international community will say ‘Well, look, the Palestinians are now under occupation, but nothing has affected their lives, they eat normally, they study normally and everything is fine.’ But not everything is fine, actually. When they close the schools, it’s closing schools. People cannot get access to schools.

Not all participants agree with this idea, however, and feel that education is so important that Palestinians should use whatever means they have, including the internet, in order to access it. A ministry official made this argument, “We want to get education whatever the case. We shouldn’t be concerned with why and how […]. So why not use ICT? […] Our problem is to get our kids educated. We say ‘روطانلا لحاتقت اليو بنعنا لوطت للدب تننا’ ‘Do you want to get the grapes from the vineyard or do you want to quarrel with the guard of the vineyard?’ […] We do not want to quarrel with the guard […] we want to get the grapes!” This ministry official feels that technology and the internet should be used to bypass problems of accessing education because the benefits of educating Palestinians are greater and more important than the perceived costs of making the occupation easier for the Israelis. If this is the case, however, then why did participants sharing this second opinion not discuss the internet as a viable solution for mitigating the effects of the occupation on education?

When I asked this question to the official who spoke of using ICT to access the ‘grapes’ of education, her response provided a second possible explanation as to why the educational role of the internet was not often mentioned in connection with the occupation. She said:
We’re adopting the [national strategy for technology in education] where technology will be used to overcome the difficulties imposed by the checkpoints and the political problems […], but we don’t talk about occupation. We talk about pedagogy. [The occupation is] not talked about because people got sick of talking about this. To tell you the truth, even the Palestinians got sick of talking about the political scene […]. Even I’m talking now and I don’t like to talk about it […]. [Instead] you say the [national ICT strategy] and the use of ICT in education is to improve the quality of education rather than to overcome other limitations or other problems.

In this quote she first recognizes that the ministry is, in fact, planning and implementing national programs and policies with educational technology in mind in order to overcome the limitations of the occupation. However, individuals are so tired of discussing the issue that they choose instead to talk only about how technology, such as the internet, can improve pedagogical aspects of education.

While participants perceive and use the internet as a valuable, educational tool, very little data indicates that it is currently being perceived and used as a means for overcoming educational limitations and restrictions caused by the occupation. Students reported using the internet and Web 2.0 for accessing information and informal collaboration. Faculty and ministry participants indicated that the main use of internet technologies has been to improve the quality of Palestinian education by attracting educators to e-learning training programs where they receive social-constructivist, pedagogical training. I next discuss the perceived political purposes for which participants are using the internet.

**Political Perceptions and Uses of the Internet**

In the section above, I quoted a ministry official who stated that Palestinians are “sick of talking about the political scene.” This may be an accurate statement describing the condition amongst herself, associates, friends, colleagues and many other Palestinians; in fact, as I interviewed faculty and officials I found that most do not concern themselves with any kind of political activity. However, as I interviewed participants at the student level, I discovered the exact opposite to be the
case. Of course, it is possible that these student participants are unique in their political use of the internet, and these findings should not be considered generalizable; however, the students I interviewed are politically involved online and were very keen to talk about their experiences and political activity. This finding coincides with the literature discussed earlier about the important role universities and university students play in Palestinian resistance and political activism and demonstrates the inextricable link between Palestinian politics and higher education (Bruhn, 2006; Rigby, 1995; Graham-Brown, 1984; Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006). One student recounted, “If you’re a student at any Palestinian University, you know how Palestinians are exclusively [into] politics, they’re into politics no matter what happens, and it’s everywhere you go.” Others told how students “eat” and “breathe” politics. While not all students I interviewed are equally politically active, most are involved in some way. Additionally, the political activities these students described are almost all occurring online.

In this section I first discuss the reported use and perceived role of the internet in political activities at the student level. From student responses, I discovered three main categories of internet usage for political purposes: amongst themselves and other Palestinians, mobilization and narration. I then discuss the perceptions and usage of the combined faculty and ministry groups and compare and contrast those perceptions with the students’. While many participants have heard of ‘hacktivism’ as discussed in Chapter 2 (Khoury-Machool, 2007; Auty, 2004), no one indicated taking part in it or knowing much about it; therefore, it will not be further considered in this study.

**Student Perspective**

The two main internet sites utilized for political purposes by participants are Facebook and YouTube. When students described online political activity that they have either heard about or are engaged in themselves, it always involved at least one of these Web 2.0 technologies. Students reported that the political uses of the internet are often amongst themselves at the university and with
other Palestinians. For example, it is very common for students to watch political video clips, movies and patriotic songs on YouTube, including clips that are not allowed on television because they are too graphic and violent. The internet also serves as a major means for political parties and factions to communicate with students—always through Facebook. At Birzeit University each national political party has its corresponding extension in the form of a student movement within the university. For example, Fatah’s extension within Birzeit is called Shabiba and Al-Kotlah is the extension of Hamas. Because of the ubiquitous nature of Facebook on the campus, political parties are able to use it to campaign, recruit new members, send out political messages and inform students of upcoming events and meetings. Using some of the blog- and forum-esque functions of Facebook students are also able to write, post and debate their political views in a running political conversation taking place amongst the entire student body.

The idea of Facebook being used by political parties to inform students of events and meetings leads into the second category of political usage by students of the internet: mobilization. I use the word ‘mobilization’ simply to refer to the phenomenon which takes place as online resources are used to move people to some sort of action, such as when the virtual gatherings become physical gatherings; when individuals from cyberspace meet in actual space. Aouragh (2008) and Khoury-Machool (2007) both discuss how the internet can be used in this manner. Students reported how they often receive Facebook messages from friends or political groups of which they are members inviting them to attend various meetings, events, demonstrations or strikes. One student spoke of a recent Facebook message she received from Shabiba to come at noon to the student council offices for a political rally. Another participant told of receiving a Facebook invitation to attend a candlelit vigil in memory of those killed in the recent attacks on Gaza. Another student recounted a recent strike organized and held by the student council. He explained that at the beginning of semesters there are often students who cannot afford tuition fees, so the student council will hold strikes in order to get the administration to grant financial assistance to these students. He said that these strikes are
organized through unofficial communication lines—completely through Facebook. Virtual mobilization is also occurring: I was told about a Facebook application, for example, that could be downloaded and would automatically update one’s status with a running total of Palestinian civilian casualties during the recent attacks on Gaza. A few of the students also took part in a Facebook event for those supporting Palestine to change their Facebook profile picture to a Palestinian flag. This was done in order to show how many people around the world are in support of Palestine. While such an act may appear insignificant to some, one must consider the fact that even up through the early 1990s students were being arrested and imprisoned for two years for possessing or displaying a Palestinian flag (Bruhn, 2006). Such past acts of resistance have now started appearing online. The internet, especially Facebook, is currently being used and perceived by students as a means for political mobilization.

The final manner in which student participants perceive and use the internet for political purposes is for narration. This discussion draws heavily from the ideas and theories discussed in the literature review pertaining to Said’s (1984) call for “Permission to Narrate.” As previously mentioned, Palestinians have tried a myriad of means for telling their national narrative: newspapers and traditional forms of media, poetry, literature, graffiti and even the scars upon their own bodies (Peteet, 2004; Khoury-Machool, 2007; Said, 1984). Most recently the internet has become a common medium for the Palestinian narrative (Parry, 2003; Khoury-Machool, 2007; Hanieh, 1999; Aouragh, 2008). All student participants reported being involved in some kind of online narration. All students reported that they felt it was their responsibility and a necessity to inform the world of what is happening in Palestine. There are, of course, different ways in which students are narrating this message: one student actively seeks out opportunities to narrate it, four students narrate as online opportunities present themselves—usually to foreign friends they already know—and all six students participate in what I call ‘forward narrating’ by simply forwarding pro-Palestinian messages and YouTube clips throughout their social network.
One student, who was part of the interview group, actively seeks out and engages in political discussions in order to inform Israeli citizens and the rest of the world what is happening in Palestine. She gave the following account:

At the beginning of the war, I was really upset about what was going on in Gaza, so I was talking to my [Palestinian] friends and [...] we all have the same feeling and attitude about the war [...] so I wanted to go see and talk to new people who had new ideas and really discuss what’s going on and whose fault is this, so I went to this group in Facebook; it’s this huge Israeli group where they discuss the war. And each time when I posted my opinion and I said, ‘You guys are wrong and you should […] change your attitude,’ I was kicked from the group for saying my opinion and for being Palestinian. So I got another account and I joined the group again and said whatever I want and some of them kicked me out again; and that’s it, like all the time.

She expressed frustrations about her online experiences and how close-minded she felt the Israelis in these Facebook groups were. She even described how the political discussion can become heated and threatening:

I really grew tired of talking to them, because each time I say what I think they tell me that I’m a terrorist and that I should die and that I’m not a human, and I say, ‘Please can you just listen to me, because we’re human!’ And they say, ‘Well, Bye-Bye!’ And then, ‘Can I bomb you?’ or something and—Click [...] Sometimes it gets really ugly and people start swearing at each other and saying bad stuff, and some will start threatening you, like ‘I will hunt you and kill you, you terrorist!’ I’ve been in this experience and it’s scary; it’s real scary.

When I asked her why she continues to engage in political discussions with Israelis via Facebook if she is having such unpleasant experiences, she replied that as “close-minded” and “inhumane” as she said some Israelis can be, occasionally she will talk to someone who is willing to listen to her and her opinions. She said, “Some of them were really open-minded and they respected what I think and what I feel about Palestine [...]. Ok, some of them are bad, but others are good, and maybe if I try to talk to them again they will understand me, and they will affect other members of the group.” She also spoke about how she feels narrating this message is a necessity and how she hopes to influence others, “When I start chatting I feel like there’s this message I need to deliver, and I feel like some
[Israelis] are […] connecting with me; they start to understand me and are communicating with me and they think I have a point of view to deliver and they really think I have a point to what I’m saying.” It is this hope of informing and influencing others towards becoming sympathetic to the Palestinian message that pushes her to continue narrating to Israelis through Facebook.

While this student was certainly the most politically active in terms of searching out occasions to engage in political discussions and debates, most of the participants have had similar experiences as opportunities to narrate have found them. Here’s an example from one student:

There are certain groups that invite me to join, and if I’m really interested in the topics that they talk about, I can discuss with them. For example, last December there was this group that was created to discuss the war in Gaza. Many Israeli people joined this group and they were talking about how the war in Gaza is a necessary thing and how it must go on and how Hamas are terrorists and how war in Gaza is necessary and they were basically following the cliché that the ends justify the means. And those who are Palestinians or are pro-Palestinians, we were getting into discussions with them about how that is not acceptable and resistance is our right by international law and it was a really heated discussion about the war in Gaza.

In this example, the student received an invitation to join a politically charged Facebook group and was then drawn into the defending and narrating the Palestinian perspective. Another student, despite his political neutrality, stated his approach to engaging in online political discussion, “Politically, I’m neutral […] but I’m interested in the Palestinian situation overall […] So when I talk to friends I share from my own point of view.” This student participates in political narration, but does so solely with those who already belong to his social network—his friends. He also clarified that the friends he mentions are not only other Palestinians but include Israelis, Japanese, British and Americans. This international element that the internet, specifically Facebook, enables is an important element of online narration (Khoury-Machool, 2007; Hanieh, 1999). Not only did most student participants report having foreign friends with whom they socialize—as discussed later in the social section of this chapter—but most students reported how they often try to inform these individuals of what is happening in Palestine. One participant told that through Facebook, “I met
people from Hong Kong, from America, from Australia, and we are very close friends now. We discuss movies, sometimes politics. I never imagined I would have friends across the world.”

Another student who is involved in narrating the Palestinian story internationally explained how they can use Facebook to easily inform citizens from all over the world, “If [the Israelis] won’t hear you then maybe other people will hear you. Maybe you’ll go to European [Facebook] group; to Asian group; to Australian people; somebody to hear you.” One student also pointed out that third-party, international support can add credibility to the message they are trying to narrate, “Communicating with other people from different countries [and] effecting one individual can affect others. If you tell someone to go look up through this American website that tells Palestinian facts, they will trust American websites.”

Online narration also has the effect of strengthening Palestinian identity as participants communicate with foreigners from all over the world and must defend what it means to be Palestinian. One student explains that her Palestinian identity becomes engrained in her “especially when you’re by yourself with people from all over the world, Americans, Israelis, you feel like you have to show who you are and stress your beliefs, your identity to show them you are Palestinian and that’s who we are. [Using Facebook is] a really a good way to stress your identity as a Palestinian on the internet trying to deliver a message or a belief or even a tradition.” Thus communicating with individuals outside of Palestine not only spreads the Palestinian story through the process of narration as described above, but it also becomes a way to strengthen Palestinian identity.

The last type of narration that occurs at the student level is through I call ‘forward narrating.’ This method of narrating simply involves receiving some kind of political content—usually text, video or music—typically through Facebook and YouTube, and then forwarding it to one’s social network—friends, family and international contacts. All student participants reported doing some kind of forward narrating. For the single student who reported that he did not take part in any political
Facebook discussions or online forums or debates, forward narrating was his sole means of political online activity.

Regardless of the degree to which each student participant is involved in narrating the Palestinian message to Israel and the international community, every student reported feeling that it was their individual responsibility and the responsibility of all Palestinians to do so. One student explained this feeling of responsibility she has, “There is the slightest chance to make them realize that they are Israeli and they are occupying and they are upsetting people and they have no right to be here. And this is our responsibility to do that. We have a responsibility towards our country, to our nation to do that.” Another student stated, “It’s like we feel as Palestinians, that this is our responsibility to fix the situation, to reveal the truth and to show other people that we are not terrorists and also that Palestine is our land, it’s not for Israel.” This perceived sense of duty towards Palestine to “reveal the truth” is being acted out by students through online narration.

Most students reported viewing online political activity as a form of resistance. Moreover, they indicated that resistance online, or e-resistance, provides an alternative to violent resistance and has the potential to increase the number of Palestinians who can participate in resisting the occupation (Khoury-Machool, 2007). One student stated, “[E-resistance is] like using literature. Words—it’s like our weapon; we are students at universities, our only weapon is words to go and spread our opinions online [and] everywhere instead of using weapons in the field.” As I was conducting the group interview with three female students, they all spoke of how limited their role as woman has been in traditional resistance movements, “We don’t carry weapons, we don’t go to combat, we don’t fight, we don’t go wearing all the green and stuff, we don’t go fight with force. We’re not able to do it.” E-resistance gives them an opportunity to participate in resisting the occupation. Facebook, they say, is “the only weapon we have.” While the scope of this study is too small to claim correlation between gender and e-resistance, future studies should take this into consideration.
Faculty and Ministry Perspective

With the exception of the 22 year old faculty member who uses Facebook for similar political purposes as the students described above, ministry and faculty participants reported that they do not use or perceive the internet for any political purpose. One participant explained, “I’m not really looking much for that […] I’m not really involved with this, I’m a person that is very busy.” The sentiment of being too busy or not having enough time to engage in political activity was quite common and given by most. When I inquired as to their perceptions of how students use the internet, no participant suggested that students might be engaging in any kind of political online activities. As I spoke to one participant about the idea of forwarding political messages to one’s social network, she indicated that she felt this practice is very rude, and said she would only forward messages individually and only when she knows the recipient would be interested in the contents of the message.

As I explored the perceptions of these individuals regarding the responsibility and duty towards telling the Palestinian narrative to the rest of the world, I repeatedly heard such answers as, “This is not our concern,” “It’s not my job” and “I don’t have time.” This is a stark difference from the responses students gave. Students spoke about “this message I need to deliver,” “We have a responsibility towards our country, to our nation” and “this is our responsibility to fix the situation, to reveal the truth.” These differing, fundamental views on the responsibility of narration may help explain the gap between the two groups in terms of online activism.

There also appears to be a related, conceptual difference between ministry/faculty participants and student participants in the perceptions of the role of the internet in the narration process. I discovered that faculty and ministry participants perceive the role of Palestinian narration as belonging exclusively to “the media,” which was defined as, “TV, radio, journal [and] newspaper.” Faculty and ministry participants accessed media both offline—by turning on a radio and television
or reading a paper-based newspaper—and occasionally online—through online newspapers, radio and television. In both cases, however, they rely upon the media to produce and deliver the Palestinian narrative, and then they consume the information and narration that is presented to them. Ironically, this is the type of positivist paradigm, discussed in the previous chapter, which faculty and ministry officials are trying to get teachers to shift away from in their classrooms. These participants, therefore, have a positivist perception of the role of the internet wherein they perceive the internet as a bank of information and knowledge which individuals can access and consume.

Student participants, however, have a much more constructivist, Web 2.0 view of the internet, in which they not only consume information but also become creators, editors and narrators of it. As described above, the internet, through Web 2.0 technologies, has become much more communicative, collaborative and contributive in nature (Anderson, 2007), making the internet an even more powerful narrating tool. Web 2.0 technologies, especially Facebook, are enabling two things to happen that are essential for online narration. First, they are making it easier for individuals to create and produce content; second, they are enabling the dissemination of that content to wider and broader audiences in an immediate and at times viral way. Just as Palestinian universities have served as centers for political activism and resistance by providing a space for individuals to gather, reflect and articulate a national identity, consciousness and narrative (Bruhn, 2006; Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006; Lunat, 2009), Facebook is acting as a similar space and serving a similar function within the university amongst the student participants I interviewed. One student best summarized this perspective by stating, “Through my experiences on Facebook and TV; after seeing all the media and how they manipulate all the news and how they send all the false pictures and ideas of what’s really happening in Palestine, I felt like I […] might be able to correct and deliver the right message of what’s really going on […]. Try to reveal the truth.” This quote portrays the student’s Web 2.0, constructivist perspective of the internet through which she is able to “correct and deliver” the Palestinian narrative.
In summary, I found that student participants perceive and use the internet for political purposes. Student participants have a Web 2.0, constructive view of the internet and indicated that the internet is being used for online activism and e-resistance such as viewing and forwarding politically charged content and information, recruiting one another to various political parties through Facebook groups, organizing and mobilizing political gatherings and narrating the Palestinian message. Most faculty and ministry participants, however, do not perceive or use the internet as a means for political activities. They also appear to have a much more positivist perspective of the internet, whereby they view the internet as a source of information rather than as an instrument for narration.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this conclusion I review the dissertation’s key findings while discussing their relation to existing literature and implications for future research. I then address and reflect upon the study’s limitations.

A Review of Key Findings and Implications for Future Research

This study found that despite a perceived decrease in recent years in the amount of closures and curfews affecting Birzeit University and the MoEHE, checkpoints remain a real and limiting factor for students, university faculty and ministry officials in accessing educational facilities and places of work. Participants reported that travelling through checkpoints to and from these institutions proves to be time consuming, humiliating, physically dangerous and emotionally damaging. Checkpoints, they claim, are therefore having a negative impact on the quality and access of education and are leading to education becoming geographically localized. These findings support much of the literature discussing Palestinian education and the occupation (Ra’ad and Nafi’, 2007; Barghouti and Murray, 2005; Sultana, 2006; Abu-Saad and Champagne, 2006; Affouneh, 2008).

Despite participants’ perceptions of the negative effects of checkpoints on education and contrary to my original hypothesis, faculty and ministry participants did not indicate that they felt the internet and e-learning was an alternative means for accessing education and bypassing these restrictions. Two possible explanations were given. First, some participants indicated that successfully using the internet as an alternative solution may pacify the international community into continuing to allow Israel to restrict their physical access to education. A second possible explanation given was that participants are tired of talking about the occupation and preferred to discuss technology as a means for improving pedagogy rather than as a means for bypassing restrictions imposed by the occupation. Regarding both explanations as to why the internet was not indicated as a solution to educational access, I found no existing literature; future research should, therefore, explore these findings further.
Rather than focusing on the internet as a means for accessing education in context of the occupation, faculty and ministry participants reported that they perceive the internet as a means for improving the teaching and pedagogical practices of the educators. However, instead of using technology to improve education by the means discussed in the literature (Stahl, 2005; Lehtinen, 2003), technology is being used as a “Trojan horse” to attract educators to programs where they will receive desired pedagogical instruction. Questions for future research regarding this issue may include: “Is the ‘Trojan horse’ an effective means for improving the quality of education and pedagogy, and is it having the desired impact on teaching?”; “Is there a more cost-effective approach for attracting teachers to pedagogy trainings than expensive technologies?”; and “What happens to the teachers and programs when the novelty and attractiveness of e-learning diminishes?”

While student participants reported using the internet for online activism and e-resistance, faculty and ministry participants indicated that they did not perceive or use the internet as a means for political activism. Although limited literature exists on this topic, these findings do add support to the work done by Khoury-Machool (2007) and Aouragh (2008). Khoury-Machool (2007) theorizes that the internet is becoming a tool, especially for Palestinian youth and students, for politicization and e-resistance. He argues that narration as a form of resistance is becoming increasingly common amongst youth: “Occupation and siege have turned many Palestinian youths into unofficial spokespersons for the Palestinian people” (2007: 27). Aouragh (2008) provides some of the first and only qualitative empirical data on this subject. She finds that the internet has become a space for Palestinian political activism, particularly in the form of online narration and political mobilization.

This study also found that in the case of student participants the internet is being used as a space for online mobilization, political recruitment and articulating the Palestinian narrative to a global audience. Although the findings of this study are very similar to, and thus support, existing literature about Palestinian e-resistance, they also contribute to this body of literature by offering possible new insights into the potential of Web 2.0 technologies, especially Facebook, in online activism. Even
though much has been and currently is being written on Web 2.0 and education, very little research has been done on Web 2.0 and e-resistance. Educationalists argue that the constructive and collaborative nature of Web 2.0 technologies make them potentially powerful for learning. I argue that for the same reasons they are also potentially powerful for online resistance. I submit that the contributive and collaborative nature of Web 2.0 technologies (Anderson, 2007) could, therefore, help enable political activism. Due to the small scale of this study, however, more research will need to be done in order to test this theory.

A final suggestion for future research concerns the relationship between gender and e-resistance. All four of the female students I interviewed were more politically engaged online than the two male students. Three of them explicitly discussed how e-resistance provides them, as women, an alternative to violent resistance, and thus the space and means to participate in resistance activities. The relationship of gender and e-resistance should be explored further.

**Limitations of the Study**

Time and resources limited the number of participants interviewed during the research process; this project is therefore intended to serve as an exploratory study that could be used as a basis for future research. While the findings of this dissertation have important implications and relevancies to the field, due to the limited sample size and number of participants the findings should not be considered generalizable to any larger population.

All student and faculty participants came from the same university; this may have limited the perspective of the findings. For example, I focused on a university from the West Bank which is currently relatively peaceful. Had I sampled a university from Gaza, which recently experienced significant amounts of violence and is currently under a strict siege, perhaps I would have discovered an entirely different set of findings. Additionally, had time and scope allowed, I would have liked to
have explored and included the Israeli perspective by interviewing participants from Israeli universities.

Despite the small scale and exploratory nature of the research, this dissertation has attempted to add to a growing body of literature pertaining to Palestinian educational and political uses and perceptions of the internet. Additionally, it has sought to gather initial empirical data pertaining to these topics upon which future research may build.
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendices A, B and C consist of the templates for the student, faculty and ministry interview guides respectively. Appendix D and E are the Information for Participants and the Letter of Consent documents given to individuals prior to their participation.
Appendix A—Student Interview Guide

Name: ____________________________
Gender: ____________________________
Studying: ____________________________
Description: ____________________________

**General and Educational Internet Use:**
Describe what technologies you use over the course of a typical day (cell phone, computer/laptop, etc.) and what you use them for:

Do you use the internet? How often? Where?

What websites do you visit most? Why?

Describe your typical routine or activities when you get online and why do you do these things:

Do you use technology/internet for schoolwork or classroom related purposes? How?

Do you use Ritaj? How often? What for?

Do you own/use a mobile phones? What do you use it for?

Do you use the following technologies and how?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
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<td>VLE (Ritaj)</td>
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What about other students at BZU? How do they use the internet/technology? Similar or different (specifically in terms of educationally and politically)?

Is there any kind of filtering (censorship) of the internet that you know of?
Is there any kind of monitoring of usage? Does/Would that effect what you decide to do on and with the internet? How so?

**Context of the Occupation**
I have read about some of the difficulties facing the university due to the occupation; could you tell me and give me some examples of what the current situation is like?

How do you get to the university? With the checkpoints and curfews, is it difficult? (How many checkpoints do you pass through?)

Is BZU experiencing closures, curfews and checkpoints now?

Are students still in danger at BZU?

Is violence still occurring at the university?

Are students being targeted?

Are the universities and educational institutions being targeted in any way? How?

Do you know of any ways in which technology is being used to improve safety getting to and while at the university?

**Political Use of the Internet**
Do you know of any ways in which technology is being used to resist the occupation?

Do you receive or send messages that contain political content? Describe these.

Do you participate in political discussions online? How? Describe these.

Is it seen as a viable alternative to violent resistance/a new channel? How so?

Have you heard of ‘hacktivism’? Is it common?

I have read that the more e-resistance that happens the more the Israel army and technology targets/damages youth facilities and educational premises; do you agree? Examples?

Do you see education itself as a form of resistance? How so?

How do you see technology being used at BZU and other universities in the future (5,10,15 years)?

Do you have anything you would like to add or talk about?

| Age: |  |
## Appendix B—Faculty Interview Guide

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<td>Occupation:</td>
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### General and Occupational Use

Describe what technologies you use over the course of a typical day (cell phone, computer/laptop, etc.) and what you use them for:

- How often do you use the internet? Where?
- What websites do you visit most? Why? (OR What are your top 3 or 4 websites you use?)
- Describe your typical routine or activities when you get online and why do you do these things:
- Do you use technology/internet for work, teaching or classroom related purposes? How?
- Given the context you are currently in, how do you and other faculty use technology for learning and teaching? How is this different from/the same as other universities? What the implications this kind of use has?
- Do you use Ritaj? How often? What for?

### Do you use the following technologies and how?

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<th>VoIP (Skype)</th>
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<td>Instant Messaging (MSN)</td>
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<td>Photo sharing (Flickr)</td>
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What about students and other faculty at BZU? How do they use the internet/technology? Similar or different (specifically in terms of educationally and politically)?

Is there any kind of monitoring of usage? Filtering/Censorship at BZU? Does/Would that effect what you decide to do on and with the internet? How so?

**Context of the Occupation**
I have read about some of the difficulties facing the university due to the occupation; could you tell me and give me some examples of what the current situation is like?

How do you get to the university? With the checkpoints and curfews, is it difficult? (How many checkpoints do you pass through?)

Is BZU experiencing closures, curfews and checkpoints now?

Are students still in danger at BZU?

Is violence still occurring at the university?

Are students and faculty being targeted?

Are the universities and educational institutions being targeted in any way? How?

Do you know of any ways in which technology is being used to improve safety getting to and while at the university?

**Political Use of the Internet**
Do you know of any ways in which technology is being used to resist the occupation?

Do you receive or send messages that contain political content? Describe these.

Do you participate in political discussions online? How? Describe these.

Is it seen as a viable alternative to violent resistance/a new channel? How so?

Have you heard of ‘hacktivism’? Is it common?

I have read that the more e-resistance that happens the more the Israel army and technology targets/damages youth facilities and educational premises; do you agree? Examples?

Do you see education itself as a form of resistance? How so?

How do you see technology being used at BZU and other universities in the future (5,10,15 years)?

Do you have anything you would like to add or talk about?

| Age: |   |
Appendix C—Ministry Interview Guide

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Can you tell me a little bit about what you do? What’s your role in the Ministry of Education?

**Ministry Use**

What projects are the Ministry currently involved in regarding the internet or ICT?

How are these projects funded?

What is the vision of the Ministry regarding the internet and ICT?

Do you see the internet and ICT as important to Palestine in general? Education? Why/in what ways?

Given the context you are currently in, how is the internet being used at the ministry?

Is the Ministry supporting ICT/internet use in Palestine? How?

What are the different uses of the internet and ICT in the Ministry itself? Why?

**General and Occupational Use**

How often do you use the internet? Where?

What websites do you visit most (work and personal)? Why? (OR What are your top 3 or 4 websites you use?)

What technologies do you use in a typical day?

How do colleagues use the internet/technology?

Do you use the following technologies and how?

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Is there any kind of monitoring of internet usage in Palestine? Filtering/Censorship? Does/Would that effect what you decide to do on and with the internet? How so?

Could you tell me a bit about the PEI (Palestinian Education Initiative?)?

**Context of the Occupation**
I have read about some of the difficulties facing universities in Palestine due to the occupation; could you tell me and give me some examples of what the current situation is like?

Are students able to get to the universities? With the checkpoints and curfews, is it difficult? (How many checkpoints do you pass through going to the work?)

Are universities in Palestine currently experiencing closures, curfews and checkpoints now?

Are students still in danger?

Is violence still occurring at the universities?

Are students being targeted?

Are the universities and educational institutions being targeted in any way? How?

Do you know of any ways in which technology is being used to improve safety getting to and while at the university?

**Political Use of the Internet**
Do you see ICT and the internet as being important to Palestine? Why?

In what ways have you seen the internet used as a tool for politicization?

In what ways is the internet used to stay informed about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict?

Do you receive or send messages that contain political content? Describe these.

Do you participate in political discussions online? How? Describe these.

Is internet being used to increase communication and interaction amongst Palestinians (WB and GS)? Rest of the world? How? Do you have examples?

How is internet being used to narrate the Palestinian story (news, blogs, “On the Ground in Ramallah”, etc.)?
How is internet being used to mobilize (demonstrations, protests, etc.)? Physically AND virtually? Local AND transnational?

Do you know of any students/faculty/colleagues who play Intifada types of video games? Chat forums? Pro-Pal websites?

Is e-resistance seen as a viable alternative to violent resistance/a new channel?

Has it/does it broaden the scope of who can participate in resistance (age, gender, nationality, geo location as well as speedier, cheaper, less time consuming)?

Do you think the internet has played/will play a role in Palestinian independence? What role? How?

Is the Palestinian story being told through the internet (YouTube, Blogs, etc.)?

Have you heard of ‘hacktivism’? Is it common?

I have read that the more e-resistance that happens the more the Israel army and technology targets/damages youth facilities and educational premises; do you agree? Examples?

Do you see education itself as a form of resistance? How so?

How do you see technology being used in Palestine and at universities in the future (5,10,15 years)?

Do you have anything you would like to add or talk about?

Age:
Appendix D—Information for Participants

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

Education, Technology and Conflict:
The Use and Perceptions of the Internet in Palestinian Higher Education
Information for Participants

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation entails. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please ask if there are any aspects of the project that are unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you would like to take part in this research.

What is the purpose of the study and what will it involve?

This study is an exploration of the role of education and technology in violent conflict or post-conflict situations. It attempts to understand the potentially beneficial and harmful influences educational technology has in such settings in order to further inform peacebuilding processes. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a written consent form. You would then be asked to complete a questionnaire and written interview sent via email as well as a face-to-face interview while in Paris or you will be asked for an interview via Skype; each interview should take no longer than one hour.

Do I have to take part? What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

It is your decision to take part in this study. You can decide to stop participating at any time and may ask questions about the study before you decide to participate. You do not need to answer questions that you do not wish to. Personal data provided will be stored electronically on password-protected computer and will be accessible only to the primary researcher of this study. All data will be destroyed at the end of the project. Every effort will be made to preserve confidentiality. While you will not be named, an indicator of your position (e.g. senior policy maker) will be included along with contextual information about initiatives in your country in the research report. From this, it may be possible for someone to identify you. Other than this, there are no known risks to taking part. The benefits include helping to create a picture of the role of education and technology in conflict/post-conflict situations which will in turn help inform peacebuilding processes.

What will happen to the results of this research?

The results of this research will form the basis of an Oxford Master’s dissertation. Some results may be published in academic journals. If you wish to obtain a copy of the published results, please inform the researcher. The study will take place from April—October 2009 after which time the published results will be publicly available in the University of Oxford library and in academic
Who is funding, organizing and approving the research?

The research is funded and organized as an independent Master’s research project in conjunction with the Department of Education, Oxford University. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC).

Contact for Further Information or Follow-up

Should you have any questions, concerns or complaints with any aspect of this project, please feel free to contact: Landon Newby, Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, UK OX2 6PY or email: landon.newby@education.ox.ac.uk. Alternatively, please contact my supervisor,
Appendix E—Interview Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
genral.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk  www.education.ox.ac.uk

Education, Technology and Conflict:
The Use and Perceptions of the Internet in Palestinian Higher Education
Interview Consent Form

This research study seeks to explore the role of education and technology in conflict and post-conflict situations. This is a study undertaken by [Name], Master’s student at the Department of Education, University of Oxford.

1. I have read and understood the information about this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to it. I have considered all the risks involved with this research.

2. I understand that I can withdraw from the study without consequence at anytime simply by informing the researcher of my decision.

3. I understand who will have access to identifying information provided and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

4. I am aware of who to contact should I have questions following my participation in this study.

5. I understand that this project has been reviewed by and received ethical clearance through the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name:_____________________________________

Date:_____________________________________

Signature:_______________________________

Researcher: ____________

Date: ___________________________
Signature: ______________________