

**Existing to Resist:
Youth Bulge Theory in the Occupied Palestinian
Territories**

**by
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Abstract

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is currently experiencing what some demographers have labeled a “youth bulge” – a disproportionately large population of young people. Youth bulge theory has sought to relate these bulges to instances of mass uprising and violent conflict. Of the societies within the MENA region, the youth population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) is among the largest.

This paper contains two core arguments. First, I argue that youth bulge theory is insufficient as a basis for conflict mitigation strategies. In order to do so, I show how the theory, against the backdrop of a political conflict mired in demographic concerns, has been translated into discourse and policies in the OPT. I examine the effectiveness and normative implications of these discourses and policies through interviews and focus group discussions with Palestinian youth. Youth responses demonstrate that “youth bulge policies” do not effectively curb youth rebellion, but rather, that they may help fuel cultures of youth resistance.

Second, I argue that youth bulge theory is fundamentally weak in its ability to attribute causation in violent rebellion. This argument is explicated through Palestinian youth’s ranking and scoring of their participation in various forms of resistance in the OPT, showing overwhelming support for nonviolent means. Moreover, through a brief survey of empirical studies on the psychosocial and cultural influences of violence, I suggest these measures may serve as better indicators than demography in predicting the risk of violence in youth bulge contexts.

My findings carry implications for a reworking of youth bulge theory. I suggest that in order to better understand the relationships between young people and violence and to mitigate violent rebellion, youth bulge theory must consider a conscious change in the framing and representation of young people in youth bulge societies, and a deepened understanding of how psychosocial and cultural influences interact with political, economic and demographic factors to influence violence in the lives of young people.

Keywords: youth; youth bulge; Occupied Palestinian Territories; Middle East; violence; gender

Dedication

For the young people of the world's youth bulges.

You are more powerful than you know.

"The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and, at length, the middle-aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them." – Henry David Thoreau

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List of Acronyms

AWRAD	Arab World for Research and Development
BDS	Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MID	Militarized Interstate Disputes
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

Introduction

The world's population recently reached an unprecedented 7 billion, according to some estimates (UNFPA, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This milestone offered renewed energy to Malthusian prophecies predicting the catastrophic impacts of ever-mounting population pressures and accompanying resource scarcity. Encouraged by these predictions, concern over mounting global insecurity has given rise to methods of 'strategic demography' – policies designed to detect and address security threats based on the specific features of a given populace (Hendrixson, 2004: 1). The threat that youth bulges – populations defined by a large cohort of young people¹ – in particular may pose in terms of igniting violent conflict has been a frequent feature in recent population debates. These suggestions can be traced back to youth bulge theory, an example of strategic demography, which suggests that youth bulge societies are predisposed to violence and that the demographic composition of a society is one of the causal mechanisms influencing conflict.

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), in which one in five people falls into the category of youth, is a hotspot for prominent youth bulges. Recent uprisings led by young people in the region have seemed to vindicate the youth bulge theory's arguments. At the same time, the non-violent nature of several of these mobilizations has complicated some basic tenets of the theory.

1 For the purpose of this study, 'youth' are defined as young men and women who are 15-29 years old. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth' to include those between the ages of 15 and 24 (UNESCO, 2012). However, 'youth' is a fluid term, and it varies according to context. A number of youth bulge studies, particularly those that focus on the MENA region, define youth to include the 15-29 age group (Dhillon and Yousef, 2007).

Of the MENA region, the youth bulge in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) of the West Bank and Gaza is one of the most pronounced and perhaps, one of the most feared (Massad, 2011). The Palestinian youth bulge (measured as the ratio of youth to the total population) currently stands at over twenty percent, the said “critical level” of youth for effecting violence (Huntington, 1996: 259-261). With a current Palestinian fertility rate of nearly five births per woman, the number of Palestinian youth is projected to increase to 1.3 million in 2025, over an 80 percent increase from 2005 (Assad and Roudi-Fahimi, 2007).

From the vantage point of youth bulge theory proponents, Palestinian society is prone to violence largely because of its large youth population. One of the ‘fathers’ of youth bulge theory, Gunnar Heinsohn, has written that Palestinian youth, by way of their numbers, “have no future other than war,” (Heinsohn, 2009). Additionally, factors that youth bulge theorists say aggravate the risk of youth violence (i.e. high unemployment rates, low economic performance) are ever-present in the OPT. Demography, combined with these structural risk factors, seem to threaten to trigger a mass uprising of angry, disaffected young people at any given moment.

Youth bulge theory supports and legitimizes discourses and policies relative to youth in the OPT, the MENA region, and other youth bulge countries. Many of these discourses and policies frame youth bulges as a form of “demographic armament”, representing young people as “ticking time bombs” (Heinsohn, 2009). Such frames and representations do little to help empower large youth populations into the source of economic power they are regarded to be in several developed societies (Bloom and Williamson, 1998; Jackson and Felmingham, 2002; Kennedy, 2003). Rather, youth bulge policies most often disenfranchise youth. They can elicit intense feelings of shame and rage, breed cultures of resistance, and in turn, complicate the youth bulge picture.

Yet youth bulge theory, despite its mostly quantitative empirical support, leaves considerable gaps in explaining the causal processes linking youth bulges with violent conflict. First, it neglects to observe youth as complex, agential and intersubjective beings, overlooking ways in which violence is enacted at personal and collective levels. Second, it fails to look at youth as being influenced by the psychosocial and cultural dynamics of the communities and nations in which they live, or at how various

combinations of these influences interact with political, economic and demographic factors to produce violent outcomes (Hendrixson, 2004; Daiute and Fine, 2003; Sommers, 2006; Barker and Ricardo, 2005). Third, youth bulge theory does not account for the vast majority of young people in youth bulge societies – those who do not engage in violence. Evidence has shown that even in some of the poorest countries with the largest youth bulges, only a minority of young people participate in violent conflict (Barker and Ricardo, 2005: 181; Sommers, 2006: 155). In these cases, it has been argued, “the majority of young people are involved in a different fight – a fight to build their economic future and contribute to society, without involvement in extremist activities” (Dhillon and Yousef, 2007: 2).

Additionally, youth bulge theory fails to examine one of its most glaring insinuations – that it is primarily *young men* who enact the violence where youth bulges are involved. From an essentialist perspective, this observation could be chalked up to high T (serum testosterone) levels in young men, which are said to propel them to commit antisocial and violent behavior (Den Boer and Hudson, 2004; Mazur and Michalek, 1998). However, the more compelling literature has argued that maleness is just as socially constructed as femaleness, and that it is not as much hormones as it is social productions of manhood that interact with forces like political repression or income inequality to influence violence (Ghousob and Sinclair Webb, 2000: 7; Barker and Ricardo, 2005: 181). An examination of the gendered influences that affect young men’s and young women’s decisions about violence is thus warranted.

Eschewing the essentialist nature of youth bulge theory, which implies an inherently violent “nature” of young people (and more specifically, young men,) this study seeks to broaden and deepen the youth bulge literature by examining youth perspectives on violence and resistance in the West Bank of the OPT. This analysis illustrates how youth bulge theory supports the sustained political, social and economic disempowerment of youth, and how this disempowerment can further foster cultures of resistance among youth. It examines some of the psychosocial and cultural influences of violence, suggesting that these factors may have more causal power than demography in explaining youth violence. Finally, this study illustrates how the presence of protective factors against violent behavior influence nonviolent resistance, even in disempowering

environments – a phenomenon that in itself unseats the basic claims of youth bulge theory.

Study Structure

The first chapter in this paper provides overview of the existing youth bulge literature, mapping out both the supportive and critical arguments of the theory, followed by a discussion of gaps in the literature and how this study seeks to help fill those gaps.

Chapter 2 explains the study methodology, including an overview of study design, approach and research methods.

Chapter 3 examines my first argument, that youth bulge theory is inefficient in its ability to influence interventions that mitigate the threat of youth violence. I provide an analysis of how youth bulge theory has historically helped to shape discourse and policies designed to curb youth resistance in the OPT. Results from focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews help illustrate whether or not these policies have been effective.

Chapter 4 explores my second argument, that youth bulge theory is insufficient in its explanation of youth violence. I postulate that while youth often make up the majority of participants in mass societal mobilization, they are by no means deterministically violent. Again, results of interviews and FGDs help support my argument with a survey of popular youth resistance in the OPT. Finally, through an exploration of possible explanatory variables influencing youth violence, I suggest that psychosocial and cultural variables (i.e. “*shame culture*”² and the idealization of a *hegemonic masculinity*³ in patriarchal contexts) may better explain violent outcomes.

² The concept of *shame culture* is defined and more thoroughly discussed in section 4.2.1.

³ The concept of *hegemonic masculinity* is defined and more thoroughly discussed in section 4.2.1.

Finally, Chapter 5 contains a summary of conclusions reached through this study. I apply these conclusions to propose a reworking of youth bulge theory and a series of key policy recommendations for consideration in youth bulge contexts.

1. “Devil in the Demographics”: The Youth Bulge Theory Literature

1.1. Youth Bulge Theory: The Supporting Literature

Population alarmist messages began to spring up in the late 18th century when Thomas Malthus' *Essay on Population* (1798) warned that the production of more human beings on the planet would in due time outweigh the resources available to sustain them. These concerns reverberated a century and a half later, when social science researchers began to draw trends between large populations of young people and popular rebellions over time. So-called “youth bulges”, researchers claimed, increased the risk of social unrest in a given population.

The youth bulge argument emerged as a formalized theory in the late 1960's with the publication of Herbert Moller's *Youth as a Force in the Modern World* (1968). Moller chronicled the role of youth in radical political movements and rebellions since the 17th century. He included a diverse set of examples, from the Nazi mobilization in pre-WWII Germany to the civil rights movement in the United States during the latter half of the 20th century. Despite the variable nature of the sample, and his melding of dynamic experiences of youth mobilization – both violent and nonviolent in nature – Moller concluded that large youth cohorts were directly linked to violent conflict.

A number of researchers soon after followed suit, conducting their own surveys of youth and civil unrest and confirming Moller's findings (Choucri, 1974; Cohn & Markides, 1982). According to these studies, youth played a leading role in most historical major rebellions and particularly, it had been young men who were disproportionately participative in anti-regime movements (Cohn & Markides, 1982). Biological explanations have since been evoked to reinforce this argument. It has been suggested that high T (serum testosterone) levels in young, single men are part of what

may cause them to exhibit antisocial and violent behavior (Mazur and Michalek, 1998; Den Boer and Hudson, 2004: 14).

Youth bulge theory has continuously been elaborated to explain youth violence. For example, Nazli Choucri (1974: 73) suggested that poor economic performance exacerbates the youth bulge effect. With this modification, the theory implicated youth bulges least developed countries (LDCs) as being especially prone to conflict. Jack A. Goldstone (1999) maintained that despite the potential youth bulges create for mass mobilization, additional factors outside of low economic performance (i.e. state weakness, elite opposition to the government, and urban growth) need to be in place in order for youth bulges to influence actual mass mobilization. Samuel P. Huntington (1996) implied the notion of the critical threshold of young people needed in order to destabilize the population as a whole: a “critical level” of twenty percent of the population would render countries especially conflict-prone.

Henrik Urdal’s (2004) statistical tests on global youth bulges and armed conflicts from 1950 to 2000 found a positive and statistically significant correlation between youth bulges and armed conflict throughout the Cold War era. However, the relationship tested negative in the post-Cold War world. He thereby concluded that conventional conflict theory – which emphasizes the level of development, regime type, and total population relative to geography (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Henderson and Singer, 2000; Hauge and Ellingson, 1998) has greater explanatory power for predicting conflict than does youth bulge theory. He also found no evidence to support the supposition of a threshold or “critical level” for youth bulges in influencing conflict (Urdal, 2004: 16). Despite Urdal’s findings and his forthright assertion that “the ways that youth bulges influence conflict propensity still remain largely unexplored” (Ibid. 16), he nonetheless deduced that youth bulges remain the “devil in...the demographics” (Ibid. 16).

Even with all these qualifications, the seed of knowledge directly linking large youth cohorts to violent aggression has been planted and continues to spread. Throughout the late 1990’s, and particularly in the wake of September 11, 2001, youth bulge theory began to receive widespread support in the Western mainstream media. Fareed Zakaria argued in *Newsweek* that youth bulges are playing a significant deterministic role in the rise in Islamic extremism throughout the Middle East (Zakaria,

2001: 24). A 2003 article in *Newsday* warned that “dangerous demographic trends typified by a mass youth bulge all but guarantee increased social instability” (Fuller, 2003). *The Wall Street Journal* informed its readers in 2009 that “(v)iolence and bloodshed...are commonly seen in lands where at least 30% of the male population is in the 15-29 age bracket” (Heinsohn, 2009). And New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof recently reported: “What’s the impact of overpopulation? One is that youth bulges in rapidly growing countries...make them more prone to conflict and terrorism” (Kristof, 2011). In this way, youth bulge theory has become progressively integrated into public knowledge, recognizable by its basic tenets: youth bulges are dangerous, concentrated in the global South, and made especially fearsome by the inherent brutality of young men.

Youth bulge theory has also found its place among the security communities of some of the world’s most powerful nations and is frequently cited by Western intelligence institutions (Sommers, 2006: 141). Additionally, a number of youth bulge theory proponents currently serve as consultants for intelligence agencies (Hendrixson, 2004: 9). An unclassified letter to the United States Senate’s Select Committee on Intelligence dated April 8, 2002 stated, “Several troublesome global trends—especially the growing demographic youth bulge in developing nations...will fuel the rise of more disaffected groups willing to use violence to address their perceived grievances” (CIA, 2002: 5).

1.2. Youth Bulge Theory: The Critical Literature

Despite widespread support, the principles of contemporary youth bulge theory have not gone unchallenged; the argument provides a hotbed for criticism and debate. For example, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2001) failed to find any significant relationship between large youth cohorts and armed uprising. Similarly, the U.S. sponsored State Failure Task Force has also failed to find significant effects of youth bulges as a cause for violent conflict (Esty et al., 1998).

Further criticism of youth bulge theory stems from doubt that demographic factors in and of themselves are strong enough to indicate a definitive outcome of violence (Holmes, 2001). And although youth bulge theory qualifications have suggested

that certain measures of economic development or regime types can deepen youth bulge risks, they have not offered much insight into the relationships between these complex factors (Barker and Ricardo, 2006: 181). While poverty, inequality and political disenfranchisement persist in the lives of many young people who do engage in violent acts, these indicators have been shown to have weak explanatory power for causing violence (Goldstone, 2001: 8). Furthermore, for all the youth who do engage in violence amidst these conditions, there are many more who do not (Barker and Ricardo, 2005: 181). Hence, there is a dynamic interaction missing from the youth bulge argument that warrants further examination.

Researchers continue to discount violent behavior in young men as natural or inherent. As researchers Barker and Ricardo (2005: 192) note, “the majority of violent behavior is explained by social factors during adolescence and childhood. Boys are not born violent—they learn to be violent.” This point is strongly reiterated by studies that have found that adolescent males with high T-levels of testosterone are not necessarily more violent than others, but rather that they are more easily influenced by peer groups. In this line of reasoning, if adolescent males “are surrounded by peers engaged in delinquency, they are likely to copy that behavior. However, if they are around those engaged in positive activities, they are likely to become leaders” (Sommers, 2006: 154). These conclusions introduce an argument that testosterone may be in fact “related to leadership rather than to antisocial behavior” (Rowe et al., 2004: 550). Arguments like these compel many critical theorists seeking to understand *how* youth bulges can become violent.

Youth bulge theory mistakenly discounts that young men and women are thinking, feeling, and rational agents. Young people ultimately choose whether or not and under which circumstances to engage in violent behavior, and those choices are often shaped through formative, repeated, socio-cultural processes (Butler, 2010: 170). Furthermore, the differences in socialization between young men and young women in most cultures suggest that these processes may influence the disproportionate participation of young males in violent acts.

Another consideration of youth bulge theory has been its normative implications. Specifically, many researchers are interested in the ways in which the theory reflects

racial, gender and age discrimination (Hendrixson, 2004: 1). Some arguments claim that youth bulge theory helps give momentum to a type of “Orientalism” (see Said, 1978) in its positioning of young men of colour as security threats. As Anne Hendrixson has pointed out, youth bulge theory frames these young men as “angry terrorists”, while their female counterparts are positioned as little more than “veiled victims” (Hendrixson, 2004:15). She goes on to argue that the effects of these frames and representations are used to justify hard-line Western military interventions and repressive population control methods in youth bulge countries (Hendrixson, 2004: 11). Others have added that the direction of foreign assistance toward repressive mechanisms and away from the creation of socio-economic opportunities for young people has been an exceedingly detrimental impact of the youth bulge theory (Sommers, 2006: 144).

The suggestion follows that youth bulge theory, at the same time as it frames young people in LDCs as threats, positions young people in countries of higher economic development as perhaps less violent, or even as “scarce assets” (Hendrixson, 2004: 15). Indeed, one finds a stark difference in the framing of young people between North and South. Throughout the developed world, the concept of a “demographic gift” has been used to describe the economic boom seen in populations that have especially large bulges of working-age citizens (including the 15-29 age group) relative to dependent populations (ages 0-4 and 64+). In their study of the economic effect of the demographic gift in East Asia, David E. Bloom and Jeffrey G. Williamson found that population dynamics may have accounted for almost half of the region’s economic miracle (1998: 450). Similarly, Paul Kennedy (2003) has argued that in order for Europe to achieve greater influential power on the international playing field, it must invest in producing more young people.

The demographic gift and the youth bulge are two distinct demographic scenarios, the former requires a past demographic transition from high to low fertility rates, does not take place automatically and requires sufficient policies to harness real economic benefits (Bloom and Williamson, 1998: 419; Jackson and Felmingham, 2002: 35). Nevertheless, the beneficial, constructive and profit-bearing potential of youth cohorts illuminated through the demographic gift theory stand in stark contrast next to youth cohorts as they are framed in youth bulge societies. Moreover, Tarik Yousef and Navtej Dhillon (2007) have conjectured that the MENA region’s youth bulge could be

transformed into a demographic gift if, over the next 20 years, youth participation in the labor forces “were to rise from 39 percent to 67 percent (similar to that of youth labor force participation in East Asia in 2005) and youth unemployment were reduced by half” (2007: 6). The authors warn that this window of opportunity to harness the MENA’s demographic gift potential is anticipated to close by 2045, and argue that taking advantage of the demographic dividend will require enhanced understanding of the aspirations and expectations of young people (2007: 7).

Finally, a critical weakness of youth bulge theory lies in its lack of focus on non-violent youth action, which notably reflects the choices of most of the youth in youth bulge societies (Barker and Ricardo, 2005: 182). Mark Boren has documented numerous examples of how masses of young people have historically not only mobilized to disrupt various social and political systems, but how they have also acted as meaningful and positive agents of change, often through nonviolent means (Boren, 2001).

1.3. Filling the Gaps

Despite a considerable body of critical literature and a collection of evidence challenging the direct link between large youth cohorts and violent conflict, youth bulge theory remains widely accepted as “common sense” (Hendrixson, 2004: 3) and “a closed statement” (Sommers, 2006: 141). The theory’s influence in discourse and policy persists (Hendrixson, 2004: 15).

To better understand the dynamic relationships between youth, mobilization and violence and thereby “flesh out” the youth bulge theory with substantial qualitative analysis, further critical work that looks at youth experiences on the personal, cultural and social levels is needed. Calls have gone out for more research that tests the theory’s significance relative to various socio-cultural practices and historical contexts (Hendrixson, 2004: 3). Normative work around the theory that can “demonstrate the contradictory and racist assumptions that operate via cultural and media representations...is still in its early stages” (Taraki, 2006: 8). And in light of evidence linking patriarchal gender orders with violent outcomes (Cockburn, 2009; Barker and

Ricardo, 2005; Sommers, 2006; Barker et al., 2011), applying a gender lens to the youth bulge analysis could be exceptionally relevant.

This study aims to fill some of these gaps with an examination of the theory from the vantage point of young people in the OPT. By providing a survey of discursive representations, normative operations and youth-directed policies vis-à-vis youth bulge theory principles, the ability of youth bulge theory to diminish youth resistance in the OPT will be assessed. Furthermore, the psychosocial and cultural influences in youth's lives will be examined against a backdrop of historical events in order to shed more light on how youth bulges may become violent (and how they may not.)

2. Study Methodology

2.1. Study Design

Research for this study took place in the West Bank over six weeks in the summer of 2011. Throughout the course of the study, the researcher lived with a Palestinian family and volunteered with a local non-governmental organization (NGO). Both actions proved to be instrumental in securing research facilities and meeting with research participants. Research took place mostly in the townships of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala, in the Aida refugee camp and in two larger urban areas (Ramallah and Hebron). Research was conducted with young people of the ages 15 – 29, and effort was undertaken to ensure a diversity of religion and socio-economic status among participants. When and where possible, young men and women were interviewed separately to encourage feelings of safety and freedom in discussing sensitive topics.

Qualitative methods were primarily chosen for this study, alongside statistical observations and analysis of relevant social indicators. Methods took several forms: an extensive desk review was undertaken; both semi-structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with individuals and groups; and a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) were facilitated. FGD tools were adapted from a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) research approach.

Care was taken throughout the course of this study to ensure that no harm was posed in any way to participants. An initial assessment undertaken by the researcher found no foreseeable physical, psychological, emotional, financial or social risks associated with participants' involvement. All interviews took place within familiar spaces for youth participants. Interviews and FGDs were based strictly upon volunteer participation and informed consent forms were mandatory for all interview and focus group participants. Participants were informed of their right to remove their data from the study at any time. They also were informed they were free to refuse to answer any

questions they were not comfortable with and still remain a part of the study. All information provided during study has been held in confidence and names do not appear in any report or publication of the research.

2.2. The Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Approach

The PLA approach employs participatory data collection methods designed to help researchers and practitioners consult, engage with and empower participants. PLA tools employ activities, visual methods and semi-structured interviewing techniques intended to promote learning and analysis not only for the researcher, but in the participants as well (Thomas, 2008: 1). Tools were designed to enable participants to identify their issues and perceptions more easily, while simultaneously developing their own analysis and possible solutions. The active participation, variety of tools, and self-analysis components of PLA research are particularly beneficial in research and development work with young people (Eckman et al., 1997: 11).

Interview questions were designed to assess individual perceptions and practices among Palestinian youth, relative to their experiences of life within a youth bulge under military occupation. Questions also sought to obtain data pertaining to youth participation in resistance activities, and to their acceptance and/or avoidance of violent behaviors. Interviews and FGDs were semi-structured; a group of structured questions were asked across most participants and groups, with a variance of follow-up and probing questions. Questions were meant to be open-ended, encouraging youth participants to direct and shape interviews and discussions.

Table 1: PLA Tools Used In FGDs

Participatory Tool	Objectives
<p style="text-align: center;">FGD Tool 1:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Perceptions, Feelings and Behaviors</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess youth’s ideas about local and international perceptions of the Palestinian struggle and of Palestinian youth; • To determine the emotional outcomes that both tacit and explicit ideas <i>about</i> youth elicit <i>from</i> youth; • To identify any relationship between these thoughts/feelings and behaviours, i.e. do perceptions about youth ultimately influence youth behavior, and how?
<p style="text-align: center;">FGD Tool 2:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Methods of Resistance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ranking/Scoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To better understand youth conceptions and relationships to resistance; • To identify the social and cultural strengths, capacities and opportunities for young people; • To develop a list and description of popular forms of resistance and determine the frequency with which youth participate in each.



Figure 1: Palestinian youth participate in the Ranking/Scoring PLA Activity during the Beit Sahour focus group discussion (*photo taken by the researcher*).

2.3. Research Participants

A total of 41 Palestinian youth (21 young women and 20 young men) between the ages of 15 and 29 were interviewed. 33 took part in participatory FGDs and 8 participated in individual or group interviews⁴. Participants included Christian and Muslim youth whose education levels reflected the high literacy and school enrollment rates in the OPT. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in English. Where necessary, questions were translated into Arabic by an interpreter, and participants were at liberty to speak in the language of their choice at any time throughout interviews.

The majority of participants were students - either in high school, university, or technical college. For those participants who were not enrolled in school, some were fully employed; some were un- or under-employed. Participants noted having a range of dreams and aspirations for the future. Desired career paths included law, engineering, photography, law enforcement, pharmacy, filmmaking, social work, business, education, and graphic design. The youth stated that they hold onto these dreams firmly, despite a stagnant and dependent economy in the West Bank. They made clear that their ambitions are dampened by the realities of occupation – a legacy that they have unwillingly inherited. Despite some having had occasions to travel outside of the West Bank, most of these youth had not known life outside of military occupation.

Perhaps partly for this reason, participants were enthusiastic about engaging in this study. The atmosphere of interviews and focus groups was fun and casual; the PLA framework allowed for discussions that were lively and spontaneous. Yet, youth did not shy away from some of the tougher issues addressed, such as their perceptions of the ways they are viewed internationally, their own experiences of violence, and their views

⁴ For full interview and focus group discussion details, see the Interview Schedule and Focus Group Discussion Schedule in Appendices A (pg. 59) and B (pg. 69).

about the viability of violence as a form of resistance. Participants responded to questions and activities openly and fearlessly, particularly when it came to sensitive, difficult topics.

Engaging youth, especially around their struggles requires a degree of empathy with their lived experiences. Also, an accurate analysis of why and how they engage in violent behavior necessitates a standpoint that aligns with that of the youth themselves (Daiute and Fine, 2003: 7). At no time in the duration of this study is that empathy or shared standpoint meant to excuse or justify acts of violence, whether in the form of individual or state violence. Rather, these efforts are meant to affirm the need to move beyond the surface of youth bulge theory and to adequately address the deeper influencing factors underpinning youth experiences with violence.

3. Youth Bulge Theory, Policies, and Practices in the OPT

Much of the youth bulge literature has shown correlation between youth bulges and violent conflict, giving demographers and security communities alike the empirical impetus for a focus on youth bulge societies in strategic conflict mitigation initiatives. But what are the consequences of youth bulge theory in these societies – what types of politics, discourses and policies do they engender? In turn, what implications do youth bulge policies have in the lives of young people themselves? And how effective have youth bulge strategies been in curbing or silencing youth rebellion?

To answer these questions, it is important to first contextualize the influence of youth bulge theory in the OPT (Section 3.1), to explicate the processes through which policies designed to curb youth resistance are constructed (Section 3.2), and to examine what such policies look like (Section 3.3). Finally, an overview of results from interviews and FGD Tool 1 (Section 3.4) sheds light on some of the emotional and behavioral responses young Palestinians have in response to these influences, ultimately illustrating the normative repercussions of the theory as well as the relative ineffectiveness of youth bulge policies to stifle youth resistance.

3.1. Setting the Stage: Youth Bulge Theory and Demographic Politics

“Demographic politics” (Zureik, 2005: 620) have largely shaped processes and outcomes throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The “Arab demographic threat” has been positioned by Israeli ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, in second place on a list of seven existential threats to the state of Israel (2009). In 2007, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned of “a demographic battle, drowned in blood and tears” (Faitelson, 2009). And U.S. President Barak Obama gave weight to these

politics in a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) on May 19, 2011 (Massad, 2011). An overview of the history of demographic politics in the OPT helps to illustrate current realities.

Following the 1947-48 War and the subsequent 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence, the existence of the Israeli state was predicated upon, and today remains dependent upon maintaining a decisive Jewish majority of seventy percent (Oren, 2009). Enshrined in Israel's Law of Return (1950), the religious and cultural principle of *aliyah* (Hebrew; literally, "ascent") encourages assisted immigration and settlement for those of Jewish descent into Israel. This includes voluntary immigration for ideological, emotional, or practical reasons, as well as compelled immigration to evade persecution. In line with these principles and policies as an ideological and political foundation, demographers have noted that since 1948, Israel has implemented ambitious immigration policies, aiming to populate the relatively nascent country with as many Jewish citizens as possible (Cohen, 2009: 116).

Following the Six Day War of 1967, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula were seized by Israel and designated under the military administration of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Thereafter, Israeli immigration policies expanded, alongside the development of a settlement regime in the now Occupied Territories, deemed illegal by international law⁵ (ICRC). Meanwhile, military-enforced planning and zoning policies have been recognized to inhibit the development and expansion of Palestinian communities (B'Tselem, 2010).

Palestinian youth have historically been implicated in the demographic politics of the OPT. Shortly after the Six Day War, Herbert Moller published *Youth as a Force in the Modern World* (1968), emphasizing the highly volatile "nature" of youth as a demographic group and highlighting the "psychopathic behaviors and primitive tendencies" that tend to manifest in youth bulge societies (257). In 1970, the OPT had a

⁵ Article 49, Part III. Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August, 1949.

considerable youth bulge: 18.6% (ages 15-24) of the total Palestinian population. The total fertility at that time hovered at 7.69 children per Palestinian woman. Existing numbers of youth and the increasing numbers of newborns began to stoke fears that a Palestinian “population explosion” in the Territories and within Israel could quickly destabilize the Jewish majority and threaten the security of Israeli citizens. Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel (1969 – 1974), has been quoted, voicing her concern over Palestinian fertility rates: “Sometimes I cannot sleep at night when I think how many Arab babies are being born” (Massad, 2011). While the total fertility rate (births per woman) in the OPT began to decline in the 1980’s, total births per year as an absolute number have since increased, alongside a falling mortality rate (World Bank, 2012). Thus, the Palestinian youth bulge has persisted.

Table 2: Total Fertility (Children per Woman) in the OPT (1950 – 2010)

Source: World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

1950-1955	1955-1960	1960-1965	1965-1970	1970-1975	1975-1980	1980-1985	1985-1990	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010
7.38	7.38	8.00	8.00	7.69	7.50	7.05	6.43	6.59	5.77	5.05	4.65

Table 3: Total Population Aged 15-24 (%) in the OPT (1950 – 2010)

Source: World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
17.6	19.1	19.7	19.5	18.6	17.8	19.1	20.3	20.3	19.8	19.6	19.7	21.2

Fear of the Palestinian youth bulge increased with the occurrences of the first (1987 – 1993) and second (2000 – 2005) Palestinian *intifadas* (uprisings; literally, “shaking off”). The young Palestinian male, masked with the *keffiyeh* (traditional scarf) and armed with stones became synonymous with the Palestinian resistance movement. For many, the *intifadas* may have been explained, in classic youth bulge fashion, as a result of there being too many disaffected young men in one place “with not enough to do” (Cincotta, Engelman, and Anastasion, 2003: 44). However, scholars have warned against taking the *intifadas* out of context, citing that the first was prefaced by a series of

“Iron Fist” policies and an increasing expansion of Israeli settlements outside of the Green Line (Lockman and Beinun, 1989) and that the second, which erupted after peace negotiations broke down at Camp David, was preceded by “profound inequalities and apartheid policies...as well as a result of the loss of a horizon of political hope for a solution” to the conflict (Taraki, 2006: 104).

Irrespective of these debates, youth bulge theory has provided empirical validation for the way young Palestinian men and women have been represented amidst the climate of demographic politics. Outbreaks of violence in the now over 60-year long conflict have been attributed directly to the surplus of young Palestinian males: “For every 1000 men 40-44, there are 4300 boys aged 0-4... And so the killing continues” (Heinsohn, 2009). Iterated over time, such assertions have arguably set in motion a securitization⁶ process, which has ultimately encouraged youth-directed security policies in the OPT via discourses that frame youth as violent threats. In an effort to show how youth bulge policies that seek to curb youth resistance have become commonplace in the OPT, the following section examines these discourses.

3.2. Youth Bulge Theory and “Discourses of Dehumanization”

Erin Steuter and Deborah Wills have examined what they call the “discourses of dehumanization” embedded in Canadian media sources. Their findings confirm that Canadian media has wholly participated in “mediating constructions of Islam and Muslims, mobilizing familiar metaphors in representations that fabricate an enemy-Other who is dehumanized, de-individualized, and ultimately expendable” (2009: 7). This dehumanization takes place, the authors argue, through forms of animal imagery, which, repeated frequently and consistently enough, constitute motivated representations that

⁶ The concept of securitization (see Waever, 1995) examines how an issue becomes constructed as an existential security threat through speech acts. Securitization is a version of politicization that enables the use of extraordinary measures for reasons of security.

become embedded in public discourse, effectively reducing the human actions of targeted populations to sub-human behaviors. The authors trace these representations to historical precedents, such as “widely disseminated media voice in print and radio...calling the Tutsi ethnic community serpents and cockroaches” prior to the Rwandan genocide; “rat and insect metaphors that have antecedents in Western media treatment of the Japanese in WWII”; and finally, Nazi propaganda films that “interspersed scenes of Jewish immigration with shots of teeming rats...also comparing Jewish populations to dogs, insects and parasites requiring elimination” (19).

Such animal metaphors are identifiable within public rhetoric relative to Palestinian populations. “[The Palestinians] are beasts walking on two legs,” former Prime Minister Menachem Begin stated in a 1982 speech to the Knesset (Kapelouk, 1982). Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak was quoted by the Jerusalem Post in 2000, stating that “(t)he Palestinians are like crocodiles, the more you give them meat, they want more.” And Israeli scholar and historian Benny Morris has asserted, “Something like a cage has to be built for them...there is no choice. There is a wild animal there that has to be locked up one way or another” (Shavit, 2004). These dehumanizing discourses echo those employed by some youth bulge theorists in their rhetorical depictions of young people. Robert Kaplan, for example, has described young men not as fellow humans but “loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting” (1994: 16).

The kind of moral exclusion elicited from these representations has been said to constitute a dangerous form of oppression, often resulting in extraordinary measures (Young, 1990: 53; Deutsch, 2005: 15). In each of Steuter and Willis’ examples, such dehumanizing discourse has contributed to the development and implementation of discriminatory, inhumane policies. In several cases, they have also been used to facilitate genocide.

As subjects of discourse, Palestinian children and youth have not only been dehumanized to the point of being considered as animals, but as actual weapons themselves. Current Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has referred to the growing Palestinian population within the 1967 Green Line as a “demographic time bomb” (Ha’aretz, 18 December 2003). The time bomb metaphor has also been used by

youth bulge researchers such as Graham E. Fuller (2003) to describe the Middle East's youth bulge.

Scholar Judith Butler has written that through the representation of weaponry, Palestinian youth are effectively “cast as threats to human life as we know it rather than as living populations in need of protection” and that “the loss of such populations is deemed necessary to protect the lives of ‘the living’” (2010: 31). Indeed, as one young Palestinian man, 29, from Bethlehem remarked during our interview, “Killing a Palestinian child is like detonating a bomb (to the Israelis)...something that must be done in order to save an Israeli life” (Interview #1, 28 June 2011). “We are asked to believe that those children are not really children, are not really alive,” writes Butler, “that they have *already* been turned to metal, to steel (2010: xxvii). In this sense, “(t)he only way to defend oneself against this attack is then to kill this child, all the children, the whole cluster” (2010: xxvii).

Herein, Butler argues, lies the strategy of disproportional distribution of “grievability” on which the perpetuation and normalization of war depends. “Ungrievable lives cannot be lost, cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone – they are ontologically already lost and destroyed – which means that when they are destroyed in war, nothing is destroyed” (Butler, 2010: xix). In this way, the lives of young Palestinian men and women are rhetorically dehumanized and devalued; they are “cast as possessing a different set of morals and knowledge – commonly stated as ‘they only understand force’” (Peteet, 1994: 106). And “force” has come to define the set of policies designed to curb youth resistance and mitigate violence in the OPT. The next section describes a number of these policies.

3.3. Youth Bulge Policies

“There is no such thing as childhood in the West Bank or Gaza Strip”, Israeli-Arab writer Anton Shammas has written (1988: 10). Indeed, politics and conflict come early in the lives of Palestinian youth. Yet childhood and young adulthood are also compromised by way of military enforced policies targeted at young people, which seek

to curb youth resistance to military occupation by disrupting continuity of life and life cycles for young Palestinians.

One example is illustrated by the IDF's official definitions for Palestinian children and youth. The Hebrew word for 'child' is not always used in military announcements when reporting injuries or deaths of Palestinian children, notes Julie Peteet (1994: 106). The author cites a particular case in which a ten-year old boy shot by armed forces was referred to as "a young man of ten" (1994: 106).

Israeli military law – which Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are subject to – has altered the internationally accepted definition of childhood for Palestinians, creating implications for the ways in which children and youth can be arrested, detained and tried in military courts. Israeli Military Order #132 "introduces a tier system for categorizing children, each with unique legal implications. Thus, anyone 11 years of age and under is a "child," anyone between the ages of 12–13 is an "adolescent" and those aged between 14 and 15 are "teenagers." Children who are 16 or 17 years old are not explicitly mentioned in the military order, thereby implicitly defining them as adults" (UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2007). These definitions are not applied to Israeli children under Israeli civil law, which complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.

By these altered definitions, Palestinian childhood is brief and policies permit for the treatment of youth as adults very early on. This can be observed in the detention rates of young Palestinians by Israeli authorities in the past five years (Table 4) and in the number of child fatalities caused by military confrontation over the past decade (Table 5). Of note, it is estimated that 85% of young Palestinians who were killed by the Israeli army during the second intifada had not been engaged in clashes (Cook, Hanieh and Kay, 2004).

Table 4: Number of Palestinian Children (under 18) in Israeli Detention

Source: Defense for Children International (DCI)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2008	327	307	325	327	337	323	324	293	304	297	327	342
2009	389	423	420	391	346	355	342	339	326	325	306	305
2010	318	343	342	355	305	291	284	286	269	256	228	213
2011	222	221	226	220	211	209	202	180	164	150	161	135
2012	170	187	206	220								

Table 5: Distribution of Palestinian Child Fatalities Caused by Military Confrontation by Age Group

Source: Defense for Children International (DCI)

Year	Age 0 – 8	Age 9 - 12	Age 13 - 15	Age 16 - 17	Total
2000	4	9	34	47	94
2001	13	21	31	33	98
2002	50	33	62	47	192
2003	16	22	47	45	130
2004	13	29	58	62	162
2005	2	10	19	21	52
2006	26	12	40	46	124
2007	3	8	17	22	50
2008	22	13	38	39	112
2009	93	63	83	76	315
2010	0	0	3	5	8
2011	2	3	6	4	15
2012	0	3	1	0	4

Palestinian children and youth also face IDF security offensives that use physical assault as a method of controlling youth behavior. Human rights organizations, such as B'Tselem, have documented hundreds of cases where soldiers and police have insulted, degraded, slapped, kicked and abused Palestinian civilians (2010). The use of indiscriminate violence by IDF soldiers against Palestinian youth is neither clearly nor unequivocally forbidden by military standards, notes B'Tselem, and very rarely are measures taken against offenders (2010). Moreover, an intricate system of unpredictable military incursions, detentions without trial, checkpoints, roadblocks and barriers, erratic home demolitions, a permit and identification card regime and the continued construction of a Separation Barrier (see figure 2) also help to fragment Palestinian public life in the name of security.

Policies designed to curb resistance in the OPT infringe upon human rights to freedom of movement, to adequate medical treatment, to education and to work. For young people, who at the youth bulge age are often negotiating transitions through pivotal phases of life, the effects of these policies are especially disadvantageous, as they impede the maintenance of economic, family and social ties and collapse the transitions from childhood to youth and from youth to adulthood (World Bank, 2010: 46). The overall aim of such policies in the West Bank is to increase security and diminish youth rebellion. But have these efforts to stifle youth opposition succeeded? In the following section, I explore the impacts of youth bulge policies in the lives of Palestinian youth and seek to expose how these policies have been ineffective in discouraging youth resistance.

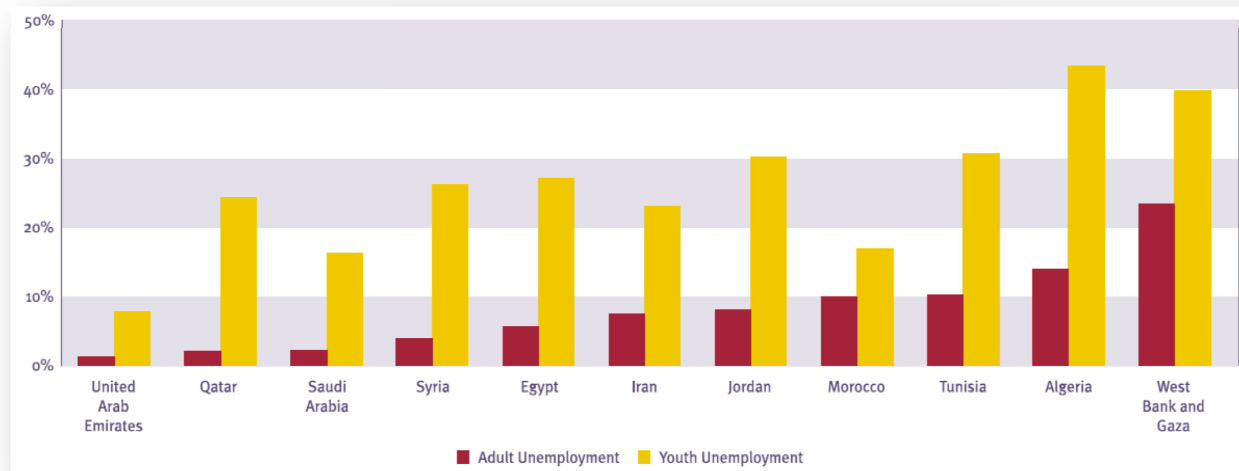
3.4. Impacts on Palestinian Youth

The effects of youth bulge policies in the OPT are confirmed in current unemployment rates (see Table 6). When compared with rates from across the rest of the MENA region, the barriers to viable employment in the West Bank – especially for

young people - become clear. “I don’t travel at all around the West Bank,” related one young man, 25, from Beit Sahour, “We are too restricted. I don’t go to Ramallah from here; I don’t go anywhere. It is too much hassle⁷ (Interview #2, 6 July 2011).”

Table 6: Youth versus Adult Unemployment, MENA Region (2007)

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO)

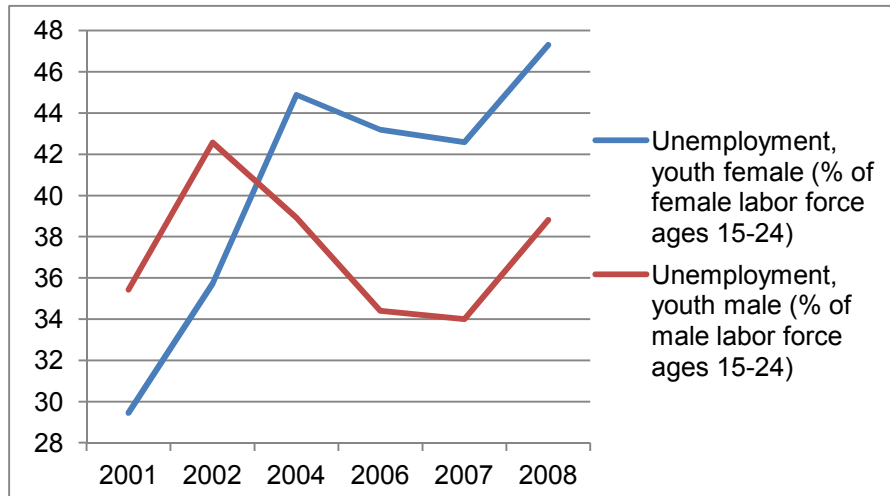


Yousef and Dhillon note that young women are the most disadvantaged by unemployment, as they are “penalized for both their age and gender” (2007: 12). “Traditions present obstacles for women,” confirmed a young Palestinian woman, 23, from Hebron, “For example, there is only certain work we are permitted to do. The problems for women here are much more than the problems for men. Females have fewer opportunities. Even in travel throughout the West Bank – we are already restricted as it is, but it is much harder for women. Men can work abroad or in other cities; we cannot (Interview #3, 14 July 2011).”

⁷ NB: The distance from Beit Sahour to Ramallah is 20km. However, with military checkpoints and roadblocks factored in, the journey can be long and unpredictable.

Table 7: Youth Unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza (sex-disaggregated)

Source: World Development Indicators, 2012



Youth understand that they are targeted by restrictive policies that aim to stifle their resistance. “The occupation is an obstacle to the whole society and the youth are a major part of that society,” a young woman, 23 years old, from Hebron stated, “the occupation targets youth specifically because we are powerful, because we have creative ideas, the impetus for change. We are the biggest threat to this occupation” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011). They also perceive the essential ungrievability of their own lives. “Just by my being alive, I am a danger...I am a threat,” stated one young man, 29 years old, from Bethlehem. “I’m required to prove my humanity to respond to this mentality, but how? How can I be recognized as a person when my very existence is a threat?” (Interview #1, 28 June 2011).

During FGDs, youth were asked to discuss how they are represented and framed by the world around them. In addition, youth were asked to describe the emotions these impositions elicit for them. Finally, youth discussed the behaviors they tend to engage in as a result of these emotional responses. FGD Tool 1 helped youth to engage in these conversations.

“Terrorist,” “aggressive,” “frightening,” and “violent,” are the terms with which youth said they are perceived by both the Israeli public and the international community.

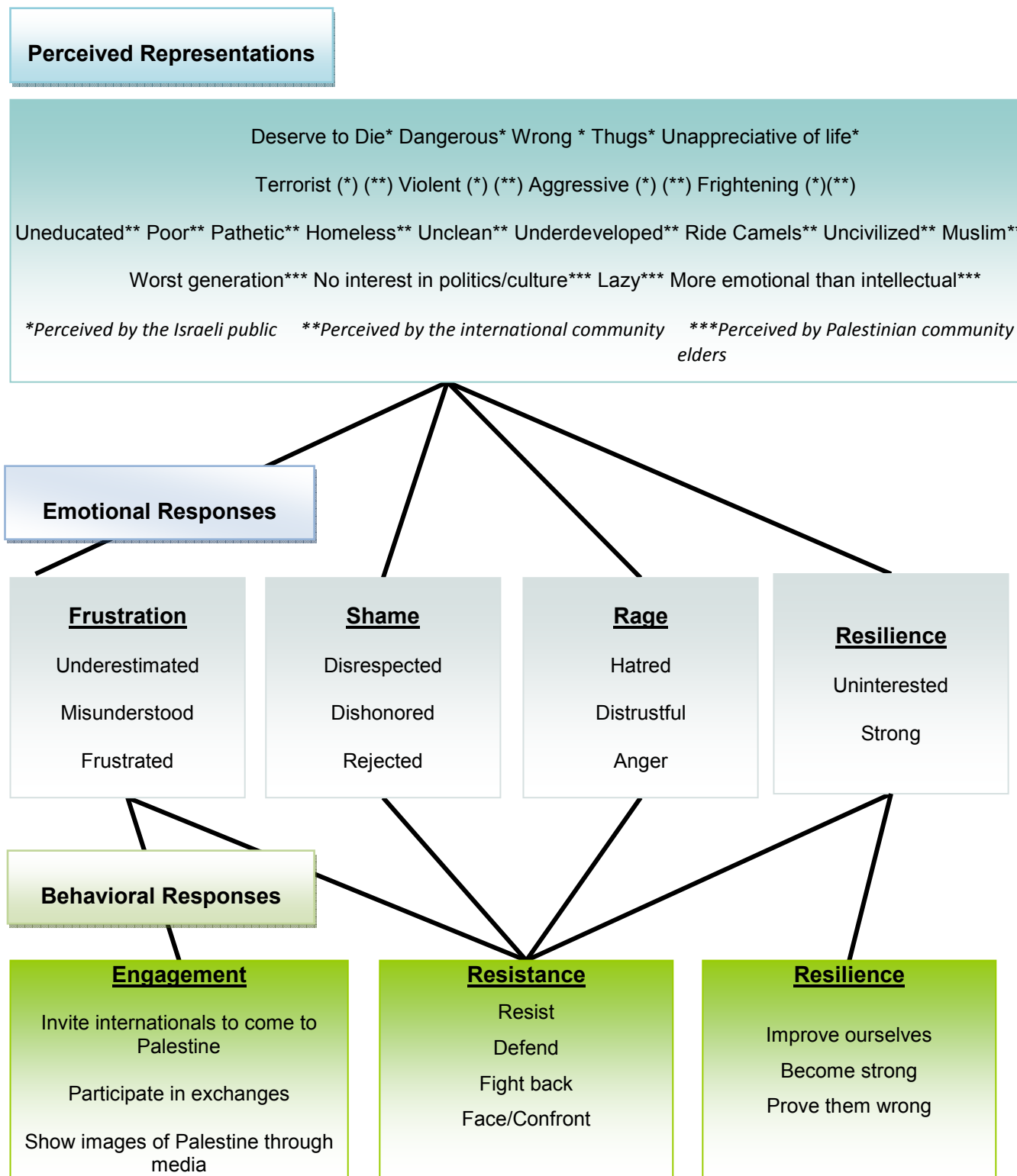
Additionally, youth stated that they were framed as “wrong,” “dangerous” and deserving of death by Israeli society. To the international community, youth additionally perceive that they are looked at as “uncivilized,” “homeless,” “unclean,” “poor,” “pathetic,” and “underdeveloped.” Finally, youth described how they think they are seen by elders within the Palestinian community. They thought that elders perceive them as being “lazy,” of the “worst generation,” having “no interest in politics or culture,” and being “more emotional than intellectual” (FGDs, Tool 1: 11 July 2011; 20 July 2011; and 29 July 2011). Youth were asked to identify the feelings these perceptions bring about for them. A number of emotions were identified, which have been categorized in Table 7 into the following emotional categories: frustration, shame, rage, and resilience.

When asked how these feelings influenced their behaviors, youth overwhelmingly stated that they felt compelled to resist these stereotypes and change people’s minds. “We need to prove people wrong,” stated a young man, 26 in Aida Camp (FGD 3, Notes, 29 July 2011). “These feelings provide us with what we need to become stronger, smarter, to improve ourselves” stated another, 24 (FGD 3, Notes, 29 July 2011). However, youth maintained that they did not feel obliged to try to change the minds of the occupying power, “It is not my responsibility to tell my oppressor how he is oppressing me,” remarked a young man, 29, from Bethlehem (Interview #1, 28 June 2011).

Contrary to the intention of youth bulge discourses and policies, youth resistance has not been inhibited or deterred. Rather, discourses of dehumanization (and presumably, by extension, the policies they engender and normalize) seem to inspire and even fuel youth resistance. In addition to trying to change the images of Palestinian youth and of life in the OPT, youth stated that it was important to resist the frames as much as possible, to “face” or “confront” the stereotypes against them, and in some cases to “fight” for or “defend” themselves (FGDs, Tool 1: 11 July 2011; 20 July 2011; and 29 July 2011).

Table 8: Perceived Representations and Youth Responses

Source: FGD Tool 1, as facilitated in FGDs 1, 2, and 3 (see Appendix B)



In this context, the identities of young Palestinian men and women have become inextricably bound up with resistance. Youth resist the words, frames and measures that control and restrict their lives, both by refusing to internalize them and by acting out in ways that contradict them. In these efforts, resistance has become a way of life for Palestinian youth, and has become synonymous with existence. “There are many ways we resist,” explained one young man, 25, in Beit Sahour, “but we are resisting just by staying alive. To exist is to resist” (Interview #2, 6 July 2011). The concept of *sumud* (steadfastness) in the OPT has come to endow political meaning in the refusal to let restrictive policies disrupt normal activities to the greatest extent possible (Taraki, 2006: 20). This political consciousness has become a part of everyday life, and is reflected the lives of Palestinian youth through what would typically be considered apolitical acts.

Discourses and policies based on the fundamentals of youth bulge theory do not achieve the effect of reducing or suppressing youth rebellion and mobilization. The evidence instead suggests that youth bulge discourses and policies can in fact encourage and strengthen youth resistance movements among young people. My next question is *how* do youth in the OPT resist? What do popular acts of resistance look like for this post-intifada generation? Is it through violence only, as youth bulge theory might suggest? The next chapter helps respond to these questions.

Figure 2: “To Exist is to Resist” – graffiti found on the Palestinian side of the West Bank’s Separation Barrier (*photo taken by the researcher*).



4. Youth Bulge Theory and the Causes of Youth Violence

Uncovering the ways in which youth engage in mobilization and resistance is a critical step in the expansion of youth bulge literature. Youth do not all mobilize the same way, and no two youth movements are ever alike. Yet youth bulge theory often takes one-size-fit-all approach to youth resistance. Chapter 3 discussed how current policies based on the premises of youth bulge theory have proven ineffective in deterring youth resistance in the OPT. Chapter 4 seeks to uncover the nature of that resistance.

4.1. Popular Resistance among Palestinian Youth

FGD Tool 2 was facilitated in order to uncover information about the methods and means of Palestinian youth's resistance. Focus group participants were asked to generate a list of ways in which they engage in resistance. They were then asked to rank the listed methods according to how frequently they participate in each. Responses generated from the FGDs and supporting interviews were diverse, included creative, innovative means and showed a reliance on local social cohesion and organization. Non-violent resistance came out ahead of violent resistance in terms of youth participation and popularity. Violence as a form of resistance ranked second to last, just ahead of emigration. Furthermore, young women describe being actively involved, and even taking on leadership roles in the Palestinian youth resistance movement, reporting an improvement in their status over the years since the second intifada. Responses over different groups tended to mirror each other, indicating a relative consistency in popular resistance across different groups and geographic locations throughout the West Bank.

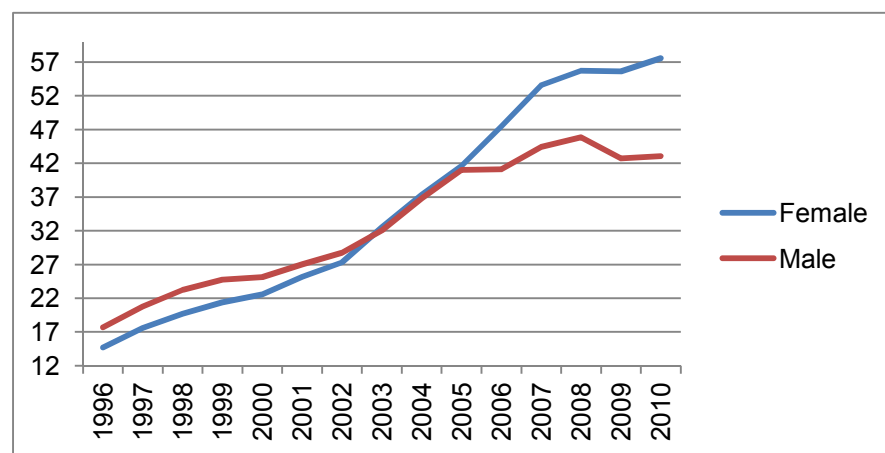
The eight major means of youth resistance, as indicated by Palestinian youth, are as follows⁸.

1. Investing in education

“Getting a good education”, “Educating ourselves about history”, and “Studying” were consistently rated as the most popular ways in which youth resist (FGDs, Tool 2: 11 July 2011; 20 July 2011; and 29 July 2011). “Education is our most powerful form of resistance,” explained one young woman, 17, from Beit Sahour. “If we can be more clever than our occupier, we will win” (FGD 2, Notes, 20 July 2011). This finding is supported by literacy rates in the OPT, which have remained above 95% for both males and females since the early 2000’s. Literacy rates in the OPT outshine those of the MENA region as a whole, as well as many other MENA states (see Table 10). Furthermore, young Palestinian women are increasingly overtaking young men in enrollment in educational institutions (see Table 9), including universities – a sign that the status of young women may be improving in the OPT.

Table 9: Tertiary School Enrollment in the OPT (% Gross, Sex-disaggregated)

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2012



⁸ Full details of FGD Tool 2 outcomes can be located in the FGD Schedule, located in Appendix B (pg 69).

Table 10: Illiteracy in the OPT and MENA Region

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012

Country	Percentage of illiterate population over 15 (2000)	
	Female	Male
Algeria	43	24
Bahrain	17	9
Egypt	56	33
Iran	31	17
Iraq	77	45
Jordan	16	5
Kuwait	20	16
Lebanon	20	8
Libya	32	9
Morocco	64	38
Oman	38	20
Occupied Palestinian Territories	16	6
Qatar	17	20
Saudi Arabia	33	17
Syria	40	12
Tunisia	39	19
Turkey	24	7
United Arab Emirates	21	25
Yemen	75	33
MENA Region	42	22

2. *Engaging in social cohesion*

Second to education, youth ranked social cohesion – exhibited as community involvement and engagement in youth social activities (sports, youth groups), cultural activities (traditional music and *dabke*, traditional folk dance), and creative arts groups (film, theatre, photography clubs). Additionally, participating in olive tree planting campaigns, providing human rights education to other youth, volunteering and offering community service were highly rated (FGDs, Tool 2: 11 July 2011; 20 July 2011; and 29 July 2011). “In order to improve our situation, we need to show more accurate images of Palestine to the world through the media,” said one young man, 24, from Aida Camp, “this is why I have taken up photography – I want to show the truth about us” (FGD 3, Notes, 29 July 2011). Not only did youth feel that social cohesion as a form of resistance bonded young people together for a shared purpose, they expressed that it also allows them creative outlets for the emotional stresses of life under occupation.

A focus on innovation and creativity in non-violent resistance was stated as being important for youth. “Ambition is a way of adapting,” explained a young woman, 23, from Hebron. “The occupation wants to make youth give up, get depressed, stop being productive and stay in the house. No. We cannot fall victim to this. Create anything! We can’t stop because that is what they want” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011).

Young women reported a broad and active participation in social organization as a form of resistance, as well as in the development of new and creative forms. “Women are much more enthusiastic about political participation,” stated a young woman, 22, from Hebron. “We have a different approach. Women won’t throw stones, but open an art gallery” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011). As a result of their participation in organization outside of the home, young women reported an improvement in their freedom of movement and increased participation. “The situation has changed over the past 10 years,” stated a young woman, 21, from Ramallah, “Now there is a bit more freedom. Now I work in the radio station” (Interview #4, 20 July 2011). “We have a louder voice than before,” added a young woman, 24, from Hebron, “Now we are free to speak out about things like honor killings, where we didn’t before” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011).

Local initiatives were cited as being more effective and more sustainable than international programs seeking to engage youth within the West Bank. “International organizations’ youth programs are not sustainable,” said a young woman, 22, from Hebron, “They volunteer here for a short time, but what is next? They do not suit the youth needs, and each organization has their own agenda” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011). Furthermore, programs that seek to bring Israeli and Palestinian youth together to engage in dialogue were considered by youth to be a way of normalizing the occupation and continued oppression of Palestinian youth. It was made clear that these programs are not considered useful or effective means of either resisting occupation or peacebuilding. “These programs where Israeli and Palestinian youth are expected to sit together and talk about their issues – these give the illusion that this is a joint, shared struggle,” explained a young man, 29, from Bethlehem. “It’s another way of making this occupation seem more ‘comfortable’. Sure, they can become friends. But at the end of the day, the Israeli goes back to controlling the checkpoint, and the Palestinian goes back to moving through the checkpoint. At the end of the day, the Palestinian still does not have his rights” (Interview #1, 28 June 2011). When asked, most youth stated that they would resist entering Israel if and when given permission, including for the purpose of participating in such programs.

International exchange programs with other youth from abroad, however, were noted by youth as being an important method of resistance, and as being critical for building and maintaining youth morale under occupation. “Changing people’s minds internationally is what gives us hope,” remarked a young man, 25, from Beit Sahour. “International support is a strong form of resistance. The Turkish flotilla was more effective and more powerful than suicide bombers” (Interview #2, 6 July 2011). Again, a need for innovation in engaging international audiences was noted as being key. “We need new creative ways of telling messages, not the cliché ways of blaming the occupation,” explained a young woman, 24, from Hebron, “We hope our messages are clear and available for the international community” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011).

3. Enhancing self-esteem

In addition to maintaining social cohesion, youth made clear the importance of also maintaining cohesion of the self in the face of dehumanizing frames and

representations that when internalized, can threaten to alter their self-image. Methods of resistance with regard to enhancing self-esteem included “working on confidence,” “laughing,” “smiling,” and “keeping up morale” (FGDs, Tool 2: 11 July 2011; 20 July 2011; 29 July 2011).

4. Involvement in Political Parties

Participation in political parties was rated considerably low as a popular means of resistance among youth. While some reported that becoming politically active was important for the youth resistance movement, most reported a mixture of frustration and apathy toward what they see as a corrupt and ineffective Palestinian Administration (PA). “I have no interest in politics. Negotiations have been going on too long and what is the result? We have become apathetic to Palestinian politics,” stated one young man, 29, from Beit Sahour (Interview #2, 6 July 2011). “We have no government,” added another young man, 20, “We have no faith in the PA – they are just an arm of Israeli policy. I am not active in any political parties” (Interview #2, 6 July 2011). For youth who did report being active in political parties, a need for more innovative approaches to resolution beyond the current regime of negotiations was expressed. Universities and legislative council youth programs were cited as being the key entry points for youth’s political participation.

5. Participating in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Campaign

The BDS campaign in Palestine was brought up several times by youth in focus groups and in interviews. Almost all youth agreed that BDS presents an opportunity for international solidarity and is an important and effective means of resistance. However, boycotting Israeli products and products made in Israeli settlements can be a difficult endeavor in the West Bank, which is almost exclusively economically dependent on Israel. While a variety of local products is inhibited by West Bank development restrictions, choice is limited. Furthermore, the quality of Israeli products remains superior in the minds of many youth. “I support the boycott movement,” remarked a young man, 29, from Beit Sahour, “But do I buy Israeli products? Yes, I do. The quality is better than Palestinian products” (Interview #2, 6 July 2011). Thus, while many youth

agree with BDS in principle, it was rated relatively low on the scale of popular youth resistance.

6. Participating in nonviolent demonstrations

Nonviolent rallies and demonstrations were mentioned by youth in their naming of ways they resist. However, frequency of their participation in these methods was reported as being sparse. In their territorial control over the West Bank, IDF forces declare such activity illegal, and frequently use force to prohibit demonstrators from reaching demonstration sites and prevent demonstration activity (B'Tselem, 2010). Youth who do decide to participate in nonviolent demonstrations most often face some degree of violence when they refuse soldiers' orders to cease. Injuries from rubber bullets, tear gas and brute forces are common occurrences for nonviolent demonstrators.

7. Fighting Back

Violence as resistance was brought up by youth and discussed at length during FGDs and interviews. Some youth were in fact hesitant to label physical resistance to military occupation in the West Bank as "violence". Several youth interviewed made a strong and clear distinction between self-defense (against Israeli soldiers or West Bank settlers) and imprudent assaults enacted by youth. The former, many feel they ought to have recourse to without recrimination while the latter, many felt there is little excuse for. As one young man, 28, from Beit Jala described it, "Violence and fighting back are not the same thing. They are different. We are defending ourselves." A young woman, 18, from Beit Sahour responded, "But fighting back using violence is violence" (FGD 2, Notes, 20 July, 2011). When youth were asked to provide pictorial representations of what they meant by "fighting back", images reflected throwing stones and lacked the technological means of violence.

Many Palestinian youth understand and can articulate their inalienable right to armed struggle as a form of resistance to foreign domination, as provided for in Article 2 of the UNGA Resolution A/RES/33/24 of 29 November 1978. Article 2 "(r)eaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all

available means, particularly armed struggle”. Still, the majority of youth interviewed reported having never participated in violent resistance. “I am against violent resistance to occupation,” explained a young man, 29, “I had a teacher who was preaching violence, encouraging us to join the army – but what good would this do, we have nothing” (Interview #2, 6 July 2011).

8. Emigrating from the OPT

Emigrating from the OPT was consistently rated last as a popular form of youth resistance. While young people agreed that leaving for a few years to experience another part of the world was acceptable, they were not supportive of leaving the West Bank without returning. This conviction did not come for youth without an observable struggle. “Of course, I’d be lying if I say I never think about it,” said a young woman, 23, from Hebron, “But emigration is not an option. I would feel like I was running away. I don’t want to run away, I want to face my challenges. It is my right to live in my land” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011). “Emigration does not solve the problem,” added another young woman, 24, in Hebron, “It creates another problem. We have to search for other alternatives if there is no opportunity – create opportunities. Emigration is a contradiction to our power” (Interview #3, 14 July 2011).

4.2. Observations and Alternative Explanations

It is important to note that the majority of Palestinian youth interviewed for this study choose not to engage in violent resistance. This finding has been confirmed elsewhere. A UNDP survey in the OPT, based on a sample of 1,200 Palestinians youth, reported that “the majority of Palestinian youth (69 percent) believe that the use of violence to resolve the conflict is not very helpful, while only 8 percent believe it is an important tool” (UNDP, 2009). Similarly, a poll conducted by the Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) with 1,200 Palestinian youth between the ages of 18 and 30 found the majority of youth polled choose nonviolence as the best means of resisting and resolving the conflict (2012: 5). These results also confirm the assertion of several critical youth bulge researchers that in youth bulge cases, the majority of youth

do not participate in instances of mass violent behavior (Barker and Ricardo, 2005; Sommers, 2006).

The discussions with Palestinian youth on violent resistance explicated youth awareness, principles and agency. Even within a youth bulge, the youth interviewed exhibited that violence is by no means a natural or conclusive inclination for them. They are thoughtful and reflective about the choice to engage in violence as a form of resistance, and they demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of its implications and consequences. Hence, there is a flaw in the youth bulge theory argument. If the theory is insufficient on its own to account for youth violence, then there may be other explanatory variables beyond that of the demographic composition and structural factors, such as unemployment rates. With this in mind, I turn to a brief examination of some of the alternative explanations of youth violence.

4.2.1. *Shame, Masculinity and Violence*

Frustration is often cited by youth bulge theorists as being a factor that helps inflame youth bulge violence. G.E. Fuller (2003), for example, contends that youth turn to fundamentalism as a vehicle for their frustration – a result of high unemployment in countries where there are too many youth and too few opportunities.

However, after 35 years of investigating the causal mechanisms of violence, psychologist and leading expert on violence research, Dr. James Gilligan concludes that the primary motive for violent behavior is not frustration at all, but rather, “the desire to eliminate the feeling of shame and humiliation...and replace it with its opposite, the feeling of pride” (2003: 1154). Shame, which Gilligan notes is related to a family of emotions, including feelings of disrespect, dishonor, inadequacy and worthlessness, is normally followed by rage and physical aggression (Scheff and Retzinger, 1991: 3; Thomas, 1995). Additional research from across the social science field has confirmed Gilligan’s hypothesis that indeed, within shame lies the “pathogen that causes violence” (Feshback, 1971; Rochlin, 1973; Luckenbill, 1977).

Gilligan affirms that shame can be a motive for collective, as well as individual violence, and that societies affected by shame as a whole may contribute to mass uprising. The anthropological concept of “shame culture” (Benedict, 1946), refers to

societies where social and cultural life is based on the central notion of honor. Traditional (pre-1945) Japanese culture (Reischauer, 1965) and urban inner city culture in Philadelphia (Anderson, 1999) have been cited as examples. These cultures are said to be characterized by a tremendous sensitivity to shame, to the point of encouraging extreme measures, even death, to eliminate the emotion. (Gilligan, 2003: 1156). Psychiatrist and founder of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights, Dr. Eyad Sarraj has noted that “shame culture” has had deep roots in Palestinian history ever since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. Shame has come to be, he notes, “the most painful emotion in the Arab culture, producing the feeling that one is unworthy to live” (2002). Sarraj conjectures that this shame is what helps to explain the motivation of Palestinian violence.

The evidence suggests that violence can seldom be mitigated by excessively restrictive policies that target populations as a whole. Gilligan’s research has shown that feelings of guilt work as protective mechanisms against violent behavior – when one perceives himself to be perpetrating injustice, it becomes more difficult for him to carry out the violent act. Thus, any experience that increases shame while decreasing guilt (for example, the delivery of unwarranted punishment or abuse) is “the most effective way to provoke someone into committing acts of violence” (2003: 1164).

In the context of youth bulge theory in the OPT, while punitive and restrictive measures carried out by military operations have not been able to stifle youth resistance, they also should not, according to these arguments, be able to quell youth violence. And as was found in chapter 3, youth bulge policies in the OPT have been shown to enhance feelings of shame and rage in young people. Further oppression and punishment against Palestinian youth, be it individual or collective, does little to placate these feelings of shame and rage young people feel from being dehumanized and morally excluded. Continued disempowering policies are more likely to enhance the risk of violent backlash.

Enacting violence, then, is a way of diminishing shame and enhancing one’s own sense of pride. But how does one come to obtain a sense of pride through violent acts? Gilligan states that while he has found that the experience of profound shame is a necessary condition for effecting violence, it is not a sufficient condition on its own (2003:

1165). The author goes on to argue that a key and necessary precondition for shame to devolve into rage and violence is the socialization of males into patriarchal gender roles that celebrate violence as a primary means of power, and whereby a young man learns that “there are many circumstances in which he has to be violent in order to maintain his masculine identity” (2003: 1166). Nonviolence in the traditional patriarchal culture is associated with femininity, therefore a nonviolent man is an emasculated man, an “Other”-ed man – “a coward, wimp...homosexual, or woman” (Gilligan, 2003: 1166).

Taking this argument and applying it to the case of the OPT, we find that Palestinian masculinities, like those of IDF soldiers, are achieved by way of violent processes beginning at an early age. By the time they reach adolescence, young Palestinians have likely already had several violent confrontations with Israeli soldiers and thereby have become acquainted with violence as a means of exerting masculine power. In fact, young Palestinians rarely, if ever, come into contact with any Israeli citizens other than IDF soldiers.

Symbolized as “the walking embodiment of power”, equipped with the modern technology of violence (Peteet, 1994: 105), the IDF soldier constitutes the ideal form of hegemonic masculinity⁹ in Israel and the OPT. The mould of hegemonic masculinity, as prescribed through military training, promotes the traits of physical strength, endurance, self-control, professionalism, sociability, harshness, prowess, aggressiveness and heterosexuality (Barrett, 1996; Connell, 1995; Kaplan, 2003). Hegemonic masculine characteristics are held in stark contrast to those of the dehumanized ‘Other’ (including women, homosexuals, and the Arab enemy) as a strategy of removing oneself emotionally from them (Kaplan, 2003: 128).

⁹ Masculinities and femininities, beyond being social constructions, have been argued to be plural and intersectional, in that there is no single and constant version of either in any given milieu and that the lives and identities of men and women have multiple dimensions (Connell, 1995; Cockburn, 2009). However, a hegemonic form of masculinity is said to exist in most patriarchal contexts, exemplifying the most desired or idealized form of manhood (Connell, 1995).

The ways in which socialization through military training sets the hegemonic masculine form apart from the dehumanized 'Other' have been made evident through the recollections of IDF soldiers:

"They were all torn apart. When you stop and think about it, he is a human being too. Was a human being a minute ago. Yet in practice one didn't stop and think about it, but kept in mind only one thought: You know that it's either you or them, so why not do it? At the minute we first spot them you don't stop to think at all. You shoot...It was one of the most thrilling experiences I ever had in my life. Everybody was in a state of ecstasy...the morale was high. People really got high on it..."

(Kaplan,2003: 133)

Military training partly thus achieves its objectives by necessitating violent acts as a performance of the ultimate form of manhood. It also does so by associating a sense of pride, thrill, and success with violent acts. As the dominant agent of socialization in Israel and the occupied territories, particularly when it comes to the socialization of masculinities (Kaplan, 2003; Ben Ari, 1998), the IDF's association of pride with violence has far-reaching effects on Palestinian youth. Repeated violent interfaces between Palestinian young men and IDF soldiers have been analyzed as "rites of passage that became central in the construction of an adult, gendered (male) self" (Peteet, 1994: 103). Violence for young Palestinians, then, becomes a central part of manhood, and boys become accepting of violent behavior "by seeing violence as an effective means to acquire power and respect" (Barker and Ricardo, 2005: 143).

Within the context of hegemonic masculine influences and the causal mechanism of shame in violent outcomes, new light is also shed upon "crisis of the male breadwinner" (Taraki, 2006: xvii) in the OPT - the rampant male unemployment in the extended aftermath of the second intifada. Youth bulge policies have created a barrier inhibiting young men from achieving the masculine ideal as protectors and providers – another cause of shame and presumably, violence. Thus, violence in youth bulge societies where unemployment is high may not be a result of "too many young men with not enough to do." Rather, it could be more a matter of "too many young men held to a hegemonic masculine standard, which they are ill-equipped to meet, cannot fulfill, and

therefore, experience shame as a result.” This hypothesis is made clearer in considering that if risk of violence is directly associated with youth bulges with widespread unemployment, then it should have been young women who were at the forefront of Palestinian intifada-era violence, since unemployment has continuously affected young women on a much more serious scale than young men in the OPT (see Table 7).

Peteet has noted, however, that violence “does not reproduce or affirm aspects of female identity, nor does it constitute a rite of passage into adult female status,” (Peteet, 1994: 105). Furthermore, Gilligan adds, in patriarchal societies, women are “not allowed to be violent, nor are they shamed and considered...inadequate as women for being nonviolent” (2003: 1167). These observations help to explain why, even though young women do participate in violent resistance, they often do not participate as principally or frequently as young men do. For young women, violence has not traditionally acted in the same way to diminish feelings of shame.

Research establishing shame, shame culture, and hegemonic masculinity in patriarchal contexts has helped illuminate some of the psychosocial and cultural variables that may have deep causal influences in effecting youth violence. These findings can help to modify, elaborate and strengthen youth bulge theory, as they consider youth violence at personal, cultural and social levels, as opposed to broader, structural levels. However, each of these variables, including those accounted for by youth bulge theory, are still ever-present in the OPT. And yet, my findings suggest that the majority of Palestinian youth interviewed for this study choose not to engage in violent resistance. This indicates that perhaps, despite all the risk factors for youth violence presented in this case, there may also be some offsetting protective factors present. The following section will discuss how youth agency and protective factors against violence may be working together to produce nonviolent outcomes in the OPT.

4.3 Breaking the Frames: Youth Agency and Protective Factors

Judith Butler writes of a “certain crucial breakage” that can take place “between the violence by which we are formed and the violence with which, once formed, we

conduct ourselves” (2010: 167). It may in fact be, the author speculates, “*because* one is formed through violence (that) the responsibility not to repeat the violence of one’s formation is all the more pressing and important” (2010: 167). This is a critical for understanding why the production of identities is not necessarily deterministic, and in the case of Palestinian youth, for understanding how nonviolent resistance can emerge from the conditions of violent aggression. “It is precisely because one is mired in violence that the struggle exists and that the possibility of non-violence emerges,” she writes (2010: 171). By this definition, nonviolence is not at a state of transcendence, but rather a struggle to make sense of and respond to the violence of one’s own formation (2010:167).

Behaviors that serve as “protective factors” against violent behavior have been identified through a number of studies. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) (2011) – a comprehensive multi-country household questionnaire on men’s attitudes and practices – found that positive attitudes toward nonviolence seem to be developing within younger men with higher levels of education (Barker, et al., 2011: 9). Education, therefore, can be a protective factor against violent behaviors among youth.

Social solidarity and social cohesion have also been cited as protective factors against violence, which could have an enormous bearing for youth bulge societies where positive male and female role models are promoted. Morton Deutsch proposes that perhaps the most powerful resources of the oppressed are their social cohesion and social organization (2005: 27).Deutsch states that resistance within a cohesive social group can arouse “a positive consciousness of one’s disadvantaged identity” (2005: 29). In this respect, social support systems and social cohesion may help to diminish violent behaviors.

In a similar vein, Gilligan contends that with sufficient means to salvage or restore feelings of pride, self-esteem or self-cohesion in the face of overwhelming shame, an individual or group can more easily make the decision to engage in nonviolence as a response. Thus, “some degree of knowledge or skills or achievements, some standing in the community or esteem in the eyes of friends, family or colleagues”

can be enough to protect our sense of self from being “wiped out” by severe humiliation (2003: 1166).

If these protective factors sound familiar, it is because they echo the three most popular forms of resistance reported by Palestinian youth: investing in education, engaging in social cohesion, and enhancing self-esteem. By engaging in these popular forms of resistance, youth are therefore not necessarily creating a threat of violence, they may be neutralizing the threat of violence by way of their own political agency. Youth are drawing on their innovation and creativity to improve their current realities and carve out a future for themselves, despite the conditions that threaten to push them into violent activity.

There is another protective factor against youth violence that may be considered in the OPT and other youth bulge contexts. Alternative forms of masculinities and increased gender equality have been widely shown to influence nonviolence. Evidence indicating a positive correlation between greater gender equality and nonviolent societies resounds throughout social science research. The IMAGES survey has concluded that men with more gender-equitable attitudes are less likely to enact violence, insinuating that heightened gender equality can help create a breeding ground for nonviolent behaviors (Barker et al., 2011: 8-9). Deutsch cites numerous anthropological reviews of peaceful societies that indicate such societies are mainly egalitarian and cooperative, including when it comes to gender roles and relations (Howell and Willis, 1989; Kemp and Fry, 2004). By analyzing the largest current database on the status of women, Valerie Hudson, Marie Caprioli, Chad F. Emmett, and Bonnie Baliff-Spanvill found a strong and highly significant link between state security and women's security, indicating that perhaps the best indicator and predictor of a state's peacefulness is its level of gender equality (Hudson, et. al, 2012: 172). And using the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) data set and new data on first use of force, Mary Caprioli has used logistic regression to determine that the likelihood of states to be aggressive in international disputes falls with higher levels of gender equality (Caprioli, 2010).

Many researchers have observed that the inability of young men in the OPT to achieve the hegemonic form of masculinity has helped drive a reconfiguration of gender relations since the second intifada, in which young men have had to redefine

masculinities for themselves and young women have had to strategize to negotiate patriarchy as they reposition themselves in the public domain (Taraki, 2006). More equal gender roles and relations have emerged as a result. Based on the evidence, and given Palestinian youth's reports of improving gender relations and increased freedoms for young women, we might surmise that more gender equitable trends could be helping foster the nonviolent behaviors in the OPT.

In terms of reworking youth bulge theory, these conclusions are of critical importance. They show that young men and women, even in restrictive and disempowering conditions, can find power through agency. Through their creativity and innovation, youth are evading determinism to create protective activities for themselves, transforming privation to productiveness. Bloom and Williamson (1998) found that innovation was a driving factor in young populations' ability to influence society-wide gains. If the findings presented in this paper are a representative sample of youth's potential for innovation, then youth bulge societies in fact may hold more of a demographic gift than a demographic threat.

5. Summary and Conclusions

This study has shown that several of the risk factors for youth bulge violence are present in the case of Palestinian youth. The OPT has one of the largest youth bulges in the world. Young Palestinians are un- and under-employed. They have few economic opportunities. They are disempowered on a daily basis. They arguably have developed, cognitively and socially, in a “shame culture”, exposed to shame through collective historical memory and iterated punishment through military enforced policies. Their shame is exacerbated by discourses of dehumanization that enhance emotional responses of shame and rage. They have grown up in a system dominated by a violent hegemonic militarized masculine form – a form to which most Palestinian young men can never aspire to. And yet, based on this sample, few report engaging in violence as a form of resistance. Moreover, young men and young women in the OPT continue to engage in resistance activities, despite the forces meant to deter them. Thus, youth bulge theory does not address the root causes of violence among youth and it cannot serve to influence policies that prevent it.

My conclusions indicate that the nonviolent resistance movement in the OPT is increasingly defined by its ability to enhance pride, self-esteem and social cohesion among youth, and that these factors can in fact help mitigate violent behaviors. I have also found that young people in the OPT have developed for themselves a series of protective factors against violent behaviors, including a demonstrated ability to reconstitute meaning and political agency in their identities and in their experiences of violence. The case of the OPT may provide fundamental evidence on which more effective methods of youth engagement and violence mitigation in youth bulge societies can be developed.

In terms of preventing and mitigating youth violence, the findings in this study hold several lessons. First, a change in the way young people in youth bulge societies are framed and represented in common discourses will be necessary in order to

empower feelings of self-worth and diminish feelings of shame. Second, a deeper, contextual understanding of the underlying psychosocial and cultural influences of violence must be carefully considered for policy formation in youth bulge societies. Third, policies in youth bulge societies must look at how to maximize the protective factors of violence while minimizing the risk factors. This means reworking youth-directed policies to: enhance gender equality; promote positive role models for alternative masculinities; eliminate violence against children; promote and support locally-initiated social organizations; sustain and increase support for youth education, for transitions from school to work and for viable, meaningful livelihood opportunities for youth; and empower autonomy, self-esteem, confidence and pride in young people. Finally, engaging with youth movements in an effort to understand young people's needs and aspirations, rather than penalizing and attempting to eliminate them, will be a necessary condition for working effectively with youth bulges to maximize the potential for positive, productive outcomes. In the OPT, current youth bulge policies cannot function to prevent youth violence, and an end to military occupation will be necessary to fully facilitate these policy adjustments in the future.

In terms of further research, there are a number of avenues that emerge from the findings in this study. Additional investigation of youth ideas about violence and nonviolence in youth bulge societies may help to influence the development of more robust and more accurate versions of youth bulge theory. Deeper analysis into the psychosocial and cultural risk and protective factors of violence, particularly as they relate to young people, could continue to be applied to youth bulge situations to determine more effective policies to prevent and mitigate youth violence. And further research on the nature of various youth movements could help to diversify the youth bulge picture. Youth bulges have shown the power to mobilize entire communities, and youth mobilization can be an important part of driving change where it is needed to remedy deep structural inequalities, corruption, and broken societies. Further study that documents the political and social transitions led by young people in youth bulge societies and seeks to show the necessary conditions for beneficial outcomes in such instances may help to illuminate the vast potential for political and social reconstruction in youth bulge societies.

Whether they engage in violent or nonviolent behaviors is a choice most youth make by way of their awareness and agency. Youth must be attributed this awareness and agency in the development of policies designed to affect them. To attribute youth violence to “nature”, as youth bulge theory does, is not only erroneous, it is irresponsible, and it overlooks the tremendous potential of young people in societies where they are many. An accurate redefinition of youth bulge theory would acknowledge the power of youth to influence change, but stop short of attributing violence to young people as a decided outcome.

Young men and women can be essential agents at the heart of change. In the OPT and around the world, the ways in which young people navigate the critical youth bulge years will determine the futures of their societies. In order to support them to do so skillfully and constructively, youth bulge theory must be revised to include more complex, more attentive and more empowering ways of engaging the world’s young people.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Interview Schedule

Interview 1: Young man, 29 years old, Bethlehem

LB: “You have mentioned to me about Palestinian youth being equated with armament. Can you tell me more about that?”

YM: *“If you refer to the Geneva Conventions, they read that there are specific responsibilities of the occupying power. It is, by law, required to provide for the health, education, and opportunities for the occupied population. Israel does not do that. In fact, it does the opposite. So just by my being alive, I am a danger...I am a threat. “I’m required to prove my humanity to respond to this mentality, but how? How can I be recognized as a person when my very existence is a threat?”*

Israeli politicians have been quoted, referring to children as trees, to be uprooted: ‘like their children, olive trees look so innocent’. We as Palestinian youth are referred to as the ‘demographic time bomb’. In that mentality, detonating a bomb becomes equivalent to killing a Palestinian child. So, by killing a Palestinian child, you are in essence, defending or saving an Israeli life. Killing becomes a form of defense. And we are required to prove our humanity to respond to this mentality – to prove that we are deserving of human rights. The fulfillment of Palestinian rights, freedom and justice should not be a threat. This is about justice, and justice should not be a threat. Justice is only a threat to a criminal.

I have heard it said in the Israeli press and echoed in international media, that Palestinians aren’t ready for their freedom because they haven’t build their social and economic structures. There are obvious barriers that have not allowed certain structures to be put in place. The PA (Palestinian Authority) is more of an obstacle to progress and it is a product of the conflict.”

LB: “Can you explain to me the concept of ‘normalization’ of occupation, from the Palestinian young person’s perspective?”

YM: *“You find that the the principle behind these so-called “peacebuilding programs” in Israel, “Peace Now”, “Seeds of Peace”, and so on...this is all a way of normalizing the occupation, of making it seem normal. Negotiations that lead nowhere and deny Palestinian human rights become a ‘dialogue’. And these programs where Israeli and Palestinian youth are expected to sit together and talk about their issues – these give the illusion that this is a joint, shared struggle. It’s another way of making this occupation seem more ‘comfortable’. Sure, they can become friends. But at the end of the day, the Israeli goes back to controlling the checkpoint, and the Palestinian goes back to moving through the checkpoint. At the end of the day, the Palestinian still does not have his rights. In the end, they are still not equal. Besides, it is not my responsibility to tell my oppressor how he is oppressing me.”*

LB: *“So if these programs are not effective ways of changing realities for Palestinian youth, what is the alternative?”*

YM: *“We resist. We have to. There can only be justice through resistance. But how do we do this? If we struggle violently, that is called terrorism. If we struggle nonviolently, say by planting olive trees on our own land as an act of defiance, we are accused delegitimizing the Israeli state! In my experience planting olive trees, we have framed as troublemakers – for planting trees!*

LB: *“What is the role of the international community in supporting or deterring resistance? For example, what about the relief and development work being done in the Territories by international organizations?”*

YM: *“Much of the relief work taking place here is funded by the US and the EU. What many don’t realize is that by providing relief work, these donors are supporting both Palestine and Israel - they are helping ease conditions for the Palestinian people, but still contributing to the continuation of the occupation by not outwardly condemning it or trying to end it. What many don’t see is that this is not a humanitarian crisis – it is not something naturally occurring that cannot be helped. In providing relief work, they are supporting two sides of the conflict, and thereby essentially supporting the conflict itself.”*

Interview 2: Three young men, ages 25, 29, 20, Beit Sahour

LB: “What do you believe in, as a solution to the conflict? A one-state solution? Two states?”

YM1: *“I believe in one state with equal rights, in theory. But there is the question, can we live with a Jewish population...can they live with us...after everything we’ve been through? And how to handle 5 million refugees coming back? This is a huge question. People will need to be ready to make changes. Infrastructure is needed.”*

YM2: *“For me, I have no interest in politics, no hope for change. Negotiations have been going on too long and what is the result? We have become apathetic to Palestinian politics.”*

YM3: *“Part of that has to do with our political situation here. We have no government. We have no faith in the PA – they are just an arm of Israeli policy.”*

LB: “Do any of you participate in political parties or activities?”

YM3: *“I am not active in any political parties.”*

YM2: *“No.”*

YM1: *“No.”*

LB: Do you feel like you, as young people, have the power to create change? To step into political leadership and change the way things are?

YM1: *“(Laughs) I never imagine what it is to be in charge. This is too farfetched as a dream.”*

YM2: *“It is overwhelming when you think about everything that needs to change...insurance, health...everything must change...police, army, intelligence, everything.”*

YM1: *"I don't travel at all around the West Bank, we are too restricted. I don't go to Ramallah, it is too much hassle."*

YM3: *"Here, we have no forest, no nature, no lake – ahh, what I would give for a casual day by the lake!"*

YM1: *"No change leads to no hope. No hope leads to no motivation and then there is no action. We spend our time doing other things, to try to forget, to try to live normally."*

LB: **"What about resistance?"**

YM1: *"How can we resist – to exist is to resist – there are many ways, but we are resisting just by staying alive."*

LB: **"What are the various ways in which youth here resist occupation?"**

YM2: *"Personally, I am against violence resistance to occupation. I had a teacher who was preaching violence, encouraging us to join the army – but what good would this do us, we have nothing."*

YM2: *"The problem is, you can't argue with extremists. They want an Islamic state, not an Arab state."*

YM1: *"International support is a strong form of resistance. The Turkish flotilla was more effective and more powerful than suicide bombers."*

LB: **"What about the relatively recent popularity of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement? Do you guys support BDS?"**

YM2: *"I support the boycott movement. But do I buy Israeli products? Yes, I do. The quality is better than Palestinian products."*

LB: **"What do you think about emigration? Is it a good way of getting away from all of this? Is it unacceptable?"**

YM3: *“Yes, many young people emigrate. It’s because we have to. We have very few choices and opportunities.”*

YM1: *“More Christians than Muslims are emigrating, Christians are now less than 2% of the population. The whole aim of leaving is to live the American dream...”*

YM2: *“There are no job opportunities; anybody who has become rich here went away for 5 or 6 years and then came back.”*

LB: *“What do you think international people who have never been to the West Bank...what do you think they think about Palestine and Palestinian youth?”*

YM3: *“The international community thinks Palestine is extremely underdeveloped. I traveled to Jordan and even people in Jordan have asked, “do you have coffee shops there?” (Laughs)*

YM2: *“Media outlets only show war, they don’t show regular life here.”*

YM1: *“Changing people’s minds internationally is what gives us hope.”*

(The father of one of the young men comes to sit down and join the conversation.)

LB: *What do you think about the role of young people in the future of Palestine?*

F1: *“The young people have to stay. My son is gone now, but he will come back. I went to the US to visit him. I saw people begging in the street. We don’t have that here. The community will not allow it; we have to help each other. But from the TV, we only see the good things about America. It is not all good. It can be an illusion that life there is perfect.”*

LB: *“What is the hope of the older Palestinian community for the future of Palestinian youth?”*

F1: *“There is more optimism in older people now than the younger ones. I think youth should be more politically active. They are our future.”*

Interview 3: Three young women, ages 22, 23, 24, Hebron

LB: “You have mentioned that you participate in theatre groups – do you consider this a form of resistance?”

YW1: “Yes. It is. But not only. Theatre is a break for the youth. Not all of our theatre has a political message, we need a break from that sometimes.”

YW2: “What theatre gives us is new creative ways of telling messages, not the cliché ways of blaming the occupation. We hope our messages are clear and available for the international community.”

LB: “What is the situation for young women in the West Bank?”

YW1: “The problems for women here are much more than the problems for men. Females have fewer opportunities. For example, travel – we are already restricted as it is, but it is harder for women. Men can work abroad or work in other cities – we cannot. Traditions present obstacles for women. For example, there is only certain work we are permitted to do.”

YW2: “Women’s willingness and ability to take on a challenge is high (for example, I’ve become a theatre actress in Hebron – this has not been easy!) But we must make sure to maintain respect all the time. “

YW3: “Women are much more enthusiastic about political participation, we have a different approach. Women won’t throw stones, but open an art gallery.”

LB: “Are any of you active in political parties or activities?”

YW1: “Yes I am politically involved, both at my university and within the legislative council youth program.”

YW2: “No.”

YW3: "No."

LB: "What does power mean to you? What does it mean to be powerful?"

YW1: "What is power? In my opinion, power is the ability to express yourself freely."

YW2: "I think It is the ability to reach what you want and bring people with you."

LB: "According to these definitions, do Palestinian youth have power?"

YW1: "Yes, they do."

YW2: "We have a louder voice than before, now we are free to speak out about things like honor killings, where we didn't before"

YW3: "This power lacks something though: financial power."

YW1: "We are not allowed to have the power, but we still have it. This is even more reason to speak out and raise our voices. We are role models for the next generation."

LB: "What are the most difficult parts of being a youth living under occupation?"

YW1: "The occupation is an obstacle to the whole society, and youth are a part of that society. The occupation targets youth specifically, because we are powerful, because we have creative ideas, the impetus for change. We are the biggest threat to the occupation."

YW2: "Under the excuse of security reasons, technology cannot be imported to support our careers. We cannot learn new skills and our technology sectors cannot flourish."

YW3: "For me, it is the psychological pressure and control. For example, the checkpoints for those who work in other cities. In this case, the occupation weighs more heavily on men than on women. They are demotivated."

LB: "What are the ways in which you cope with these difficulties?"

YW3: *“For coping, we go to the gym, participate in cultural/youth centers, volunteer. There is limited entertainment in Hebron.”*

YW1: *“Ambition is a way of coping and adapting. The occupation wants to make youth give up, get depressed, stop being productive and stay in the house. No. We cannot fall victim to this. Create anything! We can’t stop because that is what they want.”*

YW2: *“Creativity comes out of nothing, it always has. We have nothing...so we need to be creative.”*

YW1: *“Participating in youth programs is an important way of coping. But, local programs are the most effective. International organizations’ youth programs are not sustainable. They volunteer here for a short time, but what is next? They do not suit the youth needs, and each organization has their own agenda.”*

YW2: *“Taboos exist in every country, but even more so in Palestine. The PA disallows certain forms of youth expression at the request of the Israeli government. The PA recently shut down a TV show addressing youth concerns. We have to work that much harder, because our own government is trying to suppress us.”*

LB: “Do you ever think about leaving the West Bank? About emigrating?”

YW1: *“Emigration is not an option. Of course, I’d be lying if I say I never think about it. But I would feel like I was running away. I don’t want to run away, I want to face my challenges. It is my right to live in my land. We should fight to be equal.”*

YW2: *“Emigration does not solve the problem. It creates another problem. We have to search for other alternatives if there is no opportunity – create opportunities. Emigration is a contradiction to the power.”*

Interview 3: young woman, 26, Ramallah

LB: “As a young Palestinian, what is it like living in the West Bank under occupation?”

YW: “Occupation makes you crazy. It fills you with resentment. I am a resident, not a citizen in my own country. There is no area you can move to in the West Bank to make a better life in. The economic situation is everywhere. And yet, you won’t find people sleeping on the street. We have to be responsible for one another. Helping each other becomes a form of resistance.”

LB: “And what about as a young woman?”

YW: “The status of women is improving here. The situation has changed over the past 10 years, now there is a bit more freedom for young women. Now I work in the radio station.

But we still struggle to be equal. We still have to fight against early and arranged marriages and traditional gender roles. There is a big difference between rural and urban women here, and between older and younger women. Women who work outside the home may earn money, but cannot control that money. There are even females who reject the concept of equality. But it is improving; we have to keep working for it.

There is a food production program out of our office, it employs all women, who come from homes where they have not been allowed to work outside before. They are very productive, but their market is small. They cannot sell in Jerusalem, because the Israeli Ministry of Health and Culture requires a permit – they have been denied. They have no vehicle to distribute across the West Bank, and even if they did, the checkpoints make deliveries very difficult. So where we have an opportunity here for women’s empowerment, the occupation makes it impossible.”

LB: “How do you feel the situation is perceived by internationals who haven’t spent much time here?”

YW: “It is a fallacy that this is a symmetrical conflict. It is not level on both sides. One side is more empowered than the other. One side has full rights and the other has none. That is what we must consider. I also think it is a fallacy that Palestinians are poor beggars who need international assistance. I am not a beggar – I want my political and legal rights.”

LB: “Can you explain to me the concept of ‘normalization’ as it relates to Palestinian youth?”

YW: “These programs that promote normalization – they miss entirely the concept of a just peace. ‘Seeds for Peace’ and these other programs, they are propaganda...they are sellable ideas to the Europeans and the Americans. Settler children have guards with guns, and Palestinian children see their homes stolen and demolished, they have to move through checkpoints, they always have confusion and resentment in their hearts. There is no equality. There is no raising of consciousness to change the situation. There is no focus on pressuring Israel to end occupation. So we can assume that these joint groups are working to change the minds of Palestinians. To make our occupation more ‘acceptable’.”

LB: “What do you see as being the solution to the conflict?”

YW: “In order to work together, we need a prospect for peace. We need to see that the end is coming. We have to finish the demographic discourse in order to find a solution. We need a solution that meets the needs of both parties: safety and security for the Israelis and full human rights for the Palestinians. No one should have to compromise.”

LB: “Do you see the BDS movement as a viable form of resistance?”

YW: “BDS can work. It may be the only thing that can work. But it would have to be bigger than it was in South Africa. It would have to be huge. And I’m not sure the international community is ready for that yet. ”

Appendix B.

Focus Group Discussion Schedule

FGD 1: Beit Jala (11 July, 2011)

FGD Tool 1

Perceived Representations:

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by the Israeli public?

Responses: *Uneducated, Terrorists, Pathetic, Unappreciative of life*

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by the international community, particularly those who have never visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Responses: *Underdeveloped, Violent, Muslim, Frightening*

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by Palestinian elders in your community?

Responses: *Worst generation, Lazy*

Emotional Responses:

LB: How do you feel when you think about the ways in which young Palestinians are perceived by others? What sorts of emotions does it produce for you?

Responses: *Underestimated; Distrustful; Mistaken; Frustrated; Strong*

Behavioral Responses:

LB: How do you respond to these emotions? What kinds of behaviors do these emotions produce?

Responses: *Fight back; Face/confront; Keep getting better; Invite people to come to Palestine*

FGD Tool 2

Forms of Resistance	How many Participate	Ranking
<i>Peaceful demonstrations</i>	3	6
<i>Emigration (leaving Palestine)</i>	0	8
<i>Awareness Raising (raising our voices)</i>	4	5
<i>Boycotting</i>	18	1
<i>Youth Activities (sport, music, drama)</i>	14	2
<i>Involvement in Political Parties</i>	1	7
<i>Study (schooling)</i>	12	3

Notes:

YW (19yrs): *"I can understand that people want to leave, but I don't support it. Many people go away, but many of them come back"*

YW (18yrs): *"Usually, the right way (i.e. refusing emigration) is the hardest way."*

FGD 2: Beit Sahour (20 July, 2011)

FGD Tool 1

Perceived Representations:

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by the Israeli public?

Responses: *Homeless, Unclean, Deserve to die, Fear*

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by the international community, particularly those who have never visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Responses: *Poor, Uncivilized, Violent, Dangerous*

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by Palestinian elders in your community?

Responses: *No interest in politics/culture*

Emotional Responses:

LB: How do you feel when you think about the ways in which young Palestinians are perceived by others? What sorts of emotions does it produce for you?

Responses: *Dishonored; Frustrated; Anger; Hate; Disrespected*

Behavioral Responses:

LB: How do you respond to these emotions? What kinds of behaviors do these emotions produce?

Responses: *Become Strong; Resist; Try to change minds; Participate in exchanges*

FGD Tool 2

Forms of Resistance	How many Participate	Ranking
<i>Fighting Back (vs. violence)</i>	8	5
<i>Educating ourselves about history to understand the conflict</i>	18	3
<i>Community Service</i>	11	4
<i>Getting a good education</i>	18	3
<i>Working on self-confidence</i>	10	6
<i>Emigration</i>	1	7
<i>Joining in youth groups</i>	21	2
<i>Engaging with Political parties</i>	0	8
<i>Resisting permission to enter Israel</i>	48	1

Notes:

YW (17yrs): *“Education is our most powerful form of resistance. If we can be more clever (sic) than the occupiers, we will win.”*

YM (28yrs): *“Violence is not the same thing as fighting back, they are different. We are defending ourselves.”*

YW (18yrs): *“But fighting back using violence is violence.”*

FGD 3: Aida Camp (29 July, 2011)

FGD Tool 1

Perceived Representations:

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by the Israeli public?

Responses: *Frightening, Terrorist, Wrong, Thugs*

LB: What are some of the terms that come to mind when you think about how Palestinian youth are perceived by the international community, particularly those who have never visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Responses: *Terrorists, Ride camels, Aggressive*

LB: How do you respond to these emotions? What kinds of behaviors do these emotions produce?

Responses: *More emotional than intellectual*

Emotional Responses:

LB: How do you feel when you think about the ways in which young Palestinians are perceived by others? What sorts of emotions does it produce for you?

Responses: *Anger; No trust; Uninterested; Underestimated*

Behavioral Responses:

LB: How do you respond to these emotions? What kinds of behaviors do these emotions produce?

Responses: *Fight back; Defend ourselves; Improve ourselves*

FGD Tool 2:

Forms of Resistance	How many Participate	Ranking
<i>Teaching other young people (i.e. history and culture, writing)</i>	27	1
<i>Laughing/smiling, keeping up morale</i>	3	6
<i>Providing human rights training</i>	8	5
<i>Cultural activities (food, dabke, music, etc.)</i>	20	2
<i>Volunteering</i>	20	2
<i>Film and radio, media/photography</i>	14	4
<i>(Showing images of Palestine through media)</i>		
<i>Getting a good education</i>	15	3
<i>Emigration (short term)</i>	0	7

Notes:

YM (26yrs): *“We need to prove people wrong.”*

YM (24yrs): *“These feelings provide us with what we need to become stronger, smarter, to improve ourselves.”*

YM (24 yrs): *“In order to improve our situation, we need to show more accurate images of Palestine to the world through the media...this is why I have taken up photography – I want to show the truth about us.”*