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# Human Creativity as a Vehicle for Societal Change: Can Social Action Through Art and Music Drive Positive Societal Change in Jordan?

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Human Creativity as a Vehicle for Societal Change:

Can Social Action Through Art and Music Drive Positive Societal Change in Jordan?

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## Abstract

This case study addresses a gap in the research on society and culture as it examines the relationship between social action through human creativity and positive societal change in Jordan. This relationship was studied through the following methods: six formal interviews with three Musicians, one Artist, one Organizational Behavior and Work Psychologist, and one Cognition and Didactics Researcher; one informal interview with a Jordanian taxi driver; and 30 oral surveys provided to students at The University of Jordan. The researcher's main goal was to investigate how human creativity expressed through music and the arts can address current pressing environmental and social issues in Jordan such as the waste crisis, climate change, and weaknesses in ideological political systems. Additionally, the researcher aspired to investigate what drives human creativity, and how human creativity can be accessed in the most productive fashion to utilize it and positively influence society in Jordan. The researcher found that music is a powerful tool that can be utilized in many settings – including protests in the streets, concert halls, or music videos on the internet – to communicate important messages to the general population for the purpose of educating them about a specific societal issue, provoking an emotional response within them, and/or mobilizing them to take action for a cause. In addition, music about the elections and political action can not only inspire some Jordanian citizens to vote, but also encourage them to vote for a political candidate who will help improve and benefit society. Recycled art can positively impact the environment in significant ways through the reduction of waste and decrease in demand for the creation of new materials, which requires energy. In addition, recycled art encourage an ecofriendly relationship with the environment by introducing different perspectives and techniques of dealing with waste. Cultural workers – such as artists and musicians – begin harnessing their creativity to improve society when they think that society members are susceptible to change. In addition, flow states can promote an optimal state of consciousness that allows one to channel his or her creative endeavors into positive societal change. Lastly, the researcher found that economic instabilities act as gatekeepers between cultural workers and affecting positive societal change, as these instabilities do not provide cultural workers with the opportunity to choose between satisfying elementary needs, such as food and shelter, and higher needs, such as practicing environmental sustainability. The conclusions of this case study establish some solutions to the pressing environmental and social issues in Jordan, thereby advancing science in the field of society and culture. To promote the prosperity of a just and thriving country, these findings may be applied to various aspects of daily life in Jordan. The majority of interviewees in this case study concurred that passing on such tools to the youth would prove an effective place to begin planting the seeds for positive societal change.

*Keywords:* Communication and the Arts, Psychology, Social Sciences

## Human Creativity as a Vehicle for Societal Change:

### Can Social Action Through Art and Music Drive Positive Societal Change Jordan?

The researcher's love for the arts and music developed in early childhood. Growing up in a multicultural home, one of the ways the researcher's family bonded and communicated was through the exchange of music and art from their cultures. Due to her identity and culture, her years of making thoughtful observations, and her personal connection to the arts and music, the researcher believes music and the arts have the ability to move and touch everyone – to connect people of all sexualities, genders, ages, races, and classes. In this way she believes music and the arts transcend social and geographic boundaries, and connect us as a people. As the researcher began her study abroad in Jordan, she began to wonder, if music and the arts can communicate with diverse sets of people and touch them in a way that other forms of communication cannot, then can social action through art and music drive positive societal change in this part of the world? And alas, a topic to explore through an independent research project began to develop.

This case study addresses a gap in the research on society and culture as it examines the relationship between social action through music and art and positive societal change in Jordan. This topic is important to pursue because of its relevance to the current pressing environmental and social issues in Jordan such as the waste crisis, climate change, and weaknesses in ideological political systems in the ever-modernizing world. As Hana Namrouqa, writer at *The Jordan Times* notes, the waste crisis in Jordan “causes health and environmental hazards and clogs the streets' drainage systems.” The manufacturing, distribution and consumption of these goods that are supposedly “clogging the streets' drainage systems” (namely plastic and nonrecyclables) rely heavily on energy from fossil fuels, “which are the largest global source of

heat-trapping greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions” (EPA, 2016). This human-caused increase of the greenhouse effect is referred to as climate change, or “the greatest challenge of our time” (Gillis, 2013). When it comes to weaknesses in ideological political systems, there remains a “profound lack of trust within Jordanian politics, and lack of faith in the regime” (Tawarnah, 2011). Naseem Tarawnah (2011), Editor in Chief of Jordan’s *The Black Iris* news outlet, adds:

**“Corruption remains the biggest impediment in Jordan**, but not only when it comes to the economy, but social development as well. With the gap between rich and poor widening, there’s a bigger need now more than ever for corruption to be fought extensively in the name of reform. The use of family, business, and other personal connections to advance personal business interests is seen by many Jordanians as **a normal part of doing business.**”

The researcher has witnessed the use of personal connections to advance personal business interests firsthand in Jordan. In fact, Jordanians have a name for it: “wasta.” While this process of business has its benefits, it also has huge disadvantages because a system like this can succumb to bribery, nepotism, or other corrupt behaviors. Jim Weidman (2016), Director of Editorial services at *The Heritage Foundation* concludes, “Corruption erodes economic freedom by introducing insecurity and uncertainty into economic relationships.”

In her time living in Jordan, the researcher witnessed modernization and social change rapidly occurring – through social progress in women’s rights, urbanization, industrialization, and the spread of education, to name a few. Yet, what the researcher did not witness was research being done to find possible solutions for the ever-present environmental and social issues that would otherwise allow Jordan to evolve into a more just, sustainable and thriving country.

In order to ensure an ethical, effective approach was taken while conducting research, the researcher spent three months observing the people and culture before beginning her research. In addition, the researcher engaged in a Research Methods and Ethics course at The School of



International Training in Amman, Jordan to adopt the basic tools necessary to conduct field research as well as learn the methodological approaches within the local cultural context.

The researcher set out to answer the following questions and test the following hypotheses:

### *Music*

Why should music be used as a tool to communicate with people? Can music about political action and voting inspire Jordanian citizens to vote? Can music change Jordanian society member's political involvement from passive citizens into active citizens? If music is a tool that *does* impact society positively, how can musicians pass on this tool to continue impacting society positively?

### *Art*

Why should art be used as a tool to communicate with people? Can recycled art impact the environment in a positive way? Can recycled art inspire others to think differently about the environment and/or care about the environment more? If recycled art is a tool that *does* impact society positively, how can artists pass on this tool to continue impacting society positively?

### *A Broader View*

What drives human creativity? How can one access their creativity in the most productive fashion to utilize it and influence society in a positive way? Do Jordanians care about social progress and justice for the environment?

Each set of questions under the specified categories above, including "Music", "Art" and "A Broader View" indicates the scope and depth of this case study. The researcher does not claim to know what the outcomes will be; however, due to her personal experiences with the arts and

music as described in the beginning of the introduction, the researcher hypothesizes that human creativity channeled through art and music can positively affect societal change in Jordan.

Although some would view the arts and music as small footnotes in the progression of humanity, some theorists argue them to be driving forces in society. The researcher will use two sets of theoretical frameworks to contextualize and frame her research off of. First, the arts. In the words of Bill Seeley (2009), Professor at Bates College, “Artworks capture our attention, engage our emotions, cause us to empathize with characters, and challenge us to reflect on provocative ideas.” In another work published by Associate Professor Charlotte Jirousek (1995) at Cornell University, the purpose of art is argued to “extend and expand our shared common visual language.” The researcher finds these two quotes by Seeley and Jirousek especially relevant and important to her case study, as both author highlight art’s ability to “engage our emotions” with a “shared” visual language. Jirousek (1995) also asserts the theory that,

“Art has often served as propaganda or social commentary. Propaganda images are attempts to persuade us toward particular viewpoints or actions promoted by public or private institutions such as political parties, lobbyists, governments, or religious groups. The propaganda purpose may be one we approve of, such as World War II efforts to get women behind the war effort, as epitomized in Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter*. It might also be a purpose we disapprove of. **In either case, the power of visual images has frequently been used to persuade masses of people to accept beliefs, take action, or follow leaders.** The artist as social commentator may simply make us more aware of the human condition as he/she perceives it, without suggesting particular action. All societies engage in propaganda, but here are some links to propaganda art created in China, and by the Allies during World War I. and during World War II.”

Next, music. The Greeks, like the Chinese, held the view that music possessed “influential properties” (Eaton, 2003). Greek theorists and philosophers believed that the nature of music, its relevance to the cosmic order and its power to effect individuals and society were as important as “the basic materials, structures and patterns of musical composition” (Eaton, 2003). Aristotle, like Pythagoras, identified music as one of many forces that could affect the well-being of the individual and society at large (Eaton 2003). This assertion by Aristotle, even though it is

2,300 years old, perfectly demonstrates the relevance of studying this topic in modern times. If music can affect the well-being of an individual and society at large, why wouldn't communities harness this influential power for positive societal change? Aristotle's theory of imitation states that the listening to music can influence the soul. He writes,

“Emotions of any kind are produced by melody and rhythm; therefore by music a man becomes accustomed to feeling the right emotions; music has thus power to form character, and the various kinds of music based on various modes, may be distinguished by their effects on character -- one, for example, working in the direction of melancholy, another of effeminacy; one encouraging abandonment, another self-control, another enthusiasm, and so on through the series” (Eaton 2013).

Jochim Hansen and Johann Melzner (2014), authors of “What you hear shapes how you think: Sound patterns change level of construal” further add to the conversation about music possessing influential properties by illustrating through their research how music has a huge impact on people's lives, as it “alters moods, energizes, chills or relaxes.” In addition, Hansen's and Melzner's (2014) research demonstrates how music influences cognitions, such as “recollections from episodic memory.”

Although these are all solid theoretical frameworks on the arts and music that aid in contextualizing and framing research off of, there is still a lot of research to be done on the effects music and the art have on positive societal change in Jordan. Eaton (2013), author of “The Influence of Music on Self and Society - Values in Music in Eastern and Western Cultures” concludes, ancient cultures held strong beliefs in the moral and ethical power of music and the arts, and as such it is imperative for artists and musicians within those cultures to “exercise a certain moral and ethical responsibility in their **creative endeavours.**”

## Literature Review

Courtney Brown (2008), Ph.D. in Political Science once said,

“If politics is the blood that feeds our societies with the energy to evolve, then music is an essential ingredient to political transformation. We listen to music not only to be entertained. We listen to music to understand ourselves both individually and collectively. **Yet it is precisely because music is so entertaining that it carries such great potency as a venue for political expression.** With rhythm and tone, music becomes a powerful link between the emotionally rich ideas of a political thinker and the listeners. We are both political and musical creatures. This is, indeed, one of the things that makes it so fun to be human, and this is also why it is so crucial to understand the potential of music to help transform society.”

In the study “How the Arts Impact Communities: An introduction to the literature on arts impact studies” researcher Guetzkow (2002) found the more widespread and/or intense the participation of community members, the greater the impact the arts will have on cultural and social factors. However, Guetzkow points out that direct involvement is more intense than audience participation, whereas audience participation is more widespread than direct involvement. If community arts programs produce some kind of public ‘show’ such as an art show, play, reading, festival, etc., Guetzkow asserts that they will tend to optimize both dimensions of participation. Guetzkow concludes his study with the notions that the arts “revitalize neighborhoods and promote economic prosperity”; that participation in the arts improve “psychological and physical well-being” thereby fostering the growth of productive, creative minds; and that the arts provide a “catalyst for the creation of social capital and the attainment of important community goals” (Guetzkow, 2002).

Favianna Rodriguez (2013), transnational visual artist and author of *Change the Culture, Change the World* adds to the conversation on the arts as an agent for societal change by encouraging the audience to think about political change as a wave. She writes, “Normally, when we envision a wave, we think about a climactic event, but in order to reach the peak, all kinds of forces—many of which you cannot see—need to come together” (Rodriguez, 2013). She goes on

to explain that in the political world, when experience this wave's "peak" moments in events like policy or election wins, we rarely recognize the smaller "undercurrents" or conditions that lead us there. Rodriguez then encourages the reader to consider the world of art and culture as key components that lead us to this climax. She argues culture as being a space where mankind can introduce ideas, attach emotions to concrete change and win enthusiasm for their values. She adds, "Art is where we can change the narrative, because it's where people can imagine what change looks and feels like" (Rodriguez, 2013). To conclude her thoughts, she leaves the reader with this powerful statement that refers back to a famous historical figure:

"Abraham Lincoln famously said, 'Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.' It is essential for us to think about these words in the context of the wave, because artists shift and frame public sentiment as they create the cultural ocean we live in every day. **You may attend a rally or vote, but you also read books, listen to music, engage with visual art, turn on the radio and create your identity through culture. Artists are central, not peripheral, to social change. To have the movements that make the wave, you need cultural workers**" (Rodriguez, 2013).

Rodriguez's way of adding to the conversation on the arts as a vehicle for societal change is unique in that she speaks from an artist's perspective. This gives her passage a poetic, heartfelt tone – making it all the more effective.

In regards to music, Inglis (2000), author of *The Beatles, popular music, and society: A thousand voices* chronicles the Beatles' evolution from a Liverpool rock'n'roll group into one of the 20th century's defining images to illustrate how music can provoke issues and debates in society. The Beatles' music synchronized an explosion of social awareness and creativity, from spiritualism to pop art. For example, when they sang "All You Need is Love," society members truly believed it – and chased this reality. "The '60s saw a revolution ... in a whole way of thinking," John Lennon once remarked. In addition, The Beatles lifted the country out of a paralyzing grief over the Kennedy assassination. "After JFK's assassination in 1963, the Beatles

were the only thing that made 1964 bearable,” remembers pop artist Tommy James (Nash, 2014). James adds, “...They also caused my generation to take a much deeper look at what was happening in the world” (Nash, 2014). Inglis’s research along with author Nash’s commentary in her journal article *The Beatles: 7 Ways the Fab Four Changed America* take different approaches than authors Guetzkow and Rodriguez. Inglis as well as Nash take the example of an iconic band to appeal to the audience’s pathos, and to further the argument that the arts, namely music, can introduce a “whole way of thinking,” as John Lennon would put it.

King (2010), author of the journal article “‘Black is beautiful’, and Indigenous: Aboriginality and authorship in Australian popular music” takes a different approach than Inglis and Nash to illustrating the power of music to influence societal change. He begins by defining the “black is beautiful” movement, which began in the United States in the early 1960s and changed mainstream attitudes towards fashion, the body and personal aesthetics of African-American people. This movement helped the African-American people gain a new sense of “pride” in being black (King, 2010). It was not until the last decade, through the global influence of **Afro-American music**, that a distinctly indigenous sense of “black sexiness” captured the attention of and influenced mainstream audiences. This article examines such recent developments to emphasize music’s role in societal change, and to suggest that music can introduce new ideologies on race.

The researcher finds the conclusions each author makes agreeable, and values their unique way of adding to the conversation on art and music as a vehicle for societal change. As a musician, the researcher can relate to the conclusions made by the authors on a personal level, because they are applicable to her life. For example, one year ago, she found the song, “Dear Future Generations: Sorry” on YouTube by rapper and activist called Prince EA. This song

highlights the devastating outcomes of climate change, including: deforestation, flooding, and mass extinctions. After the researcher heard this song, she cried. This piece of music appealed not only to her pathos, but her ethos and logos. It was *emotionally understandable* to feel sad after learning about the irreversible damages climate change has inflicted on our planet; it was *ethical* of her to want to engage in social action to fight for the unique planet she as well as many other living beings inhabited; and lastly it was *logical* to care about protecting the environment. The large impact this one song had on her life illustrated for the researcher how human creativity through art or music can mobilize a viewer to take positive social action in his or her community and beyond.

There are several common themes the researcher obtained from these academic articles, books, and journals. These include: music and the arts provide a catalyst for the creation of social capital and the attainment of important community goals (Guetzkow, 2002); musicians and artists have the ability to change the narrative of a societal discussion, because they can imagine what change looks like and feel it (Rodriguez, 2013); musicians and artists are central, not peripheral to social change and are needed as cultural workers in our world (Rodriguez, 2013); music and the arts can provoke issues and debated in society (Inglis, 2000); music and the arts can cause people to take a deeper look at what is happening in the world (Nash, 2014); and music and the arts can introduce new ideologies on important concepts such as race (King, 2010). Although the researcher derived these common themes about the role and influence music and the arts play in societal change, the influence music and the arts have on positive societal change in Jordan has yet to be studied. Thus, the researcher aims to fill this gap in the research by pursuing a case study on this subject area.

## Methodology

This case study was carried out through a series of six formal interviews, one informal interview, and 30 oral surveys distributed to students at The University of Jordan. Information was gathered in this methodical fashion because the researcher deemed these methods to yield satisfactory results. To protect the identity and integrity of each interviewee, the researcher distributed an Informed Consent Form at each interview. She fully explained what she was studying and what she would do with the information the interviewees provided her with. She also informed each interviewee that if he or she would like to remain anonymous, it was not required to sign the form. To maintain the integrity of the researcher's data, and to avoid any misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the data acquired in the interviews, the researcher tried to video record all of the interviews. This video recording process would allow the researcher to revisit the interview to correct or add information to her findings. Additionally this process would strengthen the quality, accuracy and depth of her research. In the case that the interviewee would not allow video recording, the researcher typed her notes on her laptop. This allowed her to transcribe the interview quickly and in a legible, high quality fashion. The researcher made sure to repeat her findings to the interviewees after they were transcribed to ensure they were accurate and correctly stated.

The six interviewees the researcher formally interviewed include: Ahmad Subeih, a Jordanian art professor at The University of Jordan and artist who creates art from recycled materials; Dr. Marwan T. Al-Zoubi, Organizational Behavior and Work Psychologist and Chairman of Psychology at The University of Jordan; Hussein Al-Salman, a famous Jordanian musician who created a song to inspire Jordanian citizens to vote in the most recent elections; Marjorie Garces, Cognition and Didactics Researcher and jazz singer and visual artist from



Temuco, Chile; Yarub Smeirat, a violinist who combines his activism with his music to protest local injustices such as the gas deal between Jordan and Israel; and Tareq Jundi, a globally-known Jordanian composer and oud player who creates songs about hope, love, justice and the human condition. Each interviewee was chosen due to their occupations or fields of study. Some interviewees were not qualified to answer certain questions the researcher had; therefore, the researcher made sure to interview a diverse set of qualified interviewees and distribute the questions accordingly. The seventh interview, was conducted informally with a Jordanian taxi driver. This interviewee shall remain unnamed. The contact information of each interviewee was gleaned from a Google Search, a recommendation from an active member of the music and art community in Jordan, or provided by the School of International Training staff. In the case of the informal interview, the researcher met this interviewee by chance – it was not planned.

The researcher began the formal interviewing process by calling each interviewee to schedule a date and time to complete the interview. The more famous musicians, namely Hussein Al-Salman, were difficult to schedule a meeting with because of their busy schedules. Some of the artists and musicians interviewed did not speak English. With the help of a translator, the researcher was successfully able to derive the information she needed to complete her case study. Each interview location varied depending on the interviewee.

For the interview with Ahmad Subeih, the researcher was invited to the artist's studio. This gave the researcher a deeper look into the artist's world. This experience alone was invaluable, and offered a more comprehensive view of the artist's vision with recycled art. Subeih was asked the following questions:

1. Who are you? What do you do?
2. How have you created art from recycled materials?

3. What is your inspiration behind doing this?
4. Has your art impacted the environment in a positive way?
5. Can art impact positive societal change? If so, how can we continue implementing this tool to impact society positively?

Subeih was one of the interviewees who did not speak English. Fortunately, Subeih allowed the researcher to video record the interview so that the researcher could translate the conversation with a translator at a later time.

For the interview with Marwan T. Al-Zoubi, the interview was conducted in his office at The University of Jordan. This location was the easiest place to meet for Al-Zoubi due to his busy schedule. The researcher deemed this location to be ideal as well because an office environment is quiet. The researcher asked Al-Zoubi the following questions:

1. Who are you? What do you do?
2. Can you tell me about Jordan society from a social psychology perspective?
3. From a social psychology perspective, do you think it is possible for Jordanians to focus their creativity through social action and influence society in a positive way?
3. What fosters the growth of creativity?
4. Are Jordanian society members open to change?
5. From your observations as a psychologist, do Jordanians care about the environment and nature?
6. How do you believe creativity will be used to change society in a positive way? And who will be the change makers?

For the interview with Marjorie Garces, the interview was conducted over the phone because she lives in a different country. The researcher asked Garces the following questions:

1. Who are you? What do you do?
2. In your studies and line of work, have you witnessed clear examples of human creativity's importance in society, whether channeled through art or music?
3. If you believe human creativity is important in society, how can society members cope with a world where many institutions limit the growth of a creative mind?
4. How can one access their creativity in the most productive fashion to utilize the results to influence society in a positive way?

The internet connection proved to be a minor obstacle, but when the researcher did not understand what the interviewee said, the researcher politely asked the interviewee to repeat what she said. Overall, the experience was successful, and the researcher does not believe this negatively affected the quality, depth and scope of her data.

For the interview with Hussein Al-Salman, the interview was conducted in his music studio. Similar to the interview conducted with Ahmad Subeih, this interview location was perfect, as it allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive view of the environment in which the musician composed his activist-songs. The researcher asked Al-Salman the following questions:

1. Who are you? What do you do?
2. What is the inspiration behind your song about the elections, "Shmal, Janoob, Gharb, Sharq"?
3. Where can your music be implemented to impact society?
4. Why music? Why should we use this as a tool to communicate with people?
5. Did you notice any changes in attitude towards political involvement after audience members listened to your song?

6. What are your final thoughts on how you think artists and musicians can use their passion for creative expression to instill positive societal change?

Al-Salman was another interviewee who did not speak English. The researcher planned to video record the interview so that she could translate the conversation with a translator at a later time; however, Al-Salman would not allow any form of recording. The researcher had to readjust her plans, and bring a translator with her to the interview. This proved to be a minor obstacle. In addition, the researcher had to reword her sentences often to make the translation process easier. Nonetheless, the researcher was able to sufficiently answer all of her research questions. She does not believe these obstacles negatively affected the quality, depth and scope of her data.

For the interview with Yarub Smeirat, the researcher was invited to the violinist's studio. Similar to the experience with Ahmad Subeih and Hussein Al-Salman, this interviewing environment worked out wonderfully, as it allowed the researcher to gain a clearer vision of what the creative process looked like when composing activism-music. The researcher asked Smeirat the following questions:

1. Who are you? What do you do?
2. What were you doing at the Jordan-Israel gas deal protest?
3. Where can your music be implemented to impact society?
4. What is the inspiration behind your music with undertones of activism?
5. Why music? Why should we use this as a tool to communicate with people?
6. How has your music shifted perspectives about a certain issue or issues in society?
7. What are your final thoughts on how you think artists and musicians can use their passion for creative expression to instill positive societal change?

Smeirat allowed the researcher to video record the interview, and this was very beneficial for the researcher because it allowed her to go back and transcribe significant details that she missed during the interview. This strengthened the quality, depth and accuracy of her data.

For the interview with Tareq Jundi, the interview was conducted in his studio. Similar to the experience with Ahmad Subeih, Hussein Al-Salman, and Yarub Smeirat, this interviewing environment came in the researcher's favor, as it allowed the researcher to gain a different perspective of what the creative process is like when composing mission-driven music. This interview was especially memorable, because Jundi took out his oud and performed one of the songs he composed about life in Jordan. The researcher asked Jundi the following questions:

1. Who are you? What do you do?
2. What kinds of songs have you created to address societal issues?
3. Where can your music be implemented to impact society?
4. What is the inspiration behind your music with undertones of activism?
5. Why music? Why should we use this as a tool to communicate with people?
6. How has your music shifted perspectives about a certain issue or issues in society?
7. What are your final thoughts on how you think artists and musicians can use their passion for creative expression to instill positive societal change?

Jundi, like Subeih and Smeirat, allowed the researcher to video record the interview. The researcher was very grateful for this opportunity because it allowed her to revisit the interview to ensure she did not miss significant details during the interview. This strengthened the quality, depth and accuracy of her data.

The informal interview was conducted in a taxi with a Jordanian taxi driver. The researcher had many previous conversations with taxi drivers about life in Jordan and the role of

music and the arts in societal change; however, this particular conversation was different. This taxi driver provided insightful information from his unique situation, and opened the researcher's eyes to a different perspective. The researcher asking the interviewee:

1. What is it like living in Jordan?
2. Are their injustices within your country that impact you on a daily basis?
3. Do you think we can begin fixing societal problems through the arts and music?

To protect the identity and integrity of this participant, the researcher did not pry for the interviewee's personal information including his phone number and his full name. For this reason, he will remain unnamed. The researcher only asked if the interviewee would feel comfortable with her including his perspective and direct quotes from the conversation in her research project. He did not oppose this idea.

The final method the researcher used to derive data was the distribution of surveys. The surveys were conducted orally with 30 students attending The University of Jordan. The students were selected randomly: 15 female students and 15 male students. All 30 students were asked the following questions:

1. Do you know the song "Shmal, Janoob, Gharb, Sharq" by Hussein Salman?
2. Did this song inspire you to vote in the elections? Why or why not?
3. Did this song inspire you to vote for a good candidate?
4. Is there a response from the community because of this song?
5. In your opinion, is this song about the elections important?

All students were located on campus at The University of Jordan. This process was the most difficult of the methods process in this case study. Some students did not want to be bothered with. Despite the fact that the questions were delivered in Arabic, the language barrier still posed

small issues. In addition, due to the culture norm in Jordan, it is somewhat taboo for a random woman to approach a man, or group of men. The researcher felt uncomfortable at times due to this cultural norm, but nonetheless, she was able to gather the data she needed to complete her case study. She does not believe these obstacles negatively affected the quality, depth and scope of her data.

## Findings

The research findings are organized into three main sections to better organize the research and to portray the information to the reader in an easier, more concise fashion. However, these sections bleed into each other because they are all interrelated and intertwined, and they all deal with the greater concepts of music and the arts and their effects on positive societal change in Jordan. These categories are titled “Music and Societal Change in Jordan”, “Art and Societal Change in Jordan” and “Changing Social Landscapes through Human Creativity in Jordan.”

### *Music and Societal Change in Jordan*

Every musician reveals their passion and drive for creative expression in different ways. Some choose to sing, while other musicians may choose to be part of an orchestra or a band. How musicians choose to reveal themselves does not matter to the researcher, because “at the end of the day its music” as Smeirat (2016), one of the musicians the researcher interviewed would put it. This way of thinking led the researcher to interview three different musicians, one singer, one violinist, and one oud player. The researcher believes this technique allowed her to gather a diverse set of perspectives about music and its impact on positive societal change in Jordan.

One major theme the researcher procured from her case study is that music is a powerful tool that can be utilized in many settings – including protests in the streets, concert halls, or music videos on the internet – to communicate important messages to the general population for the purpose of educating them about a specific societal issue, provoking an emotional response within them, and/or mobilizing them to take action for a cause. One example that clearly exemplifies this theme is the backlash the recent Jordan-Israel gas deal received from the Jordan



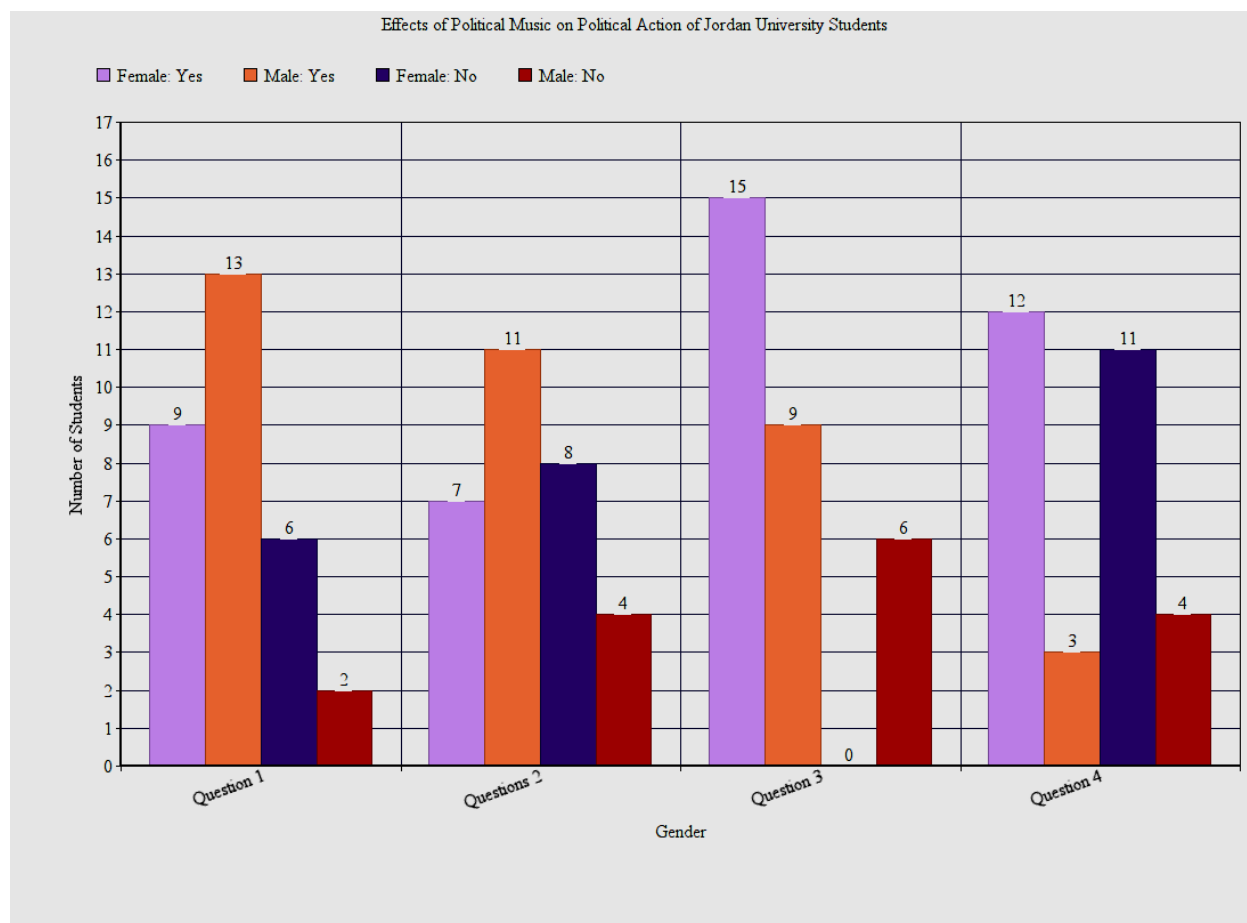
public. This gas deal was signed in late September of 2016 between the government-owned National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) and Noble Energy, a Houston-based company that holds the largest share in the Israeli Leviathan gas field, located in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Israel (Goussous, 2016). Violinist Yarub Smeirat used an unconventional way of protesting to show his rejection of this gas deal by performing at a peaceful demonstration in Jordan. Smeirat (Personal Communication, November ,172016) comments,

“Simply I was protesting with my way – with music, with arts. You cannot fight anyone with a sword. Because you are strong but for sure there is somebody who is stronger. You should fight with your culture, with your art, and with your everything.”

Smeirat is using a tool most people recognize and enjoy: music. In addition, he is raising awareness about this issue that affects all Jordanians, and motivating them through his “spark” to take part in peacefully protesting on the ground (Personal Communication, November ,172016). Smeirat concludes, “When a musician tries to help his community by teaching music or inspiring other people through his music, people will feel and will know that music is a weapon.” In another example, oud player Tareq Jundi (Personal Communication, November 30, 2016) describes the reactions he often receives from audience members after performing one of his activism songs in a concert hall. Jundi recollects people coming up to him after the show and asking him what he was thinking or feeling when he wrote the piece, or what the piece means. This exemplifies for him how his music is making an impact on Jordanians because he is causing people to think.

Another major theme the researcher arrived to from her case study is that music about the elections and political action can not only inspire some Jordanian citizens to vote, but also encourage some Jordanian citizens to vote for a political candidate who will help improve and benefit society. The researcher asked 15 female and 15 male students four specific questions in

relation to Hussein Al-Salman’s song about the recent elections in Jordan, “Shmal, Janoob, Gharb, Sharq.” The results are graphed on the table below.



The data for question one illustrates how 60% of the females interviewed were inspired by this song to vote in the elections, whereas 86.6% of males were inspired by this song to vote in the elections. The majority of those who were not inspired by this song to vote offered the reason that they already decided whether or not they wanted to vote, so a song would not influence this decision. On the other hand, the majority of surveyed students who were inspired by this song to vote claimed it was because the melody was enjoyable, and “stayed longer in our [their] heads”, said one male student as he reflected on his experience. The data for question two illustrates how 46.6% of females were inspired to vote for a candidate who would benefit and help improve society, whereas 73% of males were inspired to vote for a candidate who would

benefit and help improve society. The majority of those who were not inspired by the song to vote for a candidate who would help improve and benefit society offered the two following reasons: they already decided to vote for a candidate who they knew such as a relative or close family friend, or they did not like any of the candidates running so they voted for a random candidate. Alternatively, those who were inspired by the song to vote for a candidate who would benefit and help improve society gave a similar reason to question one responses, that is, the song stayed in their heads to remind them of the importance of voting for a worthy candidate, because the song had a catchy melody. The data for question three illustrates how 100% of females believe the Jordan people responded in some way to this song, whereas 60% of males believed the Jordan people responded to this song. The majority of those surveyed believed that the Jordanian people responded to this song because music is a big part of Arab culture, and to communicate through music is a useful way to deliver a message to the general population. The data for the last question illustrates that 80% of females find this song about the elections important, whereas 73% of males find this song about the elections important. Those who did not find this song important were neutral towards the song – and did not believe it had a significant impact on their political action. Those who did find this song important argued that any message stressing the importance of citizen involvement in politics is significant, especially if citizens want to play a role in improving society.

One other major theme the researcher gained from her case study is that human creativity, namely music and the arts, can continuously impact society in a positive way by passing on these tools to the young generations through school systems and/or community programs. One example of this is a recent community youth program launched in Salt, Jordan. Violinist Smeirat (Personal Communication, November ,172016) is an active member of this program, and claims,

“What we are trying to do is teach small kids music. They don’t have to pay anything, they just have to show up. We got them instruments. This is what we do. This is what I am passionate about. I am not just helping people, I am helping the whole community, I am helping myself, and I am helping my family. Because music will enlighten their minds, will make them more open to everything in the world. They can accept anyone who is different.”

Oud player Tareq Jundi (Personal Communication, November 30, 2016) shares a similar perspective to Smeirat. In fact, he initiated programs like Smeirat’s in Norway and Scotland for children to introduce them to Arabic music, new ideas and meaningful concepts such as societal justice. However, he has yet to do this in his own country and says, “I would also like to do this in my country – to go to schools and to do these kinds of music shows.” By reaching people at a young age, Jundi believes he can start planting the seeds for positive change that will “harvest in 15 years when this generation comes.” Organizational Behavior and Work Psychologist Marwan T. Al-Zoubi agrees from a different perspective, asserting that the youth will be the change makers who will continuously impact society in a positive way by focusing their creativity on a community project. Al-Zoubi comments,

“It will be the young generations. The young people coming together. They can change attitudes in society. I even see it happening now. After the Arab Spring, people felt frustrated so they responded with political acts. Young generations started creating “mubadarat” – where a group comes together and volunteer and aim to do something positive for society, such as empowering disabled people” (Personal Communication, October 15, 2016).

Art professor at The University of Jordan and artist Ahmad Subeih shares a similar perspective to all interviewees mentioned – however, his response will be discussed in the following section, “Art and Societal Change in Jordan.”

One major theme the researcher obtained from her case study is recycled art can positively impact the environment in significant ways through the reduction of waste and decrease in demand for the creation of new materials, which requires energy. Ahmad Subeih (Personal Communication, November 27, 2016) perfectly exemplifies this theme as he creates art from recycled materials, or what some disregard as “garbage.” He explains,

“I want to bring talk about the garbage issue. What is the issues of garbage? Now, in one of the workshops that I did personally in the Jordan valley, which is one of the unfortunate areas for poor, there was a lot of trash from the factories and also there was garbage from people that you can see on the way. We took it and we made statues out of it and the streets became clean. Instead of this trash that makes pollution or makes diseases – it became something we keep in our houses and we take care of it – instead of it being covered with dust we start removing the dust and have it a piece of art inside of the house.”

Another major theme the researcher acquired from her case study is recycled art, leading by example, does encourage ecofriendly behavior and a more compassionate relationship with the environment by introducing different perspectives and techniques of dealing with waste. Subeih often refers to garbage as “the neglected” to emphasize to the general population that he works with items that are still useful, and suffer from a lack of proper care. He further explains that through showcasing his art in art exhibitions or through his teachings at The University of Jordan, he can illustrate for people how art can be made from something seemingly unpleasant or useless into something that is beautiful – something that we keep close to our hearts in our homes. He concludes, “Then the person is close to learning about art by using the neglected – instead of going to a trash can he can go to an art gallery.”

In addition to showcasing his art in art exhibitions or sharing his ideas with students at The University of Jordan, Subeih finds it important to teach the younger populations, namely children, about recycled art. He comments, “This way, we help the environment which is very important point.” He adds, “When we make workshops for the children we help children to think. To think, to invent and many more things” (Personal Communication, November 27, 2016).

These comments from Subeih support the theme discussed in the previous section “Music and Societal Change in Jordan”, which states that human creativity, namely music and the arts, can continuously impact society in a positive way by passing on these tools to the young generations through school systems and/or community programs.

### *Changing Social Landscapes through Human Creativity in Jordan*

In addition to learning how music and the arts can be utilized as a vehicle for positive societal change in Jordan, the researcher wanted to dig deeper on the topic of human creativity and its ability to change social landscapes in Jordan. The researcher questioned: what drives human creativity? How can one access their creativity in the most productive fashion to utilize it and influence society in a positive way? Do Jordanians care about social progress and justice for the environment?

One major theme the researcher garnered from her case study is that cultural workers – such as artists and musicians – will begin harnessing their creativity to improve society when they think that the general population are susceptible to change; if cultural workers do not believe the general population is susceptible to change, they believe their efforts are not worth pursuing. The researcher derived this theme after meeting with Marwan T. Al-Zoubi (Personal Communication, October 15, 2016). Al-Zoubi explained this concept from a social psychology perspective, and added:

“It certainly is difficult to introduce something new in society. Attitudes are easy to change but norms and values and beliefs require a lot of time and effort. Beliefs are the most difficult to change. Let’s look to the hierarchy of feelings. A group of similar attitudes form a norm. Similar norms when they are grouped together form values. A group of values form beliefs. Now just imagine that in order to change the belief system in a society, you need to break down all of the components underneath – values, norms, attitudes and feelings.”

Another major theme the researcher procured from her case study is that flow states can promote an optimal state of consciousness that allows one to channel his or her creative endeavors to positively impact society. The researcher derived this theme after meeting with Cognition and Didactics Researcher and jazz singer and visual artist from Temuco, Chile, Marjorie Garces (Personal Communication, October 5, 2015). Garces comments,

“In neurochemistry and positive psychology, we refer to this as flow states. Flow is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. In essence, flow is characterized by complete absorption in what one does. If people were to concentrate their intensity on a single creative project and achieve flow state, the results could be huge. But naturally, every brain works differently. Not everyone will feel most creative during flow. In fact, some neuroscientists believe the opposite – that you must let your mind wander between different memories and neural connections in order to accomplish creativity, and find novel combinations and new ideas.”

One other major theme the researcher extracted from her case study is economic instabilities act as gatekeepers between cultural workers and affecting positive societal change, as these instabilities do not provide cultural workers with the opportunity to choose from satisfying elementary needs, such as food or shelter, or higher needs, such practicing environmental sustainability. Two interviewees led the researcher to derive this major theme. The first interviewee is Marwan T. Al-Zoubi (Personal Communication, October 15, 2016). Al-Zoubi introduced the researcher to the concept of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. He explained,

“Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five tier model of human needs. It has a specific order. There’s the biological and physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep. Then there is the safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear. Next, there is love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, trust and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. After that there is esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others. Lastly, there is self-actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. You need to feel secure with a certain stage to reach the next stage. Now that you understand the basic concept of this system, it’s obvious that protecting and caring about the environment is a higher need. **A higher need should be satisfied after satisfying elementary needs.**”

The other interviewee is the Jordanian taxi driver (Personal Communication, November 9, 2016) whom the researcher conducted an informal interview with. This interviewee was intelligent, had a degree in Marketing and Sales, worked 40 – 60 hour weeks just to make 400 JD a month, had a family to support, and dreams left unfulfilled. He allowed the researcher to see a different perspective, explaining that from inside he felt “hopeless.” When he sees a government who is not fair, he “cares less for everything.” He went on to argue that making a living in Jordan is “not just a little hard, it is so hard” and when it comes down to it, his biggest struggle is “all about money.” He asked the researcher, “Can you play guitar and sing if you are hungry? Without food, without a home you cannot do anything.”



## Conclusion

In this case study, the researcher explored the relationship between human creativity conveyed through art and music and positive societal change in Jordan. By concentrating the investigation on this specific region in the world, Jordan, the researcher was able to narrow her scope and gain a deep understanding about this relationship.

Firstly, in the section of “Music and Societal Change in Jordan” the researcher derived the themes that music is a powerful tool that can be utilized in many settings – including protests in the streets, concert halls, or music videos on the internet – to communicate important messages to the general population for the purpose of educating them about a specific societal issue, provoking an emotional response within them, and/or mobilizing them to take action for a cause; that music about the elections and political action can not only inspire some Jordanian citizens to vote, but also encourage some Jordanian citizens to vote for a political candidate who will help improve and benefit society; and, that human creativity, namely music and the arts, can continuously impact society in a positive way by passing on these tools to the younger populations through school systems and/or community programs.

Secondly, in the section “Art and Societal Change in Jordan” the researcher obtains the themes that recycled art can positively impact the environment in significant ways through the reduction of waste and decrease in demand for the creation of new materials, which requires energy; and that recycled art, leading by example, does encourage ecofriendly behavior and a more compassionate relationship with the environment by introducing different perspectives and techniques of dealing with waste.

Lastly, in the section “Changing Social Landscapes through Human Creativity in Jordan” the researcher attains the themes that cultural workers – such as artists and musicians – will

begin harnessing their creativity to improve society when they think that the general population are susceptible to change; if cultural workers do not believe the general population is susceptible to change, they believe their efforts are not worth pursuing; that flow states can promote an optimal state of consciousness that allows one to channel his or her creative endeavors to positively impact society; and that economic instabilities act as gatekeepers between cultural workers and affecting positive societal change, as these instabilities do not provide cultural workers the opportunity to choose from satisfying elementary needs, such as food and shelter, and higher needs, such as practicing environmental sustainability.

The conclusions the researcher has established in this case study are steps towards understanding society and culture and the role cultural workers play in affecting positive societal change in Jordan. Learning from these conclusions and investigating further will open doors to finding sustainable solutions that are conducive to a healthy, just and thriving planet. In the words of Yarub Smeirat, “We need to have passion. We need to have faith in ourselves as Arabs. The most important thing is we need to think as a unit.”

### Study Limitations

Everything the researcher has ever seen, felt, heard, or generally experienced has shaped how she perceives the world. Everything she has come into contact with has affected her and molded her thoughts into various perceived notions. Therefore, if bias is defined as an inclination to hold a partial perspective which prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question, the researcher admits to unintentionally being biased while pursuing her case study. Her social identities as an activist, a musician, a daughter from an upper middleclass family of Pakistani, German and Spanish decent, and a soon-to-be college graduate from America have all naturally come into play as she interviewed and analyzed her research.

For example, her social identity as a musician gives her a different perspective on music and the arts. Like many other cultural workers, she is constantly inspired by the world of the arts and music, and holds the belief that music and the arts are powerful forms of communication that can provoke certain emotions, actions or beliefs. It is therefore understandable that the researcher hypothesized prior to beginning this case study that music and the arts could positively change society in Jordan. This bias was apparent even during her methods portion of the case study, as she orally surveyed students at The University of Jordan. Students who rejected the notion that music about political action could drive societal change through powerful syntax and words of encouragement to become active members of society caused the researcher to react in a way of confusion or disbelief. As much as the researcher wanted to act as though she was neutral of every opinion, it was hard for her to fully act this way because of how connected and emotionally involved she is with the musical and artistic world. That is not to say that the researcher was dishonest in recording data; however, the research admits to expressing her biases and her emotions during the whole execution process in this case study.

On the other hand, when interviewing artists and musicians who felt similarly to the researcher about the ability of music and the arts to affect positive societal change, she would smile and nod her head in approval. This unintentional emotional response, though not harmful to the interviewees and their opinions, reflects her own perspectives and biases towards the subject of the case study.

Another study limitation may or may not be the use of the word “positive” throughout this case study regarding the societal change music and the arts bring to society. Challenging the waste crisis, climate change, and weaknesses in ideological political systems to find solutions is viewed in the researcher’s eyes as a positive thing. Whether or not this is a bias of the researcher can be argued; however, the introduction of this case study, explaining why the case study should be pursued, can testify the argument of why the word “positive” is an appropriate term to use.

It is evident to the researcher that bias can occur at any stage of research, including study design, data collection, as well as in the process of data analysis, deriving conclusions or even publishing. Bias is not a dividing or dichotomous variable. Interpretation of bias cannot be limited to a simple inquisition: is bias present or not? Rather, researchers must consider the degree to which bias prevented proper, truthful and accurate study design and implementation. To some degree, bias is nearly present in all published studies, and researchers and readers must consider the role of bias and how it can influence a study's conclusions. The key goal when it comes to bias in any research project is to limit and prevent bias as much as possible in order execute proper study design. Proper study design in turn will yield reliable, ethical, and accurate findings.

### Recommendations for Further Studies

Research on the how the arts and music impact positive societal change is a burgeoning and wide-ranging field of research. Despite the variety of research subjects and methodologies existing in the field, there are a number of avenues this case study has yet to explore. Due to the short timeframe given to complete this case study, the researcher admits that she was unable to fully expand upon this topic. Therefore, the researcher provides the following recommendations on how this case study can be expanded upon.

**Sample size.** The sample sizes of many studies, as is the case for this research project, are too small for making proper statistical inferences. For example, the researcher would certainly have benefited from interviewing more than just one artist, as the number of musicians interviewed outweighs the number of artists interviewed, and this case study aims to take a comprehensive look at *both* music's and the art's impact on positive societal change in Jordan. Another important example is the survey provided to only 15 female and 15 male students at The University of Jordan. With an average population of 31,800 students, making proper statistical inferences from surveying only 30 students is much too small.

Next, **measurable data.** The majority of the findings come from detailed accounts of people directly involved in the arts and music community. However, findings such as these could be viewed as anecdote-rich and evidence-poor. While anecdotes do serve as important evidence in the findings of any research project, a fundamental question here is whether positive societal change can be measured solely or largely on the basis of these accounts. The researcher did strive to include some form of measurable data in her case study, and this is evident in the graph provided which illustrates The University of Jordan student survey results. However, more measurable data, making the findings of this case study anecdote-rich *and* evidence-rich, would

strengthen the argument that supports the arts and music as driving forces in positive societal change in Jordan.

Finally, interviewing more female musicians and artists would emphasize the importance of a **gender sensitive methodology**. Due to the limited time the researcher had to complete this case study in Jordan, the researcher was unable to incorporate more perspectives from female musicians and artists who are using their drive for creative expression to advocate for a more just world. It is important to adopt a gender sensitive methodology because this methodology gives equal value to men and women's experiences and viewpoints by paying attention to their similarities and differences.

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## Appendices

## Survey

1. هل تعرفون الأغنية Shmal, Janoob, Gharb, Sharq بواسطة حسين السلطان؟
2. هل هذه الأغنية تلهم لك التصويت في الانتخابات؟ لماذا أو لماذا لا؟
3. هل هذه الأغنية تلهم لك على التصويت لصالح مرشح جيد؟
4. هل هناك استجابة من المجتمع بسبب هذه الأغنية؟
5. في رأيك، هل هذا أغنية عن الانتخابات ذو أهمية؟