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# The Jordanian Attitude Towards the Women's Quota System

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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**The Jordanian Attitude Towards the Women's Quota System**  
**By Aida Woldegiorgis**  
**Spring 2015**

Jordan: Modernization and Social Change

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## Abstract

This study evaluates the relationship between women and politics in Jordan: more specifically it will look at (1) the attitudes of Jordanians on the the positions of women in the Jordanian assembly, (2) the challenges that women face in the Jordanian Council, and (3) the extent to which people agree or disagree with the Parliament's quota system. I hypothesized that the attitudes of Jordanians from the public perspective will be supportive of women entering into Parliament and most Jordanian citizens will be in support of the quota system. I also hypothesized that women from Jordan that chose to enter into politics deal with many barriers that might include disapproval from male politicians, this is especially if women are coming in through the quota system since the public and some political elites might see women in political positions as less credible since the political reputation was not gained in the same(traditional) way as men. My research data consists of three interviews with Jordanian citizens from different backgrounds and two interviews with women sitting in parliament. My findings proved that most Jordanian citizens see the Quota Law as a great assistance to the political representation with a few dissenting to that there are plenty of barriers that exist today even though the country has made a long way of improvement for women in politics. I argue that these results are a great example of the current state of mainstream gendering in Jordanian society and the patriarchal barriers that exist in Jordanian politics.

**Topic Keywords: Political Science, Social Studies: General, and Regional Studies: Middle East**

## Introduction

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the attitudes and perspectives of Jordanians on the position of women in the Jordanian Assembly as well as understand the views that the Jordanian public may have on the existing quota system set in place for women to enter the Jordanian Council . It is important to understand how the public is reacting to the normalization of women being more prominent in Jordanian politics. This study also seeks to understand the barriers that women in the Jordanian Assembly had to face when first entering into politics through the quota system as well as the barriers that they faced once they had entered into the Jordanian Council. This insight is important to understand if the barriers that the women currently are dealing with are similar to the barriers that women face outside of the political hemisphere and/or a good way to prepare and inform future women that may desire to enter into politics in Jordan. I plan to go about retrieving this data through interviews with women that are sitting on the Jordanian Council that have entered through the quota system for women.

### **Interest**

I initially became interested in the topic of the public attitude on the women's quota system when I was first introduced to the topic of quota systems in politics at my university in the United States. In my introduction to International Relations course. In that course I learned that different government systems may have some form of a quota system, to ensure that there is a proportional number of representatives to the public vote. This interest in quota systems grew when I travelled to Jordan with the SIT program. Before traveling to the The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I did not know that it was common for many governmental. Parliamentary systems in the Middle East to have a Quota system set aside for women specifically. This was interesting to me because unlike traditionally quota systems in Europe and the west which had quota systems set up for various political parties, Jordan has a quota system set up for women: a demographic that has nothing to do

with an individual's point of view but with the sexuality/gender of an individual. This in particular drew more questions from me on how the public of Jordan feels about the quota system for women, and how the public saw it to be beneficial for women.

## **Relevance**

There has been many past studies that focuses on the barriers that women face but there has not been many studies that focus on the reaction of the public to the existence of a quota system after it has been installed for more than a decade. My area of inquiry is relevant because it focuses on the public opinion on the topic of the Quota System for women and the study does so at a time that Jordan is beginning to normalize the political participation of women through other non-traditional forms outside of voting. An example of this current unorthodox form of political participation is the recent pop of of multiple NGO groups that advocate for women rights in the region of the Hashemite Kingdom (Dr.Sarah Ababneh, 2015). This in some way is an indication that the ability that women have to make an impact on Jordanian politics is changing and shifting with the cultural perspective and attitude, but what exactly is the attitude that has changed from the past to what it is today? The answer to this question is what makes the topic relevant to Jordan and perhaps even the region of the middle east.

## **Hypothesis and Goals**

- 1) I hypothesize that the opinions amongst Jordanians will differ and vary slightly amongst each other but most people will agree that it is necessary for women who can represent the public well.
- 2) I also hypothesize that the women on the Jordanian Council face barriers such as having to work in a different way than their male counter-parts, since they are voted into the council in a different way, then there is a different method for women to be put into parliament and different avenues that women have to take in order to run and be seen as credible enough to



participate in Jordanian Politics. Listed below are some other barriers that I feel might be relevant to women:

- a. Lack of party support and backing;
  - b. The male political culture which militates against women's equal participation in the political sphere;
  - c. Lack of media support;
  - d. Lack of confidence among voters that women can actually deliver on their election promises;
  - e. Stunted democracy which allows for manipulation of electoral processes and results and
  - f. Lack of networking and cooperation between women's organizations and women MPs.
- 3) I finally hypothesize that the attitude amongst Jordanians on the topic of the quota system is that it is beneficial for women and is a good method for placing women into high political positions. I don't think that many people will see the Quota system in a negative way, since it was initiated by the government and there is a culture of stability amongst Jordanians to not speak out against the government. I think that the government in Jordan has a lot of power and influence on the way the public attitude of the public meshes well with the initiatives and actions made by the parliament.

## **Theories**

For my research I will be using several theories to help support and give foundation to my research:

### *Theory of Patriarchy*

According to D. Abeda Sultana in her article "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis" she describes Patriarchy as, "the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development. Despite differences in levels of domination the broad principles remain the same, i.e. men are in control"(Pg. 1, 2001). Sultana sees that it is necessary to understand the system that keeps women dominated and subordinate so that way we can see how women are forced to develop

in a systematic way. Sultana explains that Patriarchy prioritizes men in society and systematically puts women in a subordinate position in society. This patriarchy work both in public and private spheres. Because of this people use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the power relationship that exist between men and women as well as a method to seek the root cause of women's subordination in society. This theory will allow me to analyze the relationship between men and women in the private sector of Jordanian Society (Women on Jordanian council in Parliament) and the public sector of Jordanian society (public opinion on female quota system in Jordan).

### *MainStreaming Gender*

Gender mainstreaming is the public policy concept of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programs , in all areas and levels. Mainstreaming essentially offers a pluralistic approach that values the diversity among both women and men (Booth, C. and Bennett, 2002). I will use this theory of mainstreaming gender to assist my analyses on the barriers that might be in place for women who are in parliament and as a way to analyze the circumstances that are set through policy that make it difficult for women to participate in different parts of government as well.

### *Marxist Feminism*

According to Ferguson's and Hennessy's, "*Feminist Perspectives and Work*" , Marxist feminism is a branch of feminism focused on investigating and explaining the ways in which women are oppressed through systems of capitalism and private property. According to Marxist feminists, women's liberation can only be achieved through a radical restructuring of the current capitalist economy, in which much of women's labor is uncompensated (2010). I will also be using this theory to help interpret the responses from women in parliament, specifically on their opinions in regards to the way the feel women should be liberated in government.

## Literature Review

I was able to find many academic resources that dealt with my study in some way or form. There has been plenty of research in the past that focused on the introduction of a female quota system for political participation specifically on Middle Eastern countries. Most of these research articles were viewing the position of women in parliament during the first installation of the quota system for women in many Pan-Arab countries, but not too many focused the barriers relevant to women after the Parliament system has been installed. I first set out to find literature that could be inclusive to my three main theories if Patriarchy, Mainstreaming Gender, and Marxist feminism. This issue with all of these theories is that most of the general theoretical framework for this study is historically rooted in Europe and and the Western world. This makes it somewhat problematic to apply these three theories to Jordan, a Middle Eastern nation. To address this issue, I would apply these theories to research centered around middle easter quota systems for women but take into account how the theories might not fit so perfectly with the topics and settings of the literature review.

Initially, most of the material I found were comparison studies that looked at quota systems amongst multiple Arab nations. Though the articles were interesting they still did not offer a lot of heavy insight on the public opinion of people from these nations on the installment of the quota system. The entire research project was completely focused on the women in the parliament and did not focus to much on the people that voted for these women in parliament.

For example in the study titled “In search of Political Power - Women in Parliament in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon”, it examines the many ways Arab women have developed a number of strategies and adopted various mechanisms to facilitate not only their entry into politics but also to enhance their performance within political forums. The study provides background on the conditions that affect women’s participation in Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan. The study outlines many obstacles that women face in the countries and in the Arab world in general. It then analyzes the methods women use to tackle these obstacles within parliament and within society at large. I

would be able to add on to this study by analyzing what new barriers and issues have developed since the installment of the quota system in Jordan and analyzing the new ways that women are moving through these obstacles, especially since this article was published over ten years ago. I would be able to apply the theory of Patriarchy since in the study it mentions that one of the main barriers women face in Jordan specifically is “the male political culture which militates against women’s equal participation in the political sphere” (p. 2). This also strongly connects to Marxist feminism since this Marxist strand of theory since this theory focuses on the way women are oppressed through economic systems but we can use it to try and analyze how women are oppressed through political systems as well.

In a second study I found called “Jordanian women in education: politics, pedagogy and gender discourses” analyzes how the issues surrounding gender bias in Jordan are not taken seriously especially around political discourse, and claims that attempts made by NGOs and other groups in Jordan are emasculated by the political society. In this paper, the author sheds light on the national, the international and the textual 'knowledge' that surrounds gender bias in education in a context like Jordan. The writer concludes by demonstrating the importance of the national knowledge and its discursive practices in reformulating approaches based on the international (human development reports) and the textual (literature on gender bias and stereotypes in education). This is the study that I found to be closest to my hypothesis surrounding the opinion of Jordanian citizens on the topic of the Quota system for women. It does not directly deal with my hypothesis, but it does give some background and context to the perspective of Jordanian civilians on the topic of women participating in Politics. This applies to the theory of patriarchy because it is analyzing the a sector in society (political) that is dominated and structurally biased towards men. Even though this is a western concept, the theory of patriarchy can be applied to the Middle East in this way.

Two other studies I found connected very well with my Gender Mainstreaming theory that I chose to use for this research project. The first study is called “The Arab States: Enhancing Women’s Political Participation” and this study gives an overview of the Arab region and focuses on the

political status of women. It also gives an overview of the key challenges that confront women in achieving decision-making positions that are presented, drawing on experiences from three countries: Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen. The third section of the study describes some of the methods that have been used to tackle the challenges and promote Arab women's participation in parliaments, and suggests others that might be appropriate for the region. I would be able to contribute to this study by providing a closer look to the Jordanian region and the social structure that women exist in more specifically in the context of Jordanian women. This study connects strongly to gender mainstreaming, because it attempts to look at the ways in which the political status of women can be brought up through policy change, which is exactly what gender mainstreaming theory seeks for.

The second study that connects to gender mainstreaming is titled "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Political Representation for Women" this study attempts to identify different quota systems and to discuss which factors have facilitated the introduction of electoral gender quotas in various countries in the last decades. It is argued that a new international discourse on women in institutional politics is an important factor behind recent introduction of quotas all over the world, even in countries that previously had a very low representation of women. However, the fact that some countries have opened up for quotas, while others have not, and secondly, the fact that *specific types* of quota systems do seem to occur in regional clusters, all point to the need for contextual based research about what we will call *the translation* of this international discourse into individual countries and about the *mechanisms* behind the introduction of quotas nationally. This connects to gender mainstreaming theory because it looks at the way in which the policy change and law adjusted to create a quota system that includes women in politics, which again is trying to enhance the political status of women through policy change. My research would also be able to add on to this study by looking at the ways quotas might be helpful towards the progression of empowerment and liberation for women from the perspective of a citizen or a civilian member of society. This article does not do that.

## **Methodology**

Overall, my research experience was very positive and helpful to this study. I was able to obtain very useful data from my interviews with women in Parliament and my interviews with Jordanian civilians. At first I was uneasy and uncertain as to how candid Jordanians and women in Parliament would be when responding to my questions about barriers that women in politics faced. However, my interviewees proved to be very open with their opinions on these issues which was a great contribution to my research.

My main methodology is to interview and hold critical discussions with the women who are a part of the Jordanian Council and who entered parliament specifically through the Quota System. This is so that I could have a deeper understanding of the perspectives of women who have a primary experiences with the parliament and the barriers that they faced before and during their term in government. I also held interviews with Jordanian civilians to receive their opinion on the quota system and their experiences. All but one of my interviews were done in person, because I did not feel that surveys would be the best method for me to receive holistic information when it comes to the deep perspectives of Jordanian people on this topic. I interviewed one individual on the phone, since schedule a time to meet face to face was difficult for the both of us. My interactions with women in the parliament were held at the parliament government building (Majlis Al-Nuwaab) located in the Abdali Neighborhood of Amman. I was able to interact with Jordanians through every public venue. I interviewed students from various Universities across Jordan, I interviewed workers at cafes, and I interviewed a various age groups on their opinion of the Quota system for women. I was able to find many people for this group since it was a very broad category to interview. I surveyed two Jordanian women in Parliament and two of Jordanian civilians on the topic of the quota system.

I also had an observational portion to my research that took place at a conference focused on women working rights which was held at the Movenpick Hotel located next to the Dead Sea. This

conference obtained different members of Parliament, local professors of Jordan, and men in various parts of the government involved in government. I was not allowed to record names of anyone who attended the conference or the name of the conference but I was allowed to take notes and give description of the people who spoke at the Conference.

For my one on one interview and phone interview with women in parliament I spoke with two women : Tamam Riyati and Rula Alhroub. I was able to interview these two women because they were available at the desired times set for discussion and they were well experienced with participating in government affairs. Tamam Riyati has been in parliament for a few years (since 2013) and she was a part of the quota system from the Aqaba region of Jordan. Rula Alhroub is from the (insert region) of Jordan and she also has a lot of strong and impactful experience in politics. For my interviews with civilians from Jordan I interviewed several individuals. I interviewed a political journalist named Nader, I interviewed a travel agent/Arabic translator named Tariq, and I also interviewed a barista and student name Suad. I [promised not to release the full names of these participants to protect the Identity. All of my interview questions were open to receive diverse responses close to truth reactions from the individuals that were participating in the interviews.

In order to ensure that my participants would not experience any negative repercussions from participating in my research project, I made sure to protect their identities and inform them what my research entails and how their assistance would be used. For my interviews (except for two, for which I obtained verbal consent) I asked the participants to read and sign an informed consent form, which gave a brief description of my project, ensured that their participation was optional, their participation could be terminated at any time, the information provided would be used for research purposes only, and that they had the right to full anonymity if they wished. I also explained to my interviewees that my research was not funded by any outside sources. To protect the validity of my research, I had translators for my interviews with people who did not have high English fluency, but

I did have interviews in English if my participants had a strong English fluency level. I only need translators for two of my interviews: with Nader and with Tamam Riyati.

I did use other sources (articles, statistics, videos, etc.) to obtain a more informed understanding of the Jordanian civilians in general. Some changes I made from my original plan was to interview students in the public spaces of the University of Jordan. I changed my mind later during the research period because I wanted to gain different ideas and perspectives from varying age groups and disciplined backgrounds. I thought that interview students would only give me the perspective of students, and this is not what I wanted for my research project.

## **Findings**

### *Brief Background*

As a developing constitutional monarchy, Jordan has survived the trials and tribulations of Middle Eastern politics. The Jordanian public has experienced limited democracy since gaining independence in 1946 however the population has not suffered as others have under dictatorships imposed by some Arab regimes. The 1952 Constitution provided for citizens of Jordan to form and join political parties (ANND, Building Democracy in Jordan, 2005). Such rights were suspended in 1967 when a state of emergency was declared and martial law and suspension of Parliament, continuing until it was repealed in 1989.

In 1988 King Hussein cut political ties with the West Bank following the Israeli occupation. Subsequently, civil unrest followed with Prime Minister al-Rifa'i alleged to have used heavy-handed tactics against the population which resulted in riots in April 1989. After the riots had subsided the King fired al-Rifa'i and announced elections for later that year. The King's action to re-convene parliament elections was considered a significant move forward in enabling the Jordanian public to have greater freedoms and democracy, this has been labelled by the think tank



Freedom House as, “the Arab World's most promising experiment in political liberalization and reform” (Pete Moore, *Countries at Crossroads*, 2006).

The resumption of the parliamentary election was reinforced by new laws governing the media and publishing as well as fewer restrictions on freedoms of expression. Following the legalization of political parties in 1992, 1993 saw the first multi-party elections held since 1956 (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2006). The country is now one of the most politically open in the Middle East permitting opposition parties such as the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The influence of the IAF significantly reduced in 2007 when their parliamentary representation fell from seventeen to six. The Monarch still holds the true levers of power, appointing members of the House of Senate and has the right to replace the prime minister, a step that King Abdullah II of Jordan took in April 2005 (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2005).

It has been argued that the influence of tribalism in determining Parliament election results in Jordan should not be overlooked; it is stronger than political affiliations. Tribal identity has a strong influence over Jordanian life: “...identities remain the primary driving forces of decision making at the level of the individual, the community, and the state” (Khouri, 2003, p. 147).

This history is relative to the historical political participation of women. Women in Jordan received the right to vote and stand for election in 1974. In order to increase women’s political participation, Jordan has issued quota legislation through an amendment to the Electoral Law. In 2003, quota provision reserved 6 seats for women in the national parliament. A quota system has also been introduced at the municipal level. Following an initiative by women’s organizations, including the JNCW and the Jordanian National Forum for Women, the Jordanian government introduced a 20 percent quota for women for the July 2007 municipal elections. To add on to that there are around 40 female judges out of 600 judges in the court system of Jordan. Currently there are no female judges in the Shari’a courts. In 2010, a female judge was appointed as Amman attorney general for the first time. The post is considered to be a top prosecutor’s post (UNCF, 2010).

*Interview Results with Civilians:****Things Headed in the Right Direction***

To find out the perspectives of the Jordanian public on the topic of the quota system, I held one on one interviews with three Jordanians that held various professional backgrounds. There were a few similarities between the open ended responses amongst the three Jordanian participants. All three of my participants agreed that the Jordanian government were going in the right direction for women in the country. This was across the board something that was a common occurrence even with regard to the women in parliament. But we will get back to that later. Nader who is a political Journalist said that “Jordan is the 1st country in the Arab world that focused on women” and added that he believed that the quota system assisted putting women in a more equal position in society. Tariq who is a travel agent and arabic translator, had a similar response by saying that “After the quota, she started the right way and the king and queen really do support women”. Suad, who is a barista and college student, added to his agreement by saying that “Women and men have equal rights and equality is something the government has tried to reach for in many ways”.

This common agreement that things are going in the right direction is a true reflection of the circumstances and improvements that has been made in the parliament. In the past few years there has been some reform in favor of women in politics. In the past during “the 2010 election the number of seats reserved for women was raised from 6 to 12. Following the 2010 election, 13 seats (out of 120) in parliament (Majlis Al-Nuwaab) are occupied by women (that is 11 per cent of the seats, 12 through the quota regulation and one by competitive election).” (UNCF, 2010) Today , as of the year 2015, there are 15 women who are in parliament through the quota system. The number for reserved seats through the quota system has gradually been increasing through out the years and this could be the reason why most of the participants feel that things are going in the right direction for women.

### *Issues Facing us All*

Another common response amongst the civilian participants were the answers towards the question “What is the biggest issue that women in Jordan face?” Tariq’s response to the question was that “the issue of sexual harassment and rape from men is a huge problem, since women are not safe to walk freely at all times of the day”. Nader said that “there are still some men who questions women that are in the government but women generally have the same rights as men”. Suad responded by saying that the biggest problem women face is oppression in general: “Women really don’t get any attention and most of the time men’s attitude is to ignore women, even in the family dynamics”. In all the responses from the participants, they pointed out conflict women in Jordan have with men.

There are a few instances where women who are in politics have dealt with conflict amongst their male counterparts. CNN report a video in late 2014 showing Jordanian Parliament member Hind Alfayez being told by Yahya Al Saud “Sit down, Hind!” Al-Saud loudly repeated numerous times, before banging on the desk and yelling, "God curse the person who brought the (female) quota to Parliament!" (Said, 2014). This viral video of Hind Alfayez is something that went viral in the Arab world and in Jordan on twitter and other Social Media platforms. Following the event, many Jordanians on twitter support Hind Alfayez’s decision to not take orders from her fellow parliament member because she did not sit down. Many Jordanian’s on twitter showed support towards Hind Alfayez, posting tweets like “The lady made a point. She should never obey and sit down. This #sexism stupidity should be ended #sitdownhind” (@HamzaKaabar, 2014). The participants in my research had a general attitude that aligned with the responses from other Jordanian civilians on twitter in regards to the issue of her being told to sit down. There were many variations in response but overall they all pointed at some form of conflict with male oppression. This connects very well with the theory of patriarchy, and the participants in some ways have revealed that there is a strong patriarchy presence that get in the way of women in Jordanian Society. All participants have mentioned this issue of men being a barrier in some way or form for the progression of women.

Even though the responses are vague and not very clear, it still points to that power dynamic between men and women.

### ***Corruption is Key***

A strong similarity amongst all the civilian participants was the agreement that there was corruption within parliament that strongly affected the quota system and participation of women in the Parliament. When asked if they thought there was corruption within the parliament all participants responded “of course”. This was the most aligned response from all of the participants. Suad added to his answer by saying that “there is definitely tribe leaders that use money to convince people to vote for them, but once they are an MP they don’t do anything for their community”. Suad referenced an event back in 2013 when an MP member open fire with an automatic gun on another MP after a dispute about budget regulations for the country (Independent Press, 2013). This common awareness amongst public members on the level of corruption is very interesting and jarring in some ways, but gives good insight on how much trust the Jordanian public might have in the quota system and other functions of the government.

### ***Is the Quota a supporting or Crippling System***

There were a few differences between the responses from the participants. Suad and Tariq admitted to not having too much knowledge about politics but in general agreed that the quota system was a good thing for Jordan and for women in Jordan. Suad said that he was very close to Tujan Alfayes who is a political representative in the government but outside of knowing her he did not have too much knowledge on the topic of politics. Nader on the other hand had an opposing view in regards to the quota system. AS a political journalist, Nader was one of the more politically aware of the three participants, and he said that “The law is always with women, always the quota is a good thing because the people in parliament who entered through the quota system are performing well....but women don’t need the quota law. Woman in Jordan can be successful without the quota law. We have 3 women in parliament who won through the national election, not through the quota

law. If we have the Quota then the women seem weak.” Nader’s perspective is that the quota law can be crippling to women in many ways and he believes that people would vote for women without the quota because we see this happening anyways. According to an article by Martha Gill, Nader has exposed negative impact that is a result of gendered quotas: “If women are employed through quotas, they will be seen as "token", will be less respected and will have less power.” (Gill, 2012). Quota systems can be viewed as a clutch for women to hold on to and make them seem as if they are not earning their positions in the same way as their male counter-parts. This can be undermining and this is what Nader was making a point to in his interview.

### ***We are Not on the Same Level***

Another difference between the participants was the level of independence and power they thought women had. Tariq and Suad again both agree that women were not completely equal to men in Jordanian society. Tariq and Suad both think that the government needs to do more for woman, since they are not completely liberated in society. Nader again had a different view and saw that women do “need more but so does the man, they just need different things”. His opinion in some ways opposes the gender mainstreaming theory, because it can be seen as going against the concept of legislation bring equality amongst different gendered groups. This can be interpreted in many different ways but it is not unusually that Nader had the differing opinion most of the time, since he was more aware of political topics and issues in comparison to the other participants.

### ***Interview Results with Women in Parliament:***

#### ***Government on the Side of Women***

The two women that I interviewed for my research topic was Tamem Riyatee from the Aqaba region. She entered Parliament through the quota system. Rula Alhroub was the second woman in parliament who I was able to interview and she did not enter through the quota system. Rula Alhroub entered through the National election and won without the quota behind her. I wanted to

have a perspective from women of both groups to see if there would be any differences between responses or if the barriers that these women face are very similar simply for the fact that they are women. Tamem and Rula had more differences in regards to the depth of the conversation I had with them during the interview. When I asked Tamem to explain why she felt that things can get better she said that “The first time women enter the parliament the people were anxious and men were not ok with it but after that men slowly started to respect and support her and accept her opinion he men change inside the Parliament”. Tamem feels that time will make things better and she uses the experience that women have had in being in parliament and the slow changes from men in parliament as a way to prove this, where as Rula dived in the many improvements that the country has made so far in regards to women’s rights:

“There are so many enhancements in women position in Jordan. We approved the quota for women in 2006 and now we have 34 percent for women municipality. Some (women) won by competition and some by quota. There are now 15 in quota due to the increase made back in 2013. Statistically women in politics are getting better. This government made great progress since 2012. when the king first comprised the government we only had one women and the king later raised it to 3 and then in 2012 to 2015 he raised it to 5. which means it is getting better. Also society in general has changed it’s views, for example the outstanding performance for women in peace has proven women are doing better. WE are asking women to have a majority in parliament because of the representation needs to have quality as well as numbers. we have accepted for women to participate as prime minister in government Jordan. In general because of this, women are gaining respect and more positions in Jordanian government”

This is all true, a lot of changes recently have been made during King Abdullah’s rule through the past decade. It is more and more common to see women in higher positions in society. Rula also went on to talk about the way in which Jordanian society can stall the political progression of women in Jordan. Rula says that

“When it comes to Jordanian society, we still have certain issues. This comes from the Islamic tradition and the culture of society. Some Islamic groups believe women should not go to work, but yet the voices of the Islamic groups are heard in media and this causes some issues and barriers to continue improving. There is a tradition for women being oppressed in Jordanian society because historically and economically women would not support themselves and they always depended on their family and their husbands. This limited the ability for women to participate in politics”

### ***Barriers and Limitations***

When Rula and Tamem were asked to talk about the barriers that exist for women in the parliament and in Jordanian society they both pointed at legislation being a huge issue. Tamem commented by saying that now that there are women in parliament, this group (of women) in parliament has to work together to make things more available for women to reach other branches of government:

“We have a group of 18 women in parliament and there are some women from (mjlless ayaaam) from the same group and because we are a group and we should try to push the law more and work together more to do that. We also want more women in parliament and in different parts of the government and inside the court sharia so that it is more fair for women in public, and more women inside the court ... We need laws to let women inside, women are not the ones who need to change and we need to keep updating the law so that way it is more accessible for women to enter these positions”

Rula also mentioned legislation being changed to represent women in a much better light:

“There has to have legislation that is more in favor of women. But there is still a lot of discrimination from legislation in women. For example the nationalism law is by the favor of men, if you are a Jordanian woman and you marry and have a child by a foreigner, your child is not considered Jordanian.”

These ties back very strong to main-stream gender theory. Both the women I interviewed strongly believe that having legislation and policy supporting allows for good change to happen, specifically in regards to the women rights issues in Jordan. Even though women can vote and have many rights

that men have, things like representation is lacking and there is a heavy gender bias towards men in the political sphere.

### ***Legislation Makes a Difference***

Legislation was not the only thing that Rula thought to be a relevant barrier for women to enter politics. Rula saw that the lack of economic resources amongst women, the preference for men in politics in Jordanian society, and the motivation for women to run were three things lacking in the country as well as proper legislation.

“Most women do not have access though spending and this is one way men can participate in parliament even more. The money is a way that alters the competition in favor of men. Of course this can not be changed through the quota system but through political parties.”

This concept of money altering the direction of people in parliament is an interesting point to be made and also connects to the concept of corruption affecting the quota system and the participation of women in politics. In Jordan there seems to be a common understanding that money influences politics regularly. Rula's comments tie in well with what the three civilian participants said about corruption. Tamem on the other hand did not give a very in depth response to the question of corruption in parliament. She said that “There are problems in parliament but there are not big problems just different problems”. Tamem did not give too much on the topic of corruption within the parliament. This was interesting to me that Rula seemed to be more candid and open about this issue in comparison to Tamem.

### ***A Temporary Fix***

Tamem and Rula were both very clear about the purpose of the Quota law but in different ways. Rula saw it as a transformational step and for women in politics. Rula talks about the transformational necessity for the quota law below:



“We need those laws for a temporary transformational period of time until the society can really see and are convinced that women can do their jobs on their own. Most people around the world think that man are better then women. If it was not for the quota, women would not have a chance. Before the quota we only had one woman MP member but now we have three. that would not have happened without the quota. Thing are improving but slowly and with time.”

Tamem on the other hand saw that the quota law was useful but confronted the idea that it should not last forever:

“... If they vote for us then we would not need the quota system. Overtime it will go away as things become more normal but right now we need the quota for women to be in parliament...”

Both Tamem and Rula saw that the law was a huge assistance to the representation of Jordanian women in the parliament but Tamem only mentioned it to be a temporary thing.

### ***Interactions amongst power dynamics :Observations from the Movenpick conference***

In the middle of April the women in Parliament and a few other members in government held a conference at the Movenpick hotel to talk bout the best way to liberate women in the economic and political sector. There was a male presenter who suggested that in order for women to be liberated they need to find a manager that is truly fearful of God so that he can treat women workers properly. He suggested putting women in charge of different sectors beneath a male manager that will truly seek the best interest of his female workers. When the male presenter was reading off his general idea for the plan that was to be installed at the end of 2015, a female conference participant stood up and said that “ this presentation is all words, just talk”. Many women at the conference seemed to be uninterested in the topic and were not showing much enthusiasm for the plan. This can connect in some ways to Marxist feminism: economic structures that hold women in subordinate positions in society. The speaker who was leading the discussion was a man, and he was giving direction and power to the women and suggestion an economic plan that was allowing for a male manager to regulate the work of women. This aligns with the Marxist feminist theory that even the meeting at the conference that day was perpetuating traditional economic structures to exist within Jordanian society. This could be part of the reason why the dynamic between many

women political leaders in the room seemed to lack hope for the plan that was proposed. There was even a male participant that said the plan could be better and that there should not be a manager over the woman to qualify they receive these rights. This is relevant to the topic of the quota system because many of the female participants at the meeting were women who were a part of the parliament.

Another interesting altercation was when a male political representative questioned whether the plan would give even more power to women, and said it was not fair towards male workers. Immediately after a female professor from the University of Jordan stood up lecturing the man saying that “the plan is not to benefit one person or the other but to benefit all workers! period!”. The male did not speak throughout the rest of the conference meeting. The power dynamics during this meeting was interesting and it was important to note that Marxist feminist theory comes into play during this portion of the conference as well. You can see that the male political representative was threatened by the plan which was to help assist women. The male figure was threatened that the traditional structure would be altered and not benefit those who have traditionally benefitted from the system.

This can give good insight for how difficult it can be for women in parliament and especially for the women of the quota law to change legislation in favor of women. From this conference we can infer that this is a relevant barrier for women in parliament, and the conference was a primary example of that. There was struggle to get the legislation to be in complete favor of women since there would still be a male manager, and the plan was being challenge because it threatened the traditional economic structure which is in favor of the male workers (according to the conference meeting).

## **Conclusion(s)**

### Conclusion #1

I hypothesize that the opinions amongst Jordanians will differ and vary slightly amongst each other but most people will agree that it is necessary for women who can represent the public well. Two of the three participants saw that the Quota law was necessary for woman to be liberated. Only one of the participants thought that the law was not a necessity.

### Conclusion #2

I also hypothesized that the women on the Jordanian Council faced multiple barriers such as having to work in a different way than their male counter-parts. Women in my study professed to the (1) lack of party support and backing, (2) the male political culture which militates against women's equal participation in the political sphere and (3) the Lack of confidence among voters that women can actually deliver on their election promises and the (4) Lack of networking and cooperation between women's organizations and women MPs. Female MP members did not mention anything about the lack of media support that I had mentioned in my hypothesis.

### Conclusion #3

I finally hypothesized that the attitude amongst Jordanians on the topic of the quota system would think that it is beneficial for women and is a good method for placing women into high political positions. I didn't think that many people would've seen the Quota system in a negative way, and this is where I was wrong. After Interviewing Nader I learned that there is a perspective that exists which does not see the Quota law being a positive contributor to the representation of women in parliament.

## **Study Limitations**

There were many study limitations that were set by this research project. The biggest limitation was the access to contacts for women who were sitting in Parliament. My advisor was hesitant to give out a list of contacts from Parliament and was not able to provide me with all the resources necessary to reach out to the women in Parliament. I was able to receive contact for women sitting in government from secondary sources. Tamem was the only contact given to me directly by my advisor. I was able to receive the phone numbers for Hind Al Fayez, Rula Alhroub, and Wafa Bani Mustafa through other people outside of the SIT program. I still was not able to set up appointment times within the desired research period with all of the women listed above . This was a huge issue and narrowed my sample size for primary contacts sitting in Parliament. Also, idealistically I would have loved to interview people of various age groups at a greater scale, but it is hard to find a sample of older people to interview individually. There are not many spaces in public available to find a large number of older people that are willing to be interviewed. Talking to people at the University and at the cafes in downtown amman were great ways to find young men who were willing to take part. This limitation could also be due to the fact that the Jordanian population is mostly ,made of up a younger generation of people (ages 13- 30). This age group is the larger representation of the country which is why I might have had more access to this group of people in comparison to an older generation of people.

## **Recommendations for Further Studies**

If I had more time to continue carrying out my research assignment, there would be a few changes I would make. One of my biggest changes t would be to interview all 18 women that are currently a part of the Jordanian parliament. This way I would have had a full spectrum of perspectives both from the group of women that one through the national election and through the group of women that entered through the quota system. Now that I have a better idea of where and how to find contacts for women in parliament, I would feel more confident and reaching out to them and

scheduling appointment times with these women. A second change I would add would be to interview more civilian women to represent the opinions of the public on the quota system. This way the answer to my research question can be more inclusive and holistic to the demographic of Jordan. I also would have loved to seek for older civilians even though the population limited me in finding older opinions on the topic, it still would have been a great comparison to add between the older generation and the younger generation of people.

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## Appendix A: Written Consent Form

## :حقوق المشارك

١ . الخصوصية: كل المعلومات التي تقدمها في هذه المقابلة التächة سنكتبها بيد وستحافظها. اذا ما ردت أن تكتب الباحثة شيء لازم أن تقول هذا إليها

٢ .العقيلة: الباحث لن تقدم أي اسم في هذه الدراسة لأي شخص ولن يظهر في الكتابة الكاملة أي اسم إلا إذا سمح استخدام اسمه المشارك

٣ .الرفض/فسخ العقد/الانسحاب: أي شخص يمكنه يرفض مشاركة في هذه الدراسة. بعد توقيع هذه الاستمارة فما زلت تنتهي المقابلة في أي وقت. يمكنك تطلب في وسط المقابلة أو بعدها أن لا تستخدم الباحثة معلومات من البحث في الكتابة. يجب للباحثة أن تكرم هذا الطلب مع أنك وقعت الاستمارة

## :استخدام المعلومات

١ . هذه الدراسة: المعلومات من هذه المقابلة ستستخدم في الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه وهذه الدراسة ربما ستكون متاحة في الإنترنت

٢ . بحث في المستقبل: معلومات من هذه المقابلة الباحثة ربما ستستخدمها في مشاريع البحث في المستقبل أيضا

عندما توقع هذه الاستمارة فتعلن أن الباحثة مسؤولة بشاكل كامل لتكرمها. الباحثة ستوقع الاستمارة أيضا وستقدم لك نسخة

توقيع المشارك والتاريخ

اسم المشارك

توقيع الباحثة والتاريخ

اسم الباحثة

<< أنا أسمح أيضا أن تستخدم الباحث اسمي في هذه الدراسة أو في أي مشروع بحث في المستقبل.>>

توقيع المشارك والتاريخ



**Consent to Use of Independent Study Project (ISP)**

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Student Name: Aida Woldegiorgis

Title of ISP: The Jordanian Attitude Towards the Women’s Quota System

Program and Term: Spring 2015

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## ISP Ethics Review

(Note: Each AD must complete, sign, and submit this form for every student's ISP.)

The ISP paper by Aida Woldegiorgis does conform to the Human Subjects Review approval from the Local Review Board, the ethical standards of the local community, and the ethical and academic standards outlined in the SIT student and faculty handbooks.


Completed by: Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D.


\_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Director: \_\_Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D.

Signature:

Program: JOR Spring 2015

Date: May 12, 2015

**SIT Study Abroad**   
 a program of World Learning  
**Human Subjects Review**  
**LRB/IRB ACTION FORM**

<p>Name of Student: Aida Woldegiorgis</p> <p>ISP Title: The Jordanian Attitude towards the Women's Quota System</p> <p>Date Submitted: 03/22/15</p> <p>Program: SIT Jordan Modernization and Social Change</p> <p>Type of review:</p> <p>Exempt</p> <p>Expedited .....X</p> <p>Full</p>	<p>Institution: World Learning Inc.                  IRB organization number: IORG0004408                  IRB registration number: IRB00005219                  Expires: 9 December 2017</p> <p>LRB members (print names):                  Dr. Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D. (Chair)                  Dr. Ismael Abu Amoud, Ph. D.                  Dr. Badr Al Madi, Ph. D.</p> <p><b>LRB REVIEW BOARD ACTION:</b></p> <p>Approved as submitted</p> <p>LRB Chair Signature:  </p> <p>Date: April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015</p>
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**Form below for IRB Vermont use only:**

**Research requiring full IRB review. ACTION TAKEN:**

approved as submitted  approved pending submission or revisions  disapproved

\_\_\_\_\_

IRB Chairperson's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date