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The Maps of Us: Generational Trauma, Community Building, and Creative Resistance in Amman, Jordan

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The Maps of Us: Generational Trauma, Community Building, and Creative Resistance in

Amman, Jordan

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Jordan: Geopolitics, International

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Abstract

This research study focuses on the intersection of generational trauma, community-building, and creative resistance to observe the impacts of generational trauma on social-political progress and the role that communities and creativity in building social movements in Amman, Jordan.

Understanding the implications of generational trauma can help bring understanding of its prevalence, what populations need to thrive in the face of generational trauma, and the political implications of generational trauma in Jordanian society. By conducting interviews with local Palestinian families, psychologists, community leaders, and creatives, the research study found that generational trauma plays a significant role in both motivating the need for political change and political action as a form of productive trauma release, yet feelings of fear, lowered resilience, community breakdown, mental/ physical health issues, and lowered communication skills as a result of the trauma pose as barriers to individual fulfillment as well as successful social-political change. Community and creative spaces can serve as places of open discussion, networks of care, resiliency, expression, self-preservation and solidarity for social change to combat the forces of generational trauma.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....3

Methodology.....4

Literature Review.....6

Trauma in the SWANA Region and Jordan.....16

Psychologists’ Take: Generational Trauma in Jordan and the SWANA Region.....19

Shame, Dignity, and The State.....21

Political Action and Resistance Through Community.....27

Creativity and Societal Transformation.....33

Conclusions.....37

Limitations and Further Study.....39

References.....41

Appendix.....43

Introduction; Research Question and Objectives

The research study will address the topics of generational trauma, community-building and creative resistance. Through interviews, the research study will attempt to understand how communities reconstruct identity in the face of generational trauma, build community networks, and create social change through creative resistance.

The researcher is interested in this topic because of their own experience with generational trauma as the daughter of Pakistani immigrants following generational trauma in South Asia and wanting to see how other communities continue to resist and thrive in the face of instability and generational trauma. It is important and significant to study this topic because the foundation of politics is relationships; the relationship to the state, the relationship to our community, and the relationship to the role we identify ourselves as within a society. By understanding the role of generational trauma and the challenges as well as opportunities it presents to a community, we can better understand how to address the needs of people as a society rebuilds in the face of ongoing political upheaval, and what tactics people use to maintain strong social movements in society through the case study of Amman, Jordan. Especially seeing as trauma leaves groups more vulnerable to violent extremist groups, fractured political systems, and less resources to cope with instability, understanding how community and resistance is built in the face of generational trauma and then reconstructed is important to build positive, community-empowered change out of conflict.

Based on these objectives, the research will center and try to answer the following questions:

1.) How does generational trauma create interpersonal cycles that disrupt community relationships? Does this show up for certain demographics more than others?

2.) Around what beliefs or key events do displaced communities reconstruct narratives out of? How is this narrative extrapolated into the future? What sources of hope or justice are there? What non-negotiables, and fears are there in seeking justice?

3.) Do communities believe there is a place for trauma-informed research and community approaches? What needs do individuals from these communities say they need to resist, reconstruct, and thrive?

Methodology

To answer these questions, the interviewer will seek to interview a variety of locals from Amman, Jordan, including local psychologists, urban Palestinian refugees, leaders of community spaces, and local artists. Local psychologists well-versed in the regional context will be interviewed to understand the presence of mental health and contextualize generational trauma in Jordan. Interviewing individuals of Palestinian descent from different backgrounds (gender, class, age, education, etc.) will help me gain a more holistic picture of the different ways diverse members of similar communities respond to such topics. Lastly, the study will seek to interview local community leaders (non-profit centers, community spaces, etc.) and local creatives. Interviewing local creatives will speak to the unique role that creatives play in establishing community narratives, and how local community leaders can speak to the presence of

community spaces, leading figures, and potential links between generational trauma and community for political organization.

Over the course of 4 weeks, I will meet with local contacts such as tour guides, creatives, and activists, from whom I will ask for further connections with other local community figures and community spaces that have impacted them to create a roadmap of community connections. By meeting multiple individuals from various backgrounds (gender, class-status, ethnic background, East/West Amman,) I will be able to create different roadmaps of what the presence of generational trauma and community looks like through this interviewee recruitment process.

Data will be largely qualitative and be conducted in the form of interviews with different individuals. Qualitative understanding will be informed on the basis of previous research done on generational trauma, frameworks of the psychology of colonization by Fanon and Habermas, trauma-informed community empowerment, and narratives of creativity from artists in the local community addressing these topics. By choosing interviews as my methodology, I hope to provide an open space for interviewees to share their personal perspectives and stories on the topics of generational trauma, collective memory, and creative resistance within the realm of social change. Interviews will allow interviewees to expand on certain topics of interest that are relevant to their story and perspective as they see fit. Storytelling and qualitative research, I hope, will allow for genuine data rooted in empathy.

As an interviewer, I recognize my privilege and positionality as an American-born, English-speaking, college educated, upper middle-class individual. As a child of Pakistani immigrants, I realize I have my own personal experiences and connections with the topic of generational trauma and community resistance. I will use these experiences to empathize and understand what my interviewees share, rather than project my own understandings and

experiences onto them and their context. I will ethically navigate this power imbalance and the sensitivity of the topic by defining the terms used, asking open-ended questions, and asking my interviewees to answer however they see fit. I will ask for their informed consent, tell them that they do not have to answer anything that makes them uncomfortable, and actively listen rather than try to interject, correct, or prod for additional information. I will respect their time and the integrity of their information by keeping the information provided anonymous.

Literature Review

Generational trauma is a wide-field of research, describing a phenomenon of trauma where an individual's memory, symptoms, or beliefs are passed down from one generation to another. This is closely linked to historical trauma, where historical events are at the root of trauma that is passed down not from just an individual generation to a generation, but collective experiences that are passed on between generations, communities, and societies. This includes major collective traumas enforced onto religious, ethnic, racial, gendered, or social groups such as the Holocaust, residential boarding schools for Indigenous populations, forced displacement, extreme poverty, war, ethnic cleansing, enslavement, etc.

The phenomenon applies starkly to the SWANA region. The SWANA region has seen continuous instability, occupation, conflict, and wars across generations in recent years; examples include the ethnic cleansing and forced removal of Palestinian populations, the Iraq War, the Arab Spring, colonial violence, and continued civil wars. A paper published by clinical psychologist researcher Walid Khalid Abdul-Hamid describes high rates of PTSD symptoms amongst the general Arab population across countries (composite of 37.4% of the interviewed sample), and even higher rates of trauma amongst surveyed Arab refugees (over half of all

surveyed refugees). (Abdul-Hamid, 2018) Research has shown that second and third generation survivors following collective trauma show increased levels of individual/collective fear, feelings of vulnerability and humiliation, disfigured national pride, crisis of identity, and are more likely to react with hypervigilance to perceived threats based on the collective's past experiences. Considering the impacts of trauma— compromises in well-being, fractured communities, increased risk for mental/ physical problems, lessened productivity and fulfillment— the presence of trauma on a large, collective scale throughout generations carries high risk and heavy implications for a society's well-being and future prospects. (Alexander, 2004)

Prominent holistic psychologist Dr. Nicole LePera writes that ‘...trauma decontextualized from a society over time, can look like culture.’ The theory of cultural trauma, published by Jeffrey C. Alexander, describes the experience of cultural trauma as crises of collective identity and meaning making following collective traumas, which can result in societal fragmentation of the collective memory with the absence of collective dialogue. Traumatic events occurring on a collective scale go beyond the individual and are ingrained in the cultural memory of descendants as well. Referencing Hirschberger, he writes that “...the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it.” (Alexander, 2004) For example, cultural trauma can become more ingrained and enforced with continued denials and repression from perpetrators, creating socially constructed memories and identities in contrast with the collective trauma still present within society. Artwork and literature can help to preserve and navigate collective memory of the trauma as a society attempts to construct meaning out of it. Without such reconstruction, the

presence of generational trauma in the everyday can be described as the collective routinization of trauma in the unquestioned habits, identities, and illness patterns born out of trauma.

Frantz Fanon, a prominent decolonial thinker and activist, writes about the psychopathology of colonization—a form of generational trauma present within many societies of the Global South until today. He writes that the violent trauma of colonialism strips one of the sense of being human and of dignity in one's society and broader world. (Butts, 1979) Though first and foremost colonization is a material process, it is also an epistemology and a psychologically pathogenic process that can perpetuate the trauma of colonization through continued epistemology. This can be the maintenance of the hierarchical binary of the colonizer and the colonized through other systems (neoliberalism, imperialism, etc.) and oppression turned against other members of the same colonized community. Fanon describes it as manifesting in envy towards the colonizer as a form of reclaiming dignity ("And it's true there is not one colonized subject who at least once a day does not dream of taking the place of the colonist") (Fanon, 1963)— a mindset resulting in separation of oneself from one's community and identity. Considering the presence of colonial histories in Arab society and its intersection with the generational trauma, Fanon's insights into the psychopathology of colonialism help to understand the context and how this model can be applied to other traumas of oppression. The perpetuation of the trauma of colonialism through the internalization of colonization can explain how even in post-colonial societies, colonial epistemologies are present and how this prevents political/ social progress from such traumatic eras.

What theories help to illuminate the intersections of generational trauma, collective memory, and creative resistance in the realm of political and social change in the face of such systems and epistemologies? Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action divides the realm of

social action into the theory of the lifeworld and system. The lifeworld and system theory offers a dual perspective of system and agency; the lifeworld refers to the everyday background of life and society, while the system refers to the structures surrounding it such as governments, organizations, and other institutional authorities with ingrained goals (often surrounding profit or control). In combating the oppression of systems such as capitalism, imperialism, racism, and patriarchy, communicative action (defined as individual actions taken on the basis of collective dialogue) is necessary. Communication between groups, creative potential, and the ability to actively resist—in line with the basis of communicative action—support one's agency to create structures in harmony with and beneficial to the lifeworld, the everyday. Habermas' colonization of the lifeworld thesis puts forward that systems overpower the lifeworld into bureaucratization that create barriers in the lifeworld for communicative, social, and political relations. (Baxter, 1989) For example, the enforcement of colonization and oppression is derived from money and power, often causing individuals to act in accordance with self-interest rather than interests mutual to both the individual and community. This breaks down community relations against systems of oppression to ensure one's own temporary survival. Additionally, individuals often hold excess power that allow for social changes to occur without community integration or dialogue; such as wealthy or powerful individuals subverting community dialogue such as elections or other democratic processes through biased media coverage, wealth influence, etc. On an individual level, the breakdown of social relations described in the colonization of the lifeworld relates to Marx's theory of alienation, which speaks to the estrangement workers feel from their own labor, self-fulfillment, and broader community within the stratified class-based capitalist system.

This breakdown in community, under systems of oppression (capitalism, colonial legacies, etc.). facilitates the perpetuation of oppressive systems and their resulting trauma. Political scientist Boon takes Habermas' theory of communicative action and incorporates the presence of generational trauma. Boon states that the presence of generational trauma is an additional tool of continuous 'systematic attempt(s) to break communicative, social, and political relations.' (Matthies-Boon, 2018) Boon described generational trauma as a form of "counter-revolutionary colonization." They write that:

"Through the destruction of physical bodies, the fragmentation and polarization of social relations and the violent closure of the newly emerged political public sphere, these actors actively repressed the potential for creative and revolutionary transformation..." and that "the harsh brutality of social deprivation and the daily struggle for survival were not only individually traumatic in that it destroyed people's physical and mental wellbeing but were also socially and politically traumatic in that it isolated people and destroyed the possibility of a political voice."

(Matthies-Boon, 2018)

Through continuous traumatic betrayals of the state, similar populations, or continuous, seemingly endless external threats, Boon writes that this systemic breakdown of community and of the lifeworld (through unaddressed) perpetuate collective traumas that can result in political apathy, social alienation, and personal meaninglessness which can prevent meaningful, desired political and social change. Betrayals and the internalization of trauma results in the increased alienation and removal of trust from unifying institutions, social movements, authorities, and even themselves. As a result, systems of oppression remain sufficiently unchallenged and broken community relations prevent solidarity and dialogue between groups, further perpetuating the cycle of oppression and collective trauma.

This was seen in ethnographic research and personal accounts of revolutionary Caireen activists after the 2011 revolution in Egypt. Caireen activists expressed that there was a pervasive feeling of fear amongst the Caireen (especially activist) population— ranging from the physical threat of violence including targeted sexual violence against protestors from the state to the fear of political expression in the community due to surveillance and intelligence informants, breaking down trust and solidarity by extension. Betrayal within revolutionary circles further enforced difficulty and hopelessness towards political action, such as trusting the army as defenders of the revolutionary process, only for the army to violently respond to demands of minorities/ revolutionaries and only engage with the established political entity: the Muslim Brotherhood— by whom activists later felt betrayed by as well. Despite these later betrayals, the revolution itself— through political action and unity— is described as the place where Egyptians found a release for this trauma and rebuilding of the community. A Caireen activist described it as the following:

“And I was feeling a huge anger inside me, a huge anger inside me. [...] it was not anger against the poor policeman or the poor soldier who did not understand anything but I was throwing my stone at all the depression I had suffered through my life. Towards all, yaeny, all unappreciation, a lack of dignity.” (Matthies-Boon, 2018)

This speaks to how generational trauma of oppression finds its release in political and social action to change a community’s discontents. Fanon wrote as well, “we revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe”. The action one takes depends on the

construction of collective memory that a community organizes around. So, how do populations reconstruct collective memory, build community, and find methods of creative resistance in the face of generational trauma and systems of oppression? How do community spaces, expression, or other methods of creative resistance help to reconstruct narratives of generational trauma for social change and meaning?

Hirschberger divides the social construction of meaning after collective trauma into the following realms:

- a.) passing down culturally-derived teachings and traditions about threat that promote group preservation
- b.) traditions of threat amplify existential concerns and promote the integration of trauma into systems of meaning
- c.) the reconstruction of trauma into social identities in the face of such existential threat
- d.) social meanings derived from trauma can build into a historic, continuous collective self that facilitates group identification
- e.) as trauma is transformed into new beliefs, systems, and meanings, it impacts how groups interact within their social environment and other groups around them

(Hirschberger, 2018)

One can see how in this model, trauma destabilizes societies, raising questions about identity groups, systems, core beliefs, and social norms present during such trauma. Within all these realms, trauma disrupts existing systems and results in a crisis of meaning until the trauma is integrated into the collective memory. Meanings must be questioned and reconstructed from the collective trauma— new systems to cope, and new identities of victimhood and

perpetratorship— to allow for society to move forward together once more. National narratives, creative artworks, collective identities, and new systems have been born out of efforts to learn and heal from collective traumatic experiences.

This can be seen in models of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, focused on restorative and transformative justice following collective traumas. In Post-Apartheid South Africa, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was led by Desmond Tutu to acknowledge the realities of the harms done by Apartheid and provide a space for collective dialogue to allow the society to move forward. Truth was defined as the “degree of individual acceptance of the collective memory produced by the TRC,” while reconciliation was defined as political tolerance, societal transformation, justice, and institutional changes by responding to victims’ grievances directly. (Gibson, 2006) Here, the TRC served as a way of creating more equitable social institutions, establishing collective memory in acknowledgement of the violence of apartheid, and created foundations for democracy through collective dialogue on past traumas.

With ongoing, present collective traumas, maintaining a collective trans-generational identity and narrative of the trauma can serve as a way to mitigate existential threat. To ensure the memory and identity of your group as you survive on. Groups undergoing continuous trauma were rated to have higher levels of ‘trans-generational identification,’ and more likely to accept individual casualties in the fight for the collective’s reality— speaking to the immortalizing function of collective memory in the face of trauma. ((Hirschberger, 2018) However, there is also the idea of becoming ‘stuck’ in transgenerational trauma. This means that trauma persists when individuals continuously face it or are unaware of its existence, so that the routinization of trauma through habits is perpetuated. (Alexander, 2004)

Cultural and social reproductions of the trauma in this sense are a site of creative resistance against the existential threats of collective traumatic events and post-traumatic symptoms. Refusing to be silenced, to tell stories, and find community in narratives of the event. Different individuals will have different reconstructions of the traumatic event; victims and perpetrators, roots of the trauma, and stances moving forward. For example, perpetrators of a group faced with the collective memory of their victims' trauma can become defensive towards victim groups (ex: racism, xenophobia, sexism, etc.) and result in denial (further traumatizing to victims), due to the existential threat that questioning one's role in the collective identity can pose to oneself and the community, even if that social construction of identity is rooted in others' victimization and oppression.

As a result, social and cultural reproductions of trauma and history are “not merely attempts to understand what happened, but are building blocks in the construction of social identity... and the negotiation of collective meaning.” (Hirschberger, 2018) The reconstruction of memory as post-memory, such as for second and third generation survivors, involves a process of imagination and creative reconstruction of past events and collective traumas. Within the context of Jordan, nearly half of the population is of Palestinian descent of the Nakba, forced from their homes and the victims of violent military occupation and apartheid. Palestinian creative resistance and reconstruction has been highlighted through graffiti, caricatures, and the rise of comics/graphic novels as a method of political expression and personal documentation in the face of fragmentation and repression of Palestinian voices. Graffiti in the public sphere can similarly be seen on the wall dividing Israel and Palestine; voicing messages of hope and symbols of resistance such as Banksy, developed and added-on over time. Such common phrases and caricatures of graffiti can become symbols of the collective identity, helping to establish

community narratives of events and serve as communication as a form of hope. For example, Palestinian comic artist Naji al-Ali created the figure of Handala—a figure of a young boy barefoot, standing with his back towards the reader in a posture of silent, yet defiant protest. The character was inspired through his own experiences with the occupation, memorializing his and others lost childhoods to fear of violence and being forced to live in refugee camps. Naji Al-Ali frequently published such comics on topics as commentary on the occupation of Palestine and related current events from his home in London, speaking to how for a group displaced from their land, sites of creative resistance can serve as a grounding point. As Priyadarshini and Sigroha write, such documentation “By means of oral narratives, autobiographies and memoirs, among others, the personal becomes public and the individual speaks for the collective, making it available for posterity.” (Priyadarshini, Sigroha 2020) The tradition of comics such as graphic novels as creative resistance for Palestinians is also seen in Leila Abdelrazaq’s *Baddawi*, in whose introduction she writes that the maintenance of Palestinian memory and identity is a form of resistance itself.

This is a common form of creative resistance among the Arab World. Following the trend set by Tunisian Revolution, protestors of the Arab Spring often took to graffiti messages in public, open spaces as a form of political expression. This was a form of creative resistance that could reach the community despite repressive governments and lack of community communication tools otherwise. Sites of popular protest during the Arab Spring, such as Tahrir Square and Gezi Park, were observed to be filled with art, music, slogans, and performances. Cultural practices signify not only self-preservation, but fulfillment, community, and creation beyond the state.

Alternatively, in Iraq, personal testimonies of Iraqis of the violence experienced at the hand of American soldiers depicting graphic torture against civilians in a globalized mediascape broadcasted the injustices of the war and turned many against the war. In Syria, documentaries and local media publications pave the way for creative resistance. Local media publications allow for communication between areas under different powers to share their stories, as well as with the rest of the world. Documentaries such as *For Samaa* and *The White Helmets* bring the autonomy of storytelling to areas under constant violence; allowing those outside of Syria to empathize, listen, and interpret collectively. In both cases, creative resistance involves taking back the autonomy to reveal one's truth and one's story of what has happened and continues to happen, which is essential to achieving justice. In this sense, creative resistance in the Arab World, is a part of survival, collective-preservation, and the fight for justice despite the traumas of the region– which will be defined and expanded upon in the next section.

Trauma in the SWANA Region and Jordan

The common root of generational traumas identified by interviewees broadly, as mentioned above, is the lack of dignity, autonomy, and hope in building their own futures. This is the overarching theme of several continuous political and social crises in Jordan and the SWANA region; colonialism, imperialism, systems of oppression, forced expulsions and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, the resulting refugee crisis, state authoritarianism and its violence during the Arab Spring, and the present economic situation. Interviewees described that the traumas of the SWANA Region most definitely influence the politics of the region. Generational trauma can motivate political action such as the Arab Spring; pent up traumas of violence, a lack of autonomy, and demands for equality were released through collective, organized action. On a

state level, generational trauma impacts political decisions. An interviewee noted that the brutality of the Israeli occupation can be linked to the generational trauma of violent anti-semitism from the everyday fear to mass tragedies such as The Holocaust. However without awareness the desire to protect oneself has turned into perpetuating the trauma onto Palestinians through ethnic cleansing and apartheid. As continuous traumas are placed onto the society, Interviewee #1 described a sense of hopelessness and defeatism for freedom and political action. The fear following the violent repression of political movements such as the Arab Spring and surveillance of dissent has manifested into a generational trauma of community breakdown in political organizing and discussion.

These are just a few examples, and it's important to note that these traumas are not homogenous per group. Each group experiences these traumas and societal shifts relative to their identity, worldview, and privilege or lack thereof. The shock of the influx of the refugee crisis into Jordan impacts all of society. However, it impacts different groups differently dependent on class, country of origin (Syrian, Iraqi, and Palestinian refugee issues tend to be at the forefront, while Yemeni, Sudanese, and Somali refugees are not as prominent), gender, religion, ethnicity, race and class status.

One of the most prominent ongoing traumas in the region is the refugee crisis. Refugees in Jordan comprise Palestinian, Syrian, Sudanese, Somali, and Yemeni groups and collectively, make up nearly half of the Jordanian population (Fanack, 2020). However, Interviewee #4 noted that the term 'refugee' is relatively new, brought by states and international organizations to police refugees and provide aid. Before, groups that settled in Jordan such as Circassians and Armenians were considered as immigrants. They described that the term refugee, while still respecting the right of return specifically for Palestinian refugees, implies a

‘temporary stay.’ With the term refugee comes legal stipulations that police identity, movement, and livelihood. This results in material poverty and deprivation from the government— such as governmental restrictions on refugees’ field of work and movement such as from camps; removing both freedom and settlement for refugees. This results in a lack of proper community integration or support, and future planning such as pursuing businesses, fixtures, and relationships to build independence. There is not a sense of settlement in the new country or one’s home, leaving refugees in a limbo, perpetuating uncertainty. This arrangement does not allow displaced refugees to feel safe, settled, and the community-care to realize and work through the trauma of what has occurred to resist oppression and thrive in communities.

Contrastingly from the Jordanian perspective, the same interviewee noted that Jordanian society has a trauma of a crisis of identity as a result. With the influx of refugees, tensions between refugee groups and local Jordanians was a prevalent theme in the past—fights, massacres, racism. Interviewee #4, as a Palestinian-Jordanian, stated that Palestinians have been described as cultured activists in relation to Jordanian tribalism as a way of upholding Palestinian identity in spite of being refugees. The interviewee shared a common joke shared between Palestinians, that the Jordanians did not know how to add meat and cook the Mansaf until Palestinians came to teach them. Interviewee #6 shared his experience facing racism from his own family members and estrangement for being the son of a Palestinian in a Palestinian-Jordanian mixed marriage. They described the result as creating a barrier of solidarity between Jordanians and local refugee groups, and how more time is spent devising national narratives and proving Jordanian national identity, keeping the community looking towards the past rather than seeking plans for the future to meet material needs.

In addition to the impacts of the refugee crisis, the present economic situation plays a large role in shaping the trauma and political realities of today's Jordanian youth. Anecdotally, youth interviewees described increasing wealth inequality and a lack of economic opportunity affecting their entire generation at high rates. Interviewee #6 shared that the majority of Jordanian youth are currently unemployed, resulting in society-wide uncertainty, anxiety, and shame. Increased wealth inequality affects children's and adult's self-esteem from a young age; lack of the same goods everyone has, differing access and tastes to art, music, and cultural norms, and the ability to relate with different groups. Action and rhetoric from the government does not properly respond to the population's concerns due to the lack of free expression and international pressures, leaving the youth abandoned and hopeless for the future beyond themselves.

Psychologists' Take: Generational Trauma in Jordan and the SWANA Region

Interviewee #2 is a clinical psychologist and professor of psychology based in Amman, Jordan. When asked about the presence of generational trauma in Jordan and SWANA broadly, the interviewee described a prevalent backdrop of generational trauma in the region. It first became prevalent in their life as a psychologist when working to provide psychosocial support to Iraqi refugees. When working with the Iraqi refugees, they expressed feelings such as understanding the trauma of their parents, their trauma responses, and generations before them. This was what the interviewee described as the prevalent backdrop of generational trauma; not just singular events passed down, but common reiterations of traumatization and trauma responses through instability, continuous conflicts, and patterns passed down.

The interviewee described the common root of continued traumatization as the lack of true independence and sovereignty in the region. Continued occupations—the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, and continued imperialism and financial/ political dependence—has led to not only a material lack of autonomy, but a removal of dignity and choice from the population. Like how trauma on an individual level becomes stuck in the body or ingrained in habitual patterns, trauma can become similarly stuck in a society through political inaction, fear, and hopelessness.

However, contrary to other theories, the psychologist laid out a framework of generational trauma that was not purely negative, but rather also potentially transformative. The interviewee described the promotion of political action and attempts at social change as a form of trauma release—a reclamation of dignity, autonomy, and power after the enforced shame of one's identity and trauma through eras of decolonization, occupation, post-colonial oppression, imperialism, etc. This is where generational trauma can be transformative as a motivator for social change. The Interviewee cited continuous trauma as a reminder of the need for change and their 'bubbling up' into political action. Repressive governments that restrict political action can force trauma to become internalized due to the lack of release, weakening communities further and potentially resulting in disorganized, violent releases.

However, challenges to such transformation include the fact that the presence of trauma (let alone continuous traumatization) can negatively impact the resiliency of the community if not addressed; trauma can manifest in more common external triggers, dysfunctional family units, mental/ physical health issues, and fractured communities. In the next section, we will explore the traumas noted by interviewees in the SWANA region and how it manifests in self-esteem, identity, and continued resistance.

Shame, Dignity, and The State

Interviewee #6 shared that “Grief is put onto us the day we’re born.”

He described his experience of being overly aware as a child; of seeing blood and photos of massacres of people in Palestine—people that were just like him. Furthermore, he heard stories of his father in jail, and his mother dodging bullets from the Israeli police. Children learn about their identity from their parents. The grief of the community is put on them to ensure that their identity and narratives are maintained, when so much of the world attempts to erase that same Palestinian identity. Sharing such stories is a form of survival placed onto a community’s children at a young age.

This is a common experience highlighted amongst the interviewees. Interviewee #3 shared that he saw his father’s scars of bite marks all along his legs when he was a child. His father explained to him that as a young child, he used to throw rocks at the Israeli soldiers—armed with large guns and tanks—with his friends as an act of resistance against the violence they were experiencing. However, once they were found out, Israeli military chased them, beating his dad and sending dogs that bit his legs and left the scars on his leg as a child, until today. His father grew alongside his scars; he grew alongside the seemingly permanent trauma of occupation and surveilled violence. Children are not exempt from such acts of violence, nor are they exempt from seeing it occur within their families or communities or to strangers just like them. They are brought into grief and battle for survival from day one. Such stories create not only a conscious awareness of violence, but also subconscious patterns. The interviewee described that they realized that the trauma lived within them into the future. As a child up until very recently, he said he unconsciously felt inherited feelings of fear, specifically

when further triggered by racism against Palestinians in Jordanian society or seeing such violence continue. His identity began to be shaped by such experiences and was intimately wrapped up with the trauma of his community living inside of him.

A common consensus expressed by nearly every interviewee was that most of Jordanian society is in a trauma that they don't even know that they're in. Interviewee #5 shared that he did not realize that it was not normal for children to be exposed to bloody pictures of oppression or stories of so many deaths and grief in his family—it was a privilege he hadn't even realized was taken from him. He and other interviewees described that PTSD symptoms in the family come out as anger, irritability, personal stress, health issues, family issues, temper, etc, which then impacts coming generations' own mental health, sense of security, and self-esteem. Interviewee #1— a Palestinian-Jordanian stay at home mother— described how in her experience generational trauma shows up in the family as a lack of communication skills, poor mental/physical health, and the difficulty in advocating for ones needs. This translates into society broadly, when in political spaces trauma impedes communication and connection skills for community building. She stated that one's trauma can become perpetuated onto the community if needs cannot be met. For example, she described how economic uncertainty and poverty in Jordan has increased risks of theft, so when one theft occurs in the community because of trauma and unmet needs, the fears of the rest of the community of theft and violence become activated. Lack of community trust breaks barriers to community care and resistance in the face of such systems of oppression.

As a result, it is difficult to work through the challenges presented by generational trauma across an entire society, if the community is unaware and specialized services are not available. Grief and oppression can become shameful when a society is unaware of generational trauma, further keeping people 'stuck' and further away from their own capacity to heal and resist

oppression. Interviewee #2, a psychologist, described how oppression can facilitate shame through dehumanization. He described how in Palestine, there is the shame of the community's inability to assert themselves due to continued occupation, racism, and social barriers.

Interviewee #4 shared their own personal experience recognizing their generational trauma, the effects of the trauma in the present, and the process of coming into their own healing and embodiment of resistance. They grew up in a small house in East Amman, considered the working-class and refugees' side of Amman, in a family of six kids and only two bedrooms. Growing up in a small area with little space for himself, he described that he felt insecure when changing, coming into sexual feelings during puberty, and felt the need to always be alert about what was going on within his small house. Feelings of shame, insecurity, and guilt were sown into the family unit and lowered his self-esteem. The prominence of religion as power in his family, increased feelings of shame and lowered self-esteem as it created a culture of surveillance and fear of blackmail of doing something 'taboo.' Fears of other community members of the taboo perpetuated fears of identity and blackmail onto him, policing his identity, expression, and freedom on an individual level. At the same time, he also learned dominance and control as masculinity and his source of power. His father and older brother were supposed to dictate his life, while he was meant to control and dictate the lives of his sisters alongside his father and male siblings. It was something he unquestioningly adopted due to seeing it emulated in his own family, and even felt pressured to imitate it to gain the respect of his male family members. This disrupted his ability to connect with his own sisters as equals in the family, and normalized power, control, and oppression. Such feelings and societal experiences passed on in the family shapes societal norms of communication and identity more broadly, which can have

profound implications on connections between communities, one's relationship with the state, and political life.

The interviewee described how this relationship with family and religion set the stage for his relationship with power; Complacent, accepting, controlling, or rebellious. Understanding such social norms from the family allows one to draw such relationships between the family and the state. Growing up in a patriarchal society. Interviewee #5— a local activist and community space builder— shared that he saw a connection between how the position of power of the father in the family as dominating, could be connected to dominance and authoritarianism in the state. The patriarchy at the small level of the family is linked to the broader culture of a lack of accountability of male leaders, ego of political power, domination and authoritarianism, lack of “thinking for oneself,” fear, and following the dominating power— whether that is the dominating male father, or the authoritarian state. As a result, for Interviewee #4, observing and questioning his own family led him to questioning norms on a larger, societal scale. When he began to partake in activist circles and movements in Amman, his father shamed him and discouraged him. Not because he didn't support him, but because his father had previously been an activist also and wanted to protect his son from the violence, disappointment, and defeats he had faced. Protective responses born out of his own father's trauma became generational through the use of shame and restriction of freedom to keep his own children safe, disciplined, and ‘socially safe’—regardless of the parent or child's true desires. This left him feeling alone, discouraged, and impacted self-esteem. It was when the interviewee began to set boundaries and assert his self-identity for himself, that he felt himself come into his own identity. He described it as ‘a moment of consciousness,’ which then helped him in recognizing his role in movements and the importance of his individual actions through activist circles. Boundaries allowed him to assert his

own needs and release feelings of shame, fear, and uncertainty. By extension, this allowed him to assert his own voice in political and social circles as an activist.

Interviewee #6—a local musician and political researcher—described the movement within the young generation to similarly build themselves and their own voice as their own hope for the future. He described that shame, guilt, and feelings of fear from trauma can prevent proper communication, organization, and hope for the future. As a result, personal empowerment must be at the root of transformative political and social action. Helping communities to overcome forced indignity and shame through seeing one as one's own light allows for optimism in creating their own futures and resistance. This is significant because such feelings of shame and indignity can be the deliberate result of policies by the state and political systems of oppression. For example, neoliberal policies exacerbating class and social differences in the modern day facilitate disempowerment by disenfranchising populations without significant capital power and drawing a separation between the people and the state against popular demands. A youth interviewee described that the consistent unemployment and increased wealth inequality is resulting in a loss of certainty, restricting one's movement, and limiting one's dignity. Gaining employment is a step towards continuing onto other culturally important stages of life; marriage, children, and building a family. As a child, the lack of access to the same new toys, trends, or relating to other youth as a scholarship student impacted his self-esteem and identity. The lack of certainty and lack of ability to continue onto important milestones and remain self-confident can compromise the self-assertion, survival, and potential of the youth.

Another example is how refugeedom has characterized one's identity and movement. These individuals are continually surveilled and policed by the state and further policed socially by class differences and racism, removing one's dignity, autonomy, and echoing a new trauma of

control in the face of previous trauma one has already fled. Addressing the relationship between individuals and the state is essential in personal empowerment for transformative social action.

However, the current intersection of generational trauma and the state has led the current young generation of Jordan to express a desire to leave Jordan. Interviewee #6—a political researcher—stated that 72% of Jordan’s entire population is youth, and 60% of the youth wants to leave Jordan. As a young person himself, he shared that he himself will be immigrating. He describes a common feeling among the youth, that through constant wars, refugee crises, lack of free expression, and other traumas, that the land here is “jinxed” or “cursed.” He said that he still loves Jordan and will always connect to Jordan; his love is for the air, plants, and soil here—but that the land and people are not given the opportunity to live up to their potential and are forced to live in the shadows of perpetuated trauma. He described that the youth have the opportunity to move and seek a better chance at becoming their own light and fulfilling their own potential outside of Jordan.

To combat the shame and unconscious presence of generational trauma, material needs need to be fulfilled, the subject matter must be tailored to the intended groups, and there needs to be spaces for open discussion and transformation. Safety is the most important material need highlighted by interviewees. A local activist interviewed described how once during a political protest, a protester escaping police with them turned out to be a secret agent. It was only by luck that the secret agent chose to tackle the other protestor rather than them. The lack of ability to trust one's own community in freedom of expression and political resistance perpetuates fear, trauma, and the lack of safety. Interviewees defined safety as free from the threat of violence, surveillance, state repression, and blackmail, and the access to community spaces for open expression, education and exploration. Before attempting to achieve social change, interviewees

added that safety includes the condition that a community's material needs must be met. As an Interviewee put it, "no one will care about the environmental impact of the food they're eating, if they are starving." Meeting the material needs of a community is essential in restoring dignity and connection to create social change.

Interviewees added that approaching mental health topics from the standpoint of "stress, depression, and anxiety," is not effective for this region because he said "everyone here is stressed, depressed, and anxious" from what is going on in the region. A psychologist said that non-judgemental, context-informed education on generational trauma and coping skills would be most effective. Any approach must be considerate of the trauma, respect it, and not challenge it. Understanding it allows one to not internalize it, but rather use it for community connection, social change, and give the trauma a purpose for building a better future. According to him, successful social change should not shoot for forced reconciliation, but inwards community-issues. Community spaces are essential in organizing around such demands and combating the feelings of shame to build an understanding of generational trauma for social change through connection and open discussion– which will be the focus in the following section.

Political Action and Resistance Through Community

Communities are essential in providing connection, communication, and strong networks of care between people. Such communities can act as places of resistance against systems of oppression, providing the needs of the community through community itself, and also serve as places of education.

When talking with Interviewee #4, he shared how large of a role community spaces played in realizing and processing the presence of his own traumas. Being in a community space allowed him to build his communication skills, namely with the opposite-sex, and critical thinking skills. Through this community space, he shared how he became aware of this trauma, released the shame of it through open discussion, and was able to assert his dignity and explore himself in a welcoming community with similar values. The first time he realized his trauma was when he had a discussion with his friend who was an Iraqi refugee, and saw how the same feelings he had— continuous fear, trust issues, and trouble with community— were similar feelings he held in himself. The presence of a community leader who embodied similar values of education, community, and equality gave him someone to look up to and empower himself beyond his trauma and limiting beliefs. Community leaders are as important in shaping the community as the people in the community collectively. He shared that before having access to open discussions and community, he searched for answers through online communities. This often led him to conspiracy theories born out of the distrust of generational trauma, which would be associated with prejudice and fear rather than facts such as anti-semitism. Community spaces as a place of education can be places to combat prejudice and open more productive dialogues for social change.

In relation to social change, he shared that his beginnings as an activist came from the same community space. By being able to openly discuss and have known contacts, individuals were able to find community networks to easily organize social demands for change within the community. For example, the expansion of the corporation Starbucks into the neighborhood Jabal-Al-Weibdeh, home to local, community run cafes and coffee shops, was able to gather 3,500 people to protest its expansion through one community space due to concerns of

gentrification against local businesses. The movement increased to petition against other large international corporations such as McDonalds and Carrefour in downtown to prevent erasing the identity of the long-lasting community fixtures already in place. Through access to his local community to lead movements such as these, he learned that communities carry activism on their own. He shared that activism isn't about goal setting and isolated, individual achievement only ; it's the process itself of engaging with similar values and implementing one's education; "You do your individual role, and someone else builds on it now and into the future."

This personal account is one example of how generational trauma affects identity-building and political activities within the community. Interviewee #5, a local activist and the leader of the community space mentioned above, established his community space during the Arab Spring. As an activist involved in the uprising, he was frustrated with the lack of clear, organized demands and cooperation between groups. He founded the community space to encourage education and community dialogue inspired by the revolutionary energy of the Arab Spring, in hopes of providing an 'organized release' to the generational trauma present and result in clear demands.

In his time, he discussed the importance of understanding how generational patterns influence how communities organize around such issues and relate to one another. He described how community spaces are places of social experimentation in different models. They are a method of subconscious learning by seeing and doing; the same way one learns social models and is enculturated in other places such as families, other local communities, or schools. By entering a new space with models conscious of generational trauma, systems of oppression, and the need for social change, individuals can experiment with different ways of being, learning, and communicating. As a community builder, he intentionally focuses on incorporating theory

into practice for an open community. By having a horizontal leadership model, a non-profit based system, an open-minded, inclusive community, and a diverse array of workshops and topics for people, he says that the space attracts those seeking such spaces. The lack of hierarchy and mindfulness of common barriers to community allow more people to access the space and create a sense of comfort to allow them to return, experimenting in an anarchist, equal social model of being.

The patriarchal norms mentioned earlier are reflected in the state, and also impacted how he ran his community space. He experienced difficulty in encouraging a horizontal leadership model as it was not a system his community members were used to. He said that most of the people were not used to not having someone to follow, to be independent, or given the opportunity to envision their goals for themselves resulting in chaos and a lack of direction for the space. To meet his community's needs, he adjusted to the need for a clearer, yet equal leadership model. This represents how community building is a learning space for new models of leadership over time and how factors of generational trauma and systems of oppression can impact the process of learning and unlearning.

Another example of the importance of community can be seen in East Amman. Bayariq Al-Atta is a community-run, aid association that focuses on meeting the material needs of the community through various, diverse donor funded projects; a productive kitchen, a library, regular food aid, domestic violence awareness, funding medical procedures for children, and much more. All the programs by the foundation were decided based on community need. The founder shared that 'we don't choose our projects, our projects come to us.'

This ethos would be observed when during the interview, people from the community would regularly come into the main office of the founder to pick up their food, ask for aid, or other forms of help. One could observe how comfortable individuals felt coming in openly to ask for aid. When asked how she created an environment for people to feel comfortable, she shared that she focused on maintaining the dignity of the beneficiaries, by maintaining their confidentiality and respect by not taking photos of them when receiving aid. When all the beneficiaries are treated well and have their material needs met, she says the association spreads through favorable word of mouth to build community. Through such repeated positive interactions, trust and care is built within the community.

She shared that “I was born here, I was raised here. If I walk with my eyes closed, I know all the paths and roads. Knowing all the families and their children and the families now, I know them all personally.” The success of the association emphasizes the importance of knowing your community to provide a network of care while actually knowing what they need and how to provide it. She shared that once a community’s material needs are met and productive projects give individuals a routine and clear goals, people can build a life beyond their trauma. With the help of the community, individuals in the community find a place of belonging, with many volunteers at the organization who find value and passion out of love for what they are doing. This shows how community is essential to generational healing to establish new patterns of being beyond the traumatic event, and provide opportunities for social change out of love and passion.

There are difficulties in building such a community in the context of Amman. Interviewee #3 described difficulty in finding community for himself due to economic conditions. As he navigated through Jordanian society to find economic opportunity, he found himself constantly moving around and unable to truly settle down and find community. Firstly,

an outsider to the city life as a Bedouin, he had to leave his original community to pursue education and educational opportunity. Continuing to move around for jobs, the need for economic opportunity and enforcement of capitalist barriers through class stratification made it more difficult to build community and relate beyond meeting one's needs due to economic uncertainty. On an institutional level, cost and meeting needs at an organizational level can prevent communities from being able to start up, such as rent or supplies needed for aid. This was a struggle expressed by the founder of Baqiyrat Al-Atta, as they received little funding or donations for rent, let alone to begin community-building or aid projects. As a result, it took years to build the resources to become a stable fixture for the community to rely on and access.

Interviewee #1, a Jordanian-Palestinian stay-at-home mother, described a lack of community available to her beyond family as well. She described that much of her time is spent taking care of the home, leaving little time to seek out community. Her role as a woman and the gender expectations paired with the necessity of her labor, create an isolated struggle for autonomy and community. She shares that her community has instead become social media, being able to connect with like-minded spaces online allows her a chance to experience the most accessible 'community' that there is.

Lastly, fear can place a barrier to building community. Fear of the unknown— unknown people, unknown subject matter, and the unknown experience of being in a new type of environment— can be a daunting experience. Additionally, the fear of state surveillance or intervention impending on safety as mentioned above, can impede community-building. Interviewee #5 shared his experience of running into state intervention when expanding his educational community space. Frequent calls from local police and municipalities created pressure on the space to not hold certain events or pursue activist goals. The state would enforce

repression through bureaucratic power and blocking, such as denying the space its license to operate despite multiple attempts by the interviewee to receive the license. The state used the rhetoric that open discussion, education, and activism could ‘cause conflict’ through challenging the state. However, this deliberately ignores the fact that the traumas, the state, and the status quo are already violent and resulting in present conflict.

To create communities that uphold solidarity and political action for justice and their own needs is dependent on groups’ perception of one another. Many groups in the region share many similarities within their respective generational trauma— forced removal from their homes as refugees, imperialism, colonization, common roots, etc.—yet certain nuances exist between the groups. For example, Interviewee #2—a psychologist having worked with refugees—described Iraqi and Palestinian refugees faced the trauma of an ‘external force’/ enemy, while Syrian refugees faced the trauma of betrayal from their own government and people. Even within similar groups such as Palestinians, perceptions are not monolithic. Palestinians living in Gaza, under consistent occupation and violence, may perceive Palestinians who fled the struggle of occupation as traitors who left them behind, or as strategists advocating for them outside the land of occupation. Communities allow for exposure, discussion, and solidarity between groups with shared struggle; the founder of the association in East Amman shared: “True love builds relations and inspires action. Hate breaks relations down.” To create successful political action through solidarity and advocate, strong community relations and perceptions of others within groups with similar struggles are essential to building or breaking solidarity to build political power.

Creativity and Societal Transformation

Creativity is often what gives voice to a population. The arts become a method of political expression in otherwise repressive states, subverting governments and systems of oppression to spread one's message. Creativity in Jordan contains many forms; art, murals, graffiti, music, dance, and cooking. Perhaps most significant about the nature of creativity in Jordan is not its form, but that artwork and creative resistance are sites of narrative-building within the diaspora as well, notably for Palestinians. Though Palestinians have been displaced and scattered all over the world for refuge, famous Palestinian creatives such as Mahmoud Darwish or Khalil Gibran continue to provide narrative to the Palestinian identity in the face of ongoing violence and future uncertainty.

Interviewee #6 is a political researcher by day and music producer by night. Growing up in Jordan as half-Palestinian in the shadow of Black September, he faced racism from his peers as a child and even his extended family. This trend carried on later into his life, sharing that he continued to feel the odd one out as a scholarship student at a school for rich Jordanians or being the only Jordanian when he studied abroad in the U.S. He's shared how music is the one thing that has stayed with him as he has grown into his identity through struggle and processed his own story. He grew into his self-esteem by acknowledging his beauty as 'a mosaic'; half-Palestinian/ Jordanian, raised a rural kid now living in the city, English of a New Yorker through hip-hop slang, encultured with the privileged Americans and Jordanians, yet a poor child all at the same time. Artists are storytellers, and the medium of hip hop symbolizes a medium of resistance and taboo-breaking, with the Interviewee fighting against societal pressures to be good enough as he is. He tells his story through the technicalities of the music, by combining Western Major/ Minor chord scales with a Jordanian percussion beat, by adding Arabic vocals, or adding quarter notes not found in Western style music.

The medium of creative expression speaks to his identity, frustrations, and background as well. He shared that Hip Hop was more popular in East Amman, and rock music was more popular in West Amman. For Hip Hop, all you need is a flow and someone to beatbox a beat, but with rock you need more expensive instrumental equipment. By finding beauty in his identity and message through the medium, he came to say that “I don’t need to prove myself, but I would like to show you myself.” He shared that he combatted his generational trauma and the shame of emotional expression through building confidence through music. He stood strong in his musical style and identity, and voiced his anger and fear into hip hop tracks and lyrics to release the emotion inside of him and share his identity, rather than repress it for it to come out in other ways.

For him, music is not just a tool of expression, but a tool for connection and narrative-building in the diaspora as well. When he first began to get into hip-hop, he learned English through memorizing lyrics of famous hip hop songs. When he was able to study in the U.S. for college as a result, he connected back to his Arab identity by beginning to record raps in Arabic as voice memos on his phone and then into full-blown tracks. By partnering with other rappers in the Arab world whom he can produce for, he is able to help bring their stories to life and connect to his identity. Much of Arab hip hop, specifically North African and Palestinian hip hop, focuses on reflecting the realities of oppression, war, and occupation. A rapper he currently works with, focuses on combining colloquial Arabic lyricism with hip-hop beats and mixing folklore music with his own trap-esque beats to reflect his emotions towards the continued occupation of his family in Palestine. Creative resistance here creates community by creating collaboration between artists to spread the shared message of freedom for Palestine. Art allows culture to be connected, maintained, and built upon even when traditions and communities are

disrupted and scattered across the world. At moments of instability, where everything is collapsing and rebuilding, art can help to establish narratives and perspectives to help us make sense of the present moment and shape our hopes for the future. He hopes in the future that access to creativity is more open due to the discrimination against hip-hop artists in obtaining Jordanian Artistic Licenses for funding, and that hip-hop can spread beyond co-optation without message in the popular music genre in Jordan.

A small coffee shop in the artistic, yet also touristic neighborhood of Jabal Al-Weibdeh takes a different approach towards creative resistance. The owner noticed that many tourists would walk through the neighborhood only a few steps from downtown, and wanted to represent the community in a colorful way to those that would walk by. Inspired, he began to dream up ideas; painting murals, planting flowers, and first and foremost, painting the stairs that connected downtown to Al-Weibdeh. The entire neighborhood was involved in the project. A committee was established to work on the project, local artists volunteered to paint, money was collected from the residents to support cleaning and decorating the neighborhood, and the designs were selected by popular vote by the community. Murals on the wall depicted famous figures across the Arab world, such as Palestinian writers and activists Mahmoud Darwish and Ghassan Kanafani, and Lebanese singer Fairouz. Figures on the wall served as representations and reminders of history and the potential for creative resistance. As the neighborhood became more colorful it also became more lively. People would come to the stairs to share culture and traditions such as play music, dance, and have fun. Creativity and color to the neighborhood brought joy and community. Following the painted stairs, now known as Al-Kalha stairs, other neighborhoods began to paint their stairs similarly. The project in Al-Weibdeh set the trend to

invest in public spaces, bond communities, and promote creativity, speaking to the transformative power of art.

He opened up his coffee shop in the neighborhood afterwards, naming it Yafa for the city in Palestine his mother was from and the colorful, happy oranges it is known for. It is decorated with quotes and prints from famous artists all over the world, including prominent quotes and images of activist artists sourced from the community's tastes and history. He named it after Yafa to represent the identity, story, and message of Palestine in the name which he wished to express. By having the coffee shop standing, he said he is doing what he can to keep the memory of Palestine and the right to return standing. He shared that "Art is a method of resistance rather than just guns." Many recognized it as a symbol of home and resistance; many influencers and directors of series and movies have come to the shop to record it as a symbol of Palestine. He shared that his experience in the neighborhood arts has shown him that despite the ongoing feelings of helplessness of the Palestinian community, art allows one to take back power and create to express their feelings, identity, realities, and messages. Through diverse expression, art opens minds, and through public access to art, the more people will be stimulated to create art and express their own unique selves. In the future, he hopes to expand Yafa internationally, to spread the message and reminder of Palestine through the arts.

Conclusions

All interviewees unanimously agreed that generational trauma plays a large role in the social and political life of Jordanian society, and that most members of Jordanian society are in a trauma they do not know they're in. The common root of these traumas is identified as a lack of autonomy in one's future, continued oppression and instability, further perpetuated by perceived

betrayals and abandonment by the state. Like in individuals, how trauma can become stuck in the body or ingrained in habitual patterns, trauma can similarly become stuck in a society through collective fear, political inaction, and hopelessness. PTSD on a collective scale can manifest itself on a social level through increased irritability, physical/ mental health issues, poor communication skills, anger, a crisis of identity, and a breakdown of community relations. Low self-esteem, poor communication skills, and community breakdown through unmet needs impacts resiliency, solidarity, and moves for political action within Jordanian society.

Generational trauma can act as a motivator for political change, as continuous traumas can serve as a reminder as the need for change. Community spaces help to provide networks of discussion, education, and solidarity to provide an organized, productive release of the trauma through advocating organized demands. Community spaces can promote political change by embodying desired social models and serving as reliable networks of community care through repeated positive treatments.

Creativity, on an individual or collective level, also serves as a survival and coping technique in the face of traumatic events. Creativity, such as storytelling and artwork, serve as self-preservation to one's identity and story, connection to one's identity even in the diaspora, and an open expression of one's message and feelings regarding the trauma. Creativity can serve as a tool to build communities and identity and provide narratives to a community's struggle.

Takeaways from this research study are the importance of understanding generational trauma in the political landscape of Jordanian society and the need for trauma-informed care. Approaching such topics through open dialogue and from not solely mental health perspective, but rather family education and an open societal discussion to bring awareness and establish

patterns of being beyond trauma To resist the impact of ongoing traumas, building strong communities can help to provide community care, solidarity, and opportunities for political change against traumas of oppressions.

Limitations and Further Study

This research was conducted within only 3-4 weeks, leaving inadequate time to fully explore the implications of the topics. The result was that most interviewees were Jordanian-Palestinian men, with the exception of two women. With more time, it may be possible to connect with more diverse interviewees including those of differing refugee background, more local Jordanians', and more women as the researcher was mostly connected with Jordanian-Palestinian men.

Secondly, as an American outsider with a language barrier, despite translation and knowledge of the language, research conducted by locals with locals could produce research more informed on the context, meanings, and connotations of the content shared by interviewees better. Lastly, the researcher is not a psychologist nor has psychological training. A psychological approach and trauma-informed interviewer may have been able to interviewee recent refugees and with deeper questions, which the researcher did not choose to do due to their lack of training.

As a result, further research could be conducted with a more diverse, inclusive group of refugees, women, more interviewees from East Amman, and perhaps even outside of Amman. This research focused on the impacts of generational trauma, further research could focus on if the opposite of generational trauma exists: generational power, entitlement, and superiority. Generational healing practices and access to mental health services were briefly touched upon in

interviews, but further research on community generational healing/ self-care practices, access to mental health, and perception of mental health could be reviewed to provide steps forward.

Lastly, this research largely focused on the Palestinian refugee diaspora in Amman, however it would be interesting to research how diasporas across the world interact with each other, and affect collective narratives, action, and creative resistance considering the growing trend of young people leaving Jordan.

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Appendix

I. List of Interviewees

Interviewee #1	Jordanian-Palestinian Stay at Home Mother
Interviewee #2	Psychologist and Professor
Interviewee #3	Psychologist and Professor
Interviewee #4	Local Activist and Entrepreneur
Interviewee #5	Activist and Founder of Local Community Space
Interviewee #6	Political Analyst and Music Producer/ Audio Engineer
Interviewee #7	Founder of Baqiryat Al-Atta
Interviewee #8	Founder of Coffee Shop/ Community Art Project of Jabal Al-Weibdeh

II. Interview Questions

- Have you heard of the concept of generational trauma? Do you think this phenomenon is present in your life and community; if so, in which ways does it show up—interpersonally, community-wide, and on a political level?
- How does the presence of generational trauma impact social and political progress?
- How do you find or cultivate community within your space?
- Do you think generational trauma impacts how people within Jordan/ SWANA interact within our community and build communities together, especially in terms of solidarity?
- What sources of hope or creative outlets for justice do you have?
- How does your creativity help in reconstructing the realities of generational trauma, how does it help you tell your story,
- What needs do you need fulfilled to resist, reconstruct, and thrive in the face of generational trauma to achieve justice for yourself and your community?
- Do you think applying an understanding of generational trauma and trauma-informed research is beneficial in understanding how to build positive social change? How?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about the topic that we did not get the chance to cover?

III. Copy of Informed Consent

Title: Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory, and Creative Resistance

Your Name/Homeschool: Neha Malik, Georgetown University

School for International Training—Jordan: Modernization and Social Change

1. The purpose of this study is to develop empirical research on the topics of collective memory and generational trauma, including how communities reconstruct narratives in the face of trauma through creative resistance. The study will aim to investigate the impact of generational trauma on social-political progress and community resilience within Jordan.
2. **Rights Notice**
If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview.
Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.
 - a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
 - b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
 - c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

3. Instructions:

Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Signing below indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Signing below while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.

I am aware that this interview is conducted by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study on the impact of generational trauma on social/ political progress and community resilience.

I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.

I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.

I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.

I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.

I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Date:

Participant's Signature:

Participant's Printed Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Thank you for participating!

Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:

Dr. Ashraf F. Alqudah, SIT Jordan Academic Director

Telephone (962) 0785422478

Email: ashraf.alqudah@sit.edu