

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).