CREATING SOCIAL CAPITAL

INSPIRING STORIES OF EMIRATI WOMEN

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DEDICATION

For my beloved Greg

who found me the most beautiful places to write!

For Jennifer, Andrew, Sofia, Eve, Saul, Arden and Stuart

who are the future.

Creating Social Capital: Inspiring Stories of Emirati Women

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Abstract

The research was conducted in Ras Al Khaimah, located in the Northern portion of the United Arab Emirates. I worked with fifteen Emirati women, fourteen of whom are graduates of Ras Al Khaimah Women's College (RKW) and one who is a graduate of the United Arab Emirates University in the Emirate of Al Ain (UAEU).

In this case study, I have used the 4 D method of Appreciative Inquiry, an action research application of social construction, supplemented by Photovoice sessions.

The women, who participated in the research, shared narratives about contributing to their families and the community and based on the strengths revealed in these narratives, they created dreams of their futures. These futures include: completing their studies at the Master's and PhD level, creating healthier, happier families, volunteering in the community, and contributing to the effectiveness of the national education system. A number of the women have taken the first steps along the path to these futures.

This research provides a number of alternative stories to the story that is usually told about Middle Eastern women, the story that they are submissive, passive and inferior. The narratives the women shared are narratives of accomplishment, contribution and strength. With their focus on actual women in the workplace, these stories can be used to provide an injection of life and voice to cross cultural training for expatriates working in the United Arab Emirates. They will also make it possible for Emirati girls and women to celebrate the achievements of their 'sisters' and perhaps co-construct new narratives of their futures.

This case study involved college and university graduates who are employed, future research could focus on Emirati women in other walks of life. These future studies will, I'm sure, reveal different narratives creating many more alternatives to the current 'single story' of Middle Eastern women. As Myra Virgil points out in her dissertation, '*We cannot assume that one way of understanding is necessarily the same as others or is in any particular way closer to the truth*' (Virgil, 2006, p. 26*). Each perspective is – rather than right or wrong, supplemental to others* (Merrill, 2011, p. 100).

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Introducing the participants

Like a novel, this dissertation has many characters. This is a list of the women who made my research a reality (oh, I mean a social construction!) I have given a very short vignette of each of them, hoping this will help the reader remember who they are as they read through the dissertation. In Chapter Four, I expand on these descriptions.

All the women are Emirati, Muslim women who are graduates of Ras Al Khaimah Women's College or the University of the United Arab Emirates. All of them are employed and many of them are engaged in furthering their formal education.

The names are the first names of the participants. Only one preferred that I not use her name so I have referred to her, throughout, as Participant One.

Aaesha (eye sha)

Aaesha loves drawing Japanese anime and watching Korean movies. She completed her Bachelor's degree at RKW and works in the Learning Centre assisting students with their English.

Aamena (am na)

In 2205 when Aamena was working full time, enrolled in a Bachelor's program and taking care of her three sons, she won second prize in the Humorous Speech Category at the National Toastmaster's Competition.   She is a very funny woman!

Participant 1

Participant 1 graduated from the college and could not find work so she and her friend decided to volunteer at the college. Both were hired as temporary employees and now she has a full time job in the library.

'It is like a dream to have a job and pay for my own schooling, not using my family's money. I will go to university to complete my degree.'

Aarefa (are eef a)

Aarefa has amazing energy. She is a wife and the mother of two children as well as having a very demanding career as the Vice President of a bank.

When I asked her about her energy, she said: *'The good thing you know, I don't lie at home doing nothing. I don't believe in it.'*

Abeer (a beer)

When I asked Abeer how I could describe her, she talked about how much she loves Twitter; she keeps herself up to date with it and reads it like others would read a novel before falling asleep at night. Abeer is a graduate of the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) where she received her Bachelor of Science with a Major in Biology. She is currently teaching at RKW.

Afra (a fra)

Afra loves to write and she posts her stories on the RKW website for all to read. When she was a student, she had her picture taken outside the library where she now works. *'This is my photo, a picture of me standing in front of the library door. It's like I'm saying, 'Hey, my future will be here!'*

Amal (a mal)

Amal was the first Emirati hired at RKW. She still remembers the effort it took for her to be hired. *'It was not really that accepted for me to work in a mixed environment (men and women), so it was a really tough time, it was a tough time.'* Amal has held many positions in her tenure at the college and she is now the Manager of Student Services, but as you will read, she really enjoyed mentoring the Student Council.

Huda (hoo da)

Huda graduated from the college in 1998. She is in charge of Work Experience for the RKW students at the local hospital. She loves makeup and more than once has insisted on doing a 'makeover' for an unsuspecting faculty member who has stopped by to visit her students at the hospital.

Kitty

Kitty is always 'up' and she loves everything she does. Her life is full because that's the way she prefers it. Speaking about her weekend job, one she holds in addition to her full time job and her Bachelor studies, Kitty said, in her usual ebullient fashion, *'And sometimes, I don't believe it myself that I am a Head Invigilator. When I come here it's a different feeling, it's like fun, it's like I can't even explain it.'* Kitty works in the Career Centre at RKW where she assists students with their resumes and job search skills.

Latifa (la tee fa)

Latifa has been teaching Information Technology at one of the local high schools for ten years. She and her husband are in the process of building a house. They are building it as they have the money because Latifa doesn't want any loans. After her father passed away, Latifa's sister borrowed money to put Latifa and her younger sister though college. Although the loans are long paid off, partly with Latifa and her younger sister's help, she doesn't want to borrow money for anything.

Maryam (mary am)

Maryam travelled to New Mexico last summer to look into studying for her PhD at New Mexico State University. While there, she learned to make grilled cheese sandwiches, so she has one foot in America already! Maryam manages Continuing Education at RKW.

Mozah (Moe za)

Mozah is a dynamo; she has opened four businesses all while working full time. I attended Mozah's wedding a year and a half ago, and it was wonderful to see her so happy! Being married has not slowed her down, she is thinking of opening another

business, this time with her husband. She graduated from RKW in 2000 and although it took her some time to find her first job, she hasn't stopped since.

Nahla (na la)

Nahla graduated in 2002, she was in the last class I taught before I left and she was a diligent student. She had difficulty finding work but eventually was hired in the Medical Zone where she takes care of employee promotions.

Nahla has thought recently about taking a job closer to home, but the Director of Human Resources doesn't want her to leave. Nahla is a whirlwind, she gets everything done that needs to be done and she does it right.

Reem

Reem is an Information Technology teacher at the high school she attended. She tells me that she divides her life between her teaching job and her young son, fifty, fifty, and that is how she creates balance in her life.

Shaikha (shake a)

Shaikha works in a local bank; has three children and was expecting a fourth when I interviewed her. During the interview, she mentioned that she was in the process of preparing her resume so she can move on in her career. Clearly motherhood has not slowed her down.

The Researcher

I'd like to explain a little more about myself and how I came to live and work in the Emirate of Ras al Khaimah.

I have lived in the northern Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates off and on for the past fourteen years. My initial offer of employment at the Higher College of Technology was in 1997 and I couldn't wait to go! I had always wanted to work 'overseas' and had applied two years earlier only to be told there were no positions that would work for me, but to try again later. My husband and I completed our Masters studies and I applied again and this time I was accepted. I joked that this was my 'midlife crises' and it was far better than buying a red sports car!

My husband, Greg, our nine year old son, Stuart, and our large Doberman type dog, Henry, set off for the adventure. Shortly after we arrived my husband was hired as an adjunct faculty at Ras Al Khaimah Men's College (RKM) and by the end of the year, he too had a full time teaching position.

We all thrived. Once it cooled off, the weather was wonderful, and there were lots of new and interesting activities and people.

We took advantage of where we were; we camped in the desert, swam in the warm ocean and ran on the beach. I trained for, and competed in, four Olympic distance triathlons one in Dubai and three at Crescent Beach, a small town south of Vancouver. I would train in Ras Al Khaimah and compete there in the summer.

My husband and I found time for each other, something we didn't have in our hectic lives in Vancouver and our relationship blossomed.

Our son travelled with us throughout Europe and Asia and did a solo trip with the Abu Dhabi hockey team to Hong Kong, where he scored the winning goal in the tournament!

Work at the college was not demanding and I used the extra time to research employment patterns for Emirati women. When I first began teaching at the college, I was told that the women did not want to work, but it turned out that this was a myth. Graduates came back to the college after unsuccessful job searches, devastated. Not all, but a fair number of them, really did want to work so I decided to see what their options were.

My research showed that the government did not have enough jobs for our graduates. It seemed that there was a limit on the percentage of women who would be hired in any given ministry. I was able to access three years of employment data so although it wasn't enough to draw conclusions, it was clear that the trend occurred in every ministry, when employment in the ministry increased the percentage of women employed stayed the same.

I presented my findings at the Higher Colleges' Annual Conference in Dubai, where the conference attendees discussed the situation and suggested that entrepreneurship might be one option for the women graduates. Back at RKW, I organized a conference on Women as Mentors, inviting Emirati women who were employed or had their own businesses to share their stories with our students.

This conference was a positive experience and led me to partner with some colleagues and apply for a grant to open a Small Business Incubator at the RKW. We were successful both in receiving the grant and in launching one business – a ladies' salon, before I left the college to return to Vancouver.

Subsequently, the municipality of Ras Al Khaimah opened a Small Business Incubator and the one at RKW closed.

Photograph 1. Bonnie and the two graduates at the opening of their salon. Supplied by Bonnie Milne (2002).

Returning to Vancouver

It became clear to my husband and me that although our son was enjoying his time and the school he was attending was academically sound, he needed to be back in Vancouver to reestablish his roots.

Many expatriates raise their children outside of their home countries, but we felt that it would be better for him to reconnect and build his lifelong relationships in a Western environment. As it turns out, his time in Ras Al Khaimah really increased his confidence and after a short adjustment period in Canada, he did well in his studies and in his sport – hockey! More importantly, he built solid relationships that are carrying him through his university years.

My husband and I settled into jobs and the hectic North American life (no laundry service, no cleaning person and not as much disposable income). The upside was being closer to our older children. Our daughter gave birth to our first grandchild, but soon after, she and her partner and our granddaughter moved to Australia, so once again we were a long ways apart.

While we were in Vancouver, my mother's health began to fail and we cared for her in our home until she passed away. Taking care of her was an experience that enriched all our lives.

Back to Ras Al Khaimah

It was a good decision to return to Vancouver but both of us missed Ras Al Khaimah so even though I was turning 60; we decided to apply to return to the Higher Colleges. In the past the colleges did not hire people over 60. Fortunately, their HR practices have changed and in 2009, my husband and I were offered three year contracts.

Returning to Ras Al Khaimah enabled me to reconnect with some of my graduates and see how their lives have unfolded. More importantly, it gave me the opportunity to work with them on this research project to learn more about the impact their education has had on their families, their work and their community.

Chapter One

Synopsis

In this this chapter I have written an overview of my research project, touching on the highlights of every phase. I have begun by sharing my interest in this topic and have moved on to describe the research setting, the Emirate where the participants and I live and the college that is central to our lives; Ras Al Khaimah Women's College, most often known as RKW.

I have introduced the participants briefly, and you will learn more about them in the following chapters. Chapter Four, especially, provides a more complete picture of the women who participated in this study.

I have explained the iterations I went through to arrive at the final project. In discussing the methods I used, I have introduced the concept of social capital, described how I used ontological narratives, the 4D method of Appreciative Inquiry and Photovoice. Each of these concepts will be more fully explained as the paper progresses.

I have briefly described how my research builds on the work of Maha Khatib (1994) and Wanda Krause (2008) and provides an illustration of how adult education leads to increased social capital. The chapters that follow expand on these connections.

Highlights of the changes the graduates have made because of their involvement in this research appear at the end of the chapter. These changes are explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

My Interest in Ras al Khaimah Women's College

My research uses the 4D method of Appreciative Inquiry supplemented by Photovoice to elicit and share the narratives of fifteen Emirati college graduates. These women's stories illustrate their contributions to their families and their community, demonstrating the positive relationship between social capital and adult education.

While there is comprehensive research on Muslim Arab women very little work has been done with Emirati women by Western researchers. Khatib, and Krause are two researchers who have worked with Emirati women and I have consulted their research extensively.

The Emirates is a small, oil rich state that is constitutionally governed by ruling families. The nations' founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, stressed the importance of education for women and in 1988, he established the Higher Colleges of Technology. Each college consists of two campuses, one for men and one for women.

The Higher Colleges of Technology in Ras Al Khaimah, where I conducted my research, was established in 1995.

When I first joined the college in 1997, the Director told me that we were educating the women so they could be better mothers. These women, he assured me, didn't really want to work, nor did they need to. I was lulled into thinking that this was the

case until one of my graduates, Aamena, who you will meet many times in this paper, came to see me. She said that she had travelled all over the country with her nanny and her two children for job interviews. Several times she had been promised a job, but nothing materialized and she was becoming disenchanted and at the same time she showed a spark of anger because she thought that her education entitled her to a job.

That conversation shook me from my complacency and set me on a research project that ended in the opening of a Small Business Incubator at our college, Ras Al Khaimah Women's (RKW). I was able to hire Aamena to assist for part to the project and following that, she was hired in reception at the college. Aamena is a real success story, as you will see.

This research, although not directly connected to my first foray, is a result of my ongoing interest in the progress of the RKW graduates. Before I began this study I was aware of the literature that illustrated the strong connection between adult education and increased social capital. I was also aware of the picture that most Western media presents of Arab Muslim women as oppressed (Eltantawy, 2007) a view that I had tried to shift by sharing my experience with my friends and colleagues. My stories, while interesting, are not nearly as vibrant and full of life as the stories of the graduates. I am enamored with the idea that each of us needs to speak with our own voice and these narratives are one way to make that happen.

This study opens a small window, through which one can see the contributions the RKW graduates are making, and a small glimpse of their lives with their families, friends and colleagues.

It is important to counterbalance the stories that we often hear about Arab Muslim women and remember that these, are not the only stories. '*Social constructionism advocates that facts are culturally derived and that meaning is established within a tradition. If individuals remain within one tradition, one pattern of activity or one form of life, other traditions are likely to be considered less valuable, irrelevant or suppressed*' (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, as cited in Virgil, 2006).

I saw this illustrated when I shared stories of my experiences in the Emirates with my Western colleagues, they found it difficult to believe that the Emirati women I worked with were strong and independent, not unlike the students we work with in the West.

My friend and colleague, Jacquie, said, after reading the stories on the blog, '*It is great to read stories where the women are able to accomplish their goals and dream about their futures*' (Jacquie Mansell, in conversation 2012).

I would like encourage other researchers to explore the narratives of Emirati women, to continue to collaborate with them so the world can hear their powerful voices.

The Setting

The Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah

I conducted my research in Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates, a small Northern Emirate not nearly as well-known as its sister Emirate, Dubai. Ras Al Khaimah is surrounded by the craggy Hagar Mountains on the North and North East, the Arabian Ocean on the East and the desert on the West and the South.

The main town is divided by an inlet where mangrove trees flourish and migratory birds winter. A golf course borders the end of the inlet providing another hit of green in an otherwise brown and dusty landscape. Old Town is on the North side of the inlet, while Nakheel (New Town) sits on the South. The two sections of town are joined by a four lane bridge.

The town has many suburbs, known as villages. Although someone passing through wouldn't notice where one village begins and ends, the local Emiratis easily identify the borders between them. Each village has a strip mall or two with a bakery, a green grocer, a small grocery store, a laundry, a tailor and at least one salon, making it convenient for people to shop for necessities and services close to home.

As one gets closer to the mountains, the villages thin out and become more distinct. These smaller villages usually have a mosque and a primary school, but no stores. Throughout, the houses are surrounded by cement brick walls about six feet tall providing privacy and some relief from the blowing sand.

Ras Al Khaimah's Economy and Population

The town has three major hotels and is beginning to attract tourists, but the main sources of income are the cement plants, RAK Ceramics, and Julphar Pharmaceuticals supplemented by a small reserve of oil.

Expatriates provide the workforce for the hotels and the local industries while Emiratis hold the CEO or Chair positions. Emiratis also work in the government sectors; education, health care, immigration, the military and policing. Those who hold government jobs are often entrepreneurs as well, with their own small businesses. This is made possible by the short working days for most government employees. They begin work at 7:00 AM and are often finished by 2:00 PM. Many of the Emirati men from Ras Al Khaimah travel to Abu Dhabi (the seat of the national government) to work. Because of the distance; 236 kilometers (146 miles) they live there during the week and travel back to Ras Al Khaimah for the weekends.

Both Emirati men and women can open businesses or become a sponsor for expatriates who want to open businesses. A sponsor registers the expatriate's business in the sponsor's name and in return charges either a fixed amount per year or a percentage of the profit. The sponsor holds 51% of the company but does not contribute financially. Until the free trade zones opened in the UAE, this was the only way an expatriate could open a business. Sponsorship is the way many Emiratis make their living, since there is no limit to the number of businesses they can sponsor.

Most of the people who reside in the Emirates are expatriates. The split is usually identified as 80% expatriate and 20% Emiratis (or 'nationals'). More recently figures as high as 94% are being suggested for the expatriate population in Dubai (Lahouel, 2012). Ras Al Khaimah's Emirati population was approximately 172,000 when the last census was conducted in 2008 (Dubai, 2012).

The indigenous population, make up the citizenship of the UAE while everyone else who resides here does so on a temporary basis. Unlike many countries, the UAE does not allow people to immigrate. Workers, skilled, semi-skilled and professional, have 'Resident Visas' which are issued for periods of up to three years.

Based on this model, I often speculate on what Canada, my home country, would be like, if the First Nations people were the only Canadian citizens and if they had somehow managed to hold on to their land and resources and only allowed everyone else to have 'resident visas'.

This is what has happened in the UAE, less than twenty percent of the population are citizens and one result of this practice is that the resources of the country are used to enhance the lives of its citizens.

UAE citizens receive free education up to and including the Bachelor level. They are also eligible to receive funding for their Masters and PhD. The graduates who participated in this research benefited from this policy.

The UAE provides its citizens with housing grants and land on which to build homes as well as marriage grants. Only men who marry Emirati women receive the marriage grants and an Emirati woman who marries a foreigner loses her rights and the children born to these women are not Emirati citizens. Citizenship is closely guarded and has been since the country's inception.

Gulf State nationals can own land in the Emirates, but they are not citizens. The policy of not allowing immigration creates a number of parallel communities within the UAE based on country of origin and does not encourage integration between the communities.

On the other hand, a rich and diverse culture exists because of the international population. There is a wealth of cultural opportunities. In the same mall, one can buy a sari, a kandora (the white garment worn by Emirati men) or a Christmas tree. The entertainment available includes opera, ballet, the Eagles (live, in concert), Bollywood movies and everything in between.

The Ras Al Khaimah Women's College

The Ras Al Khaimah Women's College, known locally as RKW, opened in 1995 and is one of the seven Higher Colleges of Technology that were established in 1988. Each college has separate campuses for men and women and the curriculum is delivered in English. All but one of the women who participated in the research graduated from RKW.

These colleges have gone through many iterations and are now focusing on Bachelor level courses. Most of the women I interviewed graduated with a two year diploma and a number of them went on to complete their Bachelor Degrees at RKW.

RKW was built about 10 kilometers out of town, close to the base of the Hagar Mountains. Most of the buildings are temporary classrooms (trailers) that have survived quite well considering their age. There are two large permanent buildings that house the library, cafeteria, reception and some classrooms. The grounds are beautiful, with mature foliage that attracts all kinds of birds and makes walking around the campus a real pleasure, at least in the cool season, which lasts from late November until mid-April.

In 2010 (the latest year for which there are statistics) the total number of graduates for all the colleges in the Higher Colleges of Technology system reached 48,302 (HCT, 2011).

His Highness Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Chancellor of the Higher Colleges of Technology, said, in his address at the 2010 Higher Colleges of Technology Annual Conference, *'... this is an astonishing number of success stories of students who are enriching their families and our nation.'* The stories that the graduates told me, provide evidence of this.

The Participants/Collaborators

All but one of the fifteen participants are graduates of RKW. I taught thirteen of the women and seven of them are now my colleagues. One of them is a graduate of the United Arab Emirates University and my colleague. Until recently, I thought she was one of our graduates, but as it turns out, she was the first Emirati woman to work at the college.

The conversations and interactions I have had with these women have made it possible for us to extend our relationships beyond the classroom and the college. We have a sense of openness, acceptance and trust that made the women comfortable enough to share their successes, hopes and dreams with me.

These women are pioneers who are moving themselves and their country into a new era, an era of women working outside the home and contributing to the family income; an era of women being educated in English as well as Arabic; an era when their Western education influences the decisions they make.

These graduates are all employed. RKW graduate employment rates ranges from 19% six months after graduation to 64% two years after graduation, for graduates seeking employment (HCT, 2012).

The women range in age from their mid-twenties to their early forties. Seven of the women are single, four are married and four are divorced. Two of the divorced women have children and all but one of the married women have children.

All of the women have completed at least four years of post-secondary education, three of the women have Bachelor's degrees, two have their Masters and one is currently enrolled in a PhD program and a second has recently been accepted into a PhD program.

Defining the Research

Action research often unfolds in a different way than the researcher planned, and the design emerges over time (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; Reason & Bradley, 2008). My research is no exception. Although, my focus remained on the contributions the graduates make to their community, I pursued a number of trajectories.

When I returned to Ras Al Khaimah in 2009 after a seven year absence, I had already begun my PhD research on work/life balance. I planned to interview Human Resource professionals to see if their personal work/life balance impacted the way they designed work/life balance programs in their organizations.

I lacked the connections in the Emirates to carry out this research so I decided to explore my options.

Encouraging Families to Send Their Daughters to College

I came up with a plan to use Appreciative Inquiry interviews with graduates to learn more about how they contribute to their community. Once the narratives were gathered, I planned to share them with the community in the hope that these stories would encourage families to send their daughters to the college.

Currently 95% of female high school students in the United Arab Emirates apply to attend post-secondary institutes, but only 36% actually enroll (UNICEF, 2010; UAE, n.d.). Families usually make the decision about whether or not a young woman will attend college and they take many factors into consideration. I wanted to reassure the families that a college education would not only benefit their daughters, but would enhance their contributions to their family and the community.

Given the stress Islam places on contributing to the community, I thought if I could demonstrate the way the graduates give back to their families and the community; this would alleviate some of the concerns that families might have about sending their daughters to a Western college.

There are Five Pillars of Islam and two of them speak to giving back to the community, Zakat, and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Zakat is the obligation to donate a percentage of your wealth to charity, and fasting makes it easier to relate those who are truly in need and to see the importance of helping them (Muslim in America, 2011; Zahid, n.d.).

Partnering with an Emirati Colleague

When I chose this topic, Marge Schiller, my advisor, suggested that I partner with an Emirati for a joint dissertation, one that could be published in Arabic and English. My Emirati colleague, Shamma Al Naqbi had just completed her Master's Degree in Australia, so I approached her. She immediately grasped the idea of the research and loved it. She was keen to begin her PhD so we were a good fit. We planned to produce a bilingual study in Arabic and English. This would enable us share the stories with the community and would make our final dissertation more accessible.

Shamma conducted three Appreciative Inquiry interviews and was excited about what happened in these interviews, specifically, the way the women began to acknowledge and take ownership of their achievements; to see themselves as successful!

Unfortunately for both of us, Shamma had to take a break from her PhD studies, after the first year, so I had to rethink my plan.

I was conducting my interviews in English while Shamma was conducting interviews in Arabic. Shamma and I agreed that sharing English narratives would not have the impact on the families and the community that the Arabic narratives would have, because many of the parents don't speak or read English. When she decided that she couldn't continue with the study, I had to readjust my plans of sharing the women's narratives and I decided to share the narratives with faculty and students at the college and my Western Colleagues.

The Research Goal

The stance of the researcher is important to the outcome of the research. Using an Appreciative Inquiry approach, soliciting positive narratives that would expand the view Westerners have of Emirati women and at the same time provide the women with a medium in which to examine their success led to the expected outcomes. As Gergen and Thatchenkery (2004) note, research is based on the researcher's world view and '*... in social constructionist scholarship, that is, writings attempt(ing) to vivify the sociocultural processes operating to produce various "pictures" of reality- both scientific and quotidian*'

The goal of the research is both simple and complex; it is to share alternative stories to those we have been told about Middle Eastern Muslim women, to provide a new window through which to view these women. And that is the simple part. The complex part is to see how these stories that demonstrate the graduates' contribution to social capital in Ras Al Khaimah, shape the futures of the narrators and open the minds of those who read them, providing an alternative social construction of Middle Eastern Muslim women.

The stories I have told, are stories of how our graduates contribute to their family, workplace, community and country, creating social capital and sustaining a civil society. I have focused on their strengths and their achievements rather than their purported lack of power.

In the process of telling these stories, I hoped to provide a different perspective for those reading the stories and engender a sense of optimism about the future for the narrators. I wanted to demonstrate that by telling their stories and listening to the stories of their fellow graduates, the women who participated in the research would begin to take the first steps to realize this future.

Narratives, especially ontological narratives, aid in the development of identity. *'According to Somers and Gibson (1994), ontological narratives are the personal stories we tell about ourselves, our place in the world and our personal history'* (Dillon, 2011). The constructionist point of view sees the self, more as a project, than a search (Dillon, 2011). One will not 'find' oneself as many of us thought in the sixties, but one will 'create' oneself. And this self is ever changing in response to relationships, experiences and learning.

The narratives the women prepared and shared with each other, contribute to their stories of who they are. The way they responded to each other also altered their views of themselves. As they were reconfiguring their identity, they were creating a future that was in-line with this identity.

The future the women constructed for themselves is an extension of the high points of their lives. They were inspired, not only by their own stories but by each other's successes, co-creating their futures based, in part, on the relationships they formed in the Photovoice sessions.

Alexander (2009) speaks of how our feelings, thoughts and ideas are based on relationships with one another. The changes that occurred as a result of the research are a testament to the importance of the relationships the women formed.

Self-development, with the idea of giving back to the community is the recurring theme in the women's dreams of the future. This theme materialized in different ways. For Maryam it means studying for her PhD so she can contribute to the advancement of the national education system, for Aisha it means overcoming her father's concerns about her physical stamina and entering the Master's program while continuing her fulltime employment, and for Kitty it means breaking new ground in her family, showing them that she is capable of taking care of herself while she studies outside of the UAE. At the same time, Kitty is coaching RKW college students to become more independent and reliable so they too can pursue their dreams of studying abroad.

Contribution to Social Capital

The design of the research made it possible to identify ways the graduates are contributing to their community and creating social capital.

Social capital results from relationships that are based on trust and reciprocity. It is the 'glue' that holds society together. (Palgrave, 2000) It builds strong healthy communities where people help one another.

For example, friends and neighbours take care of one another's children or pets or pick up groceries for one another with no expectation of being paid. There is an expectation, usually unspoken, that the neighbour or friend will return the favour or will show a similar kindness to someone else (Putnam, 1993). Communities thrive on social capital and it is economically important because these 'social services' are provided for free within a community.

Social capital builds strong communities where people can rely on one another and monitor activity within the community. They feel free to discipline and care for children in their neighbourhood because they have strong bonds and similar values and beliefs. Networks are built that strengthen the neighbourhood; people know their neighbours and watch out for each other. Crime decreases as a result because neighbours are aware of who belongs in the neighbourhood and who doesn't (Jacobs, 1961).

Adult and higher education has been shown to contribute to social capital, specifically bridging capital, which allows individuals to tap into, and form a part of, larger more diverse networks (Field, 2003; Fukuyama, 1999). These expanded networks enable people to access resources that are not available in their tightly knit groups. For example, bridging networks are helpful when people are looking for work because they bring people together who would not normally connect, people who are not part of the family or the neighbourhood.

The women I interviewed spoke about networks they formed in college and continue to use now. They also spoke about networks they have established in their workplace that helped then achieve their career goals. For example, Nahla, who works in the Medical Zone, talked about the network she has built with her colleagues in the other Emirates and how much she relies on these women when she needs help with her job.

Equally important are the strong bonds the women have with their families (bonding capital). These were evident in the narratives they shared, many of which were about their families. When I asked the women who supported them, the answer was almost

unanimously, their family. This bonding capital comes with a price. Families support their members but they also have high expectations of them. I share an example of this in Chapter Five.

I chose to work with the graduates so I could bring their stories to light both in the community, where their families reside, and at the college. Currently the graduates are at the margins of the college community; the Alumni Association is not active and there is no place where their voices are heard and no venue to share the contributions they make.

I have compiled their stories to show the magnitude of the impact these women have had. Through the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, the exhibition of their stories in the RKW library and the Blog, I hoped to show their contribution as a group, not just as individuals. I wanted to bring them back to the centre of the college community and at the same time expose the community to their contributions (Block, 2008).

This research incorporates some elements of feminist research. It focuses lives of women, presents the possibilities for change, and it makes it possible for the women involved in the research to produce and share knowledge (van der Meulen, 2011).

The Danger of the Single Story

In her TED Talk, the Danger of a Single Story, Nigerian author, Chimamanda Adichie (2010), speaks about the danger of the single story; about popular images and how a single story told over and over again becomes 'true'. It creates stereotypes that while not false, are incomplete.

Adichie also says that power determines how stories are told, who tells them, when they are told and how many stories are told.

In her PhD dissertation, Khatib (1994) wrote about the single story of Arab Muslim women. She rejected the popular image of Arab Muslim women as passive, inferior, secluded exotic and distant. This image conflicted with her experience as an Arab Muslim women and her research was designed look at multiple stories of Emirati women. She interviewed, surveyed and met with students, members of women's associations and friends of her family which has deep roots in the United Arab Emirates. She concluded that the women she met with and surveyed are influenced but not controlled by their religion and see themselves as equal to, but different from, men.

In her dissertation analyzing the representation of Arab and Muslim women in the US press, Eltantawy (2007) reveals the popular image of Arab women in a veil or a headscarf, no matter what the subject matter of the article.

'*Many of these images portray Arab and Muslim women for the American audience as an Other: different, sometimes exotically mysterious, sometimes backward and oppressed compared to American women*' (Eltantawy, 2007).

Eltantawy's analysis supports Adichie's premise that multiple stories need to be told to empower and humanize. As Adichie (2010) says, stories can break dignity and repair it. The focus of the American press on the single story that stresses the differences between American and Muslim or Arab women widens the gap making it difficult for these women to identify with one other.

Eltantawy's research explains the way the lives and contributions of Arab Muslim women are constructed in the media in America. While this view of Arab Muslim women is disseminated by the media in the United States, it is not limited to that country. Khatib (1994) who had been residing in Britain before she began her research in the United Arab Emirates had been exposed to this idea and this prompted her to conduct her research with Emirati women.

Emirati Women's Contributions to Social Capital and Civil Society

My research builds on the work of Maha Khatib, an Arab Muslim woman, who studied the roles of women's groups and University students in the community and to the work of Wanda Krause, whose academic studies have focused on civil society, particularly women's participation in the Arab Gulf. Krause identified the contributions women in the Emirates make to civil society.

Until recently, researchers did not explore women's contributions to civil society in the Middle East because of a common assumption that women operated only in private spheres (Krause, 2010). This led to the mistaken belief that women are not active in the community and reinforced the idea that women are oppressed.

Krause and Khatib found that UAE women work and volunteer in women's organizations dedicated to improving women's literacy and work readiness skills. These organizations also provide services for lower income families and contribute to local schools.

Krause studied women's *Halaqas* (religious study groups) in the UAE and found that the women who belong to these groups donate time, expertise, goods and money to Emiratis in need.

She also interviewed women who are involved in loosely structured networks of men and women, Emiratis and expatriates, who provide assistance to Emiratis and expatriates. The people in these networks often have connections to government officials or expertise that is needed in the community. They contact one another to provide assistance.

My Interest in Multiple Narratives of Emirati Women

I have been frustrated when my colleagues in the West express their view of women in the Middle East. Many of them believe the women are treated as second class citizens and they question my decision to work here. The underlying criticism is that by being here, I am supporting a culture where women are disenfranchised.

These colleagues are looking for stories that reinforce their perceptions so when I tell them the stories of the Muslim women I teach, they have a hard time reconciling my stories with their 'single story' of oppressed women. However, those same colleagues who read the women's narratives on the blog were able to identify with the narrators. They were quick to see the similarities in their lives.

I think it is important to present a multifaceted perspective of the women in this study. It is important to celebrate the contribution they make, as mothers, sisters, daughters, employees and citizens of this country. This research has provided me with a wonderful opportunity, not only to share the narratives, but to hear them first hand, to learn more about the women and myself, to expand my awareness, and to connect

with them, not just as a colleague and a former teacher, but as another woman who is also a sister and a mother.

While on a personal level, this is very gratifying, it is also important on a wider scale because this research provides an opportunity for readers to begin to question the prominent view of Arab Muslim women.

Arab women have been characterized as passive, suppressed and inferior to men (Khatib, 1996; Mohja, 1999,). Even more recently, as Eltantawy (2007) points out, much of the discussion about Arab women centres on the significance of the veil. When I began my research, these well-meaning colleagues would send me articles about Muslim women wearing or not wearing the veil, assuming that since I was studying Emirati (Arab Muslim) women, this must be a major part of my research.

Fortunately, there are venues where the focus is shifting, like the Women in Leadership Forum in Abu Dhabi in 2010 where Dr. Rim Turkmani, an Astrophysicist at the Imperial College in London, encouraged women to support one another, saying, '*You can get ahead even if your family is not behind you…we need the support of other women, we have the power.*' So the old story is changing, but very slowly.

Research Design

I combined a number of methods to conduct the research: using a Case Study approach, Appreciative Inquiry, an action research application of social construction, specifically the 4D Model and Photovoice. It is a true *bricolage* since the study is cross cultural, exploratory and seeks to create both understanding and change.

Action Research

Action research provides a catalyst for change. This can be a change in the participants' as well as the researcher's perceptions or knowledge that alters how they define and construct their worlds. The new knowledge that enables the change is generated through relationships, the relationship developed with the researcher and the relationships developed between the participants (Gergen & Gergen, 2011; Reason & Bradley, 2009; Pedersen & Olesen, 2008).

The success of action research has been the implementation of change by the participants as a result of their involvement in the research. '*In other words, an action research methodology is one in which theory can be articulated through and in action*' (van der Meulen, 2011).

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a generative theory, more of a philosophy than a methodology (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999). It is a '*social constructionist approach to organizational change and development*' that draws our focus to what gives life to a person or an organization when we are performing at our peak (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). My research design is rooted in social constructionist thought using appreciative inquiry as an action research methodology in collecting case stories. The addition of photo voice gave me and the participants a vehicle to move beyond words into visual narrative.

Appreciative Inquiry promotes growth by generating energy and enthusiasm based on the experience of achievements and successes. It allows one to create a picture of the preferred future that is both realistic, because it is based on past successes, and challenging, because Appreciative Inquiry inspires us to 'reach for the stars' (Gergen, 1982; Finegold, Holland & Lingham, 2002). In Chapter Four I expand on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry.

Transformational change occurs when people and organizations dream of, and create their futures while keeping in mind their past successes.

From the moment I conceived of this research project, I knew that I would use Appreciative Inquiry. I wanted to illuminate the graduates' contributions and help them identify the source of their energy, so they could generate their dreams of the future in the glow of this light.

I used the 4D Model of Appreciative Inquiry; Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. In the Discovery phase conducted appreciative inquiry interviews with the women. The questions I asked led the women to share narratives about a positive time in their lives, when they were engaged and making a difference. The Dream phase began when the women answered these questions. Their energy increased and I could see that they wanted to experience those feelings again; they were already thinking about their futures before I asked and some of them had decided on changes they wanted to make by the end of the interview. Their responses to the appreciative inquiry interviews demonstrate that inquiry is intervention (Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002).

Using Photovoice to Share Success Stories and Dreams of the Future

Developed by Wang and Burris, Photovoice is a participatory research and critical thinking method that allows community members to share their experiences and collaborate for change (Lorenz, 2011). It is often used in community based participatory research to redefine the community. (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Scott, Cowan, & Bardhoshi, 2009)

Photovoice demonstrates respect for the point of view of the participants. It encourages them to reflect on their lives through photography, to use the lens of the camera to tell their stories. Although the themes they explore may be chosen by the researcher or facilitator, the participants are in the 'driver's seat' when it comes to choosing how these themes are represented.

Photovoice makes it easier to work with participants whose first language is not that of the researcher, because they are able to express their ideas, challenges, hopes and dreams through photography. The nuances are more easily grasped by all.

Dole (2009) mentioned an unintended outcome of using Photovoice in her research with adolescent African American mothers. During the course of her research, she gained insight into the young mothers' strengths and coping skills and began to appreciate how well they were managing their lives given their constraints. Her account inspired me to use Photovoice so the graduates could bring another dimension to their stories revealing the subtle meanings that I might have missed in the Appreciative Interviews.

The Participants Used Photovoice

In the Photovoice sessions for my research, all the women used digital photography as their medium.

The first Photovoice session was energizing. Each woman brought something different. Afra brought artifacts from her years as a student at the college and described how she had come to the college with very little English. She teamed up with a classmate and together they learned English. She talked about how they would sing songs, and prepare for exams together, always supporting each other.

Abeer brought a double heart necklace that was given to her by her sister and her mother; the two most important people in her life. It was broken and the other women immediately began telling her where she could get it fixed. But she assured them that she was happy with it the way it is. She carries it in her handbag; she is never without it.

The diversity of the stories was enlightening for me. Although I had interviewed every woman, only a couple of them told the same stories in the Photovoice session as they did in the interview. If they were the same stories, they were enhanced by the pictures, videos and artifacts. Clearly the women had prepared themselves to share and they had spent time reflecting on their stories. They told them with pride and confidence.

But they also revealed some of the challenges they were facing. Reem explained that she felt overwhelmed at times as a single parent, but then, she made us all laugh with the video of her son when he was a baby.

The positive principle of Appreciative Inquiry speaks to the importance of language. People are drawn together when we inquire into the times when they are energized and at their best (Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002).

This was evident in the session, the women were attentive to one another, but at the same time, they felt free to interrupt one another to ask a question, share a similar experience or give advice. The sense of camaraderie was tangible.

I had been a little concerned about bringing the women together because they are from different villages and different tribes and sometimes there is dissension between the tribes, but if there were issues, they did not surface.

Two of the women who participated in this session had worked together at the college, but they were moved to different departments because they were not getting along and this was disrupting their work. It seems that the disagreement was deep-seated, and unrelated to the workplace. In the Photovoice session, they listened attentively to each other. It seems that the inquiry into the best brought out the best in all of us.

On the way home, I recorded my reflections, I was so grateful for the women's openness and support of one another and their engagement in my research. It was so gratifying to see the similarities in our lives. I was buzzing with energy and happiness.

What I experienced in the Photovoice session mirrors Ludema, Cooperrider and Barrett's description of '… *the ability of a well crafted appreciative question to build rapport and energy'* (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2000, as cited in Bushe, 2007). They go on to say, '*AI's distinctive competence is as an intervention into the social construction of reality. The ongoing narrative is altered by new images and ideas and sometimes important new relationships are built among the people who participate*' (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2000, as cited in Bushe, 2007).

Displaying the Photographs in the RKW Library

I asked two of the women who participated in my research to set up a display with the women's photographs and stories in the RKW library. Afra and Participant One prepared the display with great care. They gathered pictures of the participants and printed the stories in small booklets which they displayed with the photographs from the first Photovoice session.

This display remained in the library for two weeks and drew interest from the students, faculty and staff, some of whom wrote their responses in the guest book. I discuss the display and the responses in more detail in Chapter Five.

Photograph 2. The narratives, photographs and artifacts on display in the RKW library - Aamena's trophy for humor takes centre stage. Supplied by Aamena (2011).

Themes

The women had time to prepare for the Photovoice session, time to reflect on their stories and decide if they wanted to expand on the story they told in the appreciative inquiry interview or tell a different story (Fowler & Moore, 2012).

The value of this reflection was evident in the Photovoice session; they expanded on their stories, sharing more information, not only about their success or their contribution, but about what was behind it. Aamena talked about winning a trophy for the best humourous speech at a time when her life was so full, she barely had time to breathe.

She explained how, now, when she is down about something, she remembers that she has a great sense of humour and this gets her back on track. She has constructed this view of herself as a 'funny woman' and that was the picture she chose to present to the group.

This was the first time the women had heard one another's stories and they began to sift through the similarities and differences in their lives, creating connections with each other. When they detected differences, they asked questions to learn more and listened to the answers with interest.

When it was time for the women to present their dreams of the future I organized another Photovoice session, and once again the women brought collaged photographs, PowerPoints and videos.

The second Photovoice session was like a reunion; the women brought each other up to date on their lives and the changes that had taken place between the two meetings.

This was a lively session with the women sharing their dreams of the future. Once they finished their stories, they discussed raising children, the trials of divorce and single parenting, and the freedom they gained by driving to Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The topics were as diverse as the women, who genuinely listened and responded to each other, sometimes pressuring more than I would have expected, but always demonstrating respect and sensitivity.

What Inspires the Women to Contribute?

The two sessions shed more light on the women's commitment to their family and their community. To help define what inspired the women to make a difference, I used Schnell's (2011) work on meaning-making.

Schnell (2011) has researched individual differences in meaning-making and has identified 26 sources of meaning that she has organized into five domains: Vertical Self transcendence, Horizontal Self-transcendence, Self-actualization, Order and Well-being and relatedness. Each of these domains has a subset of 'sources of meaning'. The full description of Schnell's model is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I will expand on it in Chapter Five. Here is a brief overview of how her work can be used to explain what gives meaning to the women's lives.

Meaningfulness increases significantly with the density and diversity of sources of meaning; the relationship between density and meaningfulness is largely mediated by diversity. Findings indicate that commitment to numerous, diverse, and, especially, self-transcendent sources of meaning enhances the probability of living a meaningful life (Schnell, 2011).

Applying Schnell's domains and sources of meaning to the narratives to determine what makes the women's lives meaningful, I identified: challenge, freedom, knowledge, achievement, tradition, community, fun, care and attentiveness.

For example, Abeer talked about the freedom to do what she wants as long as her parents are in agreement. Mozah explained that she had to overcome her concern with what the neighbours were saying. Aamena stressed the importance of maintaining her sense of humour, and Reem focused on the 'fun' times she spends with her young son. All of the women talked about the importance of learning in their lives, with Abeer identifying it as her second love. Maryam talked about what she owes her country in return for her free education and Aarefa focused on the importance of always saying 'yes' to a challenge.

Using the Display and the Blog to Achieve the Research Goals

The display of photographs and stories in the RKW library and on the blog were designed to achieve two of the research goals: first, to share alternative stories to those we have been told about Middle Eastern Muslim women, and second, to open the minds of those who read them.

Presenting Alternative Stories

The stories that were displayed in the library and on the blog are stories of success. They are about contributing to the community, the importance of family, overcoming challenges and achieving goals. I presented them as the stories of college graduates rather than focusing on the religion or ethnicity of the writers. There is no mention of veils or covering or oppression. I wanted the readers to simply read the stories and respond to them. I did not explicitly invite a dialogue about religion or politics because I wanted to move away from this deficit discourse and open the door to a discussion that focused on the contribution of the women in their community.

' If experience, ideology and the substantive experience are predicated on the value systems, stories, ideas, beliefs, meanings and theories imbedded in language, organisational participants (and researchers) are free to seek transformations in conventional conduct by changing patterns of narration (Mohr & Watkins, 2003 as cited in Virgil, 2006).

I invited the readers to respond directly to each story, and they did. The readers admired the women, encouraged them and shared their own similar or dissimilar stories with them. Essentially they took the first steps to building a relationship short lived, but none the less, important.

The Response to the Stories on the Blog

The blog was password protected and I approved the comments before they were posted. Although the women agreed to have their stories posted on a blog, I was concerned about making them 'public'. One of the participants had agreed to have her photograph and story posted only to have her husband veto her decision and I was concerned that if the blog was public and there was a negative response from a brother or a family member 'after the fact', it would be detrimental to the women. I discussed this with the participants and they agreed that a 'protected site' would be best.

I sent links out to the participants to share with their families and friends, my colleagues, friends and family and at one point opened the blog to students enrolled in my Change Management Course. I sought comments from different age groups, both

genders, those who have travelled and those who have not, academics, community activists, entrepreneurs and bureaucrats.

Although I sent links to both men and women, the responders were all women. Perhaps the narratives spoke more strongly to the women or perhaps the men did not 'find the time' to read them. It's beyond the scope of my research to explore why this was, but it would be interesting to follow this up because it speaks to Adichie's (2010) idea that who tells stories and what stories get told is related to power.

I read every comment; there was no need to modify them. The blog with the stories and comments is in Appendix Two.

The stories caused the readers reflect on their constructions. For one reader, the stories elicited admiration. *'We in the West don't have a lot of barriers to knock down anymore. Really, in this day and age there are not many barriers to break down so we are a little complacent and we take things for granted. I admire them because they are driving forces'* (Ginny, 2011).

Those who read the stories on the blog were moved to comment, either to the women or to me about their feelings and reactions. Often the stories led to introspection, the readers identified with other women's stories and began sharing their stories, comparing themselves with the women whose stories are on the blog. Sometimes the stories the readers told emphasized differences and other times, similarities in their lives.

The readers expressed their admiration for the writers and encouraged them to keep doing what they are doing. Sometimes they made suggestions for further growth. Overall, the response to the narratives was positive, sometimes the readers expressed surprise and other times they were not at all surprised by what the women have achieved. Some of the readers were amazed at the differences between their culture and the culture of the women, others were not.

In order to explore the responses of the readers, I have taken a brief look at the interaction between readers and the texts using transactional theory as it applies to literature. *'Transactional theory proposes that the relationship between reader and text is much like that between the river and its banks, each working its effects upon the other…'* (Probst, 1987).

The readers drew their responses from their experience of literature and life (Lee, 2007). Each reader will experience the text differently because each reader brings a different perspective to the text. She then *'fuses the images, feelings, and ideas stirred up by the words of the text, selects and organizes responses and expectations, and adjusts and readjusts the meaning to achieve a coherent synthesis'* (Lee, 2007).

Kolodie's response demonstrates the importance of her experience in her 'reading' of the stories. *'I lived in Morocco in the early 70's and saw the women lock themselves in a certain part of the house when a 'visitor' came to visit (a man of course). But I saw the acceptance also, of the religion, the control of it all'* (Kolodie, 2011).

Often the reader's first comment was about herself, lending support to the idea that to *'each person's most urgent motivations are to understand himself'* (Bleich, 1978, as cited in Lee, 2007). This is the first level of response, followed by criticism and then critical exchange (Bleich, 1978, as cited in Lee, 2007).

Tish's response exemplifies these three levels.

> *I grew up with parents who constantly told me that I could be anything that I wanted to be, so I'm chagrined for these women to see that they lack the model that they need for success. You see that in the resistance to change that these women face from others… I'm thrilled to see these women taking initiative to become self-sustaining adults who can take care of themselves and their children regardless of marital status or other problems* (Tish, 2007).

The 'stance' of the reader is important. Stance reflects ideological orientation of the reader, the beliefs and attitudes the reader brings to the text (Lee, 2007). This 'stance' can be altered by the text as the reader gains insights, and is able to question her values and beliefs. Arden's reflection on the stories, demonstrates how she is beginning to alter her 'stance'.

The stories are so amazing. I am so amazed by the contrasts in stories; for Kitty to take the (what would hardly be described here as) risk by taking part in the walk, then for Aarefa (I think that's who it was) to work at the bank... Those are difficult to reconcile as being part of the same process, from my cultural view. But this is exactly why it is so important to have these stories out there, to illuminate our own liberties and restrictions, and also to see that the process of equality, or even just change, does not have to be linear or logical'(Arden, 2011).

Stance also dictates which themes the reader will respond to (Lee, 2007). The readers who were older and had been part of the 'women's movement' in the West could identify with the small breakthroughs. '*So, I guess in a way, the stories remind me of our women here many years ago, how little increments move along the empowerment of the Muslim women*' (Kolodie, 2011).

Verna, who has seen women struggle in the workplace, responded to the stories that remind her of women she knows. *'...the 2 that really stick out are the banker and the lady who drove to Dubai. The banker must have worked really hard to break through the glass ceiling, and the lady who drove to Dubai is making it one day at a time, but making it'* (Verna, 2011).

The insights gained by the readers will influence how they interpret what they read, just as what they have read and experienced in the past influenced their response to these stories.

Students' Reponses to the Stories

The library display gave the students' exposure to the stories and one student took the time to write: *As Emirati I am really proud of my teacher and I hope that I will have a chance to put my picture too.*

I added more stories to the blog and shared them with students in my Change Management Course. I asked the students to explain how the graduates demonstrated leadership by applying Steven Covey's Eight Habits of Highly Effective People to their stories.

Covey's Eight Habits are:

1. Be Proactive
2. Begin with the End in Mind
3. Put First Things First
4. Think Win-Win
5. Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood
6. Synergize
7. Sharpen the Saw
8. Find your Voice and Inspire Others Find Theirs

(Adapted from Covey, n.d.)

One group of students stated that Mozah was applying Think Win/Win by working well with others, especially her aunt when she was starting her typing business.

One group looked at how Latifa was proactive in her choice of studies and a second group chose Latifa's story as well. They saw her story as an example of '*Begin with The End in Mind' 'She…planned what she wanted to do and she started to draw a picture to her next destination in her mind which was learning computing. Then, implementing what she imagined, she decided to join Higher Colleges'* (BMHR, 2011).

Mozah's story inspired a group to write:

'*Mozah is Proactive, because she was responsible for her decision of helping her friend and hiring her aunt to run the typing office, in this case her decision of trusting them is considered proactive. Also, when she planned to open a bookshop in her university (which is her decision), she was ready to take any consequences related to her decision, such as: paying 10,000 and buying bookshop materials and she did not run away from her responsibility. What is more is that Mozah is single and most young ladies of her age worry about getting married, but she focused her energy and time on working in "Tamooh" and did not stop being productive because she was worried about being a single lady* (BMHR, 2011).

Another group wrote:

'*People who have polio could be inspired from this story, by considering Mozah as a role model, who overcame her polio, take challenges and achieved her ambition, regardless of the barriers she faced. They have to ignore their physical disability and try to live their life normally. Habit 8: "find your voice and inspire others to find theirs" matches here*' (BMHR, 2011).

The students had a range of stories to choose from but most of them chose to comment on Latifa and Mozah's stories, suggesting that these are the ones they identified with. They were especially interested in Mozah's story about getting her driver's license.

Two of the responses focused on how she overcame people's response to her perceived physical weakness.

Mozah's action shows that she has a positive change in her life. She shows that handicapped persons are similar to normal persons and they act like them. Also they

can work and drive. Any diseases don't mean that the person has to stop in one state and he shouldn't think that he can't do whatever he wants. This story encourages people to do as possible as they can to achieve their goals. To achieve our goals, we mustn't despair if we face any problem. We should try many times until we achieve them' (BMHR, 2011).

The students were attracted to Mozah's tenacity, her ability to overcome a challenge and they admired the fact that she found jobs for her friends and relatives and they saw her as '*a leader in the socio-economic development of the country*' (BMHR, 2011).

They were drawn to the stories of self-actualization, facing a challenge and overcoming it (Schnell, 2011). Many of them chose Latifa's story about how she overcame her economic and family problems by studying hard at the college and getting a teaching position. In their response to this story, they commented on the importance of education.

I hope everyone thinks like her because nowadays some students give up and stop their education in the HCT or in the Universities. They don't know how this qualification is important because they just think about this moment not about after 5 years or more. Some people depend on their families but this is temporary and if they want to get a job with high school certificate, they will get low salary and this is undesirable to them' (BMHR, 2011*).*

Looking at these responses from a social and cultural context, the stories the students chose to write about can be seen as indicators of what is of interest in this culture at this point in time. '*The personal response is inevitably related to the social and cultural context*' (Lee, 2007)

The students' focus on self-actualization, overcoming challenges and self-transcendence –taking a leadership role in the country are indicators of what they see as important in their culture. If this is the case, it indicates a shift.

Higher Education Leads to the Creation of Social Capital

My research adds to a body of research that links contribution to social capital with higher (adult) education. Other research has shown that tertiary education creates lifelong learners and enables graduates to contribute both to a civil society and to increased social capital (Khatib, 1994; Fukuyama, 2001; Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

Tett and MacLachlan (2007) conducted research in Scotland that demonstrated how adult education leads to changes in social capital. This research was based on a two-phased study of over 600 literacy and numeracy learners that examined various aspects of their learning experiences and their perceptions of the impact that learning had on their lives (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

Their study showed that students' developed confidence through learning. This confidence '*…was often accompanied by positive personal growth and openness to new ideas*' (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

Tett and MacLachlan's study (2007) found that students had increased levels of confidence in making enquiries over the phone, joining a group of strangers, speaking up in a group or meeting and being interviewed. One of the most important changes

was the students 'realization that they are capable of learning'. This encouraged them to engage in other areas in their lives, like attending meetings and asking for a promotion at work.   Another area where their confidence increased was in their ability to help their children with their school work, and there was an increase in the number of students who wanted to continue taking courses and learning.

Their findings also showed that the students are more likely to ask for help when they need it and their social life was more active. They have increased their networks, building relationships with classmates and their tutors, leading to an increase in their social capital.

I have used the categories from Tett and MacLachlan to show the similarities between their findings and the graduates' narratives.

Increase in confidence

Maybe before I graduated I didn't have this much energy or I wasn't as proud of myself but after graduation, I'm trying to benefit from my education (Shaikha, 2011).

Expanded networks

Talking about her son's reactions to attending the community English School Aamena said,

… and then he started to recognize… there were different cultures, no good and bad, it's all different and he has to accommodate and learn and communicate with them (Aamena, 2011).

Responding to her brother's question if anyone bothered her when she was in the Terry Fox run, Kitty said

'No one will bother me, you know' (Kitty, 2011).

Increase in capabilities

From three months, we are entering all the ID numbers and they have to be correct, if they are not correct, the salary will stop. I know that if I give this work to others, they might say, 'Oh well, it isn't important!' So I stay in the afternoon to finish the work. If I do something I should do it right, I learned it at the college. So when I come here it is different, you know we are six in the group, everybody else is high school graduates (Nahla, 2011).

Ability to help others

So I was taking care of my family, helping them with homework something that they needed to look after, so yeah I was contributing (Abeer 2011).

I still have energy and still haven't achieved so much so I'm thinking about some community project, I don't know, something like a voluntary job or, gathering some people to volunteer to do something to this community. (Aamena)

Confidence to ask for help

Working in the library helps you, you learn from your colleagues here. We learn from each other. If I don't know how to answer this question, I call the librarian. I call and we learn from each other (Afra).

Desire to continue their education

Now I am thinking that I would like to continue and do my Masters, and again, he (my father) is saying that it's too much for me. I'm working here and I would like to show him again that I'm capable (Aaesha, 2011).

It is like a dream to have a job and pay for my own schooling, not using my family's money. I will go to university to complete my degree (Participant One).

I'm married with two children and I'm studying nowadays for my Masters (Aarefa, 2011).

Destiny

Destiny is the final phase of the 4D method of Appreciative Inquiry, but at the same time it is the beginning of the next iteration, because the 4D method is seen as circular, once one cycle is complete, the next one begins. The Destiny phase sees the participants sustaining the change they have brought about.

Although there are many factors that affected the women during the time they were involved in the research, it is clear that some of them were deeply impacted by the Appreciative Inquiry interviews and the Photovoice sessions. The relationships they developed encouraged them to begin to create the futures they were dreaming of.

- Abeer and Reem began new activities that they identified either during the interviews or the Photovoice sessions.
- Kitty became even more focused on her goal of studying in Australia and gained her mother's support.
- Maryam explored her options of continuing her education in the United States, where she travelled this summer to visit a university she is interested in attending.
- Afra has been interviewed by students who are impressed by her dedication to learning English; she is becoming a role model for our current students and
- Amal has re-enrolled in her Master's Program.

It is possible that some of these changes would have eventually taken place, but the research suggests that what we pay attention to is what we achieve. Words create worlds and image inspires action (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Although the women did not dream their futures together, as often happens in an Appreciative Inquiry intervention, they did share their dreams with one another. The time they spent together sharpened their ideas, and helped them clarify what they wanted. They gave one another suggestions about the steps they need to take to actualize those dreams.

Applying the Research

Contribution to Community as an Indicator of Success for Tertiary Education Graduates

Colleges and universities measure graduate employment and attendance in further education as an immediate indicator of graduate success and contribution in their field as a long term indicator (MSOE, n.d.; StMarys, n.d.). They post Alumni Success stories on their websites, but these stories, for the most part, recount the career and economic successes of the graduates. (See Chapter Five for more examples.)

Colleges and universities could also share narratives about contribution to community, which would demonstrate both the graduates' and the institutes' ties with their communities and attract both students and donors.

These narratives would be especially useful in the Higher Colleges of Technology where our mandate is to contribute to the community (Al Nahyan, 2010; 2011).

Opportunities for Further Research

Combining Photovoice and Appreciative Inquiry

My research has shown that Photovoice, which is defined more completely in Chapter 4, can be useful in the Discovery, Design and Dream phases of the 4 D Appreciative Inquiry methodology/process This approach is especially helpful when working with participants whose first language is not the first language of the researcher. This broadens the use of Photovoice demonstrating that it can be used with populations who are not vulnerable, to create social change. Combining Photovoice with Appreciative Inquiry enables participants to share their successes and dreams in a more concrete and believable way (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The use of Photovoice gives the participants time to reflect on both their success stories and their dream of the future while they are designing their presentation. *'Becoming an author in relationship with a researcher is asserted as one way to enact a space conducive of "tuning in" to one's own purposeful accounts of self'* (Dillon, 2011*).*

Framing the photographs or integrating a number of photographs into one frame engages creativity and may help them come up with more ideas than they otherwise would. The photos stimulate discussion and provide a medium to share the participant's successes and dreams.

It is common to use a graphic recorder or an illustrator to capture ideas at a World Café and Photovoice provides a similar function, triggering thoughts and keeping participants focused while giving them another medium to express their ideas. Photo voice and graphic recording support the Poetic Principle of Appreciative Inquiry by helping participants visualize their co-created picture of the future.

Using Photovoice provided the impetus I needed to design and launch the blog. Through the blog I was able to pull into the centre the voices that had been on the periphery, providing an alternative story for those who visited it. Using this combination of approaches provides the potential to initiate change on more levels, increasing the likelihood of '*opening minds'.*

Adult Education Leads to Increased Social Capital

The women I interviewed add credence to the theory that tertiary education leads to increased social capital by increasing bridging capital and decreasing the constraints sometimes associated with bonding capital. Kitty demonstrates this in many ways, but her most recent example is the Terry Fox Run of 2012. Last year she participated in the run with some of her colleagues and her brother was very concerned about her safety. He thought someone might bother her.

This year (2012), Kitty's brother and his young son joined her in the event. Kitty has broken through the barriers and expanded her network in the community and now she has expanded her brother's networks as well.

The graduates continue to contribute to their families, workplace and communities. They are contributing to a civil society through the creation of social capital. The outcomes show that Appreciative Inquiry interviews and the Appreciative Inquiry phases of Discover, Dream and Design create the opportunity to build strengths and to dream about a future based on one's best experiences.

The graduates spoke of finding more ways to contribute to the community, perhaps Mozah presents the best example of this '*Maybe, my humanity, my talent, is giving back; we have to give to another to be happy*' (Mozah, 2011).

The graduates' dreams of the future, shaped by their stories and the stories of their colleagues include visions of personal growth, refocusing on family and education and a commitment to contribute to women in the community, to their work and to their country.

Research in Cross-cultural Training

Research on Emirati women will become more important as they enter the workforce in larger numbers. While current cross cultural training focuses on the subtleties of the culture as they apply to working with men, in the future, multinationals will be hiring more Emirati women. International employees will need to know more about the roles women play in the workplace and will need to be aware of their values and beliefs. More research will make this possible.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of my research project, the research the methods used and a brief summary of the outcomes. The chapters that follow provide more breadth and depth to this discussion.

Chapter Two

Stories of Arab Women

In this chapter I explore the view of Arab women that has been perpetrated and perpetuated in literature and the news media and that has led to the social construction of them as submissive and oppressed. Beginning with a brief description of the culture of the UAE, I discuss the importance of family, and the incidence of divorce before moving on to explore the influence of Shariah law on women's rights. I then share the thoughts of a number of Arab women leaders about role of Islamic values in their success. This is followed by a discussion on the sociopolitical climate of the UAE, including the impact oil revenues have on the development of the country and the financial support the citizens receive from the government. The discussion moves on to the role that the class system has played in women's progress and how women's associations, prayer circles and networks enrich the country, creating a more civil society.

The Single Story of Arab Muslim Women

When I meet people and tell them I am working the Middle East, more often than not, they assail me with their view of Muslim women as totally oppressed by the men in their families and their religion. I find it difficult to get a word in edgewise and when I do, they look at me in disbelief when I tell them that the Emirati women I work with hold a lot of power and are very independent. They seem to believe I am delusional! I think it is important to explore where these ideas come from. How is it that so many of us who live in the West have such a narrow view of Eastern women? Although it is not within the scope of this project to pursue this, it is important to note that these narrow views flow in both directions. The view of Western women by Eastern women is also somewhat skewed.

Over the centuries, Westerners have portrayed Arab women as exotic, submissive and subjugated (Al Mughni, 1993; Khatib, 1994; Mohja, 1999).

The traditional Western view is clearly stated by Kahf Mohja (1999) '*The dominant narrative of the Muslim woman in Western discourse from about the eighteenth century to the present basically states, often in quite sophisticated ways, that the Muslim woman is innately oppressed; it produces Muslim women who affirm this statement by being either submissive nonentities or rebellious renegades – rebellious against their own Islamic world, that is, and conforming to the Western gender roles*' (Mohja, 1999).

When Maha Khatib (1994) wrote her doctoral dissertation about women in the Emirates, she wanted to address the historical perspective of Arab women as passive and inferior to men because this image does not correspond to how she views herself as an Arab woman and she extrapolated that this is not the way most Arab women view themselves.

One of the questions Dr Khatib was often asked was "*How are Arab women oppressed*?" as if oppression was their de facto condition (Khatib, 1994). The women Khatib interviewed explained that they are equal to, but different from, men and they do not see themselves as inferior. They see themselves as free because they can accomplish what they want to as long as it is within the limits of Islamic teachings.

For them, freedom is about equity in the workplace, being taken seriously by men at work and having goals and ideas. '*Freedom starts in holding to and understanding religious teachings*' (Khatib, 1994).

Khatib's participants showed no interest in being more like Western women, who they see as being used by men, lacking in self-worth and femininity (Khatib, 1994).

According to Haya Al Mughni, a Kuwaiti sociologist, Arab women have been represented in literature by two myths since the late 1800s, when Westerners first encountered them. The first myth is that '*Arab women have no control within their societies*' and the second is that '*their lives are entirely shaped and dictated by Islamic norms embodied in their own cultures*' (Al Mughni, 1993).

These myths have been perpetuated in fiction. For example, Egyptian Nobel Prize winning author, Naguib Mahfouz in his book, Palace Walk, portrays the wife of the hero as deeply immersed in her religion and her family, content to care for her home and children while her husband spends his evenings drinking and carousing (Mahfouz, 1991).

Also contributing to this myth of exotic Arab women is the idea that Arab women are sexual temptresses. Recall the pictures of harems with women lounging around eating grapes and grooming themselves. This myth developed life '*As women in ancient societies became more subordinate, often treated as property, many peoples developed myths about them as the source of evil and sexual temptation – dangerous and needing control. Once inheritance in the male line became important, female virginity and fidelity became central concerns*' (Keddie, 2007).

Keddie, a forerunner in research on the history of Middle Eastern women, notes that researchers face a dilemma - should we portray women as subjugated by Shariah law, Islam and their families, or should we look at the law as a protective force enabling women to live a sheltered life in comparison to Western women who often fend for themselves? (Keddie, 2007)

Another option would be to explore women's lives without reference to their status within Islam or their communities. I have focused on the success of the participants, rather than the constraints they face. As I listened to them, I understood in a deeper, more complex way that their lives, and therefore their successes, are shaped by a mix of culture and religion as embodied in Shariah law, so I have been on a journey to learn more about all three.

The Culture of the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is a tribal society and the tribes are still very influential in the Emirate of Ras al Khaimah. '*Pastoral nomadic tribes, the most common in the Middle East, can evolve only after animals are domesticated and there is a settled population with whom to trade animal products for agricultural and urban ones. Cohesion requires group decisions, which are facilitated in groups tied by kin. This favors cousin marriage, as does the Islamic provision for female inheritance, which encourages strategies to keep property in the lineage*' (Keddie, 2007).

Some of my participants' families own farms, while others' fathers own and operate small businesses and have full time jobs with the government. This dual employment is a common practice throughout the Emirates and is practical because government

employees usually work from 7:00 or 8:00 AM until 2:00 PM so they have the rest of the day to focus on their own businesses.

Marriages are arranged and first cousin marriages are common. The estimated divorce rate in the UAE is 36% (Emirates 24/7 News, 2010). Both Qatar and the UAE claim to have the highest divorce rates in the Middle East. These rates are similar to the rates cited in the Census data for 2009 for the United States, where the divorce rate has been steadily declining (Elliott & Simmons, 2011). The rates range from 14% to 37% depending on the age of the woman while in Canada the divorce rate is closer to 40% (Clarkson, 2011; CBC News, 2010).

It is difficult to compare the countries' divorce rates because those in Canada and the USA do not include common-law relationships and the UAE does not allow common-law relationships.

The divorce rates in the UAE have risen since it became possible for a woman to be granted a divorce without the consent of her husband (Hassan, 2010; MEPI, n.d.).

The rising divorce rate in the UAE is attributed to adultery, domestic violence, and financial problems (Emirates, 2010).

In Qatar, one of the reasons for divorce is the discrepancy in education levels between men and women. Women are encouraged to study because the university campus is segregated (men attend one campus while women attend another) so it is seen a safe place for them to be. One of the reasons the men don't attend college is that they have the opportunity to earn money immediately, if they join the army, the police force or simply go into business. These options seem to be more attractive to them than education.

A divorced woman can remarry, but if she does she is likely to lose custody of her children because most Islamic men will not let another man raise their children (Aamena Al Mansoori, in conversation 2011).

'In Middle Eastern Societies, kinship remains a central principle of social, political and economic organization. Western penetration in the mid-nineteenth century did not entail a weakening of family ties and obligations, or a reduction of marriages between kin, or a diminution of husbands' authority over wives and children. The Arab family withstood the forces of change and held on to its patriarchal and authoritarian character. Even today, a man's rights over his wife and children are quasi absolute. Family members continue to live '*in the same neighbourhood to intermarry, to group on a kinship basis, and to expect a great deal from each other"* (Barakat, 1985).

This is echoed by Keddie who states that: '*The home has become the last line of defense against a West that has won out in political and economic spheres. So-called fundamentalists, or Islamists, see Western practices toward and views on women as part of a Western Christian and Jewish cultural offensive, accompanying political and economic offensives, and turn to their own traditions as a cultural alternative*' (Keddie, 2007).

There are always exceptions and ways to work around the laws and traditions.

'In spite of formal and legal male dominance, Middle Eastern women followed a number of strategies to increase their sphere of power and freedom. Although men might control the quantity of sex, women had much control over its quality and the amount of pleasure the man had.   Women controlled cooking, which many men found important, and they could keep the home neat or messy, noisy or tranquil, attractive or unattractive for the husband's visitors. Throughout Islamic history many rulers were ruled by their wives or mothers, and the same thing happened in many private homes.   More equal husband-wife relations were also known. Women taught one another how to overcome formal inequalities, and the theoretical rules of Islamic law and the honor code were often not enforced' (Keddie, 2007).

One of the widest circulated examples of the power of women is the story that Sheikha Salaama, the mother of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the founder of the UAE, extracted a promise from her sons to decide peacefully who would rule the country. As the British Newspaper the Telegraph noted when reporting his death, 'His sense of honour became a trademark. He never betrayed the solemn fraternal oath he and his brothers swore before their mother Sheikha Salaama not to murder each other' (The Telegraph, 2004).

While these constraints imposed by family and kin could result in women banding together in a bid for more freedom as they have done elsewhere in the world, this is not the case in the UAE. This is not the case, in part because in this society equality between men and women is seen as more important than freedom (Khatib, 1994).

Because the UAE is on the collectivism end of the collectivism, individualism continuum, it would be unlikely for individual women to form groups outside of their families (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Freedom is a constructionist concept and the UAE is a patriarchal society and as Hirschmann (2006) says, in a patriarchal society, *'...discourse and ideology produce and perpetuate practices that limit women's options and, often, even their ability to think outside of those options'* (Hirschmann, 2006). So while women in Western countries that are more individualist might be very concerned with their rights, this is not the case in the UAE.

Al Mughni points out that because women's loyalties rest with their families and kin, they are prevented from leading or taking part in a movement to emancipate women. The ties that bind the family together are much stronger than the ties that bind women together. These ties ensure that class divisions are maintained and that women socialize and marry within their class (Al Mughni, 1993).

The UAE is a strongly collectivist society, 'one *in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty'* (Hofstede, 1994, as cited in Goby & Erogul, 2011)

In discussing the reasons for the lack of networking that female Emirate entrepreneurs engage in, for example, Goby and Erogul suggest that this goes back to the '*historic absence of female networking spaces; in traditional Islamic societies, women have been not only segregated from men, but also from other women through the absence of female gathering spaces* (Al-Dabbagh, 2008, as cited in Goby & Erogul, 2011). This seems to be changing as the students in my Entrepreneurship course tell me that

there is a place in their villages where merchants come and the women meet to buy their goods. They mentioned that this is a place where the women meet quite regularly, not just to shop.

At RKW, '*wasta*' (the power of connections) is often seen in action. For example, the Emirati women who are employed in leadership roles often choose students from their 'families' for positions on the student council and other leadership roles. They also promote their relatives as good candidates for employment opportunities. In a collectivist society, this is to be expected as hiring or promotion decisions take employee's 'in-group' into account (Hofstede, et al., 2010).

Women perpetuate class divisions when they arrange marriages that are meant to promote both political and economic success within the family. This is what is referred to by Tett & MacLachlan, (2007) as the 'dark side' of social capital – the exclusion of outsiders, sometimes to the detriment of the group because new ideas and opportunities are shut out.

There is an Arabian Bedouin tradition of consensus and consultation. '*At an informal level, that principle has long been practiced through the institution of the majlis (council) where a leading member of society holds an "open-house" discussion forum, at which any individual may put forward views for discussion and consideration'* (UAE Embassy, 2009).

While men gather in the majlis, the women gather to arrange marriages (Kandiyoti, 1980).

The closeness of the kinship relationships is revealed in a survey conducted by Jacqueline Ismael in Kuwait, which is a small, oil rich country, like the UAE. She found that 80% of respondents visit their kin daily or weekly, 48% are married to relatives of whom 78% are first cousins and more than half have relatives in the workplace or as business partners (Ismael, 1982).

This suggests that the current society is an extension of the networks formed when the Kuwaitis were nomads and the internal structure was based on the *Ashira* (a group of families who are related or have similar social networks) (Ismael, 1982).

The Emirates and Kuwait are very similar in this way. More often than not, when I visit my students in the workplace where they intern, I find that they have chosen a specific employer because they have relatives working there. In the last term, one of my students was working at the Police Department where her uncle held a high ranking position. At the end of her internship, she was offered a job. Similarly, when I visited my student at the Municipality, she was working in the Public Relations Department with her sister, while another student working in in the Lands Office was with her sister, who is a City Planner.

Islamic/Shariah Law

Islamic law, also known as Shariah law, has an impact on women in Islamic societies and is often seen as a deterrent to their progress, but there are many who say that it is not the law itself that is at fault, but the way it is interpreted.

David Western, who is the Staff Judge Advocate, for the US training mission in Eskan Village in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, says that the financial power that Saudi women have

signals a change in their basic human rights and that this change does not conflict with Sharia law (Western, 2008).

> Islamic law is often viewed as a repressive legal system which effectively denies women equal rights around the world. The truth is that Islamic law is fundamentally fair, and can be interpreted in such a way as to protect a woman's fundamental rights. Placed into context with international law, Islamic law can find conformity.

> Unfortunately, because Islamic law is often taken hostage by customs and traditions that are clearly not Islamic, the fairness of Islamic law has been trumped at times by putative scholars trying to justify patriarchal tradition by misinterpreting Islamic law. When Islamic law is properly interpreted, however, one sees a system intended to benefit, if not advance, the rights of women.

> To encourage states to properly interpret Islamic law so as to protect the basic human rights of women, a mechanism is needed to change the underlying attitudes that halt such interpretations. This underlying mechanism is the economic development of women. As women in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, and other Islamic countries begin to experience economic advancement, they will also by necessity experience improved human rights. In reality, when a woman acquires financial freedom, she is able to unshackle constraints on her preexisting legal rights, whether those rights are based on international human rights or Islamic fundamental rights of women (Western, 2008).

Western concludes that *'...Islamic law is not the obstacle for women in the Middle East. Instead, old patriarchal structures block effective change'* (Western, 2008).

The women I worked with found it easier to divorce their husbands because they had the means to support themselves and their children. In some cases, the woman's family is reluctant to give her moral or financial support because this can cause a rift in the family, especially if she is married to her first cousin.

While the law may not discriminate against women, there are times when its interpretation favours men. As Western (2008) says, the patriarchal structures are still in place and these limit the freedom women have. While there is no law prohibiting women from driving, many women are not allowed to drive. Their father, brother or husband can refuse to sign for them to open a file at the Police station so they cannot begin the process of getting a driving license. Even when they have a license, their father, brother or husband can forbid them to drive outside of Ras Al Khaimah.

Khatib does not tie women's equality to their finances, but rather sees it as part of their religion: *'Emirate women's perceptions of themselves as equal to other believers, and to men, at this spiritual level is the one source of power and credibility that enables them to voice dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their society'* (Khatib, 1994).

Female Leaders Discuss the Prominent Role of Islamic Values in their Success

Along with a group of eight RKW students who were volunteering, I attended the Women in Leadership Forum in Abu Dhabi in December of 2010, where a number of the speakers talked about the importance of Islamic values in their lives.

Dr. Rim Turkmani (2010), an Astrophysicist at the Imperial College in London, spoke about how the challenges that women face are similar all over the world:

> Women face the same obstacles everywhere. In the developing world and in the first world, Muslim women have different narratives, so it is not the religion that is the main factor.

> We need to pay attention to what really matters – self refinement, self-evolvement, leaving a legacy and these are all Islamic values. In 13th century Yemen, the ruler, who was a woman, started a school. There are many schools named after the women who started them. It was a Moroccan woman who created the first university in the world.

> Real leadership takes determination and will power; it is not based on wealth and class. The first laws of business were for women; the Prophet's wife was a business woman.

> The mother is like a school and women are more than half of society because they raise the children. There are numerous examples of women in business roles in Muslim history, but putting women behind four walls put the Muslim world back.

> You can get ahead even if your family is not behind you…we need the support of other women, we have the power (Turkmani, 2010).

Farida Abdullah Kamber al Awadhi, the president of the Association of Professional Interior Designers in the UAE, says that she relies heavily on her religion and culture for support. If she experiences stress or encounters difficulties, she gets her strength from religion. '*In a Muslim community, you need to know the core things, which are contribution to community, building a healthy community and human rights*' (Al Awadhi, 2010).

One of the prominent Middle Eastern women who promote the importance of human rights is Shirin Ebadi, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 *"for her efforts for democracy and human rights. She has focused especially on the struggle for the rights of women and children"* (Nobelprize.org, 2003).

Ebadi has this message for Muslim women:

'Keep on fighting. Don't believe that you are condemned to inferior status. Look carefully at the Qur'an so that the oppressors will not succeed in misleading you with their commentary and their selective quotes. Do not believe you are meant to occupy a lower position in society. Get yourself an education, and invest your best efforts in competing in all areas of life. God created us equal, and when we struggle for equality, we are doing what God wants us to do' (Nouraie-Simone, 2005).

Ebadi sees women's rights in the context of human rights and believes that the way a society treats women is an indicator of how human rights are viewed generally. Women's rights are not a feminist issue, but are about social justice. Promoting women's rights serves to protect and improve conditions for all, regardless of gender (Nouraie-Simone, 2005).

In an area of the world where the lack of women's empowerment is systemic, these are strong words. Ebadi's emphasis on education and equality and her assertion that women's rights are an indicator of how healthy a society is mirrors the importance placed on women's empowerment by those seeking to include gender specific measurements in development programs.

'Because of the importance of beliefs and values in legitimating gender inequality, a process of empowerment often begins from within, which makes it difficult to measure. Empowerment comprises not only forms of observable action, such as political decision-making, but also the meaning, motivation and purpose that individuals bring to their actions; their sense of agency or self-worth' (Kabeer, 2005, as cited in Beetham & Demetriades, 2007).

Khatib (1994) describes the women she interviewed as having a sense of empowerment, feeling that they are equal to men in the areas that are important. Khatib subscribes to the idea of 'pairs' where one complements the other, women and men are complementary, not the same, so women do not strive to have the same roles as men.

The women I interviewed have a sense of agency and self-worth. They see themselves as effective in their community.

These points of view follow a continuum with Ebadi at one end and Khatib at the other. Ebadi is pushing for equality for women in the way we think of equality in the West while Khatib, sees the women she interviewed as equal but different. I anticipated that the women I worked with have the power to make a difference in their community. I have not been specific about what the difference is; I've left that up to them to expand on. I see myself as somewhere in the middle of the continuum, not pushing for equality in the sense that women assume the same roles as men, but not accepting that women are intrinsically incapable of doing so.

The Sociopolitical Structure of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The discovery of oil in the UAE resulted in the creation of social safety nets including free education from primary to, and including, tertiary levels, medical care, land and housing grants and a marriage fund.

Families who require social assistance receive '*cash assistance, rent subsidies, reimbursement of loan and house finance installments, subsidies for the purchase of clothes for their school age children; subsidies for water and electricity consumption…basic food necessities and even oil subsidies for private car consumption*' (Hamoud, 1987).

With the introduction of all the social safety nets citizens became dependent on their government. Hisham Sharabi has labeled this form or government 'neopatriarchy… *the sociopolitical structure resulting from the combination of patriarchy and a system of dependency*' (Ali, 1998).

*'In such societies any attempt at innovation or at rethinking history, culture, or the role of women as being social constructed would be contested by ruling bodies' (*Ali, 1998*).*

Neopatriachy '*refers to a specific form of traditionalism that has been absorbed into dependency of a unique character, having a dimension of cultural-intellectual dependence in addition to military dependency. Major threats to such a social structure are innovation, consciousness raising, and cultural change* (Ali, 1998).

These threats materialized in the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, as people in the Middle East began to communicate across countries and the world using social media, Egypt and Bahrain erupted and Khadafy found that it was no longer possible to run a country with an 'iron fist'. In Saudi, women are pushing to be allowed to drive and in the UAE many believe that the time could be right for women to make further advancements (Arab illuminist, 2008).

The women who spoke at the Women in Leadership Forum demonstrated this dependency by referring to the way their government had given them their rights without a struggle. Farida Abdulla Kamber Al Awadhi, the president of the Emirates Association of Professional Interior Designers, said that she felt this is the '*Golden Age, for women because the government really supports them and they have not had to fight for their rights- they have been given them.*'

Although Emirate women have not had to fight for their rights in the same way that Western women have, they do exhibit a sense of entitlement and they are not at all shy about pursuing what they see as their rights. This was evident at RKW last week (March 2012) when the speaker from the Khalifa Fund, which provides loans for startup businesses, said that the largest loan for a small business in Ras Al Khaimah would be AED 500,000.

Earlier my Entrepreneurship students had accessed the Khalifa Fund website that stated the maximum loan is AED 3,000,000 (about 1,000,000 US). The students corrected him, but he said that is the limit for Ras Al Khaimah; it is higher in Abu Dhabi. The students responded, saying that this cannot be right and asked him what he would do if they presented a proposal for more money. He said he would support that proposal. (Interestingly, I observed that as they were questioning him, he was physically backing up; he looked like he was both literally and figuratively being 'backed into a corner').

Her Excellency, Ameera Abdel Rahim Bin Karam, Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Sharjah Business Women Council, reiterated that in the UAE, success for women has been achieved through evolution, not revolution. According to Najla Al-Awadi, CEO of Dubai Media Incorporated, women's access to higher education has revolutionized the UAE.

Krause reinforces Sharabi's idea of neopatriarchy when she states that: '*the notion of reliance on the state for one's rights … produces dependency, not self-reliant selves*' (Krause, 2009).

Nine of the forty members of the UAE parliament are women, and as in most Middle Eastern countries, these women are from the ruling class. As the research around the world demonstrates, the number of seats held by women is not an indicator of power,

the involvement of the women in setting the goals for the future of the country is a much better indicator (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007).

Women's Groups in the UAE Contribute to a Civil Society

Civil society is a term used to describe the nongovernmental organizations that contribute to the health of a society. The Aga Khan has made it his mission to contribute to the growth of civil societies around the world. His definition of civil society is comprehensive:

'By civil society, I mean an array of institutions that operate on a private, voluntary basis but are driven by public motivations. They include institutions dedicated to education, to culture, to science and to research. They include commercial, labour, professional and ethnic associations, as well as entities devoted to maintaining health, protecting the environment and curing disease. Religious institutions are central to civil society and so are institutions of the media' (Aga Khan, 2008).

There is a strong link between social capital and a civil society. The trust and reciprocity and the networks that result in social capital form the foundations for a civil society (Valadbigi & Ghobadi, 2011).

In the 1970's the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) helped to establish Women's Unions in the UAE. Literacy classes and artisan training were offered. Emirati women attended literacy classes while expatriate women were more interested in artisan training.

The older women were interested in literacy training so they could learn more about Islam while the younger women were more interested in achieving high school equivalency so they could teach their children.

In the 1990's the Women's Union in Dubai was offering classes on change management to help women deal with the rapid change resulting from the influx of expatriates (Khatib, 1994).

These Unions were the precursors of the women's associations that Wanda Krause studied in 2008. In the past, these groups have not been included in research on civil society because women's actions in Middle Eastern countries were assumed to be limited to the '*private sphere*' (Krause, 2008).

Krause studied Islamic Associations, *halaqas* (religious study circles) women's networks and GONGO's (Government Organized Non- Governmental Organizations – while this sounds like a contradiction in terms, there are no NGO's in the UAE but similar organizations exist under the auspices of the government so they are called GONGO's). Her analysis focused on: participation, empowerment and civility, factors she identified as helping to create a civil society.

Krause defined participation as '*occur (ring) when people organize around specific interests, negotiate, and collaborate to reach particular ends.*' She defined empowerment as *'any form of agency from which greater fulfillment, satisfaction, consciousness-raising, skills development, or piety may result',* and she measured civility, *'by acts of trust, reciprocity and tolerance'* (Krause, 2008).

Women's organizations in the UAE are essentially arms of the government. They operate under the auspices of Sheikha Fatema, the widow of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE, and exist in almost every Emirate. Their leaders are usually Sheikhas (wives, sisters or daughters of a ruler). The staff are appointed and paid by the government or are on paid leave from ministry jobs. The women's organization's mandate is to support any initiative that the government undertakes. As Krause says, '…*participation in these state-run organizations is contributing extensively to state priorities…*'

Women's Associations are funded and directed by the government, but Krause states that this does not preclude them from enabling women to improve their lives. The associations have:

- raised literacy rates
- provided courses so women can compete their high school diploma
- increased the maternity leave from three months to six months
- provided assistance for families and widows
- encouraged women to take part in sports activities
- increased the overall number of women seeking employment
- increased women's empowerment through self-development projects

(Krause, 2008).

The women's Islamic groups and halaqas (prayer groups) contribute to the community in other ways. The members inform one another about the needs of individuals or groups in the community. These women donate funds and materials. They volunteer to visit people in their homes and in the hospitals. '*In this way, the associations provide an important link between the participants and members of the wider society, in which individuals are motivated and encouraged to contribute*' (Krause, 2008).

Krause states that Islamic groups and *halaqas* increase women's empowerment by providing them with the opportunity to develop their communication, organization and leadership skills (Krause, 2008). This outreach connects them to people who are outside of their social networks, and expands their social capital as well as contributing to a civil society.

All Muslim women are welcome in these associations and *halaqas* and this creates a unity that is not often experienced in the stratified society of the UAE. These groups illustrate the bonding capital that religion is known to generate.

Civility is demonstrated within the interaction of individuals whose idea of a common good does not preclude the participation of a woman because of a particular lineage, ethnicity, class, or ideology. In this view, a generalized trust is enabled that bridges to stronger civility, a necessary condition for the expansion of civil society, as the associations are located within a sharply stratified society (Krause, 2008).

The loosely structured networks that Krause studied concentrate on human rights issues, collecting funds and providing charity. The networks:

- provide medical care
- provide shelter for men, women and children

- try to help those who are oppressed
- make sure that the voices of the oppressed are heard

(Krause, 2008)

For example these groups were instrumental in documenting and putting an end to the practice of trafficking young children (two to four years old). These children were used as camel jockeys until the practice was outlawed in 2005.

The individuals in these networks:
- care for those who need help
- provide food, clothing, household items, money, toys, etcetera
- give lessons and fund education
- provide counseling (professional and nonprofessional)

(Krause, 2008).

Krause found that the loosely structured networks were the only groups who openly spoke out about human rights issues. *'Women demonstrated that they lead the way in taking risks to confront rights issues affecting especially women and children'* (Krause, 2008).

She feels that '*…when women collaborate together to empower others, they effect a cumulative process that leads to their own empowerment'* (Krause, 2008).

The loosely structured networks Krause researched include women of all faiths so the focus of the women is on human rights and personal freedom for the oppressed rather than on promoting or defending a point of view or a religious belief (Krause, 2008).

Krause summarizes that her project has produced important observations, '*namely (1) GONGO women's organizations play a central role in governmentality; (2) Islamic-oriented women's organizations contribute to civil society formation despite their ideological motivations and some problematic formulations of justice; and (3) women's' networks (the loosely structured ones)can be the most vital elements for civil society development'* (Krause, 2008).

The Importance of Virtual Networks

These loosely structured women's networks might have been missed in Putnam's research because he focused on the memberships in structured clubs and organizations. These virtual networks are not visible; their members use text messaging, cell phones, and emails to reach each other, they seldom meet as a group. Krause's research demonstrates that in countries where there are not as many formal organizations, there are other ways to develop bridging capital and contribute the growth of a civil society.

These networks are building social capital within and without because not only are the networks made up of expatriates from all different countries as well as Emiratis, they are from all different levels of society and they help people from different countries who are here in the UAE - everyone from the former child camel jockeys, to orphans, laborers and those who have been forced into the sex trade.

I belong to one of those networks. We buy airline tickets for prisoners who have served their time but won't be released unless they have a ticket home. We also provide necessities for mothers and their babies and children who are in prison.

These networks build bridging capital right across the country and they are grass roots. Civil rights issues can't be raised in the media because in this country, that would be seen as criticizing the government. Most of the people in these networks do not have '*wasta*' (powerful connections) but they know others who do. Some do have contacts in the government, in the courts and in the hospitals. They have people who will help them, but they have to protect these people so they say little about what they do.

It is really difficult to talk about how you are building a civil society when you can't tell anyone what you are doing; the people who do know are those who are benefiting from your actions. Nonetheless, Krause sees these networks as contributing to the development of a civil society, and I agree. At a grass roots level, changes are happening.

Working in these networks is subversive, exciting and risky because all expatriates are here at the behest of the government; we are guests in the country and we can be asked to leave any time. But as Krause says, when women are trying to right an injustice, we are more likely to take a risk.

Emirati Women - Multiple Stories

In her PhD dissertation, Khatib (1994) wrote about the single story of Arab Muslim women. She rejected the popular image of Arab Muslim women as passive, inferior, secluded, exotic, and distant. This image conflicted with her experience as an Arab Muslim woman, and her research was designed look at multiple stories of Emirati women. She interviewed, surveyed and met with students, members of women's associations and friends of her family, which has deep roots in the United Arab Emirates. She concluded that the women she met with and surveyed are influenced but not subjugated by their religion and see themselves as equal to, but different from, men.

The Importance of Education for Emirati Women

In the interviews Khatib conducted with Emirati women at the University of the United Arab Emirates (UAEU), she found that women see education as a way to improve their country rather than to gain individual freedom. *'...female education was seen as being beneficial to both men and women because of the advantages it provided to the country as a whole'* (Khatib, 1994). Women also saw education as allowing them to take on a larger role in family discussions.

Education improved the socio economic status of some women because they were able to take high paying jobs but for most women their social status remained tied to their families' status.

The women Khatib interviewed said that one of the benefits of education was an increased knowledge of Islam, which they shared with their mothers. As a result of this, daughters were sometimes able to convince their mothers to attend literacy classes offered by the women's organizations so they too could learn more about Islam.

'...women's work was seen as beneficial to both women and their society as long as Islam and its teachings were not challenged' (Khatib, 1994).

The women Khatib interviewed at the UAEU demonstrated their understanding of the connection between education and contribution to their community. While they also see education as a way to increase their personal wealth, their responses to Khatib's questions illustrate their understanding that educated men and women make a positive difference in their country.

Khatib's findings support the idea that education builds confidence and expands networks, thereby increasing one's social capital (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

Defining Freedom

Khatib found that women saw themselves as free; they do not value the freedom that Western women have. '*They respected some of the West's accomplishments, but in general they disapproved of the conduct of Westerners, especially women.*' They felt that they could accomplish what they wanted as long as it was within the limits of Islamic teachings.

Khatib recapped the women's definitions of freedom:

- *'Freedom is about equity in the workplace, being taken seriously by men at work, having goals and ideas.'*
- *"Freedom starts in holding to and understanding religious teachings".*
- *'Freedom is present in our society. When a person is given freedom, a degree of responsibility is given with it. The person who neglects and moves away from his /her religion is the one who makes mistakes. Our religion is the religion of freedom'* (Khadija Ajman, as cited in Khatib, 1994).

Khatib's participants showed no interest in being more like Western women, who they see as being used by men and lacking in self-worth and femininity.

The Single Story of Western Women

Khatib's work provided me with some unwelcome insights into the way Western women, like me, are viewed by Emirati women. Every day, I work with Emirati women. They are my students and my colleagues. We always treat each other with respect so this was a shocking revelation and an affront to my view of the hard won freedom of the women of my generation.

I had to check with my students to see if this was this how they viewed me.

I remember clearly, raising the question. My colleague and I had designed some curriculum about the pros and cons of women working outside of the home. The students were enjoying their discussions and role-plays about what happens here when a woman goes out to work.

It seemed a good time to ask what they think of women in the West since we have been working outside the home for a number of years. Did they see us as having freedom and independence, and was this important?

Sadly, 'no'. The ideas expressed by Khatib's interviewees were echoed by my students. Women in the West don't care about their families, they may have sexual freedom, but that is all.

While they didn't show any disrespect, they did mirror the lack of interest that Khatib's interviewees demonstrated. They did not see a reason to compare, nor do they want to be like Western women; they want to be like their mothers and sisters. Yes, they want to work and have careers, but their families will come first.

This discussion with my students led me to reflect on how I could build stronger relationships with them. How we could find similarities to build on and expand our understanding and acceptance of each other?

Because family is so important to my students, I have begun to talk more about my family when I am teaching. I draw examples from my experience as a sister, daughter, mother and a grandmother along with examples from the workplace. I pay closer attention when my students share stories about their families. The students respond well to this, they ask questions about my children and they appreciate my interest in their families.

I am engaged in trying to provide alternate stories about Western women as well as Emirati women.

Summary

The traditional social construction of Arabic women runs from exotic to submissive and oppressed. They are seen as moving in a private rather than in a public sphere. Fortunately this is shifting. As Western (2008) tells us, Shariah law can be used to uphold women's rights, and Krause found that women work together in formal and informal networks to support one another and to help others; they contribute to the growth of a civil society. Khatib found that Emirati women do not aspire to be like Western women but as Turkmani states they do face similar challenges. Khatib sees education as a driving force for women to find employment and at the same time to educate themselves about Islam.

Chapter Three

Social Capital

In my research, I explored the contributions the participants make in their community to determine how they are building social capital. In this chapter, I share my early encounters with social capital, provide a number of definitions, and describe how social capital is created and measured. I include a historical perspective of social capital and describe the connection between social capital, active citizenship and creating a civil society. I have included examples from my research to enrich the discussion on social capital. I elaborate on these examples in the following chapters.

My Early Encounters with Social Capital

Richard Miles, a former colleague who teaches economics at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), said, when I started to study work life balance and contribution to community, that I should look into social capital and suggested that I read something by Robert Putnam. I found a couple of articles and then I found Bowling Alone; the collapse and revival of American community, and I was hooked. I loved the idea that attending community courses, participating in fitness sessions and playing bridge were important to the health of a community, that inviting your neighbours and friends to dinner made a difference to the safety and well-being of people. It rang a bell with me and it reinforced what I already knew from my own experiences, that it is important for neighbours to know and help each other.

I spent the first five years of my life in a small rural community. My Mom collected eggs from the local farmers, candled and packaged them in our basement and delivered them to the kitchens of families in a much larger town. My grandfather laid water pipes from his creek-side well and supplied the neighbourhood with fresh clean water. My grandmother sold milk, cream and butter to the neighbours. My sisters, who were older than I was, attended a one room school until they reached grade six. Social capital was everywhere and there were many benefits for me as a child.

As a young child, I could wander over to a neighbour's house and they would either take care of me or call my Mom to come and get me. I knew the adults as well as the children because I accompanied my grandmother when she delivered her dairy products and when she went to collect her money. There was always a social aspect to these collections, the adults would have tea and catch up on the local news and I would have milk and cookies and listen. My grandmother didn't drive so we walked from house to house; we were truly grass roots people.

We celebrated big events like New Year's Eve at the community hall, where a small band would play, the women would gather in the kitchen preparing food and everyone, even the children, would dance. One of my fondest memories is being whirled round the dance floor with my feet firmly planted on the top of my grandfather's big shoes. We would move in unison not only connected physically, but also connected through our mutual enjoyment of the music and each other.

So it does not come as a surprise to me that social capital, and strong, safe, healthy communities are closely linked.

Defining Social Capital

'*Despite its simplicity, social capital has taken the social sciences by storm. However, it has also remained controversial, even with regard to its basic definition – a rare achievement after two decades of vibrant debate*' (Bartkus & Davis, 2009). Below are a number of definitions of social capital:

'*social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures*' (Portes, 1998).

'*People's ability to work voluntarily together*' (Coleman, cited in Paldam, 2005).

'*…an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between two or more individuals…Not just any set of instantiated norms constitutes social capital; such norms must lead to co-operation in groups and therefore are related to traditional virtues, like honesty, the keeping of commitments, reliable performance of duties, reciprocity, and the like*' (Fukuyama, 2001).

'The "*glue" generating excess cooperation*' (Paldam, 2000).

'*... social capital is the product of complex relationships that occur between networks of individuals, organizations, and institutions: these relationships afford individuals and communities resources which contribute to their success and well-being*' (Coleman, 1998; & Putnam, 2000; as cited in Williams & Pocock, 2010).

'*…social capital is a multidimensional concept comprising networks of social relations characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity*' (Stone, 2001).

'*…the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network.* (Bourdieu, 1986, & Burt, 1993, as cited in Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998)

'*...a "mesolevel" concept that can be usefully linked to other bodies of theory in order to ground them better by focusing our attention on actors and their networks, the ways in which networks structure patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and the ways in which the mobilization of these networks helps explain change in access to resources and relations of power*' (Bebbington, 2004).

Bebbington suggests that social capital might be a reformist concept that opens space allowing '*scholars and activists*' to '*trespass*' into areas where they might otherwise not venture and create opportunities for change (Bebbington, 2004).

These definitions stress the importance of relationships and networks in creating the opportunity for people to contribute to one another's well-being. They draw attention to the importance of trust and reciprocity in creating and maintaining a healthy community. Reciprocity when referred to in the context of social capital is defined as: '*doing for others not with any immediate expectation of repayment*' (Putnam, 2000).

What remains unsaid, is the idea that people help one another with no expectation of being repaid; believing that the person they have helped will go on to help others. In the networks Krause described, there is very little recognition for the work done or the help given so it is clear to me that the other component, not usually mentioned is intrinsic satisfaction or a sense of pride one feels when the person or people s/he helped accomplish *their* goals. This was apparent in Abeer's story of coaching her sister with her studies. Abeer felt her '*life's work was done*' because her sister succeeded in her Bachelor's studies.

Bridging, Bonding and Linking Social Capital

There are three types of social capital, bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital exists in families and tightly knit groups who share common values and beliefs, bridging capital exists in looser networks that are diverse, like volunteer organizations, and linking capital connects one to those who are in positions of power like politicians (Williams & Pocock, 2010). In the UAE linking capital would be referred to as '*wasta*' which is the Arabic term for '*having connections*'.

Stone expands on these definitions '*Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in closed networks, and helps the process of 'getting by' in life on a daily basis. 'Getting ahead' in contrast, is facilitated through bridging social capital involving multiplex networks which may make accessible the resources and opportunities which exist in one network to a member of another. Linking social capital involves social relations with those in authority, which might be used to garner resources or powe*r' (Stone, 2001).

Field, 2003 and Fukuyama, 1999 agree that bonding social capital can be detrimental to communities because it creates an insider-outsider mentality that excludes some community members. *Bonding social capital tends to be associated with powerful mechanisms of exclusion*' (Field, 2003).

Field, like Stone, sees bridging social capital providing the opportunity for '*...people to access resources that are not available within their own immediate circle, but it can be more fragile and ephemeral than bonding social capital*' (Field, 2003).

Field describes linking social capital as even more '*fragile and vulnerable at times of crises*' unless these relationships are '*...underpinned by strongly shared social norms*' (Field, 2003).

At the college we see the students using linking social capital quite often. One of the reasons RKW is getting a new campus is because students phoned the ruler in Dubai and complained that the RKW's facilities are not adequate. Clearly one or two students had personal access to the ruler and were able to leverage this access. As a result of these phone calls, the Ruler of Dubai, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, visited our campus and signed an agreement to build a new campus.

The Sheik's response demonstrates the value the country places on the education of women.

A Historical Perspective

Although my introduction to social capital was through Robert Putnam, he was not the first person to explore this idea or use this term.

One of the early proponents of social capital, Jane Jacobs, the urban planning visionary, identified the importance of physical communities in maintaining networks and building social capital.

> To be sure, a good city neighborhood can absorb newcomers into itself, both newcomers by choice and immigrants settling by expediency, and it can protect a reasonable amount of transient population too. But these increments or displacements have to be gradual, if self-government in the place is to work, underlying any float of population must be a continuity of people who have forged neighborhood networks. These networks are a city's irreplaceable social capital. (Jacobs, 1961)

In the 1970's Coleman, a social scientist (cited in Dasgupta & Serageldin, 2000), explained that the existence of social, religious, and family ties creates networks within which agreements are made and honoured without the need for legal contracts. Those in the network take their obligations seriously because they know that if they don't follow through could be ostracized from the community.

At the same time, these ties exclude outsiders and can restrain the group members who are bound by the norms and values the group imposes. '*While this restraint can be seen as a negative, it does have its positive side because communities benefit from the social control that results from these constraints*' (Portes, 1998).

The cohesion of the group often precludes access to ideas, people and resources outside of the group, so exposure to ideas and practices that might be beneficial doesn't occur. These limitations can include a loss of access to those outside the geographic location if the group lives in a small area like an inner city (Portes, 1998). Individuality can be stifled because members owe so much to the group and one's errors reflect badly on the group and, more importantly reflect badly on one's family.

In the UAE constraints to guard against such errors or too much perceived individuality are in place. Women need permission from a male relative to marry or to get a driver's license and husbands can place restrictions on their wives. For example, one of the women in this study signed a permission form to have her story and picture shared in a number of venues. The next morning she called to let me know that she had to rescind this permission because her husband would not allow her story and picture to be shown.

She was not surprised by his reaction as he has restrained her activities before. She worked hard to convince her family that she is a responsible woman and earned their trust. Now, it seems that she will need to start all over again with her husband.

These constraints are especially visible in the small town of Ras Al Khaimah where everyone knows everyone else. As Mozah said, she didn't feel she could drive by herself because her parents were concerned about what the neighbours would say. So for quite a while she would drive to work with her brother in the car, he would drive the car home. Then when she finished work, he would drive to pick her up and she

would drive the car home with him in the passenger's seat. Eventually, she did drive on her own but only after her parents felt comfortable with this.

Kitty communicates with her family members all the time to keep them up to date on her activities outside her home, so there are no surprises and they are able to understand and support her actions.

Using the lens Portes has provided, I can see the Emirati community from a different perspective, one where privileges are counterbalanced by obligations. Often my Western colleagues and I imagine that the Emiratis lead lives of leisure with their large houses, maids to take care of the cleaning and cooking and nannies and extended families to take care of their children. But it is clear that there are expectations and obligations that accompany these support systems.

For example, one on my Emirati colleagues, a single parent, whose father had just passed away, explained the duties she had to take on. Her father's second wife, who was considerably younger than he was, has two children who are younger than my colleague's children. Because a widow is not allowed to leave the house for 30 days after her spouse has died, my colleague had been given the responsibility of running errands and shopping for her stepmother. She was also responsible for taking her much younger siblings to events in the community. As she said, suddenly, she had five children to care for instead of her usual three. At the same time, after her father's death, my colleague was offered a suite in her father's house where she and her sons can live. She was excited about this because it means she can be back in her old neighbourhood. There is, however, a corresponding loss of freedom because her brothers and their wives live in the house and they will 'keep an eye' on her and her sons.

So I can see the importance of bonding capital, those close ties between families, in this example. All parties are supporting each other. Her stepmother gets the help she needs, my colleague will have a place to live with her sons and she will be physically close to her family. On the other hand, each will monitor the other, making sure that their behaviour is within the norms of the community. '*Social capital is rooted in relationships and relationships are embedded in exchange. Social obligations come with membership in the group, but being a member of the group entitles one to the social capital of the group and enhances one's credentials*' (Bourdieu, 1985).

Creating Social Capital

Fukuyama describes three sources of social capital:

> 1. Government, mainly through education which ensures that students are trained in the rules and procedures of their professions
>
> 2. Religion which is a source of culture
>
> 3. Globalization which introduces new ideas and practices

(Fukuyama, 1999).

Adam Smith said that social capital was a result of the *'bourgeois social virtues, like honesty, industriousness and prudence' that are created when people engage in market interactions*' (as cited in Fukuyama, 2001).

Norms that hold communities together are not necessarily beneficial to the communities. They originated in the major religions and cultures of the world and are handed down from generation to generation as part of our socialization process (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Fukuyama, 2001).

In her research on Emirati women, Khatib discussed the importance of '*adat*' adhering to religious practices in everyday life. These '*unquestioned*' norms form the basis for judging the actions of one's neighbours and make it difficult for change to take place. Both Kitty, with her active lifestyle and Mozah, with her desire to drive on her own have been criticized for stepping outside the boundaries these norms impose.

Going back to the importance of the built environment in creating social capital, Williams and Pocock convey the importance of social networks in designing planned communities in Australia.

> …social networks underpin the development of relational community (Voydanoff, 2001, as cited by Williams & Pocock, 2010) which builds bridging, bonding, and linking social capital (Putnam 2001; Stone, 2001) for individuals and groups…

> When thinking about the concepts of community and social capital together, community can be considered the social milieu from which social capital develops. If the community provides individuals with the opportunity and capacity to participate in social activities and form social networks, then social capital in the form of trust, reciprocity, support, social control, civic engagement, and political empowerment, is likely to develop. (Williams & Pocock, 2010)

Williams and Pocock go on to identify the antecedents of social capital as the '*…opportunity and capacity to develop social ties and networks…*' (Williams & Pocock, 2010).

Very much in line with Jacob's original description of social capital, Williams and Pocock suggest that social capital is a result of both physical and social structures, that is, '*… buildings and facilities that exist in a geographic area and the physical links between places and people. Social infrastructure refers to the social environment. It includes formal groups and networks that cater to all sorts of social, professional and life stage interests or needs*' (Williams & Pocock, 2010).

The smaller villages in the Emirates could be said to encourage the development of social capital by providing places for people to congregate and talk. The Mosques are the place where the men in the community meet to pray and socialize after the prayers. The Friday prayers are held in the larger mosques bringing larger numbers of men together and this is one place they exchange ideas and discuss local events.

According to my students, the women have a place set aside for them to meet in the smaller villages where they exchange ideas and village news.

Along with the importance of neighbourhoods, researchers agree on the importance of education in creating social capital. '*A number of researchers have argued that participation in post-compulsory education is a means of generating social capital*

because it impacts on relationships' (Baron et al., & Field, & Schuller, as cited in Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

Education enables learners to develop personal networks that they can continue to use after they graduate, and these networks '*lead to more involvement in society and the building of trust'* (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

'*The combined effect of trust, networks, norms and reciprocity can also create a stronger sense of personal and social efficacy because people are able to call on greater sources of support in their lives*' (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

'*The precise nature of the interconnectedness of social capital and learner identity is not easily isolated from a range of other determinants of learning but we hypothesised that the acquisition of a stronger learner identity, developed from a positive learning experience, has a catalytic role in building learners' confidence and social capital*' (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

In their research, which was conducted in Scotland with adult learners, Tett and MacLachlan found that the learners had increased their confidence and expanded their network to include those who valued education (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

My research builds on Tett and MacLachlan's by identifying how the graduates have gained confidence and expanded their radius of trust which had made it possible for them to contribute to their families and the community.

Technology as a Mediator of Social Capital

Relationships are the basic components of social capital and relationships create a basis for learning. The amount of time spent in a relationship determines the depth of the relationship and the amount of learning that takes place. The more time one spends interacting with a person the more one will learn, but the curve is inverse after a point (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

'*Close ties do not result in sufficiently candid or fresh assessments of information, but rather reinforce existing opinions. Long-term associations can lead to stagnation. When groups become too tightly knit and information passes only among a select few, networks can become competency traps…Thus, the ties that bind can also become the ties that blind*' (Smith-Doerr & Powell, 2003).

Web 2.0 has made is easier for users to create their own content and connect with one another through a number of applications like: Blogs, Wikis, and Twitter as well as social networks and web services like Facebook and YouTube. These technologies support the creation and continuation of virtual communities and stimulate 'the development of social capital through collaborative discourse' (Daniel, 2009).

Twitter is an example of an application where the user can create her own content and keep up with the happenings in the lives of her friends and colleagues. Because of its broadcast nature, the messages are not usually of a personal nature. Up to date posts about the sender's activities or current world news are usually broadcast through Twitter.

Twitter messages are short; up to 140 characters. You can 'Tweet' on hand held devices making it possible to share critical information quickly in an emergency. (Raisinghani, 2008)

Twitter is used by a wide range of people from university professors, to magazine editors, celebrities and teenagers. Perhaps its most important role is that it keeps people in touch with one another, strengthening relationships and increasing the likelihood of the creation of social capital (Raisinghani, 2008).

While Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn can expand the number of relationships one has, they do not necessarily increase the depth of these relationships. It is easy to add to one's knowledge using this technology because speed is of the essence but unless the users are coordinating a project or working toward similar goals and find a point of connection, they have few reasons to create long lasting, relationships where knowledge exchange and friendship are intertwined (Eccles, 1981; Uzzi, 1996, as cited in Doerr & Powell, 2003).

Thus, while there is a capacity for this technology to build social capital, it doesn't create it 'instantly'. One still has to build a level of trust with other users and share meaningful information to develop relationships.

Posting the women's narratives on the blog is a good example of how technology can be used to share information, and to provide the basis for new relationships. The comments the readers posted on the blog provided a rich response to the women's narratives. It was evident that the readers connected with these narratives. However the blog did not result in lasting relationships between the narrators and the readers. In Chapters Four and Five, I discuss the blog in detail.

The Link Between Social Capital and Adult Education

The women who participated in my research live in a community that consists of a number of small villages. To the untrained eye, it is difficult to see where these villages begin and end except in instances where the villages are outside of town in the mountain valleys or in isolated areas of the desert. Fukuyama talks about the lack of weak ties in traditional communities, which he says are '*often segmentary, that is, they are composed of a large number of identical self-contained social units like villages or tribes*' (Fukuyama, 2001). Weak ties are ties between people who are not closely related. For example, I would have a strong tie with my best friend but a weak tie with some of her other friends who I don't know as well. Weak ties are important because they allow one to access opportunities and information that are outside of one's usual network or circle.

The UAE is a tribal culture which is '*based on shared norms that are used to cooperative ends*' (Fukuyama, 2001). Strong ties and trust exist within the families and villages but they don't always extend beyond the village. As an example of this trust, in their villages, the college students sometimes participate in '*rotating savings groups*', where each person contributes a certain amount of money every month to be used by each woman in turn.

RKW provides many of our students with their first opportunity to socialize outside of their village and extended family. While some have travelled to other countries and some have been to the major cities in the UAE, most have not had a lot of interaction

with people outside of their local community. The college enrolls students from all over the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah and the students work on projects, share ideas and discuss their lives with women who they would not otherwise meet in their day to day living. They also interact with the international faculty members.

This interaction could and sometimes does, create distance between the students and their families. The students develop new interests and want to expand their horizons, as Aamena said; she was influenced by her female Western teachers who at 50 were still working because they had educational credentials. She wanted to have that same opportunity. Aamena now has her Masters and teaches at RKW.

Fukuyama says adopting new habits and trying out different ways of doing things can create conflict for the person within her community, and Aamena has been questioned about some of her decisions. Her neighbours could not understand why she was sending her boys to the English Speaking School when she herself attended public schools. She has become one of those '*...heterodox individuals at the periphery of the society's various social networks who are able to move between groups and thereby become bearers of new ideas and information*' (Fukuyama, 2001).

Lifelong learning and social capital are closely linked in the literature. Field defines lifelong learning as '*...a wide variety of learning including informal and non-formal learning as well as institutionalized instruction, taking place in and through adult life*' (Field, 2003).

'*The broad consensus among scholars interested in these issues is that the relationship between adult education and active citizenship is clearly a benign and mutually reinforcing one. Precisely why it is so beneficial and whether it is invariably so, has not yet been explored in equivalent depth*' (Field, 2003).

My observation, given the narratives the women shared and their dreams of the future, is that this relationship is benign and mutually beneficial. Education gives the women the skills to engage in active citizenship and, as importantly, it gives them the communication skills they need to involve their family members in these activities.

Perhaps, the confidence the education imbues encourages the women to trust that they will achieve their goals. As Mozah demonstrated when she told her father that she had opened her first business, she knew exactly when to tell him so that he would accept her initiative.

Kitty participated in the Terry Fox run last year for the first time. After seeing her photographs and hearing about her experience, her brother decided to take his young son and participate in the run this year. Kitty expands her horizons and the horizons of her family through her extended social networks and her desire to be involved in the community.

'*Learning is usually viewed normatively, as beneficial, whether to the individual doing the learning, or to the wider community, as it involves the acquisition of new skills, information and knowledge that in turn help people to widen their capacities for action, individual or collective*' (Field, 2003).

Field suggests that the two are mutually reinforcing, with education leading to 'civic engagement' and '*civic engagement*' leading the person to seek '*personal transformation*' (Field, 2003).

The women I interviewed were all involved with their community. They were engaged with their families, colleagues or community members in an effort to '*make a difference*.' They coached their siblings in their studies and created employment opportunities and ensured that their fellow employees received recognition for their contributions. All the women are currently engaged in formalized learning or expressed a keen interest in furthering their education.

While much of the social capital the women demonstrated is bonding capital, ties between people with similar values and beliefs, that is, ties between members of the Emirati community, some, like Mozah worked with, and created relationships with business people from the international expatriate community. I will expand on how the women exhibited bonding and bridging capital in Chapter Five.

In Field's conclusion, he states that in the particular context (Ireland) and time (2001) '*...the study demonstrates a positive association between attitudes towards civic engagement and adult learning*' (Field, 2003).

'*Putnam sees active citizenship as an important source of social capital because it is the main way in which people – particularly those who are strangers to one another – experience reciprocity through their pursuit of shared objectives*' (Field, 2003).

Measuring Social Capital

Although there is a relatively clear consensus if not a completely clear definition of what social capital is, there is not yet a clear consensus on how to measure it. Fukuyama suggests a number of approaches; the first is very similar to Putnam's approach of finding the number of groups and group memberships in a society. The second is to analyze survey data on trust and reciprocity (Fukuyama, 2001; Paldam, 2000).

Paldam thinks that measuring individual networks is a more accurate way of measuring social capital than Putnam's method of measuring membership in voluntary organizations. His concern is that in a dictatorship, voluntary organizations might be banned but people always build personal networks (Paldam, 2000).

Ismail Serageldin from the World Bank saw measuring social capital as an additional way to measure wealth in developing countries while others in the World Bank saw it as an opportunity to connect community participation with development.

Fukuyama discusses a '*radius of trust*' as another way to measure social capital. '*All groups embodying social capital have a certain radius of trust, that is, the circle of people among whom co-operative norms are operative. If a group's social capital produces positive externalities, the radius of trust can be larger than the group itself.*' And further to this, '*the radius of trust can be thought of as a type of positive externality because it is a benefit that accrues to the group independently of the collective action that the group formally seeks to achieve*' (Fukuyama, 2001).

The difficulty of measuring social capital is discussed by authors (Stone, 2001; Goulbourne, 2006) and researchers are cautioned not to conclude that outcomes can be used to measure social capital.

Stone (2001) explores the measurement of social capital thoroughly and has suggested a variety of methods for measuring it. She suggests surveys as a useful vehicle but

before these can be developed she feels that it is important to define the concepts that need to be measured. She emphasizes the importance of *'...social networks, norms of trust and norms of reciprocity'* and suggests that measuring these components will give the researcher a good indicator of the extent of social capital that exists in a group or for an individual.

To measure social capital in different networks, Stone uses the work of a number of researchers and gives examples of questions they ask to determine the extent of trust and reciprocity in these networks. Two of the areas she explores in kinship or family networks are time and money. She thinks it would be useful to determine who would lend money to the respondent and who the respondent would lend money to. She also asks who the respondent would go to if s/he need help over an extended period of time and who s/he would help out over an extended period of time. She believes that these questions are good indicators of the strength of the ties and trust that exist within the network.

Like Putnam, Stone also suggests measuring participation in civic and social groups as an indication of social capital (Stone, 2001).

Measuring Social Capital in My Research

There is no woman's association in Ras Al Khaimah and there are very few, if any, clubs or volunteer associations. There may be prayer circles, but none of the women mentioned these to me as places where they found support. In one of the Photovoice sessions, the women said that they seldom get together to talk or to socialize except with family members.

The absence of associations, clubs and groups meant it was not feasible to measure social capital by measuring the groups and their membership. Rather than ask who the women would loan or borrow from or who they would go to for help, I asked them who supported them when they were contributing to their family, work or community. The answer to this question helped me identify the relationship or network that each woman relied on, drew strength from and trusted.

Most of the women talked about the support they received from their families, drawing a clear picture of very strong bonding social capital. Two of the women talked about networks they had built, one while she was a student at the college and the other in her workplace, indicating bridging capital.

The Importance of Social Capital in a Democracy

Much of the literature mentions the link between social capital and democracy, and for a while I thought the authors were saying that social capital creates a democracy and I was confused by this, because the Emirates is not a democracy and I wondered how I would discuss this connection. Then, I began to read Fukuyama, who talks about what he believes the connection is.

Fukuyama (2001), citing Alexis de Tocqueville, says that *'...a modern democracy tends to wipe away most forms of social class or inherited status that bind people together in aristocratic societies. People are left equally free, but weak in their equality since they are born with no conventional attachments. The vice of modern democracy is to promote excessive individualism, that is, a preoccupation with one's private life and family, and an unwillingness to engage in public affairs.'* He goes on

to say that '*Americans combated this tendency towards excessive individualism by their propensity for voluntary association, which led them to form groups both trivial and important for all aspects of their lives*' (Fukuyama, 2001).

The role that social capital plays in a democracy is to engage the population in creating a civil society, which '*serves to balance the power of the state and to protect individuals from the state's power*' (Fukuyama, 2001).

In contrast to a democracy, Ras Al Khaimah in particular, and the Emirates in general, is a tribal society with clear hierarchies and inherited status. These hierarchies play an important role in the lives of our women, often dictating whether or not they will work, where they will work and who they will marry.

The strong tribal ties might also explain the lack of volunteer organizations, because the ties that bind people together make them responsible for each other, thus reducing the need for voluntary associations. The strict hierarchies also dictate who associates with whom, making it difficult to establish broad based local associations. The government provides social services for Emiratis who are in need, including housing and money to cover their basic expenses.

Social Capital and Community

Some of the women I interviewed talked about contributing to their community, which consists of their relatives and friends and is almost exclusively limited to Emiratis. They see their community as locational and relational as defined by Voydanoff (as cited by Williams &Pocock, 2010).

Ras Al Khaimah Women's College provides the women who attend it with the opportunity to participate in social activities and develop social networks. Williams and Pocock talk about the importance of community in developing social capital.

> When thinking about the concepts of community and social capital together, community can be considered the social milieu from which social capital develops. If the community provides individuals with the opportunity and capacity to participate in social activities and form social networks, then social capital in the form of trust, reciprocity, support, social control, civic engagement, and political empowerment, is likely to develop (Williams & Pocock, 2010).

Summary

Social Capital has existed as a concept and a theory for over fifty years and researchers are still identifying ways to measure it. Putnam was the forerunner in this area and thought that measuring groups and the membership of groups was a good way to determine the amount of social capital that exists. His premise that social capital is declining in the United States is based in large part on his analysis of the declining membership in volunteer organizations. Stone and Fukuyama agree that this is one way to measure social capital, while Stone also suggests measuring trust and reciprocity. Paldam is concerned that in a dictatorship, civic organizations might not exist so he suggests measuring personal networks.

Civic engagement or active citizenship is closely connected to social capital and is another measure that can be used. Fukuyama proposed that these volunteer

organizations overcome the 'excessive individualism' created by the lack of a hierarchy in democracy. In the UAE, where civic organizations are not as prevalent, measuring individual networks would seem to be the best way to measure social capital.

In my research, I asked the women who supported them when they were contributing in their communities and their answers indicated that most of them have strong relationships with their families (bonding capital) while others have built networks in their workplace (bridging capital) that they can rely on.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Methods

This chapter begins with an overview of qualitative methodology and a full introduction to the women who participated in this study. I describe how I have used the 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry, enhanced by Photovoice sessions and a blog to give the narratives exposure and garner a response for the narrators. There is a discussion of the process I used to obtain the participants' consent, which can be a sensitive process in this culture.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research involves a process of discovery while quantitative research focuses on verification (Ryan-Nichols & Will, 2009). This study lent itself to a qualitative approach, because I was investigating the contribution the graduates make in their communities through the social capital they have developed as a result of their involvement in higher education.

Appreciative Inquiry

Methodologically, appreciative inquiry builds on its constructionist premises, emphasising metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing, on language, and on its potential as a source of generative theory (Gergen, 1994, in Cooperrider, 2003, as cited in Virgil, 2006). 'Generative' can interpreted in a number or ways. One interpretation is to '*challenge the guiding assumptions of the culture*' (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004) and had I interpreted it this way, I would have explored more deeply the religion that guides the lives of the women and/or the politics of neopatriarchy.

I was thinking more along the lines of Gervase Bushe's interpretation of the ways Appreciative Inquiry can be generative. '*It (Appreciative Inquiry) is the quest for new ideas, images, theories and models that liberate our collective aspirations, alter the social construction of reality and, in the process, make available decisions and actions that weren't available or didn't occur to us before*' (Bushe, 2007).

AI promotes growth by generating energy and enthusiasm based on past achievements and successes. It allows one to create a positive picture of the future that is both realistic, because it is based on past successes, and challenging, because Appreciative Inquiry inspires us to 'reach for the stars' (Gergen, 1982; Finegold, Holland & Lingham, 2002).

Transformational change occurs when people and organizations dream of, and create, their futures while keeping in mind their past successes.

'*The task of social theory is to open the world to new and untold possibilities. Beginning with the powerful premise that the future is opportunity, not destiny, the postmodern thinker is invited to discover the affirmative task of social theory and to engage in forms of knowing that serve to make collective reality comprehensible from the perspective of human possibility*' (Unger, 1987, as cited in Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999).

There are many definitions of Appreciative Inquiry, most of which focus on the search for what is working and giving life in an organization or energizing a person.

Because this research focuses on individuals the definition that best fits is one crafted by Cooperrider et.al in 2011.

Appreciative Inquiry '… deliberately seeks to discover people's exceptionality – their unique gifts, strengths, and qualities. It actively searches and recognizes people for their specialties – their essential contributions and achievements. And it is based on principles of equality of voice – everyone is asked to speak about their vision of the true, the good, and the possible. Appreciative Inquiry builds momentum and success because it believes in people. It really is an invitation to a positive revolution. Its goal is to discover in all human beings the exceptional and the essential.' (Cooperrider, et al., 2001)

The Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

The five original principles of Appreciative Inquiry were developed by David Cooperrider and his PhD. advisor, Suresh Srivastva at Case Western University in the early 1990's. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, in their latest edition of *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry* (2010), provide the following overview of the five original principles along with three newer ones:

Table 1		
The Eight Principles of Appreciative Inquiry		
1.	The Constructionist Principle	*Words create worlds*
Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state. It is socially created, through language and conversations.		
2.	The Simultaneity Principle	*Inquiry creates change*
Inquiry is intervention. The moment we ask a question, we begin to create change.		
3.	The Poetic Principle	*We can choose what we study*
Organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes, even creates, the world as we know it.		
4.	The Anticipatory Principle	*Image inspires action*
Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action will be.		
5.	The Positive Principle	*Positive questions lead to positive change*
Momentum for large scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core.		
6.	The Wholeness Principle	*Wholeness brings out the best*
Wholeness brings out the best in people and organizations. Bringing all the stakeholders together in large group forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity.		
7.	The Enactment Principle	*Acting "as if" is self-fulfilling*
To really make a change, we must "be the change we want to see". Positive change		

occurs when the process used to create the change is a living model of the ideal future.		
8.	The Free Choice Principle	*Free choice liberates power*
People perform better and are more committed when they have freedom to choose how and what they contribute. Free choice stimulates organizational excellence and positive change.		

Appreciative Inquiry Methodologies

A number of methods have been devised that operationalize the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) provide the following list: the 4-D Cycle, Whole-System 4-D Dialogue, Appreciative Inquiry Summit, Mass-Mobilized Inquiry, Core Group Inquiry, Positive Change Network, Positive Change Consortium, A Learning Team, and Progressive AI Meetings.

The 4 D Method of Appreciative Inquiry

The 4 D Methodology is based on Appreciative Inquiry. The 4 D's are: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny or Deliver.   In the Discovery phase Appreciative inquiry interviews are conducted to find out about the peak experiences in a person's or an organization's life. The interviews draw out what energizes the person or the organization.

In the Dream phase, the person is asked to imagine herself or himself or the organization in the near or distant future. This future they imagine is based on the peak experiences of the past, the strengths, values and supports are once again in play in the future, informing it, shaping it and bringing it alive with the energy generated by the highlights of the past. A 'provocative proposition' is a way of articulating the dream in a short 'pithy' statement often used as the bridge between the Dream phase and the Delivery phase.

The Design phase brings the group together or encourages the individual to come up with a plan to achieve their Dream. The underlying questions are: 'How can we make this real?' "How can we make the dream happen?' 'How can we realize the future?'

In the Destiny or Delivery Phase the person or the team enacts the plan moving toward the desired future. This is an iterative process and at any point the cycle can begin again, encouraging the person or the group to clarify the next steps which are always based on peak experiences from the past.

This process is especially effective in cross cultural settings because it '…*creates a language and climate of interaction that embraces differences, accepts polarities and helps create new cultures where diverse values are heard and honoured. If taken deeply enough, appreciative processes of knowing and interaction enlarge our sense of solidarity with others, overcome the arrogance of prejudice and cultural blindness, and allow for the cooperative evolution of the shared values, accountabilities, and meanings that shape the collective good* (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999).

Smith, The Maori scholar and author of *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) supports the idea of encouraging participants to create dreams for their futures. *'Imagination*

enables people to rise above their own circumstances, to dream new visions and to hold on to old ones. It fosters inventions and discoveries, facilitates simple improvements to people's lives and uplifts our spirits. Creating is not the exclusive domain of the rich nor of the technologically superior, but of the imaginative. Creating is about channeling collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems' (Smith, 1999).

Action Research in Combination with the 4D Method

The hallmark of Action Research is that it enables the participants to identify and make changes in their lives as a result of their participation in the research project. The combination of Action Research with Appreciative Inquiry is a complementary approach because Appreciative Inquiry interventions provide a framework for individuals and organizations to generate change.

Action Research has been focused on identifying a problem and then coming up with a solution (Greenwood & Gevin, 2008) but Srivastva and Cooperrider (1999) are persuasive in their claim that the combination of Action Research and Appreciative Inquiry, with its focus on strengths, has the potential to explore how knowledge is developed and find ways to open up this process to scrutiny and use it to inform change (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999).

As Cooperrider and Srivastva point out the methodology one chooses predicts the outcomes one will find and by creating new knowledge about the world, there is 'a *strong likelihood of changing that world itself* '(Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999).

Using the 4 D method to explore past successes, highlights, and peak experiences and to learn more about what made these possible, opens the door to create futures that we otherwise might not have created.

'… *the collection and analysis of data provide a much better basis for taking action than is ever normally available, but action researchers are always in the position of taking action on the basis of prehension rather than full apprehension of the situation* (Somekh, 2005). This is similar to the principle of simultaneity in Appreciative Inquiry. '*If you can dream it, you can do it'* (adapted from an inscription at Walt Disney World).

Gergen (1982) refers to this as the '*enlightenment effect'* which '*...constitutes an invitation to every theorist to actively participate in the creation of his or her world by generating compelling theories of what is good, and just, and desirable in social existence*' (as cited in Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999).

Action research is successful when it discovers what needs to be done to '*increase human happiness'* (Greenwood & Levin, 2008).

Ontological Narratives

The 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry encourages the use of narratives. These are the basis of the Appreciative Inquiry interview, which often includes the phrase, '*Tell me a story about a time when...'* We love to tell stories and we learn from them. Indeed stories are a large part of the way we come to understand and embrace our cultures (Fisher, 1984, as cited in Bute & Jensen, 2011; Lannamann & McNamee, 2011).

Narratives, especially ontological narratives, '*…the personal stories that we tell about ourselves our place in the world, and our history'* (Dillon, 2011) help develop our self-identity. Telling stories about our futures, helps create this future and reshape our identity to fit that future.

Narratives are created from a '*process of collaboration'. What* one person says affects the other's response creating a story much different than one might tell oneself or a story that varies somewhat in content from one telling to the next depending on who one is interacting with or relating to. These variations do not refute the idea of a life story as '*a single coherent narrative'* (Gergen & Gergen, 2011).

Because Appreciative Inquiry interviews focus on the positive, the stories that are told are positive in nature, they illuminate the best times, what gives life to the organization and what gives meaning to the person's life. The stories themselves help the narrators understand themselves on a deeper level. '*Stories create meanings for the narrators and the readers…for those who tell them and those who hear them'* (Jenco, 2012).

'*In the re-telling of a life experience in the form of a narrative, an individual is forced to reflect on those experiences most readily remembered. It is this process of making sense out of experience that makes narratives different from and better than structured interviews'* (Fowler & Moore, 2012).

Narratives can empower the story teller, to position herself or himself as the hero of the story. Appreciative Inquiry interviews with their focus on the positive encourage the narrator to see herself or himself in that light and make it possible for them to imagine other similar situations in the future.

'*This capacity of narratives for imagining and constructing other worlds, and for trying to make them a reality, is an essential feature of the human capacity to transform our own selves as well as our social contexts'* (Monteagudo, 2011).

These narratives influence not only the narrator, but also those who hear or read the stories.

'*On the other hand, self is constructed and transformed through the stories it receives, creates and shares'* (Monteagudo, 2011).

The Case Study

According to Stake (1995) there are two types of case studies, instrumental and intrinsic. An instrumental case study is conducted when the researcher wants to '*get insight into the research question by studying a particular case'*. An intrinsic case study is used when '*one wants to understand a particular case'*. This is an intrinsic case study. I am interested in studying the graduates to learn more about the ways they contribute to their community rather than studying contribution to social capital as a whole.

Researchers use case studies to collect and present information about one person or a small group of people, so although conclusions can be drawn about that person or group; the findings are not generalizable to a larger population. However a case study can be used to provide support for an existing theory (Denscombe, 2007). This case

study provides support for the theory that adult education enables the learners to expand their networks thus increasing their social capital.

When a researcher takes the strategic decision to devote all his or her efforts to researching just one instance, there is obviously far greater opportunity to delve into things in more detail and discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research (Denscombe, 2007*).*

This study lends itself to the case format because it is designed to explore the details of how the graduates contribute in the community while at the same time, giving them a space to imagine how they might continue to contribute in the future.

Choosing a Case

Martyn Denscombe (2007) says that choosing a case is dependent on a number of criteria, three which apply to my case study.

The first is 'typical instance'. The fifteen participants involved in this research reflect similarities to most women graduates of RKW who are employed in the community. Seven are single, four are married and four are divorced. Eight of the women experienced difficulty finding employment, but all have been employed for over three years. Eight have continued their studies beyond their initial Diploma or Higher Diploma. All of them have stayed in their home community of Ras Al Khaimah.

The second criterion is 'intrinsic interest', a criterion that is not considered key by Denscombe, but is important to me because it has propelled me through the research. Living in another culture causes me to question many things, both in this culture and my own and conducting this research is one way to answer a small number of the myriad of questions with which I assail myself and perhaps alleviate the discomforts I experience as I try to adapt.

I have had the stress that Harman refers to: *'The person's total belief system is an organization of beliefs and expectancies that the person accepts as true of the world he or she lives in – verbal and nonverbal, implicit and explicit, conscious and unconscious. Typically a person may go through most of life with these core beliefs essentially unchanged. When they do change the shift is likely to be accompanied by a rather stressful period in the person's life'* (Harman, 1998). Living and working in another culture has shifted some of my beliefs, working with these women in this study has helped me to question and broaden my perspective on the importance of family.

The third criterion is that of a 'unique opportunity'. Returning to Ras Al Khaimah enabled me to reconnect with some of my graduates and see how their lives have unfolded. These are some of the first graduates of RKW so they are a unique group of women who provide an opportunity to explore the contributions they have made to their community that presage contributions yet to come as more women graduate.

Boundaries

Case studies are described as 'a self-contained entity with distinct boundaries' and this research conforms to description by focusing directly on a distinct group of fifteen Emirati graduates.

My research is situated in the context of college graduates' contribution to community and their increased social capital. (Tett & & MacLachlan, 2007). It builds on the Doctoral work of Wanda Krause on Emirati women's contribution to civil society (Krause, 2009) and Maha Khatib's who sought to show Emirati women in a new light in her Doctoral Dissertation (Khatib, 1994). Moreover, it demonstrates the power of Appreciative Inquiry in initiating the conversations that lead to transformative change and the effect stories have on their narrators and their readers.

Photovoice

I first encountered the Photovoice methodology in a PhD Dissertation published by Debora Dole in 2010. She used this method to learn more about the lives of African American adolescent mothers. According to Hergenrather, Scott, Cowan & Bardhoshi (2009), Photovoice is often used in community based participatory research. Most often the focus is on problem solving, but they did find cases where it was used to help participants become change agents.

'*The concept of photovoice was developed by Wang and Burris (1997) from theoretical literature based on Freire's (1970, 1993, 2000, 2007) work on education for critical consciousness, feminist theory, and documentary photography…The process is mutual and results in emancipatory knowledge that enables people to think critically about their own situations. The ability to think critically about one's own situation and community redistributes real power into the hands of those previously without power or agency*' (Dole, 2009).

'*Photovoice is a participatory action research strategy using photography as a tool of social change. The process turns the camera lens toward the eyes and experiences of vulnerable populations and gives people the opportunity to record, reflect and critique personal and community issues in creative ways*' (Community, n.d.).

The Photovoice participants are given cameras and photography training and the researcher gives them a topic to explore. In some projects, the participants chose their own topics. Once the photographs are taken, the researcher facilitates a discussion with the participants as a group to explore the significance of their photographs.

'*Visual structures do not simply reproduce the structures of 'reality'. On the contrary, they produce images of reality which are bound up with interests of the social institutions, within which the images are produced, circulated and read. They are ideological. Visual structures are never merely formal: they have a deeply important semantic dimension*' (Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

The photographs are usually displayed in a public place to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities the participants are working with, to expose the way they view their world. Sometimes the photographs are displayed so agencies or those who work with or care for the participants can alter their perspectives of the participants.

While photovoice is often used with disenfranchised groups to present their point of view, more recently it is being used to document success. I have used it in this way to enhance the 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry.

I was mindful that I may not always understand my participants because they are speaking in Arabic, a language I do not understand. Streck goes beyond the language issue and talks about the importance of catching the nuances of gestures and side conversations. '*…reality itself constitutes a subject that interacts with the researcher, many times in unexpected ways: a gesture, a word, a vote may indicate to the researcher that he or she did not understand anything of what was happening around him or her, and he or she will have to learn how to reposition him or herself within this context'* (Streck, 2007).

Photovoice is especially beneficial in cross cultural research because the pictures lend clarity to the discussion. They capture the nuances that second language speakers can find difficult to articulate.

Inviting the Graduates to Participate

I prepared the following information to give to the women I wanted to interview. I met with them to give them the information, rather than emailing it so I could answer any questions.

Shamma Al Naqbi and I would like your help on our PhD research project. We want to hear your story. More specifically, we want to know about your successes, at home, with your family, at your work or in the community.

First of all, we would like to interview you on your own and hear your story and then, if you are willing, we would like to invite you to meet with a small group of graduates to share your stories. When you meet with the group, we would like you to bring a picture or a small item that captures a part of your story.

We want to use your pictures and items along with your stories to create a small exhibition which we will share with the community.

We are really excited about this project and we hope you will be willing to share your stories with us!

(signed) Bonnie Milne

I quickly learned that there was too much information in this handout, because the women thought they needed to have pictures for the interview itself. Both Kitty and Huda prepared a PowerPoint presentation for their interviews.

In the end, I found it easier to meet with the women, tell them about the project and ask if they were interested in being a part of it. Once they agreed I had them sign the form and set a time for the interview.

Selecting the Participants

The participants in this study were purposefully chosen; all but one of the women are graduates of RKW (Ras Al Khaimah Women's College). They were accessible and willing to take part in the study. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), a representative sample of informants is not always what is needed where the primary

concern is to elicit information, what is required are participants who are willing to share their ideas and in this study, their hopes and dreams.

The primary reason these women were chosen is because I already had a relationship with most of them, and those who didn't know me, knew of me. Eight of the women were my students between 1997 and 2002 and I work with seven of the women at RKW. Three of the women I work with are my former students. The relationships I have with these women are important because we trust one another. This trust meant that the women were comfortable sharing their stories and their dreams with me.

The women range in age from mid-twenties to late thirties. Four of the women are divorced, three are married and the rest are single. All but one of the married women have children and two of the divorced women have at least one child. Between them, there are eight children four boys and four girls. Two of the women have Masters Degrees, two are completing their Masters now, one of the women has her Bachelor's and the others have four year Diplomas. All the women are employed full time and have been working for at least three years. Five of the women have been employed for over ten years and only one of these women has changed employers in that period of time.

The women who participated in my study are representative of RKW graduates who are employed. These graduates are unique in that they are all employed; they are pioneers who are moving themselves and their country into a new era, an era of women working outside of the home and contributing to the family income; an era of women being educated in English as well as Arabic; an era when their Western education influences the decisions they make.

Only two of the graduates I approached said they didn't want to be interviewed. I met one of the graduates when I was visiting my students at the Ministry of Labour, where they were doing their work experience. Over a period of six weeks I met with her four times to inquire about my students' progress, but our relationship was not strong enough for her to agree to be interviewed.

The second graduate, who didn't accept my offer, works at RKW and she said that she was too busy to be involved. I requested an interview with her about a month after I interviewed the other women at the college, and I did not know her well. I think she turned down my request because she was busy, but more importantly, she did not appreciate being asked later than the other women. When I asked Amal if I could interview her, she agreed immediately and that was at least a month after I had interviewed the other graduates, but Amal and I worked together on the Small Business Incubator so we have a long standing relationship.

This is an important point for those who want to conduct research with Emirati women. It is important to work with the women in the community or the workplace before asking for their involvement. The society is hierarchical and it takes time and patience to build relationships and networks. There is not the easy ebb and flow of relationships one finds in the West. In Vancouver, for example, I would meet my colleagues for dinner or to go to the gym or the theatre. These opportunities are rare here, as most Emirati women do not socialize outside of their homes and if they do it is usually with their family members. This is another example of how bonding capital can lead to the exclusion of outsiders and prevent new ideas from entering into tightly knit communities.

All but one of the women gave me permission to use their first names, so they are included throughout, while I have called the woman who didn't want her name used, Participant One.

Introducing the Participants

What follows is a more complete introduction to the participants than the one I gave at the beginning of Chapter One. As you will see, they are a group with diverse interests and ideas. While I have given you a rather small window through which to view them, (there are areas of their lives that I cannot share) my intention is that these short vignettes will make it possible for you to 'see' the women more clearly and begin to identify them and perhaps identify with them as you read more about their contributions and their dreams in the following chapter.

Aaesha

Aaesha, one of my former students, works in the Learning Centre at our college and when I interviewed her, she said she was planning to do her Masters at the college.

'A long time ago I would have liked to go somewhere else, but I don't have transportation. So when I have the chance now, here in the college, why not?'

Initially Aaesha wasn't enthusiastic about being interviewed, but when I asked her how she enjoyed the interview her response was positive.

'I think it's OK. I am glad you are doing the stories for your PhD.   I think it's a new idea and it will inspire our students to continue their studies.'

When I checked back with Aaesha recently, I learned that she has enrolled in the Master's program at RKW and is really enjoying her studies.

Aamena

Aamena graduated in 1998 and has been working at the college since 2000 when I hired her to work at the '*Women as Mentors'* conference that was part of the research we did before setting up the Small Business Incubator at RKW. She completed her Master's Degree in May of this year! (2011)

Already married with one son when she came to the college as a student, Aamena took on a leadership role in the class. She is artistically and intuitively creative. She is the author of a book, soon to be a screen play, about an Emirati girl who wants to be a writer. Aamena has written nine scripts for the popular cartoon/comedy show Al Fereej which is about the lives of four older Emirati women (Harib, 2003).

She also has a marvelous sense of humour. In 2005 when she was working full time, enrolled in the Bachelor's program at the college and taking care of her three sons, Aamena won second prize in the Humorous Speech Category at the UAE National Toastmaster's Competition.

Participant One

Participant One graduated from the college and could not find work so she and her friend decided to volunteer at the college. Both were hired as temporary employees and now she has a full time job in the library.

'It is like a dream to have a job and pay for my own schooling, not using my family's money. I will go to university to complete my degree.'

'At the same time I can be helpful and give a chance to my other younger sisters if they want money to study.'

Participant One helped mount the Photovoice display in the RKW library.

Aarefa

Aarefa is the Vice President of a local bank and has been working full time since she graduated from RKW in 2003. She is a wife and the mother of two children as well as having a very demanding career.

When I asked her about her energy, she said:

'The good thing you know, I don't lie at home doing nothing. I don't believe in it. And why am I doing a Master's degree? I have a good salary, good increments, a good position and a Masters won't add any value or money, but it will add self-satisfaction. I feel I should have a Master's degree and the thing which prevented me for the last few years; I have two children and they were very young.'

Abeer

Abeer graduated from United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) in Al Ain – a small town in the middle of the Emirates. The University has dormitories and the students from the outlying towns, like Ras Al Khaimah, stay in the dorms during the week and return to their homes for the week ends. Abeer was one of the women who stayed in the dormitories.

The first time I saw the buses full of women; I thought there must be a huge women's conference going on somewhere and I wondered what I was missing! We passed 40 buses! Then I realized that they were students heading back to the University for the week.

Abeer graduated with a degree in Biology, but she could not find a job. *'I graduated and then I stayed at home for three years looking for a job. So when I was reaching the hopeless stage, I thought, 'Why not study again?' Just to fill out the space that I had in my life because I was starting to get really bored and very nervous at home.*

I decided to come to the college and I studied for two semesters and a half and then I got a job so I had to move to afternoon classes. I was in love with studying. This is my second life studying and learning.'

Abeer is always busy; she belongs to two book clubs, one in Dubai and one in Ras Al Khaimah. She helps her brother with his college studies and often brings her nieces to the college for special occasions. This September she began her PhD studies so now she travels to Dubai (about 100 kilometers, 60 miles) most weekends to take classes.

Afra

I taught Afra and now she is one of my colleagues. It seems that she has always known that she would work at the library, perhaps because she spent so much time there as a student.

My English was terrible. I wasn't able to understand what the teachers were saying to me. They had problems communicating with me as well, but then, I came to the library…'

Among the artifacts Afra brought to the Photovoice session was a picture. *'This is my photo, a picture of me standing in front of the library door. It's like I'm saying, 'Hey, my future will be here!'"*

Amal

Amal is the only participant who did not graduate from RKW. (I initially thought she was one of our graduates, but actually, she was the first Emirati woman hired at the college.)   She is the Manager of Student Services.

Amal and I worked together on the Small Business Incubator Project and when I left, Amal took the idea to the community and the Chamber of Commerce opened a Small Business Incubator so the one at RKW was closed.

Amal is a Shaikha, the daughter of one of the rulers of Ras al Khaimah and because of this, she has a lot of demands on her to organize and attend events in the community. She is a gracious woman who understands protocol and is always willing to advise the faculty on how to interact with members of the community.

Amal looked for work for a year after she graduated and even being hired at the college was not an easy task. *'It was not really that accepted for me to work in a mixed environment (men and women), so it was a really tough time, it was a tough time.'*

Huda

Huda graduated from the college in 1998. I taught her in the last year of her studies. When she graduated, there were no jobs available in her specialty so she and a number of her colleagues volunteered at the Saqr Hospital. After accepting the women as volunteers, the hospital decided to hire them and Huda has been there ever since. She started off as the Secretary to the Director and now she heads up the Training Division.

Huda is lively and full of ideas and she has always been a good friend to me. When I told her that one of the reasons I wanted to return to Ras Al Khaimah was to see her, she replied, *'You know you were not only my teacher you were like a friend for us. I always remember the card that you sent me when I graduated. This card is still with me.'*

Kitty

Kitty's name is Khawla, but because she loves cats, she calls herself Kitty. She works at the College Career Centre and attends University classes in the evening. Her weekends are equally busy, Kitty has more energy than anyone else I know, she is always 'up' and she loves everything she does.

When Kitty came to the first Photovoice session, she showed us a photo of herself in a 'bib' that she wears for IELTS that identifies her as the Head Invigilator.

'When I wore this the first time, Dr Bob (Dr. Robert Moulton, The Director of Ras Al Khaimah Women's and Men's Colleges) said to me, 'Can you tell me which football team this is?' I said, 'Football team, it's not a football team!' He said, 'No, no, no, it's a football team – it looks like an old football team uniform.'

He was proud, he said, 'What are you going to do today?' And I said, 'I am head invigilator.' And he said, 'Head invigilator? You, Kitty, head invigilator?' I said, 'Yes.'

And sometimes, I don't believe it myself that I am a head invigilator. When I come here it's a different feeling, it's like fun, it's like I can't even explain it.'

Latifa

Latifa teaches Information Technology at a girl's high school. She was a student in the last class I taught in 2002 before I returned to Vancouver.

That year, I had an influential Shaikha in my class and she and I went to the Ministry of Education and suggested that they hire graduates from the Information Technology Program to teach Information Technology (IT) in the secondary schools. The Ministry followed up on our suggestion and hired fifteen of the twenty-six graduates as IT teachers. (The number hired is an estimate based on discussions with those still teaching)

Latifa really enjoyed being a student at RKW; she saw it as a way to learn something that would make it possible for her to support herself in the future.

'It was really different for us because we were growing up without a father. That's why I had to depend on myself to get some money and to grow up. I had to do something good so I had to work at something big and I thought I would have to learn computers because it was something new.'

After she had been teaching for a year, Latifa married and now she has two children.

'Maybe more than five of us are still teaching: Najla and Afra, me and Fatema are teaching here. We were all married in the same year (she laughs) I didn't know the men were looking for teachers.'

Maryam

Maryam is the Manager of the Continuing Education Department at RKW and she is always busy, on her Blackberry, meeting with people from the community and sourcing instructors for the courses offered by her department. When I interviewed her, she said she was looking at Universities in the United States trying to decide where to do her PhD studies so she can contribute at a higher level.

When I spoke with her recently, Maryam told me that she has been accepted into the PhD program at the University of New Mexico!

Mozah

I have known Mozah for many years. She's a dynamo; she has opened four businesses all while working full time. Each business Mozah opened enabled one of

her relatives to work, and her search company, Tamooh, sourced jobs for a number of our graduates, both men and women.

I attended Mozah's wedding a year and a half ago (2010), and it was wonderful to see her so happy! Being married has not slowed her down, she is thinking of opening another business, this time with her husband.

Nahla

Nahla works in the Medical Zone in Ras Al Khaimah where she has been in Promotions for four years. I met her when I was visiting my students in the workplace and I didn't remember teaching her. When I arrived at her workplace to interview her, she led me to the HR manager's office, which he quickly vacated. Then she pulled out the project she had done nine years ago for her work experience and said, '*Now do you remember me?*'

The memories flooded back. She did her work experience in an innovative private school where the kindergarten children were using small colourful laptops. She created a beautiful alphabet book for them, she was an amazing student and it felt so good to reconnect properly!

Nahla had difficulty finding work after she graduated even though she completed additional computing credentials. She was offered a job in Abu Dhabi, but couldn't face the idea of relocating.

Reem

Reem used to come to our house to teach our son Arabic. I love Reem and think of her as my Emirati daughter. Reem's father was an Ambassador to the United States, the former Soviet Union and one of the smaller African countries. Reem's mother died in a car accident when Reem was very young and she tells me that her father has always been there for her; he is her support system!

Reem was hired to teach Information Technology as soon as she graduated from RKW (2002) so she is back teaching in the high school that she attended. She has a young son and is a single parent with a lot of responsibilities.

Shaikha

Shaikha and her children were at a concert at the Cultural Centre that I attended with Reem. I taught Shaikha in 2000 and as soon as I saw her, I remembered who she was and she remembered me.

I was amazed that even though she has three children and is expecting a fourth, she is still working. When I stopped in at the bank where she works to interview her, she was in the process of preparing her CV so she can move on in her career.

Redefining the Research Goal and Design

When I designed the research, I was working with an Emirati partner, Shamma Al Naqbi and we planned to conduct the research in both Arabic and English.

Currently 95% of women in Emirati high schools apply to attend post-secondary institutes, but only 36% actually enroll to attend (UNICEF, 2010; UAE, n.d.) Before

a woman enrolls in the college, she needs to have the approval of her family. The decision makers are her parents, brothers or, if she is married, her husband. This is not to say that she doesn't have some say in the decision but one of these family members can withhold his or her approval and then she will not attend college.

Shamma and I thought that if we expanded the discourse in the community to include more positive narratives about how college graduates contribute to their families, workplaces and the community that families might see the benefits of higher education for their daughters, sisters and wives.

We had a vision of presenting the graduate's narratives (in English and Arabic) and photographs from the Photovoice sessions in local high schools, hospitals, malls and cultural centres.

We planned to interview thirty women, fifteen in English and fifteen in Arabic and present their narratives in both languages. Because Shamma is Muslim and therefore familiar with the Islamic Faith, she could describe how the contributions the graduates make support Islamic principles. We wanted to demonstrate that higher education, in English, enhanced the roles the women play in their families and community.

Unfortunately, Shamma couldn't continue her PhD studies so I had to redefine the research goal and design. Because the narratives would now be in English, and most of the Emirati community doesn't speak or read English, I couldn't follow through with the idea of presenting them in the various locations throughout the community. This also meant that I couldn't measure how these narratives and pictures might influence families' decisions about allowing their daughters to attend RKW.

'…action research projects are often emergent and so too design can emerge over time. Early design may be simply to open communicative space into which co-design can later develop' (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Fortunately the focus of the Appreciative Inquiry interviews was on contribution to community - building social capital, so I knew I could find alternative ways to explore the narratives. The literature provides many examples of how social capital increases when adults continue their formal education. There is also a large body of research on how narratives create meaning for the narrators and those who read them. I simply had to think of another readership for the narratives. It proved less difficult than I thought. Adichie had identified the danger of the 'single story' which is the way Arab women in the Middle East are portrayed and this inspired me to pursue the idea of sharing the women's narratives to provide multiple stories to replace that 'single' story of oppressed women .

The Goal of the Research

> Social constructionism is the theoretical approach of accounting for something by construing its nature and existence as the product, in some sense, of social relationships, practices, and discourses. Social constructionism is a particularly hopeful approach to take toward anything we regard as wrong or bad because if we find that something bad is a social construct rather than being that way independently of social practices, then we can try to change it socially or, at least, to construct it differently next time around. Feminist social constructionism is deeply concerned with the concepts, practices, entities, and

attributes that constitute oppression. If oppressive practices and oppressed identities turn out to be social constructs, then they would be the products of social relationships that could conceivably be under human control, and we could plausibly hope to change them through human intervention. Social constructionism suggests that whatever is oppressive to women is not inevitable or unchanging and can be made better by human beings acting differently (Friedman, 2006).

In this research I have provided an alternate construction to the conventional view of Arab women as oppressed, a construction that has been reinforced by the media, novelists and the lack of 'everyday' Arab Muslim women's voices. The women's stories speak for themselves.

 'The process of writing, of narrative construction, is the process of creation, of truth claims, of alternative representations' (Daya & Lau 2007).

The goal of the research is both simple and complex; it is to share alternative stories to those we have been told about Arab Muslim women, that's the simple part. The complex part is to see how these stories shape the future of the narrators and open the minds of those who read them (Adichie, 2010).

By asking the women to tell stories about how they contribute to their communities, building social capital, and sharing these narratives with others, this research augments the 'single story' of oppressed Arab Muslim women with multiple stories of strong, self-directed Arab Muslim women.

The 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry provided the context for the women to dream about their futures and to take the first steps along the path to those futures.

Sharing the women's narratives inspired the readers to think more deeply about their lives and to compare them with the lives of the story tellers. This resulted in the readers identifying both similarities in, and differences between, their lives and the lives of the narrators.

The Research Design

I used multiple methods and a very fluid approach, an approach that aligns with Streck's caution that, '*there is a risk of methodologization, which consists in believing that the current use of certain techniques, or an adequate methodological design, suffices to find solutions to the problems, sometimes diverting attention for the search for the most relevant questions from the social and human point of view*' (Streck, 2007).

While methodology is important, it is also important to begin with an open view of the world. '*The secret of research may be in penetrating this simplicity, to move inside, with its cracks and saliencies. This simplicity and this "obvious" does not meet us at the desk, protected among books, behind the computer screen. The obvious meets us in the streets, in the classroom, in conversations, always when we are ready for a type of listening in which we let go our defences and barriers, and abandon the position of those who already know or who imagine that their role is to make each piece of reality and of experience fit into a given schema or to put a tag on them*' (Streck, 2007).

I conducted the research in four phases. First, I conducted Appreciative Inquiry interviews exploring how the participants contribute to their families, workplaces and community. Second, I invited the participants to Photovoice Sessions to share their success stories and their dreams of the future through photographs. Third, I displayed the narratives and pictures in the RKW Library and on a secure blog. The fourth step was to conduct another Photovoice session to discover the changes the women had made as a result of their involvement in the study. Because attendance at this session was limited, I followed up with the women individually, visiting them in their workplaces.

Analyzing the Data

Using the narratives as a '*primary unit of analyses ...a move that is in line with research on narrative inquiry as holistic rather than fragmented*' (Webster and Mertova, 2007, as cited in Bute & Jensen, 2011) I classified the narratives by assigning them to one or more of the settings that were defined by the questions I asked in the Appreciative Inquiry interview. The settings are: family, workplace, community and country. Within each setting, I discussed the type of social capital the woman was generating: bridging, bonding or linking or I used Schnell's categories of meaning making to identify what was important to the narrator.

I analyzed the responses to the narratives on the Blog using transactional theory as it applies to literature. '*Transactional theory proposes that the relationship between reader and text is much like that between the river and its banks, each working its effects upon the other…*' (Probst, 1998)

The Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

In order to find out how the women contributed to their families, work, community or country, I conducted Appreciative Inquiry Interviews. This is the Discovery Phase of the 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry. The interviewee told a story about a time when she was engaged, energetic, achieving something important. I framed the interview questions to capture the women's contribution to social capital. Seeking to learn more about their support networks, (bridging and bonding capital), I also asked them who supported them. Then I had them imagine a future based on these past 'peak' experiences shifting into the Dream phase of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry method.

The Appreciative Inquiry Questions

I developed a list of questions before the first interview and then adjusted them to fit the situation, always covering the same topics, but using different words to make sure the interviewee understood what I was asking.

As Stake (1995) suggests, '*the interview questions should be designed before the interviews are conducted and although they may not remain completely the same for each participant, they are bounded by the original design.*'

The questions below are a modified version of my first draft and closer to what I used in most of the interviews.

I want to hear one story about a time since you graduated when you really felt like you were contributing to your family or your work or your community, when you felt like you were making a difference.

Can you take a minute to think back…

1. *What was the situation, where were you, who was with you?*

In most of the interviews, I didn't use the first question, because the women shared their stories openly with lots of detail so I didn't need to probe or the probe was different. Looking back at the transcripts, there were very few times when I spoke because once the women started telling their stories, their energy increased and they really talked a lot.

2. *Who supported you?*

3. *What did you achieve at that time that you are most proud of?*

4. *Looking forward, how do you see yourself contributing in the future? Or… Thinking about your future, what do you see yourself doing next, how will you build on your success?*

Conducting the Interviews

I conducted Appreciative Inquiry interviews with fifteen women, fourteen graduates of Ras Al Khaimah Women's College (RKW) and one graduate of the United Arab Emirates University (who I mistakenly thought was a graduate of RKW). My first interview was on February 28th, 2011 and my last one was on May 9th, 2011.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of places and spaces. At the college, I used the board room, participant's offices, and the library; at a local school, I used the head mistress's office, at the Medical Zone, Nahla and I met in the HR Manager's office, at the bank, we sat at Shaikha's desk, at Reem's home, we sat in her living room, at Mozah's workplace we moved around, from her office to the cafeteria and back to her office, and at the hospital, we met in Huda's office.

Kitty and Huda had Power Points with videos and pictures as well as artifacts and Mozah had a number of stories she wanted to share, so I fit the questions in where I could, or gleaned the information I wanted from their presentations.

The shortest interview was with Maryam, who told her story and her dream of the future very quickly (ten minutes) and the longest interview was with Mozah whose 'system' was down at work so she had lots of time to talk (three hours)!

In keeping with Arabic hospitality I was offered refreshments when I visited the women in their offices and Nahla and Huda gave me small gifts when I went to interview them. I reciprocated by taking them flowers on my next visit.

I recorded fourteen of the interviews on my mobile phone and transcribed them verbatim, including all the filler words and repetitions. I transcribed the interviews within 24 hours of conducting them, so the conversations were fresh in my mind and I could remember what was said in the places where the recording wasn't clear.

I really enjoyed transcribing the interviews; it took me back to the 'moment' and I was able to recreate the interaction in my mind and begin to compare and contrast the narratives, I'd heard. '…*transcription is not a neutral process, but is, in effect, part of your analysis'* (Branley, 2004). Stake (1995) concurs, stressing that the role of the researcher is to continually interpret as she is gathering data.

One participant didn't want me to record her interview so I took notes and then wrote up the interview from my notes immediately after and shared these notes with her.

The recording device failed when I interviewed Reem so I wrote notes that evening from my recollections.

Once the transcripts were ready, I emailed them to the participants so they could correct any errors in my transcription and add more information. Having participants review the material for accuracy and palatability is one way to triangulate the data (Stake, 1995).

Mozah made some major changes to her transcript. She changed what I assumed was a story about her brother to one about her father. The other participants did not make any major changes, nor did they add anything, but they did ask me to remove the filler words. When I selected portions of the transcripts for the Blog, I did remove most of the filler words and repetitions so the readers could focus on the content of the stories.

Photovoice

Running a Pilot Session

Shamma Al Naqbi and I ran a pilot Photovoice session for our colleagues. We thought they could use this technique in their classes and working with them gave us a chance to practice facilitating together.

Our college will be moving to a new campus in 2012, so we wanted to find out where our colleagues go on the current campus when they need to relax and refresh so we could encourage the administration to create similar spaces in the new venue. We asked the participants to bring pictures of these places. The session provided an opportunity for our colleagues to talk about something that was important to them.

Shamma and I gained experience facilitating a Photovoice session and the session resulted in positive outcomes. The participants identified the need for a space outside the office area to meet with students and the college facilities administrator agreed to this. The other positive outcome is that one of the participants incorporated Photovoice in her teaching.

How Photovoice Enhances the 4D Appreciative Inquiry Method

The Photovoice sessions were designed to enhance the 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry by giving the women an opportunity to hear one another's stories. Since I had conducted all of the interviews, the wonderful synergy that results when participants conduct the interviews was not present and I saw the Photovoice sessions as one way to create that synergy.

The Photovoice sessions provided an opportunity for the women to share their successes with one another – the Discovery phase of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry

Method and share their dreams of the future – the Dream phase of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry Method. Because I interviewed the women in English, their second language, using photographs which they composed provided them with a second medium to share their stories and their dreams, a medium they are very comfortable using.

The photographs and narratives provided the content for the display in the RKW library and for the Blog. The Blog was the medium for my colleagues and friends to read the stories so they could begin to broaden their construction of the lives of Emirati women. It inspired them to compare their lives and the lives of the narrators. The Blog also became the venue where the women could see what others thought about their stories.

It wasn't necessary to give the participants cameras or photography training, as Emirati women seem to have been born with a camera in one hand and a cell phone in the other. They take pictures all of the time; this is a medium they love and one that proved a good choice for my research.

In some ways this fascination with photography is odd because most of the women do not want photos of themselves to appear in a public venue, but they have numerous photos on their mobile phones. Often, the pictures they take are artistic works that make it impossible to identify the individual in the photograph. For example, they might take a photograph of someone's hand as the person cuts a birthday cake, so it is possible to see that this is a birthday celebration but not possible to identify the celebrant.

Scheduling the Photovoice Sessions

I invited the women in person and by email and followed up these invitations with phone calls and texts. Even with all this communication, scheduling the sessions proved a challenge, in part because not all of the women drive and they are not always able to follow through on commitments. Their families come first. Six women attended the first session on April 6, 2011, where they shared photographs, collages, videos and artifacts.

Kitty attended the second session on May 11, 2011and we discussed her dream of the future, which is to attend at university in Australia.

After much consultation, texting and emailing, I scheduled the third session on a Saturday, which is the second day of the weekend, May 28, 2011. Four women attended this session and shared their dreams of the future.

After the summer break, I scheduled the final session for Sept 29, 2011, to discuss the changes that had taken place since the beginning of the study. The response was positive, but once again, Kitty was the only attendee. I followed up with all but one of the women by visiting them at their workplaces and emailed and texted the other woman.

The difficulty with the scheduling made me even more aware that conducting the interviews in the women's workplaces had been a good idea. Once again, for future research, it is important to note the lack of control the women have over their time. If a family commitment arises, it must be attended to. If someone else in their family needs the car or cannot drive them to the session, they will not be able to come.

The Location of the Photovoice Sessions

I used a light filled, comfortable room at the college that was close the entrance where the women could park their cars or be dropped off and picked up. We pulled the tables together to form a large, conference sized table which the women sat around. The women projected their photographs, videos and collages on a screen so this became the focal point when they were talking. I provided refreshments and small gifts for the women who attended. At the end of each session, I turned off the recording device and we enjoyed a small meal together and talked about our lives.

Seeing the Photographs and Listening to the Women's Stories and Dreams

Photovoice sessions are very much like focus groups in that each participant is encouraged to talk and share her point of view or, in this case her story and her dream. The role of the facilitator is to guide the discussion. Writing this, a smile comes to my face as I recall the energy, laughter and camaraderie that enveloped these sessions. Gergen and Gergen stress the importance of finding new voices or voices that have been restrained when hearing another's story.

Yet, in listening to another's story, one privately takes on various roles, most typically that of the protagonist. In playing out the part of the protagonist, polyvocality is restored. Recessive personae may be thrust into salience (Gergen & Gergen, 2006).

Although Gergen & Gergen uses this example to explain the use of narratives in conflict situations, it also fits when introducing new activities or new ways to experience success. One of the reasons the photovoice sessions were effective is because the women were able to imagine themselves as the protagonists in the other women's stories, momentarily, experiencing the other woman's success**.**

The First Photovoice Session

Six participants came to the first Photovoice session; Abeer, Afra, Reem, Mozah, Aamena and Kitty. Each woman brought a photograph, a collaged PowerPoint or artifacts that represented her success story.

Afra, who works at the library at RKW, brought artifacts from her student years that included a picture of her standing outside the library when she was a student. She said it was as if she always knew she would work in the library.

Abeer brought a lovely necklace that had been given to her by her Mother and her sister, the two most important people in her life, and Aamena showed us a picture of her when she won the Humour Award at the National Toastmasters Competition.

The last person to speak was Reem, who talked about the computer lab she had redesigned at her school and then showed us a short video of her young son in the bathtub, laughing. The video made us laugh too and it was a wonderful ending to the presentations.

The Second Photovoice Session

Only Kitty attended the second session which was organized to talk about the women's dreams for the future. She talked about her dream of the future which is to travel to Australia to attend university.

The Third Photovoice Session

Four women came to the third session and shared their dreams of the future; Aamena, Aarefa, Kitty and Reem. This was Aarefa's first Photovoice session so she shared her success story and shared her career goals.

Aamena had just been awarded her Masters and she shared her desire to do something completely different in the future, travel and perhaps volunteer helping women in the community.

Kitty shared her dream of completing her studies in Australia and Reem talked about the impact the first session had on her life and the changes she was going to make as a result of that.

The Fourth Photovoice Session

Kitty attended the fourth Photovoice session on her own and told me about how she is preparing herself and her family for her studies in Australia and how she is beginning to coach our current students who want to study abroad.

Sharing the Narratives and the Photographs

Researchers who use Photovoice usually display the pictures and the stories of the participants to influence change (Hergenrather et al., 2009). Displaying the narratives and photographs in the RKW library and on the Blog made it possible to share alternative stories about Emirati women. While the RKW library was a starting point and raised the interest of students and faculty in the achievements of RKW graduates, the Blog provided an opportunity for people outside of the Emirates to read positive stories about Middle Eastern women. This aligns with the research goal of presenting multiple stories to augment the 'single' story.

Chapter Five explores the narratives and the responses to them in more detail.

Displaying the Narratives and Photographs in the RKW library

RKW graduates are at the margins of the college community; the alumni association is inactive and there is no central place where their voices are heard. The faculty know of some graduates who have done amazing work, at home and in the community, but their stories have not been pulled together to show the magnitude of the impact they have had. This small exhibition in the RKW library showcased their contribution as a group, not just as individuals. The display was one way of bringing the graduates back to the centre of the college community (Block, 2008).

Gergen and Thatchenkery touch on this idea as well, '*Yet these are not the only functions of research within a constructionist frame. Various research strategies may also be used to give voice to otherwise marginalized, misunderstood, or deprivileged groups*' (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2004).

The library technicians, both of whom participated in the research, prepared an interesting display with the stories written in small booklets on a bulletin board and I added the following description of the project:

Building Social Capital: Inspiring Stories of Emirati Women

As part of the research for our PhD, Shamma Al Naqbi and I have asked our graduates about their successes, at home, at work and in the community.

First of all, we listened to, and recorded their stories and then we invited them to share their successes with each other using photos or memorabilia.

We had a wonderful time, the pictures, stories and memorabilia were amazing. Afra brought mementos of her college life and Abeer showed us a beautiful double heart amulet that she holds dear. Reem, after sharing her work life success, showed us a video of her little boy laughing.

This exhibit, which was put together by Afra Al Shehhi and (Participant One), is a snapshot of that gathering.

We are really excited about this project and we hope that you enjoy reading these inspiring stories and we welcome your comments!

(Signed) Bonnie Milne

I invited comments by placing a '*Guest*' book with the display and six people responded; three faculty members and the librarian from our college, a faculty member from a University in Dubai and one student. I have included their comments in Chapter Five.

The Purpose of the Blog

Presenting the women's narratives and photographs to the '*public*', while protecting their anonymity was a bit of a tightrope walk. Sharing the stories was necessary to achieve the research goal of presenting alternative stories, but I had to be certain that women would not encounter any backlash from their families. Without being 'overprotective' I felt that I needed to be cautious. My Western colleagues at RKW were especially concerned that I might be putting the women and/or myself at risk.

One of the participants had agreed to have her photograph and story shared in the community only to have her husband veto her decision. She called me the next morning and let me know. I was concerned that if the blog was public and there was a negative response from a brother or a family member 'after the fact', it would be detrimental to the women. I discussed this with the participants and they agreed that a 'protected site' would be best. This met my objective of sharing the narratives and stories with my Western colleagues, friends, other researchers and academics who were interested in my research.

Preparing the Narratives for the Blog

Some of the women gave me permission to post their stories on the blog. Where I had more than one story from a woman, I chose the one I thought would be of most interest to the readers. As it turned out, I posted almost all the stories that the women who gave me permission had shared because the Change Management students wanted to read them all.

I edited the stories for the blog, deleting sections that wandered from the topic or were repetitive and then I consulted the participants before displaying their narratives and pictures.

The women were interested to see which of their narratives I chose for the blog. They expressed their approval of the look and feel of the site.

Kitty was concerned about her facility with English and asked me to edit her story. This led to a discussion about 'voice'. I explained that I found her way of speaking was, both powerful and gentle, and I wanted the readers to hear that. She agreed to leave the story as it was.

On the other hand, Aarefa wanted to be sure to acknowledge those who have helped her in her career which made her entry much longer.

Aamena asked me to delete some personal information about her sons, and this led to a discussion about what was appropriate and what was not. What was inappropriate for her was fine with one of the other women. After this discussion, I decided not to post Aamena's story on the blog, I was not comfortable taking that risk.

'*Even within a participative methodology, the researcher is from the outside, and the community in a way expects to see how it turned out in the picture. Research contributes to the constitution of the public to the extent that it helps the community see and listen to itself, a fundamental condition for the existence of the public sphere*' (Streck, 2007; citing Arendt, 1999).

Designing and Launching the Blog

I hired a web designer and once the site was ready I added the stories and the pictures. I used a security feature with a password that I gave to the participants, so they could review the blog and suggest changes and then send it out to their friends, family and colleagues and then I sent it out to twenty people. I sought comments from different age groups, men and women, those who have travelled and those who have not, academics, community activists, entrepreneurs and bureaucrats. Many of the people I contacted were colleagues who had questioned my decision to work in the Middle East and/or had expressed the opinion that the women I work with are oppressed.

Little did I know how widespread the practice of creating blogs and asking for comments is. Kolodie, who responded directly to me by email, said that she receives numerous requests every week to review blogs.

Although I sent links to both men and women, the respondents were all women. Perhaps the narratives spoke more strongly to the women or perhaps the men did not 'find the time' to read them. It's beyond the scope of my research to explore why this was, but it would be interesting to follow this up because it speaks to Adichie's (2010) idea that who tells stories and what stories get told is related to power.

Response to the Blog

Of the 20 people I contacted, six responded, and their responses were thoughtful and thought provoking. I have included their comments in Chapter Five.

In the autumn of 2011 I was teaching a course on Change Management and my students were learning the 4D Appreciative method as well as Steven Covey's Eight Habits of Highly Effective People. I posted more of the women's narratives on the blog and gave the students temporary access so they could read them. Working in small groups, they chose two stories and identified the 'habits' the women demonstrated.

The students were inspired by the strength, stamina and accomplishments of the women. After reading the story about how Mozah, who had childhood polio, was able to pass the driver's tests, the women commented, '*This story encourages people to do as (much as) possible to achieve their goals. To achieve our goals, we mustn't despair if we face any problem. We should try many times until we achieve them*' (BMHR, 2011).

Kitty kept up with the comments as they were posted and said, '*I was really glad to read it. I was even translating it for my Mom. I was telling her, see how people are. I'm just reading you some comments from others and she's really happy, she's really, really happy!*

The narratives that were posted on the blog and comments from the readers are in Appendix Two.

The Benefits of Using Photovoice

Photovoice complements the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, '*...photovoice enables participants to build upon experience to engage in personal and community change*' (Hergenrather, Scott, Cowan, & Bardhoshi, 2009).

The Photovoice sessions gave me an opportunity to learn more about the women, their community and the roles they play and to share some of my experiences with them.

As Hergenrather, Scott, Cowan, and Bardhoshi explain, Photovoice provides an opportunity for individuals to support each other. The participants would often interrupt the presenter to tell her their story or to offer advice and encouragement.

'*When working with communities, photovoice methodology enables the researcher and community members to become co-learners, bridging cultural differences and equitably sharing expertise based in personal experience and professional knowledge. ...photovoice can identify concerns and priorities that empower participants to become advocates of change for themselves and community ...*' (Hergenrather et al., 2009).

Once the women finished discussing their photos, I stopped recording and we ate together. The women discussed their lives, shared advice and joked with one another. I joined in, finding ways to share similar experiences expanding the bonds we had already created.

The findings identified photovoice as a method for community members and researchers to provide equity in sharing ideas, encouraging collaborative learning, enhancing respect for community member knowledge, and facilitating change' (Hergenrather et al., 2009).

Summary

One of the highlights of the chapter is a more in-depth introduction to the women who made my research possible.

Appreciative Inquiry works well with the Arabic practice of 'saving face' and focusing on the positive. The women really enjoyed the opportunity to talk about their contributions and to remind themselves of their strengths and accomplishments.

Photovoice also fit well, the women created amazing 'presentations' using Photoshop, PowerPoint and video to tell their stories. Some brought artifacts and when it was time to prepare the display in the library, Aamena even brought her trophy – awarded for her humourous speech at Toastmasters.

While the display in the library raised some interest, the stories needed more exposure. The blog was designed to provide this exposure and it generated the responses I had hoped for. Colleagues, friends and current students gave wonderful feedback to the women, feedback I have shared in Chapter 5.

Throughout the project, I had to keep in mind the gap in our cultures and the language issues that sometimes made it difficult for us to communicate clearly. Using Photovoice made it easier for us to connect. A picture is worth a thousand words!

Chapter Five

Stories as Transformation: Creating Social Capital

I begin this chapter by exploring the narratives as multiple stories that can supplement the dominant theme of Arab Muslim women as suppressed, hidden by black veils and somehow backward in comparison to American women. What are the other stories? What gives meaning to the lives of the narrators? I delve into the contribution the women are making in their community and the networks they are creating. How do these stories reinforce the theory that higher education enables students to contribute to social capital? Then I look at the responses to the stories. Did the stories, as they were told, alter the views of those who read them? How did the readers make sense of the stories?

The Social Construction of Arab Muslim Women

'We walk around with media-generated images of the world, using them to construct meaning about political and social issues. The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral but evinces the power and the point of view of the political and economic elites who operated and focus it. And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very act of social construction is invisible' (Gamson, 1992*).*

In her PhD dissertation, Khatib (1994) wrote about the way Arab Muslim women have been characterized as passive, inferior, secluded, exotic and distant.

In her PhD dissertation, Eltantawy (2007) analyzed the way Arab women are represented in the US press. No matter what the subject matter, the image chosen is that of a woman in a veil or a headscarf.

'*Many of these images portray Arab and Muslim women for the American audience as an Other: different, sometimes exotically mysterious, sometimes backward and oppressed compared to American women'* (Eltantawy, 2007).

'*Middle Eastern women have traditionally been viewed as weak and submissive, passively accepting male authority and leadership rather than seeking leadership for themselves. From Edward Said's Orientalism to Lila Abu-Lughod's "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" women of the Middle East have been portrayed as helpless creatures who are often hidden behind the veil, quietly waiting to be liberated*' (Eltantawy, 2007).

Khatib and Eltantawy's work supports Adichie's premise that multiple stories need to be told to empower and humanize. As Adichie (2010) says, stories can break dignity and repair it. The focus of the American press on the single story that stresses the differences between American and Muslim or Arab women widens the gap, making it difficult for these women to identify with one other.

Adult Education Builds Social Capital

The research was inspired by my belief that Ras Al Khaimah Women's College (RKW) graduates contribute to their community on many levels - building social capital. The idea that adult education is connected to the creation of social capital is supported by a number of researchers (Fukuyama, 2001; Field, 2003; Tett &

MacLachlan, 2007). The stories of the contributions the women make, provide new ways of looking at Emirati women, specifically, and Arab Muslim women, in general. They provide the basis of a new social construction of these women.

The Delivery Model used by the Higher Colleges of Technology

Ras al Khaimah Women's College (RKW) is one of the Higher Colleges of Technology. These colleges are modeled on Technical Institutes in Canada. Their delivery model is very similar to the one used by the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), where I have also taught.

The curriculum is set for the two year Diploma program, there are no elective courses and students work with the same cohort for the two years. They have twenty hours of class a week. The language of instruction is English and the majority of our Instructors and Administrators are from the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia with a smaller number from the Middle East and Europe.

The Graduates Retain their Religious Practices

I wondered if this Western model of education might influence the students to question their cultural and religious beliefs. My concern was unfounded as the women demonstrated strong support for their families and the community and many of them spoke about the importance of religion and its associated values in their lives much as they had discussed the importance a '*adat*' (adhering to religious practices in everyday life) with Khatib (1994).   Some of the women adopted new parenting practices and others took part in community events that might have initially caused their families some concern, but overall, the women said that they are guided by their religious beliefs.

Multiple Stories -The Women's Narratives

The stories the women shared speak to their contribution to their families, workplaces and community, bringing a refreshingly different perspective of their lives to light. These narratives illuminate the challenges the women face, but also reveal their tenacity, confidence and sense of dignity.

Using the narratives as a '*primary unit of analyses ...a move that is in line with research on narrative inquiry as holistic rather than fragmented*' (Webster & Mertova, 2007, as cited in Bute & Jensen, 2011). I classified the narratives by assigning them to one or more of the contexts that were defined by the questions I asked in the Appreciative Inquiry interview. The contexts are: family, workplace, community and country. Within each context, I discussed the type of social capital the woman was generating: bridging, bonding or linking or I used Schnell's categories of meaning making to identify what was important to the narrator.

Applying Schnell's (2011) '*domains and sources of meaning'* to the narratives, I identified: challenge, freedom, knowledge, achievement, tradition, community, fun, care and attentiveness as the factors that create meaning in their lives.

Contribution to Family - Increasing Bonding Capital

Abeer, Kitty and Aamena talked about the contributions they make to their families. All four women have full time jobs and are enrolled in, or have recently completed,

more formal education. Both Abeer and Kitty talked about teaching, mentoring and coaching, instilling the importance of education in their younger family members.

Abeer has been working for seven years. Her first employment was at a bank and for the last six years she has worked at RKW, first in Student Services and for the past two years as an instructor. Abeer has her Masters and in September of 2011, she began a PhD program.

Abeer said that she has been helping her siblings with their studies since she graduated from high school, but it is her sister she spent the most time coaching.

I was always trying to push her to study ... So I feel like I did a lot with this girl which I am really proud of. After she graduated from her Diploma she felt more confident in herself, she finished her Higher Diploma and she did her Bachelors which makes my life contribution.

As well as helping her sister in her studies, Abeer has taken steps to ensure that her sister can depend on herself.

I know she comes back to me sometimes to ask things… but I know she can be by herself without me. I know she can do things by herself.

Kitty talked about being an aunt; *'I am a great aunt, I'm a favorite aunt for my nieces, they're always saying this.'*

She spends most Fridays with her nieces and nephews; teaching them to read in English *'So everyone is surprised at how they learn quickly from me. They do have their Mom but no one is teaching them like me.'*

These excerpts from the narratives demonstrate bonding capital. The women are helping their families. At the same time, they are introducing ideas that they have learned outside of their immediate circle. Abeer is able to coach her younger sister because she has learned 'how to learn'. Having been a student at the UAEU (United Arab Emirates University) and RKW, she has honed her skills. So she is bringing back to her family the skills that she has acquired in the relationships she built as a student. These relationships represent bridging capital.

Field (2003) describes the '*relationship between adult education and active citizenship as ...mutually reinforcing.*' Abeer and Kitty and a number of the other women show that the relationship resembles a spiral, as they study more, they contribute more, and then they want to study more. They not only begin to associate with people who believe education is important, thus expanding their networks (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007), they also draw their families into that network with them. They create a situation where education becomes important to their family.

When Abeer's sister graduated, their mother said, '*You made her like you. Now she is not stopping from learning and certificates!*' She was very proud of both of her daughters and this is especially poignant because Abeer's mother is not educated, but it is clear that she sees the value of education for her daughters.

Aamena has been working at RKW for twelve years. She began working in Reception after she was hired to help me organize a conference on Women as Mentors. Then she then took a CELTA course (Certificate in Teaching English to

Speakers of other Languages) and fell in love with teaching, so she completed a Bachelor of Education at RKW, all the while working full time and parenting three sons. She moved into teaching Information Technology four years ago when she completed her Bachelor's Degree and last year (2011), she completed her Master's Degree.

When she was studying for her Bachelor's Degree, Aamena was also working full time at RKW so her days were very busy, but she still kept her focus on her three boys.

My kids were at a good age for them to be more independent so ... I didn't have that concern, but it added lots pressure on me because you know I didn't want to miss that ... period of their lives. So I had to plan and prepare lots of activities for them to do while I'm at work or while I'm studying and then, I have to plan the weekend very well in order to take advantage of every single hour, doing something with them.

One of Aamena's colleagues in Student Services decorated his desk at Christmas with lights and Christmas knickknacks so when Ramadan came around, Aamena decorated hers. It became a contest between them – the decorating wars. Each of them found more and more occasions to celebrate!

They built a strong working relationship and the competition helped, it lent humour to what could have been a difficult situation, a religious clash!

So while Aamena was ensuring that she was taking as much time as she could to keep her family intact, she was reaching out at work, building relationships that made her more comfortable in her environment and bridging the cultural divide.

Contribution to the Workplace – Increasing Bridging Capital

Nahla, Amal, Reem, Aarefa, Huda, and Afra all talked about the contributions they have made in the workplace.

Nahla has been working in the Medical Zone for about eight years. It took her some time to find work in Ras Al Khaimah. She was offered a job in Abu Dhabi but she said that even though she wanted the work, the logistics of moving on her own, proved too difficult.

She is a valued employee and is really proud of the care she takes with her work.

'*Last summer I had to do the promotions. The other offices, they did this for one year and they still are not finished their files, but me, I finished everything. The lady called me and said, 'All the forms that are coming in are signed Nahla, you are the only person working on this? In Sharjah, in Abu Dhabi there are two people working on this project, but I see your signature on every one!'*

This excerpt from Nalha's narrative shows that she achieves self-actualization through her work. Nahla steps up to a challenge, she thrives on doing things right and achieving her goals.

Amal is the Supervisor of Student Services. She was the first Emirati hired at RKW and has been here seventeen years.

Amal talked about a time when she was leading the Student Council, and the satisfaction she gained from being the only Emirati staff member at the college. During this time, the RKW council came up with a proposal for a council with representatives from every college.

'*... I was so enthusiastic about them with their ideas, their creative ideas, and one of their ideas was when they launched the council for the whole system. It came out from Ras Al Khaimah Student Council and it launched for the system. And they were recognized by Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nayan (*Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Chancellor of the Higher Colleges of Technology) *who attended the ceremony to launch the Association and one of the local Sheikhs also attended the launch.* '

Amal could see that she was providing leadership for a group of students who were planning for the future, introducing new ideas, taking risks, setting up a council that included men and women students. And it was the women from Ras Al Khaimah, one of the smallest colleges that came up with the idea.

What was important to Amal was what Schnell (2011) defines as *'horizontal self-transcendence'*, '*taking responsibility for affairs beyond one's immediate concern'.* In her narrative Amal is focused on generativity - a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation (Kotre, n.d.).

So while I have placed Amal's narrative under contributing in the workplace, she is really contributing on a much larger scale by supporting the Student Council members in their bid to create a broader based group. This can be seen as bridging capital even though the council is limited to Emirati students. These are a group of students with similar values and beliefs, not a heterogeneous group, but they are from different communities so they are creating relationships with people outside of their usual networks. To that extent, therefore, it is bridging capital.

Reem has been teaching Information Technology in the high school she attended for eleven years. When she began teaching, she had a lot of energy and the computer labs at her school were very outdated. There were two labs and she had to move from one to another to teach a class.

Reem designed a new computer lab for her students and went to the community to raise money for it. She was able to have the lab built and buy new computers and new chairs. Everything was state of the art! This was a huge achievement and she was quick to say that she had help with this, she didn't do it all on her own, but she did spearhead the project.

Photograph 3. Reem's Computer Lab. Supplied by Reem (2011).

Reem designed and sourced funding for a new computer lab in her high school – if you look closely in the mirrored doors of the school you can see Reem, dressed in her black abaya taking the Photograph. Just behind her is her white car.

Reem wanted to create something that would last and that would make life better for her students. Like Amal, Reem demonstrated '*a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation*'.

Aarefa is the Vice President of a local bank. She has been employed in the banking industry for eight years; she was hired just before she graduated. Aarefa values education and works with her staff to make sure they are well trained. '*And even my staff members, I always train them…if they have free time, I tell them to read the procedures to learn something, try to be innovative. That is how it should work.*

I never call her (my manager) and none of my staff call her. Because my staff knows that if they come to me there will be no need to go to anyone else. So that is the environment I created in my organization and I always believe that there are things I can do for them.'

Aarefa's narrative is similar to Abeer's and Kitty's. Being educated herself; Aarefa wants to provide her staff with opportunities to learn. She is passing her values on to them. She is building bonding capital, creating relationships that entail both responsibility and reward. Her staff members are a team, she will help them, but they are expected to fulfill their responsibilities and one of those responsibilities is to

continue their training. '*Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in closed networks, and helps the process of 'getting by' in life on a daily basis* (Stone, 2011).

Huda ensures that employees at the hospital are both trained and recognized. There are pictures of employees being recognized for their contributions and outstanding performance on the walls outside her office. She told me the story behind one of the pictures.

And we do 'Star of the Month'. We have criteria…the director chooses. I prepare everything; the person didn't know that he was the star of the month. Without him knowing, I called his wife and grandchildren. They are coming without him seeing them. When he got there and he saw his picture on the screen, then his young grandchildren came and he was so happy that his wife and grandchildren know about that! They know that he is the 'star of the month.'

The employees Huda works with at Saqr Hospital are from all over the world. Huda sees the value of diversity in the workplace and strives to provide training that will help the staff form relationships and work together in this multicultural environment. By providing education and recognition, Huda is creating a healthy workplace that provides '*social capital a center of meaning, membership, and mutual support*' (Kouvonen, A., et al., 2008).

Afra has been working at RKW for nine years. She works in the library and she loves to read and write stories so it is a perfect fit for her.

What's important to me is working here - its means a lot to me, the quality not quantity. If I do something, I have to care about how to do it. Will it be OK? Will it please everyone here? Does it work? I have to do something that I'm convinced with and that makes other people happy.

Afra's narrative speaks to how her job provides her with Self-actualisation. She enjoys a challenge, and has the creativity to design something that others will like. Clearly she has a sense of achievement from her work.

Contribution to Community and Country – Increasing Bridging and Bonding Capital

Huda, Maryam and Mozah talked about their contributions to the community. All three women have been in the workforce for a number of years, hold management level positions and stress the importance of education for themselves and for others.

Huda has been working at Saqr Hospital fourteen years (2012). She began as a volunteer after she graduated from the college and she is now the Head of Education and Training Affairs. She expressed a desire to continue her studies, *'I want to continue my studies, but until now I found some challenges at work, but I want to continue my studies.'*

When I asked her about contributing to the community, Huda spoke about her work with the Breast Cancer Committee. '*We are going to the schools, we give advice,…we make brochures, go to all departments in Ras Al Khaimah, we explain and we inform all the old ladies who come here how to do the (breast) examination, we organized a 'walk' for Breast Cancer on the Corniche.*'

Photograph 4. Huda speaking at a session on Breast Cancer Prevention. Provided by Huda (2011).

Maryam has been the Continuing Education Coordinator at RKW for nine years (2012). She organizes courses for members of the community who want to upgrade their skills.

Maryam was quick to mention the debt she owes her country because she has had free post-secondary education.

'*My every day job is to serve my country as a priority, first priority I just serve my country.*'

She expressed pride in her work, saying that she loves every part of it, '…*but what I like is, I'm serving the community. I'm giving the chance to the people who didn't get a chance to join the college to get … knowledge or education, not necessarily to get a full degree, just a few months of skill and training.*'

Maryam has her Master's Degree and has just been accepted to the PhD program at the University of New Mexico (2012).

Mozah has started four businesses all while working full time. Each business has resulted in employment for one of her relatives or friends who couldn't find a job. '*I opened my first business Hawaa for typing and photocopying with my auntie. She was looking for work and she didn't find a job, so I thought we could open a business together.*'

Subsequently, Mozah opened a search company that focused on finding work for Emirati men and women. This was the first company of its kind in Ras Al Khaimah and perhaps in the Emirates.

'*My sister needed a job when she graduated from university so I decided to establish an Employment Company… Tamooh Nationalization for free Business* '

Photograph 5. Mozah at the Opening of Tamooh (in the Centre is the ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, Sheikh Saud). Supplied by Mozah (2011).

 'My sister got married and couldn't help me with the business so I started it myself. The first promotion I did was at her wedding, I handed out chocolates with a card attached that said, "If you want a job, call this number." Next day, I had four women in my office who were looking for work!'

Mozah's aunt took over the operation of *Hawaa* (the typing and photocopying business), Mozah hired a marketing team for *Tamooh (the search company)* and she opened a stationary store in her village. When she returned to university, she opened yet another stationary store at the university because her friend needed work and the students needed a store.

Mozah overcame a number of challenges to get where she is today. She had childhood polio which left her with some difficulty walking and she often had to push to get the resources she needed.   *'I am hoping to help a lot; I'm feeling how happy I am when I give to others. I want to send a message out to other people that they can do what I have done. They can overcome their problems.   Maybe my humanity, my talent is giving back. We have to give to another to be happy.'*

Mozah's narrative demonstrates that she has a number of sources of meaning in her life. 'Self-transcendence' is illustrated by the way she develops opportunities for others, 'self-actualisation' is exemplified by her love of a challenge and her creativity and 'well-being and relatedness' are characterised by the way she builds community.

'Meaningfulness increases significantly with density and diversity of sources of meaning; the relationship between density and meaningfulness is largely mediated by diversity. Findings indicate that commitment to numerous, diverse, and, especially,

self-transcendent sources of meaning enhances the probability of living a meaningful life' (Schnell, 2011).

While Mozah often works within the relationships established by her family, she stepped outside that radius of trust and established relationships with businesses throughout the Emirate while she was operating *Tamooh*, her search company. This demonstrates her ability to form relationships that create bridging capital.

The following table summarizes the stories the woman shared in their interviews and/or in the Photovoice sessions when I asked them to tell me a story about a time they were making a difference, contributing at home, in their workplace, in their community or their country.

Table 2			
Contribution and Dream			
Name	Family	Workplace	Community/Country
Aaesha	Dreams of studying for her Masters so she can demonstrate her physical strength to her father and she can contribute at a higher level in the college. Aaesha was in a car accident about six years ago. She was badly injured and her father is concerned about her health so part of the reason she wants to continue her studies is to reassure him that she can manage on her own.	Teaching and studying for her Bachelor's at the same time. The students really benefited, because she was a student herself and could see the importance being an independent learner, she encouraged the students to help each other and be less dependent on her as the teacher – more self-reliant learners	

Name	Family	Workplace	Community/Country
Aamena	While working full time and studying for her Bachelor's Aamena made sure that her sons were her main focus. She planned activities for them to do when she was studying or at work and spent all her time with them on the weekends.	In the workplace, she subtly educated her co-worker about the Emirati/Muslim culture by decorating her desk to celebrate the Islamic Eids (holidays)	Dreams of providing classes for women to introduce them to the language and technology they need to communicate with their families, learn about the changing world, and shop for household necessities.
Amal		Guided the members of the Student Council at RKW as they organized events for the students and coordinated the introduction of an HCT (Higher Colleges of Technology) wide student council for both the Men's and Women's campuses.	Dreams of opening a multifaceted centre for women and their children for recreation, leisure and personal development.
Participant One	Because she is working, Participant One is able to contribute financially so her sisters can continue their education.	With her friend, Participant One volunteered at the college because she couldn't find work. They encouraged each other and were both hired as temporary workers and now she has a full time position.	Dreams of designing fashionable clothes at reasonable prices.

Name	Family	Workplace	Community/Country
Aarefa	Dreams of staying in Ras Al Khaimah so her daughters can have the support of their grandmother while she continues her career.	Contributes to the ongoing growth of her staff at the bank where she works. Aarefa is a role model for Emirati women who want to move up to management positions in their organizations Dreams of continuing to improve the working conditions and introducing advanced customer service systems at the bank where she is the Vice President.	
Abeer	Mentored her sister in her studies and has seen her grow to become an independent educated woman.	Dreams of completing her PhD so she can contribute at a higher level at the College.	
Afra		Dreams of mentoring college students so they can become fluent in English and take advantage of their college education.	
Huda		Trains employees at Saqr Hospital and coordinates celebrations of their success. Dreams of offering more cross cultural training for the hospital's employees so they can provide better service to all their patients.	Takes part in Breast Cancer Awareness events in the community

Name	Family	Workplace	Community/Country
Kitty	Dreams of enriching the lives of her nieces and nephews and reassuring her family that she is reliable and independent and can be successful in her studies in Australia.		Provides role model for women who want to take on leadership roles in the community in a mixed (male and female) environment. Encourages RKW students to be responsible and reliable so they can be trusted to study abroad.
Latifa	Has paid back her sister for the loans she took to get Latifa through college and now makes sure that her family manages on their income without going into debt.	Dreams of a new job where she can learn new skills and contribute in a different area.	
Maryam		Provides opportunities for adults who have not had the chance to attend college to improve their skills and abilities.	Dreams of working with the ruler of Dubai to improve the national education system.
Mozah			Has provided employment for her friends and her family and been a role model for entrepreneurial women. Dreams of involving her husband in a company start up and giving back to the community her relatives.

Name	Family	Workplace	Community/Country
Nahla		Works diligently so the Medical Zone and hospital employees receive their promotions on time. Dreams of continuing to contribute in the health sector.	
Reem	Dreams of creating a stable, happy environment for her young son while she maintains work life balance and in the future, continues her education.	Worked with her students to provide a holistic education by taking them on field trips. Designed and found funding for a 'state of the art' computer lab for the high school where she teaches Information Technology.	
Shaikha	Introduces her children to different cultural experiences to broaden their appreciation of diversity.		Dreams of working in a government Ministry where she can share her expertise in systems design.

Appreciative Inquiry and Transformative Change

Many of the women involved in the study have transformed their visions of their futures and have taken steps to create those futures. Those who read the blog posted reflective comments that indicated they had begun to alter their views of Arab Muslim women. These responses are shared in detail in Chapter Six.

'…*the much greater motivation needed to sustain long-lasting change and deep-reaching, or transformational change…arises not from a desire to move away from an unsatisfactory present but from a deep yearning to reach an inspirational vision* (Faure, 2006).

Appreciative Inquiry shifts one from a problem focus to a possibility focus. It works on a number of levels and for a number of reasons. Faure outlines five reasons that Appreciative Inquiry interviews work, four of which apply in my research:

1. They set a positive, energizing tone, 'I've done it before; I can do it again.'

2. Valuing the participants – the person is able to relive her achievement , this provides motivation

3. Creating personal connections – gives you the sense that you can work with this person, builds a relationship

4. Reduces differences – the pair focuses on their similarities rather than their differences

5. Reduces anxiety – this is in a large group, because the person has one person to focus on and this is easier, they provide a feeling of safety and comfort.

(Adapted from Faure, 2006)

The first reason accounts for the increasing energy released as the Appreciative Inquiry Interviews are conducted. While the energy is more palpable in a room full of people, even in the one on one Appreciative Inquiry Interviews I conducted, I could hear the women's voices change, see their postures shift as they began to tell their stories, as if they were amazed by themselves. The energy that initially ignited them came back when they told their stories.

The women felt valued both in the one on one interviews and in the Photovoice sessions, they enjoyed the acknowledgement of their success and demonstrated pride in their achievements.

I built stronger connections with the women in the interviews, I look at them with new understanding and increased respect, I focus on their strengths and I am interested in their futures. Differences are reduced and similarities focused on. I often stop by Abeer's desk to see how her studies are going and she always asks me how mine are going. We have found that we have a common 'love of learning'.

Aamena also spoke to the importance of the connections made in the Photovoice sessions. '*We don't have social gatherings here…these sessions are not just about doing study for the PhD, we are here to support each other….*'

Social Construction Informs Appreciative Inquiry

'*The theory of AI is based solidly on social constructionism*' (Gergen, 1982, as cited in Faure, 2006)

Our actions are shaped by our view of the world and this view is shaped by our past experiences and our interpretation of those experiences through dialogue and discussion with others. '*Through social interaction, we make sense of the past and shape the future because our actions are conditional on our vision for and anticipation of that future…there is not one objective reality (that is, ours), but multiple subjective realities, as each of us interprets (and reinterprets) events and the actions of others…these realities although representing the truth to the holder at any given moment, can be modified through dialogue* (Faure, 2006).

Appreciative Inquiry creates a convergence of these multiple realities into a common understanding across the organization, in our case the women began to see opportunities and potential in their lives based on their past success and the past success of the other women. So they created the idea that their futures could envelop many possibilities.

Real change is likely to happen when those affected are given the opportunity to decide on the change themselves. Faure (2006) discusses this in terms of organizations, but it applies to individuals as well. The women had full range in dreaming their futures, although the seed had been planted about making a difference in the community. Words create worlds and in their narratives the women focused on their contributions so naturally this focus was maintained in their dreams of the future.

Generative Metaphors

The essence of these visions of the future is distilled into a provocative proposition or a generative metaphor, (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Bushe, 1998, as cited in Faure, 2006) something that captures the change desired in a phrase. For example, Reem came up with the idea of '*Changing My Routine Life!'*

Amal articulated a clear picture of what she wants to do: '*There is a dream, of course, and I'm thinking of starting it seriously. Here, women in RAK lack a place where they can really get together and do many activities in one place…this is the main dream.'*

Maryam has begun to construct the path to her future*, '…but the main thing is that I find myself working really close with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum* (Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai). *I want to get into that position so I'm working very hard to do my PhD on what is lacking in the field of enrollment.'* In January of 2012, Maryam was accepted to the University of New Mexico to begin her PhD studies, so she is on her way.

Participant One plans to design affordable fashion, '*So if I look at how I could contribute in the future, in fashion, making it so every working person can afford it. I have my own designs, like Dior, but only they will cost less so everyone can buy them; still good fashion, but not so expensive.'*

The actions the women are taking now are based on the vision of what they want their futures to be. This is something that Aamena's narrative really illustrates well. She noticed that her instructors were able to support themselves in their 50s because they were educated so she pursued her education and she too began teaching. But she knew that she needed to complete her Masters to be secure in her job.

Now that that is in place, she is beginning to envision a different future, one that involves travel and community-based projects. She is imagining a number of different paths she can take, spurred on by her success in completing her Masters and the confidence that has engendered. Some of the women in the Photovoice sessions viewed Aamena as a role model. As Reem said, '*I just look at all of you guys and Aamena especially, Aamena, with all her achievements.'*

This made Aamena even more proud of her accomplishments and encouraged her to offer advice and support. So in the sessions, she could see yet another path to the future, coaching women, who, like her, have dreams of the future.

As Faure says, people involved in an Appreciative Inquiry intervention use their insider knowledge to decide what to do. The women have the knowledge of their culture and they can decide what they can do within it, what works for them and what ultimately allows them to grow and contribute.

The transformative change the women underwent underlines the idea that Appreciative Inquiry '*transcends cultural boundaries and appears to be universal in its application'* (Yaeger & Sorensen 2005 cited in Faure, 2006).

On the Path to the Future

Many of the women have begun creating the futures they envisioned. '*When successful, AI generates spontaneous, unsupervised, individual, group and organizational action toward a better future. My research suggests that when AI is transformational it has both these qualities: it leads to new ideas, and it leads people to choose new actions'* (Bushe, in press; Bushe & Kassam, as cited in Bushe, 2007).

Kitty continues to earn the trust of her family preparing them for the time when she will travel to Australia to study. She is expanding her network beyond the Emirati community.

After her recent (June 2011) appendectomy, Kitty returned to visit the physician who performed her surgery and they have become friends. '*He is from India'*, she says, nonchalantly, in a culture where hierarchy is everything. Her physician showed her videos of his work, her appendectomy and some cancer surgeries and invited her to come and observe a live surgery. Always open to new experiences, Kitty will likely take him up on his offer, once she finishes her exams.

Kitty's past experiences have been positive, she has been able to draw her family into the networks she has created so she will continue to reach out and expand her 'radius of trust', constructing her future through her social interactions (Faure, 2006).

It is unusual for Emiratis to make friends outside of their community, but Kitty has also embraced the Philippina woman who works with her on the IELTS exams. They go for coffee together. Kitty's friends have been critical of these relationships but Kitty likes to '*treat people the same.'*

This behaviour is an example of two of the sources of meaning identified by Schnell (2011). The first is: '*Order: Holding on to values, practicality, decency, and the tried and the tested.'* Kitty continues to do what has worked for her in the past, but she also values decency, treating others well.

The second is: '*Self-actualisation: Employing, challenging, and fostering one's capacities'* Kitty loves to learn, she wants to find out more about medicine and she doesn't let much get in the way of her desire to learn. She demonstrates the confidence adult learners often exhibit, the confidence'*... often accompanied by positive personal growth and openness to new ideas'* (Tett & MacLachlan, 2007).

In accord with research that shows tertiary education creates lifelong learners and enables graduates to contribute both to a civil society and to increased social capital (Khatib, 1994; Fukuyama, 2001; Tett & MacLachlan, 2007) many of the women have embarked on a path to further their education. Abeer has enrolled in a PhD program, Amal has taken up her Masters studies again, Aaesha has begun a Master's Program, and Maryam will begin her PhD studies in September of this year (2012).

Reem has demonstrated an increase in confidence. Prior to her involvement in this research, she hadn't driven outside of Ras Al Khaimah, even though she has been driving for ten years! Much like Aamena, who had to take this step when she began

her Master's studies in Dubai, Reem had not dared to venture onto the crowded highways where speeds up to 140K are common. But last summer, she drove her young son and her nanny to Dubai a number of times. They stayed in hotels and enjoyed the many activities Dubai has to offer.

Reem also began attending evening classes at RKW demonstrating her '*desire to continue her education*'. The classes were held every evening and proved too much for her, but now she has a clear view of what it will take for her to complete her studies and has recognized that at the moment, her young son, her father and her teaching career are her priorities.

Showcasing the Stories

The women's narratives that were displayed in the library and on the blog are stories of success. They are about contributing to the community, the importance of family, overcoming challenges and achieving goals. I presented them as the stories of college graduates rather than focusing on the religion or ethnicity of the writers. There is no mention of veils or covering or oppression. I wanted the readers to simply read the stories and respond to them. I did not invite a dialogue about religion or politics.

The way the narratives were presented invited the readers to respond directly to each story, and they did. They admired the women, encouraged them and shared their own, similar or different, stories with them. Essentially they took the first steps to building a relationship short lived, but none the less, important.

Analyzing the Responses to the Stories

The readers responded to the stories as a whole.

'*The more I work with women around the world, the more I see that we share similar concerns and problems. I'm thrilled to see these women taking initiative to become self-sustaining adults who can take care of themselves and their children regardless of marital status or other problems. There is a body of research that indicates that when mothers get better, children get better*' (Tish, 2011).

The stories caused the readers reflect on their constructions. For one reader, the stories elicited admiration. '*We in the West don't have a lot of barriers to knock down anymore. Really, in this day and age there are not many barriers to break down so we are a little complacent and we take things for granted. I admire them because they are driving forces*' (Ginny, 2011).

Those who read the stories on the blog were moved to comment, either to the women or to me about their feelings and reactions. Often the stories led to introspection, the readers identified with the women's stories and began sharing their stories, comparing themselves with the women whose stories are on the blog. Sometimes the stories the readers told emphasized differences and other times, similarities in their lives.

The readers expressed their admiration for the writers and encouraged them to keep doing what they are doing. Sometimes they made suggestions for further growth. Sometimes the readers expressed surprise and other times they were not at all surprised by what the women have achieved. Some of the readers were amazed at the differences between their culture and the culture of the women, others were not.

In order to explore the responses of the readers, I have analyzed the interaction between readers and texts by using transactional theory as it applies to literature. '*Transactional theory proposes that the relationship between reader and text is much like that between the river and its banks, each working its effects upon the other…*' (Probst, 1998).

The readers drew their responses from their experience of literature and life (Lee, 2007). Each reader will experience the text differently because each reader brings a different perspective to the text. She then '*fuses the images, feelings, and ideas stirred up by the words of the text, selects and organizes responses and expectations, and adjusts and readjusts the meaning to achieve a coherent synthesis*' (Lee, 2007).

Kolodie's response demonstrates the importance of her experience in her 'reading' of the stories. '*I lived in Morocco in the early 70's and saw the women lock themselves in a certain part of the house when a 'visitor' came… (a man of course). But I saw the acceptance also, of the religion, the control of it all*' (Kolodie, 2011).

Often the reader's first comment was about herself, lending support to the idea that to '*each person's most urgent motivations are to understand himself*' (Bleich, 1978, as cited in Lee, 2007). This is the first level of response, followed by criticism and then critical exchange (Bleich, 1978, as cited in Lee, 2007).

Tish's response exemplifies these three levels. *I grew up with parents who constantly told me that I could be anything that I wanted to be, so I'm chagrined for these women to see that they lack the model that they need for success. You see that in the resistance to change that these women face from others. The more I work with women around the world, the more I see that we share similar concerns and problems. I'm thrilled to see these women taking initiative to become self-sustaining adults who can take care of themselves and their children regardless of marital status or other problems. There is a body of research that indicates that when mothers get better, children get better* (Tish, 2007).

The 'stance' of the reader is important. Stance reflects ideological orientation of the reader, the beliefs and attitudes the reader brings to the text (Lee, 2007). This 'stance' can be altered by the text as the reader gains insights, and is able to question her values and beliefs. Arden's reflection on the stories, demonstrates how she is beginning to change her 'stance'.

The stories are so amazing. I am so amazed by the contrasts in stories; for Kitty to take the (what would hardly be described here as) risk to do the walk, then for Aarefa (I think that's who it was) to work at the bank... Those are difficult to reconcile as being part of the same process, from my cultural view. But this is exactly why it is so important to have these stories out there, to illuminate our own liberties and restrictions, and also to see that the process of equality, or even just change, does not have to be linear or logical (Arden, 2011).

Stance also dictates which themes the reader will respond to (Lee, 2007). The readers who were older and had been part of the 'women's movement' in the West could identify with the small breakthroughs. '*So, I guess in a way, the stories remind me of our women here many years ago, how little increments move along the empowerment of the Muslim women*' (Kolodie, 2011).

Verna, who has seen women struggle in the workplace, responded to the stories that remind her of women she knows. *'...the 2 that really stick out are the banker and the lady who drove to Dubai. The banker must have worked really hard to break through the glass ceiling, and the lady who drove to Dubai is making it one day at a time, but making it'* (Verna, 2011).

Ginny's first response to the stories indicated an unwillingness to see the women as anything but the 'other'. Her terse remark was simply that she was glad she lives where she does. I was taken aback, but followed up and she clarified,

I've been thinking a lot about the complete sense of entitlement that we have here; young women are encouraged by their families to have high self-esteem but they are not earning it. We don't have to fight against anything and we don't have to fight for anything. These women, wow, they really have something to be proud of!

In this, more thoughtful response, Ginny is beginning to draw comparisons between the stories the women told and the young women she knows. She is starting to question her initial reaction. While she still sees the women as worlds apart, she is beginning to develop an appreciation of what they are doing.

In the last part of her comment, Ginny is finding meaning for herself (Bleich, 1978, as cited in Lee, 2007).

Reading these stories, I have a sense of freedom. I can do anything; I have lots of options, and opportunities. No one would tell me that I can't follow any path. I am the only person that tells myself that.

Another comment from Verna, *The fathers have so much say in the lives of their daughters, and so much responsibility as well. I was surprised by how much the women are like us.*

Verna is my sister and after I received this response, we had a brief discussion about the role our father played in our lives. He would never have thought of suggesting where we should go to university or making a decision about who we should marry. It is not surprising that she focused on the importance of narrator's fathers. And her follow up remark that it is surprising how much the women are like us could be a result of her wondering how with such different parenting, the women could be similar to us

'*Therefore, each reader "will seek out the particular themes that concern him. Each will have different ways of making the text into an experience with a coherence and significance that satisfies"'* (Holland, 1980, as cited in Lee, 2007).

The insights gained by the readers will influence how they interpret what they read, just as what they have read and experienced in the past influenced their response to these stories.

Analyzing the Students' Reponses to the Stories

The library display gave the students exposure to the stories and one student took the time to write: *As Emirati I am really proud of my teacher and I hope that I will have a chance to put my picture too.*

I added more of the women's stories to the blog and shared them with students in my Change Management course, using the stories as examples of how successful the graduates are. I asked them to explain how the graduates demonstrated leadership by applying Steven Covey's Eight Habits to their stories.

Covey's Eight Habits are:

1. Be Proactive

2. Begin with the End in Mind

3. Put First Things First

4. Think Win-Win

5. Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

6. Synergize

7. Sharpen the Saw

8. Find your Voice and Inspire Others Find Theirs

(Adapted from Covey, n.d.)

One group of students stated that Mozah was applying Think Win/Win by working well with others, especially her aunt when she was starting her typing business.

One group looked at how Latifa was proactive in her choice of studies and a second group chose Latifa's story as well. They saw her story as an example of '*Begin with The End in Mind' 'She…planned what she wanted to do and she started to draw a picture to her next destination in her mind which was learning computing. Then, implementing what she imagined, she decided to join Higher Colleges'* (BMHR, 2011).

Mozah's story inspired a group to write:

'*Mozah is Proactive, because she was responsible for her decision of helping her friend and hiring her aunt to run the typing office, in this case her decision of trusting them is considered proactive. Also, when she planned to open a bookshop in her university (which is her decision); she was ready to take any consequences related to her decision, such as: paying 10,000 and buying bookshop materials and she did not run away from her responsibility. What is more is that Mozah is single and most young ladies of her age worry about getting married, but she focused her energy and time on working in "Tamooh" and did not stop being productive because she was worried about being a single lady* (BMHR, 2011).

Another group wrote:

'*People who have polio could be inspired from this story, by considering Mozah as a role model, who overcame her polio, took challenges and achieved her ambition, regardless of the barriers she faced. They have to ignore their physical disability and try to live their life normally.* Habit 8: "find your voice and inspire others to find theirs" *matches here'* (BMHR, 2011).

The students had a range of stories to choose from but most of them chose to comment on Latifa and Mozah's stories, suggesting that these are the ones they identified with. They were especially interested in Mozah's story about getting her driver's license.

Two of the responses focused on how she overcame people's response to her perceived physical weakness.

Mozah's action shows that she has a positive change in her life. She shows that handicapped persons are similar to normal persons and they act like them. Also they can work and drive. Any diseases don't mean that the person has to stop in one state and he shouldn't think that he can't do whatever he wants. This story encourages people to do (as much as) as possible so they can achieve their goals. To achieve our goals, we mustn't despair if we face any problem. We should try many times until we achieve them' (BMHR, 2011).

The students were attracted to Mozah's tenacity, her ability to overcome a challenge and they admired the fact that she found jobs for her friends and relatives and they saw her as '*a leader in the socio-economic development of the country*' (BMHR, 2011).

They were drawn to the stories of self-actualization, facing a challenge and overcoming it (Schnell, 2011). Many of them chose Latifa's story about how she overcame her economic and family problems by studying hard at the college and getting a teaching position. In their response to this story, they commented on the importance of education.

I hope everyone thinks like her because nowadays some students give up and stop their education in the HCT or in the Universities. They don't know how this qualification is important because they just think about this moment not about after 5 years or more. Some people depend on their families but this is temporary and if they want to get a job with high school certificate, they will get low salary and this is undesirable to them' (BMHR, 2011).

If we look at these responses from a social and cultural context, the stories the students chose to write about could be seen as indicators of what is of interest in this culture at this point in time. '*The personal response is inevitably related to the social and cultural context*' (Lee, 2007).

The students' focus on self-actualization, overcoming challenges and self-transcendence –taking a leadership role in the country are indicators of what they see as important in their culture.

Comments on the Display in the Library

I placed a 'guest' book with the display and invited people to comment on the stories. Faculty from our college and a college in Dubai, as well as one student entered the following comments:

Excellent real life inspirational stories!

Excellent, nice, empowering stories. Great to remember our success as women.

Fantastic to read these really inspiring stories

I love to see success! Spread your motivation and dedication and I wish you the best.

Many thanks to these ladies for sharing their inspirational stories with us! They are models for our students and for students of the future. I admire their perseverance and determination to succeed.

As Emirati I am really proud of my teacher and I hope that I will have a chance to put my picture too.

These responses, though few in number and brief in length, indicate that readers pull from a narrative, '*particular themes that concern him (them)*' (Holland, 1980, as cited in Lee, 2007).

Summary

I began this chapter by exploring the narratives as alternative stories to the dominant theme of Arab Middle Eastern women as suppressed, hidden behind veils or headscarves and sometimes seen as backward in comparison to American women. Then I shared some of the women's stories and used Schnell's (2011) sources of meaning to identify what gives meaning to the lives of the narrators.

I explored the contribution the women are making in their community and the forms of social capital they are building. I shared examples of how these stories reinforce the theory that higher education enables students to contribute to social capital. Then I looked at the responses to the stories and analyzed these responses using transactional theory.

Chapter Six

The Value of the Research

Introduction

Ethics and rigour are especially important in a cross-cultural project and I begin this chapter by sharing the approaches I used and talking about the co-learning that occurred. I expand on the use of Photovoice to enhance the 4D Method of Appreciative Inquiry. From there, I move on to discuss the value of the research for the women who participated and for those who read their narratives. I devote the end of the chapter to suggesting how my research can be used and expanded on.

Co-Learning

'*Co- learning is a dialectic process, grounded in respect that creates something new from participation in a relational process*' (Fisher & Ragsdale, 2005).

Co-learning has occurred at a number of stages in this research. The interviews and follow-up discussions with the participants created opportunities for me to learn more about them, their support systems, their values and their contribution to social capital.

The Photovoice sessions enabled the participants to learn from each other and for me, once again, to learn more about them. In these sessions I shared my experiences when it seemed appropriate, which meant that the participants could begin to see the similarities between my life experiences and theirs.

Throughout the process, my perceptions have shifted as I saw the stories first through the eyes of the story tellers and then through the eyes of those who read and heard them.

Ethics

'*The goodness of fit ethics (GFE) model is an appropriate model to use when conducting research, interacting with communities, or developing policy directed at populations who are vulnerable due to age, gender, social position, racial or ethnic affiliation. Goodness-of-fit ethics recognizes that although power imbalances are intrinsic to most forms of research involving human subjects, relationship power is fluid and constantly negotiated and renegotiated*' (Fisher & Ragsdale, 2005).

All but one of the women gave me permission to use their names and to share their stories with others. Participant One is the name I am using for the one participant who did not want me to use her name.

There have been moments when I wondered if the women understood what they have agreed to, but they assure me that if I 'Google' their names, I will find them on the Internet.

Many of them have spoken publicly and some have had their pictures in the local paper so they know what it means to 'go public'.

At every stage, I have checked with the participants before sharing their stories and they have agreed to the process. Fisher and Ragsdale (2005) suggest that ethical procedures need to fit the needs and values of the participant population and I have

done some soul searching over this, as the wrong exposure for the participants could be damaging for all of us and I am not always sure that they are aware of that. But I have learned to trust their knowledge of the community and their sense of what is right and wrong.

Rigour

Rigour is critical in research and it is interpreted in many ways. I am struck by Streck's definition of rigour in participative research. '*Rigour means, among other things, knowing how to move among the different types of knowledge, and ways of knowing in order to help a given community or group to develop their strategies for organization, and to find means that enable them in the struggle for a better living together*' (Streck, 2007).

It is also incumbent on the researcher to know a variety of research methods and to use the ones that work best in the situation. Streck says this in a more poetic way, 'This *does not exempt the researcher from knowing the roads travelled by others, and to figure out the roads he imagines and projects for his/her own steps*' (Streck, 2007).

According to Davidson Reynolds (1971), '*...rigour is the 'use of logical systems that are shared and accepted by relevant scientists to ensure agreement on the predictions and explanations of the theory.*'

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989) cited in Ryan-Nichols and Will (2009) the truth component of rigour is assessed by determining if the research is accurate in its record of '*how things really are and really work*'.

One of the ways to determine if the stories are an accurate record is to reflect on how easy it was for the participants to respond to the interview questions. Once they understood the question, sometimes language was an issue, they were able to come up with multiple stories of their contributions. This demonstrates that the questions I asked are within the framework of the participants. They are totally familiar with the idea of building social capital even though they might not be familiar with the terminology.

'*When there is confidence that the study findings are representative of the variables being studied and cannot be attributed to the research procedures, the research design is said to be internally valid*' (Ryan-Nichols & Will, 2009).

The narratives told in the interviews and in the Photovoice sessions were not always presented in the same way. Some of the women chose to tell a second story in the Photovoice session, but when they told the same story the content did not differ. The women's construction of their experience remained the same.

'*Truth is found in the discovery of human phenomena or experiences as they are lived and perceived by subjects as opposed to the verification of a priori conceptions of such experiences*' (Ryan-Nichols & Will, 2009).

The participants need to be able to recognize their experience in the research account – this is the credibility measure that Guba and Lincoln put forth (Ryan-Nichols & Will, 2009). Credibility is addressed in my research partly through the interviews, but mainly by the use of Photovoice where the participants shared their stories with one another. When I asked the women to review their stories on the Blog before I opened

it to the readers, they requested changes because they were reluctant to share some information or they wanted to share more information not because the information was inaccurate.

 'Research activities are said to meet the criterion of fittingness when study findings fit into the context external to the study situation, whereby the findings are found to have meaning and can be applied to the audiences' personal experiences. Additionally, study findings fit the data from which they are derived, reflect the typical and atypical elements, and are firmly grounded in the life experiences of the individuals studied' (Ryan-Nichols & Will, 2009).

The response to the display in the library and the blog demonstrates that those who read the stories and saw the pictures were touched by them. The stories helped the readers recall similar instances in their lives and reflect on the differences and the similarities between the story tellers and themselves.

'*Study findings are said to be auditable when another researcher can clearly follow the audit trail used by the investigator during the study*' (Ryan-Nichols & Will, 2009).

Ryan-Nichols and Will (2009) also note that Guba and Lincoln advocate having the research reviewed by a second researcher and extended contact with participants.

As I mentioned earlier, I began the research project with a colleague, Shamma Al Naqbi, and she was an excellent sounding board.   She supported the idea of Appreciative Inquiry Interviews and conducted four interviews herself. We both found that the participants really enjoyed the interviews and that they began to view themselves, their experiences and their contributions in a more positive light as the interviews progressed.

Shamma attended the first Photovoice session and once again, supported the notion that this is a good way to work with the participants.

I began the interviews in November of 2010 and have been in touch with the participants for over a year. I have texted them, called them and talked to them about the changes they've experienced and to ensure that they are still comfortable with me sharing their stories with others.

The Participants' Consent

Following the procedure outlined by Mary Brydon-Miller (2008) I informed the participants about the research to make sure that they understood the topic and the way the study would be conducted and based on that information they chose to participate without undue influence or coercion.

Shamma and I discussed the idea that perhaps we needed parental or spousal agreement for the graduates to participate in the study as in this culture it is common practice to have, one or the other, consent to activities of the women. We discussed this with the graduates and they agreed that the best approach would be for them to discuss their participation with their families before agreeing to engage in the project.

The first form we designed was in both Arabic and English. At the Photovoice sessions, the women gave me permission to use their stories for the display in the

RKW Library and on the Blog. I drafted a new consent form because they insisted that is was fine to use their names and I wanted to make sure that I could use their stories if I wanted to publish an article on my research. I then contacted the other women who had not attended the Photovoice sessions to see how they wanted me to represent them in the research. All but one woman wanted me to use their first names. Copies of the consent forms are in Appendix One.

Dr. Robert Moulton, the Director of Ras Al Khaimah Women's and Men's Colleges kindly granted Shamma and me permission to carry out our research with the Ras Al Khaimah Women's College graduates and students.

Photovoice and the Poetic Principle of Appreciative Inquiry

The Poetic principle of Appreciative Inquiry suggests that '… *what we choose to study makes a difference it describes, even creates the world as we know it'* (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, as cited in Kelly, 2010). The photos the women composed gave them an opportunity to focus on the success they have had and the futures they dream of. They chose the elements in their collaged photos in such a way that they began to create their future through these photos. They became more aware of themselves as the authors of their futures.   This positive imagery led them to see their futures and each other's futures through a new lens.

Appreciative Inquiry's focus on strengths freed the women to celebrate and build on their successes. Appreciative Inquiry empowers without threatening existing values because it advocates more of what is already working. This makes it an effective method for transformational change in a cross cultural setting.

'Practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry believe this approach is true to human nature because it integrates different ways of knowing. Appreciative inquiry allows room for emotional response as well as intellectual analysis, room for imagination as well as rational thought' (IISD, 2000).

'It(Appreciative Inquiry) touches a deep universal longing to find positive solutions to local and global challenges and provides an almost immediate and primordial sense of satisfaction in the human spirit' (Mantel & Ludema, 2000).

RKW students and graduates are always interested in 'new things' whether it is new technology, new design, or new activities so I knew the graduates would be interested in taking pictures to tell their stories and share their dreams of the future.

The women used digital photography as their medium because it is easy to change, adapt and construct. They were able to pull multiple images into one frame, making clear the connections that exist in their lives.   Reem's composition below is an example of how the women were able to 'picture' the dreams for themselves and others, in this case, Reem's son 'Aboud'.

Photograph 6. No More Routine Life. Supplied by Reem (2011).

Like Reem, many of the participants, altered their photographs using Photoshop or other software. Regardless of the modifications they made, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state, '*viewers will interpret the pictures as real. Underpinning this is the belief in the objectivity of photographic vision, a belief in photography as capable of capturing reality as it is unadulterated by human interpretation. Behind this, in turn is the primacy which is accorded to visual perception in our culture generally. Seeing has, in our culture, become synonymous with understanding. We 'look' at a problem. We 'see' the point. We adopt a 'viewpoint.' We 'focus' on an issue. We 'see things in perspective'. The world 'as we see it' (rather than 'as we know it', and certainly not 'as we hear it' or 'as we feel it') has become the measure for what is 'real' and 'true'* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The women's photographs made it possible for them to present their experiences and their dreams in a way that is believable, and, at the same time, created a mutual vision of their success stories and their visions of the future. The women in the sessions saw one another's futures created in front of their eyes. They were constructing their futures; pulling from their past experiences, using one another's advice and encouragement and refocusing their lives.

The women who participated in my study are on the paths to the futures they envisioned. They have a new way of telling their stories and RKW has a new way to

showcase the success of its graduates. Not only do these graduates work, but they contribute to social capital and the growth of a civil society in the UAE.

The students who read the narratives expressed more confidence in their futures. They can see what their 'sisters' have achieved, the leaders that they have become. This has provided the students with a context in which to imagine their futures.

The women who read the stories on the Blog have been able to supplement the 'single story' of oppressed Muslim Arab women with multiple stories of women who overcome challenges and are more similar to, than different from, themselves.

The narratives the women shared add a new perspective to cross cultural training literature for the Middle East and more specifically for the UAE. As multinationals move into the UAE in ever increasing numbers, it will become even more important for the expatriates who manage these women to have a 'grounding' in the culture of the UAE and the many roles the women play in this culture, especially in the workplace.

Research on Emirati women is limited and my research opens the door to others to expand on the knowledge base that currently exists. Much of the research that has been conducted focuses on other Middle Eastern countries, such as Kuwait (Keddie, 2007; Ismael, 1982; Al Mughni, 1993) and Egypt (Keddie, 2007; Suny, 2010; Inhorn 1998; Larson, 1998; El-Baz, 1997) but very little work has been done with Emirati women.

Social Construction – our beliefs create our world

In this study, I have made reference to the way the media has represented Arab Muslim women and how this portrayal has influenced the view of many Westerners. Words do create worlds and world views. I have sought to counterbalance this perspective in a number of ways. I have shared the findings of Khatib and Krause that clearly indicate the Emirati women are active members of their communities. I have published narratives of Emirati women that provide different points of view, one which encouraged the readers to begin to question the prevalence of the stories they have been told and to appreciate the diversity of the stories that do exist.

At the same time, I have explained the way the women who took part in this study and some of the Arab Muslim women leaders are guided by their religion and how their views are coloured by this, creating a gap between how they are viewed and how they view themselves.

Gergen and Thatchenkery (2004) discuss how researchers have explored 'the intersection of research and social action.' My research served the dual purpose of providing multiple narratives of Arab Muslim women and at the same time, it set the stage for the women involved to make positive changes to their lives.

'Finally, in the broadened conception of research, methods may be sought to generate new realities, to engender perspectives or practices as yet unrealized (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2004).

New Success Stories for Ras Al Khaimah Women's College

RKW now has access to success stories of graduates that will be posted on the college website. These stories present an alternative view of what is important to graduates because they include stories of how our graduates continue to learn and grow, and how they make a difference in their workplaces and in their families. This qualitative research made it possible to add richness and depth to what were formerly lifeless statistics on graduate employment. The narratives that resulted from my research demonstrate the way RKW graduates contribute to the health and wellness of their community.

Narratives to Inspire RKW Students

The twenty eight RKW students in my Change Management course read and analyzed the narratives to identify leadership qualities the graduates employed.

Along with the Emirati faculty members at RKW, the graduates who shared their stories are powerful role models for the students. The student wrote how they were inspired by the work their colleagues have done and the strengths they demonstrated.

In the future, students will conduct Appreciative Inquiry interviews with graduates and add to the existing stories while creating the opportunity for the graduates and themselves to co-create dreams for their futures.

Wider Exposure for the Narratives

As a follow-up to my research, I will share the narratives with more RKW faculty members to give them alternative stories of our graduates. Currently, many of the faculty members don't have the opportunity to see our graduates at work in the community. These stories will give them some idea of how the women incorporate what they learn at the college into their lives and how they use the knowledge and experience they have gained to contribute in the community.

Multinationals have located, and will continue to locate, their headquarters for the Middle East region in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. They will be hiring, or working with Emirati women as well as men. In order to form strong working relationships they will need multiple stories about Emirati women and these narratives are a good starting point.

Limitations of the Research

Selecting the Participants

I am fortunate to work with Emirati women, both as an instructor and in the workplace. Many expatriates have little or no interaction with Emiratis, especially Emirati women.

When Shamma and I were preparing to conduct our interviews we reviewed a list of graduates that we knew. Although we didn't discuss the reasons, we both knew that it would be inappropriate to interview women we didn't know. This limited our choice of participants. The only exception was Aarefa, who has been a guest speaker at the college on many occasions. When I contacted her, she was willing to meet with me even though we had only met once before.

Initially, Shamma and I wanted to interview graduates who are not working, but the logistics of locating them proved too difficult.

This selection technique is not random in any sense of the word, and this means that the 'findings' are not generalizable.

Transportation and commitment to a meeting time were constraints for some of the participants and I overcame this by meeting with most of them during their working hours in their workplaces. This worked well for the interviews, but scheduling the Photovoice sessions was a bit of a nightmare. The women would agree to come but would not show up and they wouldn't let me know that they weren't coming. Consequently, Kitty and I met twice on our own for scheduled Photovoice sessions because the other participants failed to materialize.

I am not sure how I could have overcome this. It seems that the women don't have control of their time.

One participant asked me to write a letter to her employer describing her participation in the project so she could attend the Photovoice session. I duly wrote and delivered the letter, but she didn't attend any of the sessions.

The women were highly engaged when they did attend the Photovoice sessions, so I think that they wanted to come.

Time is experienced differently in different cultures. In the Arabic culture, '*The notion of time is something that is happening now. If you and I have an appointment at 2:00 and you show up at 2:30, well that's OK because I was doing other things anyway and I didn't really notice that you were late' (James & Woodsmall 1988)* It is quite possible that the lack of attendance at some of the Photovoice sessions had to do with this different concept of time. The women likely intended to come and got caught up in some other activity. When the women didn't attend the last session, I visited them in their workplaces and followed up there, but these visits lacked the vitality of the Photovoice sessions.

Limiting the Topics

All of our stories are framed by the cultural idea of a story. All of our stories are framed by what it is possible to think about in our culture and possible to speak about in our language (Merrill, 2011).

There are stories that I didn't hear or didn't share. For example, when I first prepared the stories for the blog, I wrote a short introduction about each woman, explaining a little about her background and my relationship with her. For one of the women I began my introduction by writing about her creativity, sense of humour and her myriad of strengths. Because her story was about raising her sons, I went on to say that they spend their weekends with their father and step mother. I included this information to indicate that she is a single parent.

When she read this introduction, she was very offended; essentially she stopped short of calling me stupid, but the implication was there. She could not believe that I would mention where her sons spend their weekends because that is no one's business, private, personal information that is not to be shared.

I apologized profusely and thought about explaining that in the context of the blog that was being read by Westerners, this is information that would not be seen as personal or confidential, but I could see that this would not make sense to her.

She was angry with me and her words implied that I should have known better. I removed not only the reference to her sons, but the whole story from the blog and posted it much later, when I was preparing to share the narratives with the Change Management students.

Her reaction also demonstrates how each of us interprets a text differently, depending on our culture and our experiences. '*Each reader*, i*n the presence of the same page of words, generates content fairly eccentric from what I meant to say*' (Merrill, 2011).

In seeking responses to the narratives on the blog, I steered away from a discussion on politics and religion. My focus was on how the women contribute in their communities and therefore a discussion of politics and/or religion was outside the scope of this project.

'*Based on the belief that organizations grow in the direction of what is studied (inquiry is constructive), the choice of a positive topic is proposed – as a way to construct positive social realities*' (van der Haar & Hosking, 2004)

I can see that this is a topic that could be explored in the future using Appreciative Inquiry.

My Bias

'*...at the heart of a social constructionist approach is the questioning of assumptions, in particular, the questioning of 'objective' definitions of social reality, and indeed, the categorisation of different aspects of the social world as social problems*' (Jacobs *et. al*, 2003, as cited in Haworth, Manzi & Kemeny, 2004). Because I came at this research from a particular point of view – two points of view, really, first, that there is a 'single' story of Arab Muslim women and second – that that story is a social construction that needs to be questioned, I was biased toward finding stories that did not support the idea of the women as submissive. I began by thinking the story I wanted to tell was closer to the 'truth', which flies in the face of the social constructionist perspective that there are many stories and '*Each perspective is – rather than right or wrong, supplemental to others*' (Merrill, 2011*).*

Future Research

Follow-up research with graduates who have, either not found employment, or have decided not to work outside the home would make it possible to learn how their college education has increased their networks enabling them to build social capital and 'make a difference' in their families and/or their community. Many RKW graduates will not work outside the home, but this does not negate the value of their education or preclude them from 'making a difference'. Their narratives are important to our current students and instructors because they will provide us with alternative models of success.

This is a case study with fifteen college and university graduates, but there are many other women who are contributing to their families and communities. Similar studies

with different groups of women might reveal very different narratives. The more alternative stories, the less likely we are to create yet another stereotype.

Research on Emirati women will become more important as they enter the workforce in larger numbers. While current cross cultural training focuses on the subtleties of the culture as they apply to working with men, in the future, multinationals will be hiring more Emirati women. International employees will need to know more about the roles women play in the workplace and will need to be aware of their values and beliefs. More research will make this possible.

Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed the steps I took to ensure that my research complied with ethical guidelines, exhibited rigour and made use of a viable consent process. Working with Emirati women, I knew that I needed to be very careful to keep their identities safe. I learned that consent was not always in their hands.

I have expanded on the benefit of using Photovoice in conjunction with Appreciative Inquiry, especially in a cross cultural setting. I have outlined the value of this study for the graduates, students and faculty of RKW as well as for those who responded to the narrative that were posted on the blog.

I have made suggestions for other ways the study can be used, especially in cross cultural training here in the UAE and suggested further research that would enhance our understanding of the contributions that Emirati women make to their families, workplaces, communities and country.

Appendix One

Consent Forms

I used two consent forms, the first one in English and Arabic explaining the project when Shamma and I began and the second one in English to gain the consent of the participants to use their first names, stories and pictures in a variety of places. We discussed the second form in the Photovoice sessions and I visited or texted those who did not attend the Photovoice sessions to ask for their permission.

Dear participant,	عزيزتي ...،
Shamma Al Naqbi and I are doing research for our PhD. As part of our research we are interviewing RKW graduates. All the interview data will be kept confidential (we will not use your name in my research). We will not use any of your information for other projects without your permission. You can withdraw at any time from our project and we will erase your information. At the end of the study we will share what we have learned with you. If you are willing to help with this research, please sign the attached form. Thank you very much for your help, **Bonnie Milne** bonnie.milne@hct.ac.ae	أنا حاليا أدرس الدكتوراه في العلوم الإجتماعية. وكجزء من هذا البرنامج الدراسي فإنني أقوم ببعض البحوث و المقابلات لجمع المعلومات المتعلقة بأكمال البحث. سوف أدعوك لإجراء مقابلة قصيرة لجمع المزيد من المعلومات المتعلقة بحياتك العائلية و العملية. جميع المعلومات المستخدمة سوف تكون مجهولة (أنا لن أستخدم اسمك في بحثي). و لن يتم إستخدام أي معلومة دون الحصول على إذن مسبق. في نهاية البحث , سوف أقدم لكم معلومات عن نتائج البحث الذي أجريته. إذا كنت سعيدة بالمساعدة في هذا البحث, الرجاء التوقيع على النموذج المرفق و إعادته إلي. شكرا جزيلا لمساعدتك, **بوني ميلن** أستاذة إدارة أعمال كليات التقنية العليا- كلية رأس الخيمة للطالبات Shamma.alnaqbi@hct.ac.ae
Name... **Signature**..	الاسم: .... التوقيع: ....

Creating Social Capital, Inspiring Stories of Emirati Women

Release Form

1. Please check the places where your picture and story can be displayed:
   - at RKW in the library
   - on the video screens at RKW
   - at a workshop given by Bonnie Milne
   - at girl's high schools
   - on the HCT website
   - on a website or blog set up for this project
   - at the culture centre
   - in publications

2. Would you like me to use your name in the research reports, presentations, and websites or would you like me to use a code name
   - my name
   - a code name

Date: May 28, 2011

Name: _____

Signature:

_____

Thank you so much for participating in this project!

Appendix Two

These are the stories and pictures that appeared on the blog along with the comments from the readers.

Reem's Story

About four years ago Reem married and had a son, but the marriage did not work out and she divorced her husband. Under Shariah law, when a woman divorces her husband, he can make financial demands on her and is not obliged to pay alimony or child support. At a minimum, the woman must pay back her dowry and Reem was in this situation; her father and her brother gave her money and she took a loan from the bank to pay off her obligations to her husband.

Although Reem has custody of her son, her husband has the right to custody when he turns 11. I have found conflicting information about whether or not the child has a choice.

Reem explained that she has been really wrapped up in caring for her son; like many mothers, she worries about him constantly, whether they are together or apart. Talking about her picture, Reem said:

'So I have to know how to let go a little bit. He'll be fine and I'll have more free time, you know catch back, hopefully I'll climb the stairs and reach to the door. So I'm planning Insha'Allah, in the next two years, two to three, four years maybe, I have to do something to change my routine life.'

When I asked Reem what was beyond the door in her picture, she began to cry and said,

'I need comfort, I need …to stop worrying, stop caring so much… So maybe behind the door if he's fine, I'm fine.'

Photograph 6. No More Routine Life. Supplied by Reem (2011).

Once Reem finished talking, the other women in the group offered advice and solace. Aarefa said, 'Just, by the way, they do grow up, you know,' which brought some much needed laughter.

Kitty, shared her experience of worrying about what other people think and being overwhelmed, crying every night when she went to bed. This stopped when she began attending university, where she was with people of different nationalities with different interests. She said she is very happy now because she knows that what she is doing is right, and when her brother and sister criticize her, it rolls off her back. It does help that her mother stops by her room in the evening, after her siblings leave, and reassures her that she trusts her and believes in what she is doing. Kitty encouraged Reem, telling her to follow her heart and believe in herself.

Aamena encouraged Reem to drive to Dubai and shared her experience of driving to Dubai for the first time. Although many women in our community drive, most of them only drive in Ras Al Khaimah so this is a big step!

Shortly after I returned from summer vacation, I received an email from Reem telling me that throughout the summer, she drove herself and her son to Dubai, stayed in hotels and had a wonderful time! A true break from her usual routine!

Comment for Reem

I encourage you to think about and plan for the time when your son is bigger and does not need you as much as he does now. You can be a wonderful mother and also take care of yourself! By studying or doing volunteer work outside the home perhaps he will have positive attitudes in future towards women doing these activities, so you will be contributing to future happiness in your own family as well as in your society if you take time to pursue dreams outside the home as well! Children are only small for a short time, and it passes so quickly! I am glad you are enjoying time with your young son now — such an important thing to do — and I also encourage you to keep both the present and the future (positive ones!) in your mind and heart and plant seeds now that will flourish later when you need them to.

Kitty's Story
OK, I have two things to show you. Actually, the first thing, Aamena was with us too, it's the Terry Fox run. This is something new for me to do it, to be honest. And, watch the movie and you will see.
Kitty has chosen a lovely piano piece that is full of swirls and crescendos as the sound track for her movie, which is a collection of pictures of the Emirati women from the College who took part in the Terry Fox run this year. They are wearing bright blue Terry Fox T-shirts over their abayas. (My home town, Port Coquitlam, is the town Terry Fox is from and I ran in the Terry Fox run almost every year when I lived in Vancouver, so I was really touched by this.)
I feel like I did something … on that day. I was just planning to do something different – to do something different in my life. To go out with all these different people!
And the main thing from this movie, and I showed it to my family; in the future I would like to continue my study outside the country. Like they won't worry about me, I'll be fine, I'll be safe and this is just to put the idea, how we can do everything. Because, in our culture, it's not really easy for us to go out and study.
Everyone will be thinking like negatively, some of them positively, when I was telling them.
They were saying, 'Excuse me, what? You will be wearing this thing – a T-shirt, you will be doing this? Out with different people?' They were a little bit angry.
I went out and I saw some of my Emirati colleagues and I asked them, 'Are you going?' And they say, 'Ah, we are thinking about it.' I say, 'Please don't say you are thinking about it, please say you are going!'
And I was very surprised when I saw you, Aamena, there. She was there with her kids. Yeah, and you know I didn't know that you would go. I thought you were very busy with your study and you can't do it. But see, even if we are doing something and we are working and we are studying, still we can spend time. We can do something totally different. And this one is something that is really totally different for my life!
It was a Friday. My brother was saying, 'Come on, how come you will go? It's Friday.' 'You know', I told him; 'I won't be long. It will be from the morning until 11. So there will be time for me to shower and just spend my time to read the Koran and spend time with you guys. I can come back home'.
And we did finish around 11 o'clock and then, once I went home. I just, I didn't download the pictures, I took the wire and the TV and was just straight away, straight away, straight away dimming the lights. I told them, 'Now, I'll show you what we did.'
And I didn't show them that all the girls' pictures, you know, because these are our

students. So I showed them a lot of pictures, like when I was with Paul, Elizabeth and some of the kids and they just didn't say anything. And then one of them said, 'No one bothered you there?' I said, "No one will bother me, you know.'

Photograph 7. Kitty at the Terry Fox Run. Photo supplied by Kitty (2011)

Comments for Kitty

Comment One

When I read this story I see Kitty's ingenuity in building support from her family in pursuit of her goals, and I am impressed by her making priorities that may be inconsistent with those expected of her. I wonder if her family's resistance to her doing things out of the ordinary comes from concern, for her safety, peoples' perceptions of her by extension themselves. I think Kitty is making it safer for other people to do things that may be unconventional by being a trailblazer herself; this takes courage, conviction, and inspiration.
It sounded to me like seeing Aamena at the event bolstered Kitty's confidence and contributed to a sense of solidarity. I hope, if this is true, that it gives Kitty strength the next time she decides to challenge a norm.

Comment Two

I remember Terry Fox and watching him run was fascinating to me. One day, many years later, I was having a pity party over my doctoral program when I remembered his run. I remember thinking to myself that if a one-legged man could run across a country that I could surely pin back my ears and finish my doctoral program.
I want to tell Kitty that everyone's run is different…being different is a blessing and a gift from God. When people criticize you for being different, they do so because they do not have the strength to try new things for themselves.

Comment Three

I am impressed with the way you can balance your religious obligations and your interests in your life. This type of balance can be challenging to achieve. I hope you continue to find this balance, and also continue to have support from your family for your unconventional thinking about what you want to do in your life. I hope you can continue to seek out and surround yourself with people who believe in you and what you want to do while remaining true to your religious practice.

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