Female Student Voice and Breaking the Silence: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Exploration of Arab Female Students', in the U.S., Lived Experiences of Digital Storytelling


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*If you be bold and be more than what you are told*
*Then you know you're valuable like gold*
*Is when you decide to break the mold*
*And go against what you are told*
*Be Brave and Bold*
*Right the wrong*
*Show you belong*
*And that your spirit is still Strong*

*Go out there smell the fresh air*
*The smell of Courage and Faith*
*Don't go out and smell hate*
*The Poverty and Fear*
*Go out and cheer*
*Because today is the day you*
*Stand up and Withstand*

*We fall but what matters is we get back up*
*There will always be people that say*
*You are worth nothing*
*You'll go nowhere*
*You have no future/ and you are meant to fail*
*But you are forgetting one/crucial detail*

*You are you*
*Meaning you are smart*
*You have heart and soul*
*Like a pole you always stand strong*
*Through Wrong or Right*
*Thick or Thin*
*You'll win the fight*
*Before it will begin.*
- Latif

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**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Ibrahim, for his unwavering support and for agreeing to come with me to the United States to pursue higher education. Without his encouragement and guidance, I would not have had the opportunity to achieve my dreams. I also want to say thank you to my children, Latif, Nora, Ahmed, and Adam for their patience with me as I sacrificed time with them to work on this project. Their understanding means more to me than they will ever know. I am thankful for Ahmed's strength as he fought for survival from his heart surgery to show his support for my work. I look back and am amazed at all we went through together, and how strong we became. Also, to my homeland of Saudi Arabia, thank you for this opportunity to spur social change. Had I been born in a different era, the chance to pursue my personal goals might not have been available.

**Abstract**

The purpose of this post-intentional phenomenological research study (Vagle, 2018) was to study the phenomenon of female student voice within young girls attending an Arabic elementary K–4 school in the United States. The setting was chosen in order to approximate the effects of student voice and digital storytelling on critical thinking (McLellan, 2006; Robin, 2008), identity development (Papadimitriou, et al., 2013; Davis, 2004; Alismail, 2015), and breaking the silence of oppression (Freire, 2000) that may be expected under similar conditions in Saudi Arabia. Historically, Saudi Arabia has ascribed to the banking model of education in which female students are required to listen obediently to the teacher, who is recognized as the sole authority figure (Hamdan, 2005). Recently, Saudi Arabia has made significant strides toward progressive change for girls and females, with a goal that society will reflect gender equality when Vision 2030 is realized (Vision 2030). Given the oppressive educational system and its deleterious effects on voice and identity in young female students, it is imperative that public education allows female students to resist oppression and break their silence.

The post-intentional phenomenological philosophy and methodology explicated here explores how the phenomenon of female student voice and resistance is produced, provoked, and takes shape (Vagle, 2018). Participants were engaged in three distinct phases to discover the phenomenon. These stages included: deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action. Data was analyzed using the whole- part-whole process (Vagle, 2018). Phenomenological materials included post-reflexion journal entries, chasing the lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and following Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) methodological requirements for using thinking with theory. Thinking

with theory is focused on the critical post-structural feminist (CPSF) theories of Jones (2006), Davies (2003), and hooks (1990, 1994).

Study findings included three constructional illuminations, including *moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity, and moment of resisting oppression with female voice.* Each illumination includes an explanation of its relationship to the phenomenon, implications, and the significance of the findings toward female student empowerment and voice development. Analysis and discussion of findings provides a deep and invoking examination of female oppression, and develops feasible and thought-provoking recommendations for changes in female student education in Saudi Arabia in anticipation of upcoming progressive changes in Saudi society.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

*"The choices that women have today are greater than yesterday, and every day they will grow more."*

- Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud
(Interview with Emirates Woman, 2018)

The above quotation from Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud captures the inspiring and transformative shift toward freedom for females taking place in Saudi Arabia. Growing up as a female in Saudi Arabia, the possibilities for my future were limited to those of a wife and mother. The opportunities to think critically and express myself in school or engage with my teachers were nonexistent. I had no freedom. I observed some changes over time, as I grew into adulthood and experienced the rapidly accelerating social changes and freedoms that are now open to women in Saudi Arabia. I have seen firsthand the way women's freedom to make choices has evolved. Thought-provoking women such as Princess Reema [1] have the power to inspire others, as they have inspired me, to see the value in my choices and in my voice. Because of the changing landscape in Saudi Arabia, there are now possibilities to empower female students within the educational system. As such, this study is extremely timely; female students today, for the first time, may experience both innovative and traditional teaching methods and be provided avenues for personal and academic growth within the classroom setting.

The history of women's education in Saudi Arabia is inextricably bound within the sociopolitical forces and economic factors that have shaped women's status in society. The unequal distribution of power between males and females is a logical

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[1] Princess Reema is the Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States. On 23 February 2019, she became the first women envoy in the country's history.

reflection of gender inequities in Saudi society. Restraints exist for Saudi women in the field of education, and gender disparities are obvious within its systemic educational curriculum (Alharbi, 2014). The reason for the inequities largely stems from decisions made by members of the Directorate of Education. Members of the Directorate of Education are religious men who uphold traditional views on women's role in society, and have been authorized to guide curriculum and instruction since public education was made available to females in 1960. Very few changes have been made since then. Female student curriculum and instruction mandates that young girls receive instruction that will teach them how to become obedient wives and mothers. In contrast, boys receive a curriculum and instruction that allows them to consider a wide range of professional and vocational careers and make choices for their futures so they may become gainfully employed and contribute meaningfully to the Saudi economy.

In the past decade, the importance of student voice has garnered much research attention (Basu, 2008). Educators are aware of the important role they play in guiding and developing student voice, and how opportunities for dialogue, discussion, and discourse foster student voice and allow young students to learn about themselves and discover their thoughts and identities (Jones, 2006; Cook-Sather, 2002, 2009). The banking model of education, which is the standard teaching method experienced by students in Saudi Arabia, is based on the untested assumption that students are blank slates ready to be filled with information under the authority of the teacher. The banking model of education is well known to minimize and deter creative thought and autonomy in students, as the teacher is the full authority on all matters (Freire, 2000). Student voice is neither valued nor acknowledged within the classroom setting. Students are given no

opportunities to provide their insight into the readings and lectures, or to contribute meaningfully to the classroom in any way. This highlights the importance of incorporating teaching methods that encourage student voice into the curriculum and instruction to mitigate the deleterious effects of the banking model of education. According to Cook-Sather (2009), intentionally eliciting student voice is necessary for creating an engaging learning environment. She says, "Remembering students' experience, really listening to them, and taking their perspectives seriously all allow teachers to create classrooms in which students are active partners not only in dialogue, but also in learning" (p. 179).

My personal educational journey began in Saudi Arabia, where I experienced the banking model of education firsthand. Each day in the classroom, I was trained to sit quietly and obediently, keeping my thoughts and fears buried deep inside myself, despite desperately craving innovation and change. I was forced to keep these thoughts and feelings to myself. My job as a student was to silently memorize the presented material, despite being internally aware of the oppression that was limiting my cognitive development. I was frustrated, but had zero control and no way to provide any feedback to the teacher for consideration. When I graduated from college, I became a high school teacher. A year later, I became a coaching teacher for elementary school teachers. I used my personal experiences — mainly the memory of my silenced voice — to guide my teaching. I encouraged my all-female students to think independently and experience the curriculum from a personal perspective. I could see my pedagogical approach was boring to them, so I tried to liven up the lessons by using videos and incorporating discussions.

Despite my best efforts, I was still constrained by the rules of the administration and the effects of a long-standing system that did not encourage students' creativity.

Later, I taught female students at King Faisal University (KFU) who were training to become educators. This was part of my role as a faculty member in the Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Department at KFU. I had more freedom in the college environment compared with the high school setting, and this allowed me to try more things with the students. This gave me opportunities to better understand how to engage the students with C&I-related topics. I wanted the students to not only enjoy the class, but to also walk away from the course having gained a level of knowledge they did not previously have. All of these teaching experiences shaped me into the educator I am today, and encouraged me to afford students the opportunity to discover their own voices and identities and break the silence of oppression. The following excerpt from Cook-Sather (2002) describes my intent succinctly:

> To move toward more fully authorizing the perspectives of students is not simply to include them in existing conversations within existing power structures. Authorizing student perspectives means ensuring that there are legitimate and valued spaces within which students can speak, re-tuning our ears so that we can hear what they say, and redirecting our actions in response to what we hear. The twin challenges of authorizing student perspectives are (a) changing the structures in our minds that have rendered us disinclined to elicit and attend to student voices and (b) changing the structures in educational relationships and institutions that have supported and have been supported by this disinclination. (p. 4)

**Purpose of the Research Study**

Traditional teaching methods, such as the banking model of education, ensure that the teacher is the authority in the classroom and that the students are obedient, quiet, and listen intently to the teacher (Freire, 2000). Any deviation from this on the part of the student is strictly punished. Consequently, female students learn the skills and behaviors necessary to become obedient wives to their husbands, and to listen to authority without incident (Hamdan, 2005; Alharbi, 2014). This results in female students graduating from public school as adults unable to critically think, question authority, or realize their oppression (Freire, 2000; Jones, 2006). Student voice has been offered as a remedy to oppression and a tool for breaking the silence (Cook-Sather, 2009). In traditional school settings, such as those found in Saudi Arabia, student voice remains undervalued and unexplored (Al-Mohsen, 2000; Hamdan, 2005). As such, this post-intentional phenomenological study is meant to deeply explore the phenomenon of female student voice in students who have been significantly exposed to the banking model of education. The purpose of this study is to understand how students come to realize their power and identities through voice, and how this may feasibly be implemented into traditional classrooms that have relied on the banking model of education for generations. Specifically, I explore student voice as a phenomenon through a post-intentional lens. I use methodological materials to understand how female student voice and resistance was produced, provoked, and took shape (Vagle, 2018).

*Phenomenon*

According to Vagle's (2018) post-intentional phenomenology methodology, a phenomenon is in a constant state of flux, constructing, deconstructing, and

5

reconstructing as events and ideas collide and meaning shapes and shifts. This dissertation examines how female student voice may be developed in traditionally marginalized students, such as females from a country in which females are oppressed. Female student voice is fostered through critical discourse, feminist literature, and critical post-structural feminist theories, and then encapsulated in students' digital stories. The students' digital stories provide the evidence of voice utilization and identity development. This allowed me to learn from the students' self-described lived experiences, and allowed the students to learn from each other through sharing their digital stories with one another, further advancing voice and identity while empowering female students to resist oppression and break their silence.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guide this post-intentional phenomenological exploration.

The Primary Research Question:

> *How might expressions of student voice take shape for K–4 females in an Arabic school in the U.S. through digital storytelling (DST), the historical role of females in Saudi society, and political analysis of Saudi Arabia?*

Secondary questions:

> a) *How might empowerment, as exhibited through student voice, relate to students' identity development?*
>
> b) *What do the stories developed by the female students through DST tell us about their lived experiences?*

*c) How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political*

*decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender*

*roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia?*

**Significance of the Study**

This study has significance for marginalized females who have been exposed to

and taught under the banking model of education, as well as educators and parents who

wish to explore the student voice and empower their students and children to become

agents of change. Specifically, I looked through a lens at three levels of significance of

this study.

First, this study provides educators innovative and creative strategies for

encouraging student voice and identity development within a structured educational

setting. This study provides the impetus for educators to begin to explore their own voice

and identities, and understand how self-expression and critical analysis of their personal

motives and beliefs affect their students, as well as the way they interact with their

students. By providing educators a structured methodology to allow them to become

humble and explore their identities, they may also become empowered and willing to

share power with their students.

Second, this study may greatly enrich and improve the lives of female students

who have been exploited and oppressed through traditional teaching models, such as the

banking model of education. Students may understand and experience, for the first time,

adult authority figures who ask questions and listen to their responses. They may begin to

develop professional and personal relationships with the teachers, allowing students to

feel valued and respected as individuals for the first time. This may allow female students

to begin to feel safe and secure to explore their voices and identities. In doing so, female students can prepare themselves to be competitive applicants for future careers and employment options. Female students may also be prepared to live in a society as proposed in Vision 2030, as reviewed in Chapter 2, in which society deviates significantly from tradition.

Third, parents may realize the benefits of student voice and student empowerment in their observations of their child's growth and development, and thus become proponents for educational reform, rather than resistors of change. Parents may then feel more comfortable with student voice and identity development, and encourage the development of these skills in their children within the classroom.

**Organization of Chapters**

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I provide an extensive literature review and discuss the conceptual framework within which I think about the phenomenon, specifically Vagle's 2014 post-intentional phenomenological approach. I review the historical relevance of education in Saudi Arabia to the current study, and the connections between tradition, oppression, and breaking silence through the development of voice in young female students. Also in Chapter 2, I discuss Component #1 of Vagle's approach, in which I present the post-intentional phenomenon around the context of a social issue. I also expand on Component #1, where I state the research problem (Part 1), provide a partial review of the literature (Part 2), and present the theories with which I want to think (Part 3).

In Chapter 3, I explain the post-intentional phenomenological method as my approach (Vagle, 2018). I go into detail of the study contexts as related to the

phenomenon (Part 4), and also go deep into exploring the social change (Part 5), participant selection (Part 6), and my research questions (Part 7). I then discuss Components #2 and #3 of Vagle's approach, in which I devise a clear and flexible process for gathering the phenomenological materials under investigation and make a post-reflexion plan.

In Chapter 4, I discuss Component #4 of Vagle's approach, where I explore the intentionality of my data analysis and provide a thorough exploration of the phenomenon. I discuss the role of theory, the phenomenological material, and my post-reflexions through the whole-part-whole analysis (Vagle, 2014) and Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) "plugging in" approach in combination with "thinking with theory." I use Deleuze and Guttari's (1987) technique of purposely chasing the lines of flight. This helps me to deconstruct the wholes of phenomenological materials. Also in Chapter 4, I uncover Component #5, in which I craft text that engages the productions and provocations of the post-intentional phenomenon around a social issue.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the study findings as related to the three illuminations of the phenomenological constructs. These illuminations are conceptualized as productions and provocations of the phenomenon and include: *Moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity, and moment of resisting oppression with female voice.*

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, I present a concluding summary for each chapter, including an articulation of research implications, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

*"Let there be everywhere our voices, our eyes, our thoughts, our love, our actions, breathing hope and victory."*

- Sanchez, 1984

This chapter explains my choice to study the female student voice as a phenomenon that could encourage female empowerment and resistance to oppression in the Saudi education system. This literature review will provide context for my choice of study and present the conceptual framework I'll be using to investigate my topic. I use Component #1 of Vagle's (2018) post-intentional phenomenological research to address the limitations of the banking concept of education in Saudi Arabia to conduct my study, in which I investigate how the female student voice can be produced, provoked and took shape.

This chapter focuses on the first aspect of Vagle's (2018) post-intentional phenomenology, Component #1: Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue. In this section I provide an overview of Component #1, Parts 1, 2, and 3. Part 1 provides a statement of the research problem, which explains why the phenomenon of the female student voice is important to me. Part 2 provides a literature review that supports the rationale and need for an in-depth exploration of my topic. Finally, I close the discussion with Part 3, theories "I want to think with," where I identified the conceptual philosophies and theorists to "think with" in this research (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). To conclude this chapter, I provide an overall summary of how this framework contributes to and will be applied to my topic and study. Throughout this dissertation, I provide my own embodied experiences story to detail my lived experience as a female student in Saudi Arabia. These embodied experiences provide

examples of how my thoughts and reflections connect to the phenomenon of female student voice, as well as to the text. As Van Manen (1990) states, phenomenology is about the lifeworld as it is experienced. The embodied experience story is a critical component of post-intentional research that explores phenomena as they are connected to the world, how they present and how they shift and shape over time (Vagle, 2014). These post-intentional phenomenological moments are rich with emotion and intrigue and lead to significant and profound 'ah-ha' moments (Vagle, 2018).

### Component #1: Identify a Post-Intentional Phenomenon in Context(s), Around a Social Issue

### Component #1, Part 1 State the Research Problem

Phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience. In this sense, the aim of this partial literature review is to examine and clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences "as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life" (Von Eckartsberg, 1998, p. 3). Thus, it is relevant to incorporate literature from the field to define the phenomenon prior to data collection. Vagle (2018) explains that the phenomenon is important in its context and also as a social construct. The phenomenon is provoked and examined through dynamic social experiences that provide insight into one's lived experiences. This provides context for exploration the "discourses, habits, policies, practices, contexts, histories, language, art forms, popular media, politics, objects, etc." (Vagle, 2018, p. 140). My phenomenon under study, *the female student voice*, is particularly silenced in a marginalized student population, such as the female student population in Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia, the female student voice is nascent. Because of this, female

students are not provided opportunities to develop their thinking skills and discover their

identity. Suppressing female student voices facilitates oppression. Suppressed voices and

oppression is most obvious in school settings wherein the banking concept of education is

operational[2] (Freire, 2000). In the banking model of education, the teacher is viewed as

the authority and the children are viewed as blank slates, ready to be filled with

information. The teacher decides what is to be delivered and the students are required to

memorize what is taught. Students are not allowed to ask questions that do not directly

involve the curriculum, to explore issues they are interested in, or to connect to the

reading and curriculum in any way that was not assigned by the teacher (Freire, 2000).

All students are treated the same and are expected to be the same. That is, they are

expected to sit quietly, listen to the teacher, and memorize the material provided

regardless of their individual interests, needs, strengths, and abilities.

As a former female student in Saudi Arabia, I experienced the consequences of

the banking model of education. Not being allowed a voice proved to be emotionally

and academically debilitating. My female peers and I finished compulsory school without

the ability to critically think, make decisions, or provide for ourselves financially. We

struggled in college and found it difficult to write about our opinions and viewpoints on

new subjects because we had no experience vocalizing or forming opinions. This

reinforces the observation that female students are overlooked in the Saudi Arabian

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[2] I am inspired by the work of Freire and his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000). I was not aware of my own oppression in the educational system until I read this book and this inspired me to understand how the student voice is important for releasing young girls from the oppression that the banking model of education creates and explore teaching methods that might encourage and develop that student voice.

educational system. This oversight is due to the fact that the political environment of

Saudi Arabia is rooted in an Islamic patriarchal philosophy (Alireza, 1987).

*Embodied Experience Story*

*Though patriarchy is prevalent in many Saudi Arabian families, my family has more egalitarian views. Unlike some families that want all boys, my father wishes that he had more daughters. People consider men to be capable of working and earning an income, which is appealing to many. My father, however, values family and fun. He wishes for many girls because he loves spending time with his family and he values family time and having fun family gatherings. The patriarchal nature of Saudi Arabia prevents parents from spending time with their adult sons, as it is expected they would be busy working and making money. Therefore, being a female is a privilege because of my parent's love for family togetherness. Also noteworthy is my father's education and experience. He studied abroad and experienced many things outside of Saudi Arabia that exposed him to different lifestyles and cultures that he admired and wanted to share with his family and friends. Therefore, I am also privileged to have a father who was able to receive an international education, as well as being a thoughtful and just champion for social justice and equality.*

Using post-intentional phenomenology as understood and taught by Vagle, I

realized the assumptions and philosophical grounding of post-intentional phenomenology

helped me "contemplate and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and

through our being in the world" (Vagle, 2014, p. 22), while allowing the multiplicities of

my own lived experience and identity to inform the research. Grounded in this, I have

been able to explore how digital storytelling could shape student voice.

Digital storytelling (DST) allows students to represent themselves and how they

see themselves with respect to others and the world. Vagle helped me to understand how

post-intentional phenomenology is a method for interacting with those who occupy the

same place and space I do. As I explore and move through time and space, observing and

contemplating my world, I find myself questioning what meaning is and what it means to

say something is understood and known. As I question myself and my own thoughts and

understanding, I slow down and become more careful and observant of the multiplicities

and lines of flight shaping my lived experiences and how I interpret and derive

intentionality from them. The post-intentional phenomenological research question I seek

to investigate is: *How might expressions of the student voice take shape among K–4*

*female students in an Arabic School in the US, through digital storytelling, the history of*

*gender roles in Saudi Arabia, and political analysis?*

Thus, the core of my scholarship is concentrated on understanding how the female

student voice may be developed and enriched in educational settings. My focus is on

elementary students K–4 this will be the population which I will serve when I complete

my graduate studies. My future position will involve training pre-service teachers on

methods to increase student agency and promote student voice in young students, grades

K–4. With this aim in mind, the three areas mentioned in the above question will guide

my research.

In the next section, Component #1, Part 2, I discuss the history of female

education in Saudi Arabia and how the role of silence and patriarchal hegemony

contribute to oppression. I then introduce and define my phenomenon, female student

voice, and explain how female student voice may be an instrument of change and

empowerment. I also discuss pedagogies for increasing female student voice and

breaking the silence associated with the banking model of education. Finally, I shall

introduce digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool that provides students with

opportunities to achieve agency and resistance through storytelling.

## Component #1,
## Part 2 Partial Review of the Literature

To understand the significance of my phenomenon, *the female student voice*, I

provide a review of the relevant research to orientate the reader to the importance and

context of the topic and explore the phenomenon of the female student voice. As such,

literature pertaining to student voice with an emphasis on strategies for breaking the

silence of marginalized students will be reviewed "[in] opening up and exploring the

phenomenon" (Vagle, 2018, p. 79). Therefore, the partial review of the literature was

utilized to situate the social issue. First, I sought literature that related to the history of

education in Saudi Arabia. My own lived experiences as a member and participant in

Saudi Arabia's oppressive patriarchal society and education will inform this discussion of

the literature. Second, I sought to examine all relevant research that describes the student

voice and explicates the importance of said female student voice. Pedagogies that

promote student voice and break student silence are provided, as well as how to break

student silence through the use of digital storytelling.

**History of Female Education in Saudi Arabia**

Islam is a system of life in Saudi Arabia, and this faith tradition, in theory, places

men and women equal in honor. In understanding Saudi cultural attitudes toward gender,

it is also important to note the physiological and psychological differences between the

sexes. Historically, from a Saudi perspective, there is an underlying belief that there are

fundamental, biological differences between the sexes which uniquely prepares them to

fulfill specific roles (Al-Aloola, 2008). Therefore, the struggle between conservative

traditionalists and progressive ideologists in determining Saudi woman's identity in Saudi

society is constant. I realize there is great injustice in my home country for women, and I

am motivated to resist these oppressive forces and bring voice and authenticity to female

students there so female students may break their silence and resist their oppression.

People blindly accept the dominant culture's instructions for who and what they are and

how to be. The culture of power is so ingrained in the people that no one questions why it must be that way, or why it is so (Delpit, 2006).

The history of women's education in Saudi Arabia involves protests, oppression, and continued advocacy. In 1925, Saudi Arabia's government established official public schools that were under the authority of the Directorate of Education (DE). The DE was under the Ministry of the Interior because there were not enough qualified and educated people to establish a specialized department outside of the Ministry of the Interior. As the product of a conservative society, the educational system allowed only boys to enroll in public schools. The official dominant curricula focused only on religious studies, language, history, math, and moral curriculum (Hamdan, 2005). Though there were limitations in Saudi Arabia's educational system, people's needs were satisfied at that time. Chambliss (2015) states:

> Their curricula were limited; they could not always attract well-trained teachers; physical facilities were not always conducive to a congenial educational environment. Most importantly, these schools could not meet the growing need for trained personnel or provide sufficient educational opportunities for those who wished to continue their studies. (p. 1)

The Directorate of Education, led by religious men, shaped the Saudi educational system for decades and greatly influenced the curriculum on all educational levels. Knowledge was considered a highly valued commodity to be defined by the powerful and dispensed to the common people. This relationship between knowledge production and power was in effect in Saudi Arabia's curricular policy and is still in effect today.

A decade after public education was enacted in Saudi Arabian society (1930's),

the general feeling amongst Saudi Arabians was that girls should stay at home in order to

prepare for a life of being a wife and mother (Hamdan, 2005). For many women in that

period, the only educational option was the "kuttab," assuming the family would allow it.

Kuttabs were located in mosques or a teacher's house, and were often the only chance a

girl had to learn how to read and write (Doumato, 2002).

*Embodied Experience Story*

> *I remember my grandmother telling me that she received her education from a kuttab. She told me about her teacher, a male teacher who was very old and had lost his vision. Because he was disabled, he was allowed to teach young girls without violating Islamic law. My grandmother's parents wished her to receive an education and they wanted her to read and write, as such, they risked public judgement and supported their daughter's desire to learn and become educated from a kuttab. Her father was an educator and he taught his daughter, my grandmother, to love learning. At that time however, she was only allowed to receive the education offered through kuttab, which consisted of religion and language; however, she received more education than most women of that era.*

This was a more likely scenario for girls living near the eastern and western

borders[3] of Saudi Arabia whose families were often more progressive than families in

central Saudi Arabia due to more opportunities and experiences with international travel.

However, even for progressive families, female education was rarely sought.

**The Beginnings of Female Education**

The discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in 1938 was the first of several major shocks

to Saudi Arabian culture in general and the Saudi Arabian educational system in

particular. Oil meant the country had an extremely valuable resource to exploit, but

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[3] The east and west areas are represented by more diversity, with a wider range of socioeconomic classes and cultures present. Therefore, the east and west parts of the country are less conservative than the other parts of the country; this means most girls who were fighting for their education were from the east and west areas of the country.

developing that capacity would take time as it required both infrastructure and a highly trained workforce. This helped the Saudi community to collectively become aware of the importance of social change and therefore try to attain the development of other urban and industrial countries in the nineteenth century (Doumato, 2002). Without persuading religious men in the country and getting their support, it was impossible to establish girls' education in Saudi Arabia. King Saud played a large role in changing education for females (Alhareth & Dighrir, 2015). In 1959, King Saud announced his support for female education and requested assistance from religious scholars to help implement these changes and initiate public education for girls (AlMunajjed, 1997; Alamri, 2011). Girls were now allowed to attend school, a large victory for females in the country. However, the education girls received was foundationally patriarchal, and females were still regarded as inferior to men.

In the 1940s, Saudi Arabia began sending promising young male students abroad to receive education in a different cultural context than that of Saudi Arabia. At this time (1940s) a young female student, Fatina Amin Shakir requested that she also be allowed to participate in education abroad. She was a promising and bright student, and she met the criteria necessary to participate. Her application was denied due to her female status. The Ministry of Higher Education rejected her application, admonishing that it would be immoral to allow a female to travel by herself and live independently abroad. Twenty years later, in the 1960's, Fatina and her father appealed to King Faisal, who was known to be sympathetic to women's education. With King Faisal's support, Fatina was one of the first females to receive a PhD in Saudi Arabia. She focused her thesis on how developing countries adopt modernism, and included an interview with King Faisal to

honor his support in making her educational dreams a reality (Lacey, 1981). Today, Fatina is an anthropologist who asserts that the "denial of women's rights is rooted in the hegemony of social practices… as customary laws or traditions, rather than rooted in Islamic essence" (Arebi, 1994, p. 217).

Islam requires all people be educated enough to at least read and write. Higher education is also strongly encouraged by Islam. People, however, are often much more conservative than their religion, and protests are common. For example, in September 1960, the Saudi Arabian government had to send forces to break up demonstrations being held against girls' education in the city of Buraydah (Lacey, 1981). This show of government support was always coupled with government rhetoric about the ways in which education would make women better wives and mothers (Hamdan, 2005). Despite these protests, Saudi Arabian reformers, foremost among them King Faisal, continued to provide more opportunities for women through the founding of new educational institutions for women. King Faisal was highly influenced by his wife, Effat Al Thunayan, who promoted and exemplified feministic freedom.

Effat Al Thunayan promoted and advocated for the education of women in Saudi Arabia. She was able to realize her dream that Saudi Arabian women be allowed to study and pursue careers focused on science and language and other subjects generally regarded as only appropriate for men. She herself was educated, a mathematics scholar, and possessed strong moral character and reasoning. She and her husband together developed the first women's academy in Jeddah, which was the first in the country[4]. The academy

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[4] Dar Al Hanan was attended by 15 young women in the first year it was open. As acceptance for female education grew, the number of girls enrolled also increased. The idea first caught on with prominent families such as the Hijazi families of Mecca and Medinah.

was named, Dar Al Hanan[5] which translates to, "The House of Affection" which was inspired from a commandment in the Quran that addressed the care and concern of girls (Lacey, 1981). The Dar Al Hanan was available to all females, regardless of age, who wished to receive an education. Later, in 1960, in response to a national committee of conservative members who insisted on controlling female education throughout the country, Effat established the first college for women. This college was called Kulliyat Al Banat, or Girls' College[6]. The number of women's institutions grew from one college in 1960 to 155 in the 1970s (Al-Mohsen, 2000). According to Al-Mohsen (2000), early curriculum focused on the arts, education, language, and geography, with all other fields only available to men. Women were allowed to pursue careers and education in medicine beginning in 1975 (Jawad, 1998). King Faisal supported women's education, however, other changes were occurring that led to educational reform.

**Economic, Social, and Political Conditions and the Educational System 1970s-1990s**

Educational advances for women did not happen solely from Effat and King Faisal's support. Mounting changes in the social, economic, and political climate of Saudi Arabia also had and continues to have great influence on educational reform for girls in the country.

*Economic Influences*

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[5] The main objective of the Dar Al Hanan was to teach girls how to be good wives and mothers. This was progressive at the time, because before it was taught that the family should teach these values to girls. By receiving education that facilitated their ability to be good wives and mothers, they received an education based both on Islamic values and modern educational theories. Effat argued with many conservative religious scholars, asserting that women who were educated outside the home would be more traditionally rooted and prepared to promote and instill traditional beliefs and values in future generations.

[6] In August 1999, Effat worked to promote revamping the Girls' College into a University. This newly formed University, Effat University, was inaugurated two months before her death. Effat University was the kingdom's first University for women.

Prior to the discovery of oil in 1933, Saudi Arabia was a relatively poor country. The discovery of oil advanced Saudi Arabia to a wealthy country in a very short amount of time. Saudi Arabia could now support education for boys and girls. Despite the ability for Saudi Arabia to equally support male and female education, boys' education was better funded than girls' education, with girls only receiving 18% of the funding that boys received (Jawad, 1998). In addition, higher education for women was limited and vocational training was not available, as much of the work available to those with higher education and vocational training was not considered appropriate for women[7]. During this period of time, women were not admitted to engineering, law, pharmacy, geology, petroleum, and political sciences, and were not able to have full access to many libraries and recreation centers. As such, the government allocated money toward male education while providing few benefits for females. Males were able to become exponentially better educated, where women, in comparison, fell drastically farther behind. Al-Mohsen (2000) states that "despite the increased record of support, the Saudi government policy of sexual segregation has saddled women with facilities substantially inferior to those available to their male counterparts" (p. 22).

With the founding of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in 1979, an influx of foreign workers arrived in Saudi Arabia for work. This marked yet another major shock to the Saudi Arabian educational system. For the first time, people were coming to Saudi Arabia for new opportunities, both economically and educationally. This

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[7] Until the end of the 1970s, many Saudi women and men considered women's nature to be different from that of men; therefore, they were not allowed to work in the same jobs as men. That is why only certain jobs (i.e., teaching and nursing as opposed to engineering) were open to women.

created a need for more teachers, who were recruited from surrounding countries to come

to Saudi Arabia and teach (AlMohamed, 2008; Alamri, 2011). At the same time,

conservative elements of Saudi Arabian society were more determined than ever to

preserve the central features of Saudi Arabian society in the face of the nation's new

wealth.

*Embodied Experience Story*

> *There was a shortage of qualified teachers at the girls' educational institutions. My mother told me that most teachers were from other countries such as Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia, and Jordan. Therefore, Institute of Teachers for women was established in order to provide enough female teachers to meet the needs of the country's girls.*

The role of women in public life became more important and discussed more

openly in 1978. Male and female authors started publishing opinions in newspapers and

magazines discussing women's rights to participate in public life. Related issues such as

women's right to drive a car[8], work outside of the home, and receive an education became

widely discussed hot topics (Doumato, 2002). Despite the growth of conversations

related to the topic, many still viewed women's freedom and mobility as dangerous and

influenced through Western ideals (Arebi, 1994, p.17). Cultural struggles driven by

economic changes continued through the 1980s as King Fahd came to power and as the

number of women enrolled in both schools and colleges increased. During the 1980s,

approximately 10 more educational institutions for girls opened, allowing women to

pursue education in the arts, as well as sciences such as biology and mathematics

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[8] As I write this, Saudi Arabia has in the past day approved women's right to drive. As such, women will be allowed to drive beginning in June 2018. This is a major event and victory for women in Saudi Arabia, and women are very excited to learn to drive and begin to experience a new type of independence.

(Hamdan, 2005). Since women's education in Saudi Arabia officially began, educational levels have increased rapidly.

### *Political and Social Events*

A major political event that led to educational reform in Saudi Arabia occurred in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait, resulting in the Gulf War. This war, conducted in conjunction with the United States, led to large numbers of American service people and civilian support staff living in Saudi Arabia, which was the primary staging ground for the American assault on the Iraqi army. Saudi women saw American women driving cars, serving in the military, and otherwise enjoying freedoms that Saudi Arabian women did not have (Hamdan, 2005). This was also the first time many in the international community were made aware of the limitations that had been placed on Saudi women (Alharbi, 2014).

*Embodied Experience Story*

*I vividly remember the Gulf War. I was six years old. My mother was pregnant with my brother, and our family and friends from Kuwait came to stay with us, as it was safer in our hometown Al Hussas, and they did not want to risk harm to their family. Even at home, life was dangerous. My father quit working for six months, and all children, boys and girls stayed home from school. People only left their homes in emergency situations or to buy food. The community became like a large campground. The government supplied all Saudi Arabians with oxygen masks, and we were asked to wear these if we were attacked. This fear and camp style living continued for six months, when life finally again resumed. I recall this as a very scary and exciting time, full of adventure and fear.*

This new awareness led to greater international pressure to allow women more freedom, especially in their educational choices. Coupled with a nearly 100% increase in funding for education between 1995 and 1998, the number of educational resources and opportunities for women skyrocketed (Hamdan, 2005; Alaugab, 2007). Despite the funding boom for female education, Saudi Arabian women faced (and can still face to this day) serious opposition. The widespread belief that women should not be educated in

Saudi Arabia, led many educated families to send their daughters abroad for their

education so as not to face ridicule and shame from others in Saudi Arabia who disagreed

with female education (Hamdan, 2005). This trend continues to this day.

*Embodied Experience Story*

*Saudi women for the first time began to question why they were not allowed to drive, why they must cover their face, and why they are not allowed to speak and write as women elsewhere. I experienced this firsthand as a young child listening to my mother talk to her friends and family about the differences between themselves and the American woman that were serving in Saudi Arabia. This made me wonder for the first time if women in Saudi Arabia were oppressed, and where these rules for women originated and why. This facilitated my analysis of how women in Saudi Arabia were treated, and I began to question the origins and intentions of those in power. The obvious difference between Saudi women and others was unavoidable to notice, and this created a great deal of confusion and questioning among women in Saudi Arabia.*

Until 2002, women's schooling was managed by the Department of Religious

Guidance. This changed after a tragic fire at a girls' school that resulted in 15 deaths.

These deaths could have been prevented, however, the police did not allow the girls to

leave the building as they were not dressed in proper Islamic attire. The police did not

want the girls to accompany an unknown male due to strict adherence to Islamic law,

which forbids men to accompany women with whom they are not related. These

unnecessary deaths created outrage, and men's and women's education was then

consolidated under the Ministry of Education (House, 2013; Alharbi, 2014) in attempt to

prevent future tragedies due to gender segregation. However, this consolidation did not

lead to equality in the opportunities available to men and women. Women's education

still focused on producing good wives and mothers, and participation in activities such as

sports was still discouraged (House, 2013; Alharbi, 2014; Alhareth & Dighrir, 2015).

*Embodied Experience Story*

*Throughout my schooling in Saudi Arabia, I did not receive any opportunities to play sports. My father noticed this and provided opportunities for me to engage in sports and physical activity at home outside of school. I did not receive any social studies education as men did.*

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*Even the strategy of teaching, which we call the banking concept of education as Freire named it, was oppressive and disallowed females to engage in physical activities. When I compare my education to that of my brothers, I see obvious inequities. My love for education and my desire to learn motivated me to continue my education, despite the odds against me. I am fortunate to have had a supportive family who allowed this; many women in Saudi Arabia are not as fortunate.*

**Present Dynamics of Female Education in Saudi Arabia (2006 - present)**

Despite opposition, reform efforts continued with King Abdullah establishing a nationwide program to improve the educational system for both men and women[9] (Hilal & Denman, 2013; Alharbi, 2014). These reform efforts, even when facing opposition from conservative quarters of Saudi Arabian culture, have resulted in improvements in the Saudi Arabian educational system for all students (Hilal & Denman, 2013). For women, in particular, the results have been quite dramatic. More than 300 higher education institutions for women now exist, and women now represent more than half of university students in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2014). Even though women have full and equal access to education, K-12 schools are still segregated by gender. Even at the university level, most majors are still segregated, with a few exceptions like biology, nursing, medicine, and pharmacy.

In 2009, King Abdullah gave women a chance to be Ministry of Education leaders. Dr. Noura Al-Fayez is currently the Deputy Minister of Education Affairs for girls (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). In 2011, King Abdullah declared

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[9] At the higher education level, King Abdullah's scholarship, established in 2006, provided the opportunity for both young adult women and men to study around the world. The mission of the scholarship program was to "Prepare and qualify Saudi human resources in an effective manner so that they will be able to compete on an international level in the labor market and the different areas of scientific research, and thereby become an important source of supply of highly qualified individuals for Saudi universities as well as the government and private sectors" (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, 2013, p. 1). This program has been very important for my family and my friends, many of whom were able to be educated overseas. My husband is a participant of this program as well, and it provides a benefit to those who wish to continue their studies.

women would be able to vote and run in the 2015 local elections, as well as be appointed to the Consultative Assembly (Murphy, 2015). In 2012, the Saudi government allowed women to participate as athletes in the Olympics for the first time, and to work in different sectors in order to achieve gender equality (Alaugab, 2007; Brown, 2012).

In 2014, Bahlaiwa (2014) reported the Saudi government allocated 25% of the national budget to education, indicating the high value placed on this sector. These reforms in the educational system have resulted in more opportunities for women and have allowed them to develop a greater voice within the power structures of education. According to the Ministry of Education's (2014) annual report, the number of females enrolled in Saudi Arabian schools was balanced with males for the first time in history during the 2012-2013 school year. There are now 2,345,364 female students enrolled in Saudi Arabian schools. Additionally, there are 250,000 female teachers, which outnumbers male teachers (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015). Although the number of female students and female teachers have increased, and are currently at their highest numbers, the strategies employed in the classroom are still largely traditional. In this way, female education is still oppressed, and students are not encouraged to engage in dialogue, think critically, or examine their identity and exercise self-expression.

*Embodied Experience Story*

*I recall an instance in 2nd grade of punishment from a teacher. I was supposed to memorize the times table, and I made a mistake on 4 x 6. The teacher was angry that I made a mistake, took a ruler and slapped my hands 24 times, the number that I did not remember. Because the teacher is believed to be a prophet, it is not appropriate to object to the punishment, and parents often support the teacher's actions, even when abusive. This belief that the teacher is a prophet, I believe, supports oppression and prevents students from learning and being engaged in their education. Corporal punishment was outlawed in 2011, and if teachers apply this punishment in the classroom, parents have the right to sue. The teacher can also lose some of his/her privileges and authority.*

> *As an adult, I struggled with the concept of self-reflection and I did not understand reflection papers. I would ask my peers, "What is reflection? What does reflection mean?" Even after I understood what reflection was, I did not know how to do it. I did not think that way, and I had to learn to have a voice. After developing my own voice, I realized how empowering having a voice is, and how important it is to break the silence by encouraging students' voices.*

This type of education serves those in power, as it keeps the dominant theory and worldview alive and present. Students are incubated in the dominant culture space (Alharbi, 2014; Alhareth & Dighrir, 2015). More progressive educational models that promote creative thinking, self-reflection, and dialogue are absent[10]. This pedagogical approach requires female students to sit quietly, be still, listen, and memorize the material delivered (Alharbi, 2014). Students are punished for voicing concerns or opinions that deviate from the lesson objective. The observation of female oppression within the school system reminds me of what has been dubbed the "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" (Freire, 2000).

*Embodied Experience Story*

> *In my experience, we did not have this type of freedom in Saudi Arabia. Teachers ignored student voice and student thoughts. The teacher only taught what was in the text, and did not allow for new learning by the way of critical thinking. The focus was solely on memorization. When children grow up, it becomes difficult for them to learn critical thinking skills, as they were not exposed to it as young learners. Therefore, they become adults who are fearful of speaking up and do not understand the importance and power of dialogue. Because negotiation is not allowed in Saudi Arabia, I am concerned for my daughter who enjoys debating and negotiating. It is such a huge part of her personality and I worry about the trouble she will be in when she begins attending school in Saudi Arabia. I hope that she is able to find an excellent teacher who appreciates and develops her amazing personality, however, it is something that I think is unlikely, though I'm optimistic.*

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[10] The education men receive is also oppressive and prohibits creative thought and self-reflection. However, males receive more education in the sciences and are prepared to enter the STEM careers in the workforce, whereas girls are trained to enter female professions and become wives and mothers. Females are prohibited from expressing themselves in the larger society as well, where men are obligated to speak for the women.

In April 2016, King Salman announced that girls would be allowed to receive

physical education in public schools. Based on that, a new college opened to prepare

women to teach physical education to girls. King Salman allocated one minister to

manage both male and female education, which improved equality for girls' education,

including physical education. In April 2016, the King's son, Crown Prince Mohammed

bin Salman, was interviewed and provided a lengthy and inspiring vision for Saudi

Arabia's future (Saudi Press Agency, 2016). He called this, "Vision 2030"[11]. He explains

how important it is that Saudi Arabia honors Islamic principles first and foremost, despite

the advent of significant wealth. As such, he cautioned against using the country's wealth

foolishly, and instead to use the money to invest in the future for Saudi Arabia. He

claimed that not just one aspect of Saudi Arabian life will improve, but all areas (Vision

2030, 2016). According to Vision (2016) Mohammad bin Salman explains:

> We are determined to build a thriving country in which all citizens can fulfill
>
> their dreams, hopes and ambitions. Therefore, we will not rest until our nation is
>
> a leader in providing opportunities for all through education and training.
>
> Together we will continue building a better country... unlocking the talent,
>
> potential, and dedication of our young men and women. (p. 1)

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[11] For more information on Saudi Vision 2030 see http://vision2030.gov.sa/en/foreword

*Embodied Experience Story*

> *I felt a strong connection to the Crown Prince's vision. As a woman who will be working within the educational system in Saudi Arabia, the Crown Prince's vision well positions me to be supported by government to increase the capacity of female teachers to empower their students and allow their students to have a voice. By using Digital storytelling, I will show teachers in training how this method can improve the self-agency students experience in the classroom and allow them to develop their identities. This ties in with the Crown Prince's vision, in which he calls for all citizens to find and pursue their passions and live their best lives.*

In 2017, King Salman facilitated efforts to change the power structure in Saudi Arabia. He envisioned a new power structure that was represented by all people of the population, not just wealthy religious men. This allowed for everyone in Saudi Arabia to be represented and have a voice. The Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, which is the formal advisory body in Saudi Arabia, now includes women and allows women to be involved in decision making (Almansour & Kempner, 2017). In this way, women will now be represented by women, and not spoken for by men who do not want to empower women.

Dr. Thuraya al-Arrayed was the first woman selected by King Abdullah to be on the Consultative Assembly in 2013 (Alarabiya, 2013). Later, in 2017, Latifa Al Shaalan, joined the assembly and asserted a strong and powerful voice on behalf of women's rights. Latifa championed for the right to drive, the right to receive an equal education, and the need for teacher preparation that allows for training and preparing teachers to be agents of change and positive role models for their female students (Almansour & Kempner, 2017).

In September 2017 King Salman issued a Combating Harassment order. This order protects women from the harassment they have received by male drivers providing evidence that women are becoming more visible in society and influential in the political

landscape of the country. Because women are unable to drive, they must rely on male drivers to take them to work and other important events that they must attend. By allowing women to drive, and protecting them against harassment from male drivers, women's voices were heard and addressed (Alarabiya, 2017).

Another victory for women occurred in September 26, 2017, when King Salman announced that women would be allowed to drive within a year. Women in Saudi Arabia have suffered at the hands of the drivers. Being unable to drive, many women have no choice but to call on taxi services or hire male drivers to take them to work or to important events. This has provided opportunities for male drivers to harass and extort women. Many times, the drivers that are hired are from another country and not Saudi Arabian citizens. Therefore, in the event that the male drivers sexually or verbally harass a female passenger, they may flee to avoid punishment (Alarabiya, 2017).

The stories of female harassment by male drivers were made public by female teachers. Female teachers were most often victimized as they held full time jobs and needed daily transport to their school. Therefore, female teachers were often victimized and spoke out collectively against this abuse. They asserted that they could not provide a proper education to their students if they were not safe and could not arrive to school safely. The voices of the female teachers and their resistance to harassment paved the way for allowing females to drive, as the government realized that women must have this right in order to be safe. Being driven by males was actually a less safe situation and this requirement allowed foreign nationals to victimize Saudi women. Women had a year to prepare to drive without a man present, without male permission, or without male guardianship (Al-Harbi, 2010).

A month after the Saudi government provided women the right to drive, Saudi Arabia's General Sports Authority announced that sports stadiums in three major cities will begin accommodating families. This allows men and women together, with their mixed-sex children to attend sporting events together. This is the first-time women have been allowed in the sports stadium. Though women are allowed in sports stadiums in three major cities, not everyone supports this new policy. One Saudi newspaper reported there was a man that attended a sports game with his wife, but he covered his face because he was so worried someone might recognize him and feel he was betraying traditional values. Inside families there is also divide between conservative and liberal thought. Therefore, some women may attend with some male relatives, but not others, as not all people support the new policy (Watan, 2018).

In March 2018, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in a *60-Minutes* television interview. Mohammed bin Salman is a popular young prince, regarded as a revolutionary and risk-taker within his country (Norah, 2018). In 2017, he took power and began initiating sweeping changes through a liberation campaign. As many economists believe, gender equality will become essential as the nation shifts away from an oil-fueled economy and becomes dependent on dual incomes (Abalkhail, 2017). During this interview, the Crown Prince discusses his ideas on gender reform within Saudi Arabia and proposed innovative ideas for ending gender segregation. He explains gender segregation in Saudi society:

> Saudi Arabia still adheres to an ancient power-sharing arrangement between the House of Saud and Wahhabi Islam, the strict, predominant faith in Saudi Arabia. But the Prince told us it is not his religion, but extremists within Islamic groups

like the Muslim Brotherhood, that have infiltrated Saudi society, including its

schools. (p. 1)

Mohammed bin Salman stresses the importance of both men and women and

recognition of the equality between men and women. Assertion by the Crown Prince that

gender equality is a must and gender segregation is unacceptable is a huge feat for Saudi

Arabia, as it is with his support and power that the lives of women in Saudi Arabia can

truly begin to change and women can become equal to men. The Crown Prince also

expresses concern that only 22% of women in Saudi Arabia work, and he explained that

he wanted more women to join the workforce and will institute measures that provide

equal pay for men and women (Norah, 2018).

On June 24, 2018, the Prince Crown's vision for female drivers in Saudi Arabia

became a reality. On this day, Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on female drivers. Female

drivers soon were seen driving, moments after the ban was lifted. As Samar Almogren, a

talk show host and writer, said to *Support The Guardian*, "I always knew this day was

going to come. But it came fast. Sudden. I feel free like a bird," (Chulov, 2018). Previous

to the ban, women in Saudi Arabia had to depend on male family members or paid

chauffeurs to travel anywhere by car. Many experts believe that allowing women to drive

is part of a larger transformation which may influence how women are treated in other

parts of the world, outside of Saudi Arabia's borders. In an interview with Saudi Arabia's

foreign minister Adel al-Jubeir stated "When people look at Saudi Arabia, see Mecca and

Medina, they want to emulate it. When they see openness and moderation and tolerance

and innovation, that's what they want to be… no other country has "that soft power[12]"

(Cohen, 2018, p. 1).

*Embodied Experience Story*

> *When I first moved to the United States in 2011, my husband drove and I did not. I did not have any intention of driving, even though it was allowed in the United States, because I figured that I wouldn't be able to drive in Saudi Arabia, so it was not something that interested me at the time. However, with the driving ban now lifted, I am happy to report that I am learning to drive. I echo what many of the women in Saudi Arabia are saying. I feel free, and I feel empowered. Not only am I able to perform an activity that is highly pleasurable and useful for me recreationally, I am now able to support my husband and family by sharing with the household and family obligations. Before my husband did all the driving related activities, including taking the children to and from school and activities, grocery shopping, running errands, taking us to appointments and basically doing everything for our entire family himself. I was of course an integral part of the family, and I performed cooking and cleaning duties, as well as childcare, but anything that could be helpful to the family that involved transportation was off limits to me, until now. I not only plan to drive when I go back to Saudi Arabia, but I also plan to contribute to the movement by teaching my female family members how to drive as well.*

## Patriarchal Hegemony and Female Voice

Gender role ideologies in Saudi Arabia can be attributed to traditional and socio-economic values associated with a patriarchal philosophy rooted in Islam (Alireza, 1987). Islam is a system of life in Saudi Arabia, and this faith tradition places men and women equal in honor in theory. This notion is supported by Al-Aloola (2008) states that, "[Islam] is a separation that is established on a religious pillar that is based on equity" (p. 32). As argued by Davies (2003), it is inherent within society an 'oppositional and hierarchical binary' where males are not labeled, while females are labeled in relation to a male. Davies speaks of the "patterns of power and powerlessness" in gender, and she acknowledges that it is the males who have access to it. For example, "power and

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[12] "Soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye, 2017, p.1).

maleness are constituted in relation to one another" (Davies, 2003, p. 12) and this can be observed in traditional Saudi families.

In understanding Saudi cultural attitudes toward gender, it is also important to note the physiological and psychological differences between the sexes (Abalkhail, 2017). Historically, from a Saudi perspective, there is an underlying belief that there are fundamental, biological differences between the sexes which uniquely prepare them to fulfill specific roles (Al-Aloola, 2008). For instance, biological differences between men and women are provided as reasons why genders should be segregated in education, "Male students… better in physics, chemistry, mathematics… while female students are excellent in languages, biology, and handicrafts. This makes it logical to separate the two sexes" (Al-Aloola, 2008, p. 32). Therefore, the struggle between conservative traditionalists and progressive ideologists in determining Saudi woman's identity in Saudi society exists as an evolving process.

**Women's Role of Silence**

According to Uwakwe (1995), "silence comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned" (p. 9). This quote aptly describes the current state of education in Saudi Arabia. Despite all the work, reform, and funding that has been expended into the Saudi Arabian educational system, by Western standards, the model is archaic. Students, particularly females, are taught under the banking concept of education. This pedagogical approach requires students to sit quietly, be still, listen, and memorize the material delivered (Arebi, 1994). Students are punished for voicing concerns or opinions that deviate from the lesson objective. Arebi (1994) argues, "[Female students] were

oppressed because they were not allowed to express themselves" (p. 25). The observation of female oppression within the school system has been dubbed the "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" (Freire, 2000).

Saudi women possess limited power in any role within society and are subordinate in both the private and the public sectors to male individuals who may often have inferior qualifications. According to Doumato (2002), "Girls were taught enough to buy into an assigned role, a role in which they were subordinate to men, but not enough to challenge it" (p. 93). As Freire (2000) describes, women and young girls have been "doubly marginalized" inside this educational model, in which student voice is prohibited and strict adherence to rules and teacher mandated conduct is enforced (Kumashiro, 2002). Kumashiro (2002) defines this type of oppression as a "dynamic in which certain ways of being (or, having certain identifications) are privileged in society while others are marginalized," (p. 31).

In regards to Islamic teaching and women's education, there are many differences between how Islam is used in education and the diverse practices of Muslims (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011). For example, many critics of Islam insist that Islam treats women poorly and as inferior. However, other believe Islam actually shows a great deal of respect and reverence to women. An example of this is how women have traditionally lived in society, such as one of the wives of the Prophet Mohammed, Aysha. Aysha negotiated with Prophet Mohammed and discussed various issues. She was highly regarded for her wisdom and power to influence society. She is thought to hold a lot of influence on the teachings and words of Islam (Hamdan, 2005). Other examples of prominent women in Islam related to Prophet Mohammed is his daughter, Fatima. Fatima

was cited as very politically active. Sukie'na, Prophet Mohammed's granddaughter, excelled at math, and more recently, Benazer Bhutto, a Muslim woman, was the prime minister of Pakistan (Al-Sari, 2003a, 2003b). Despite the fact that many Islamic teachings and historical records support the freedom of women, many others still oppose total freedom of women. As such, a great divide exists in Saudi Arabia, with some women enjoying political freedom, but many others still oppressed.

Thus, the Saudi educational system was used merely as a tool to prepare women to be able to fulfill the socially ascribed roles of wife and mother, where boys' education prepares them for profitable work and social life. The educational system is an important context for developing young girls' voices and facilitating empowerment. As such, if female education in Saudi Arabia encouraged and fostered female student voice, the inequalities between men and women would be lessened, and women would find themselves with greater social and economic roles in Saudi society.

**The Importance of Voice: Voice Defined**

Understanding the importance of female student voice necessitates an understanding and exploration of the student voice phenomena. Voice has been described by Bakhtin (1984) as a method of speaking a personality or consciousness. According to Bakhtin, voice is like a fingerprint, in that it is unique and distinctive to each student. Student voice is a deep and dynamic part of an individual. Johnson (1991) defines voice as a medium that allows students to exercise and control their thoughts or feelings and communicate this to others. Later, Mitra (2003) and Milton (2007) explain the definition of student voice to suggest student voice allows for student to be involved in school leadership decision-making and have input into any school decisions that would affect

them. Lensmire (1998) describes voice as being involved in the world, where others have presented voice as something that is complex, dynamic, and an ongoing and continuous process. Other scholars see voice as part of a cultural narrative (Bakhtin, 1981; O'Loughlin, 1995; Lincoln, 1995; Cook-Sather, 2006). Fielding (2004a) describes voice as something that can be given, multifaceted, and dynamic.

As the amount of literature regarding student voice increases, educators are becoming increasingly aware of the power that student voice may have within the school environment, and this power begins with focused curriculum tailored to increase and facilitate student voice within the classroom. According to Mitra (2004), opportunities for students to use student voice helps students understand their abilities and empowers students to make changes in the world for themselves and for others. Students value "having their voices heard and honored" (Mitra, 2004, p. 652). By understanding the connections between voice and identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Delpit, 2006), one begins to understand student voice is more than allowing students an opportunity to talk. Student voice becomes a means to reform oppressive activities built into the structures of the schools (Cook-Sather, 2002, 2006; Fielding, 2004a; 2004b; Jones, 2006; James 2007).

Educators' acceptance and use of student voice suggests high quality teacher-student interactions and effective learning are needed (Beresford, 2000). This awareness has brought attention to the importance of student voice and the role of student voice in discussions regarding education report in the United States and in Saudi Arabia (Kozol, 2005; Al-Aloola, 2008). As such, it is beneficial to maintain the importance and ensure concerted effort is made to keep student voice at the center of school decisions and school reform initiatives. By doing so, the legitimacy of proposed change is enhanced,

and the users of the educational system are served, as their voices were used to guide change and maximize student engagement, learning, and empowerment (Schor, 1986).

O'Loughlin (1995) explains that student voice incorporates and utilizes student's own propensity for narrative interpretation and examination of their lives. Students use narrative to describe and tell their story. These narratives are used to describe their upbringing, ethnicity, gender, class, and culture. To this end, students have not one voice, but many. As states by O'Loughlin (1995), "rather than possessing one voice, students construct multiple perspectives on their emerging identities as a result of the social and economic communities," (p. 111). These voices, and the opportunities to explore and create narratives position students to break their silences and becoming advocates and agents of their own change.

**Pedagogies for Breaking the Silence and the Banking Concept Education**

As discussed, student voice is an important phenomenon for breaking the silence of students engaged in oppressive environments. Educators that engage student voice and incorporate student voice in the classroom have students who use their narratives to empower themselves and each other. Student voice is also used to guide and direct educational reform. However, in order for student voice to be effective, it must be utilized and valued within the educational system. Several pedagogies exist that target student voice. These pedagogies include: student voice pedagogy, anti-oppressive pedagogy, critical pedagogy, storytelling as agency and resistance pedagogy. These pedagogies provide context and direction for incorporating student voice in the classroom.

***Student Voice Pedagogy***

Teachers who use student voice as a pedagogical strategy, view student voice as an invitation for students to share their voices and perspectives with others, to be heard as unique individuals, and to allow students to influence their own education and have a say in the pedagogical activities and decisions made in education as it relates to their personal and academic learning and growth (Cook-Sather, 2002, 2006; Fielding, 2004a, 2004b; Jones, 2006). Hall (1989) considers identity to be a relationship between oneself and others, and that without dialogue, one cannot know who the others are. Without voice, students cannot develop their identity, as "voice comes to be located as agency ... and a means of becoming" (Oldfather et al., 1999, p. 290).

According to Ellsworth (1992), many educators claim to support student voice and agree as to the importance of student voice for educational reform, yet these same administrators and decision makers ultimately draw upon long standing structural imperialistic strategies in practice (Orner, 1992). With this in mind, it becomes clear that we need to understand how we move past knowing and recognizing the importance of student voice for educational reform, to a point where student voice is actively and clearly integrated into educational decision making. Student voice implies that students are able to have an opinion, which is respected and used, in matters that relate to their own learning. Critical post-structural feminist theories suggest that female students who are provided opportunities to explore themselves through voice, can use this voice to examine their identity and the pieces that make up their identity (Weedon, 1987). In this way, female students are the subjects in the examination and their voice guides their exploration, not a teacher.

***Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy***

hooks (1989), explains her experience growing up as a black student in the south. In her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. She describes her positive experiences with her teacher, Miss Moore, who she describes as "a short, stout black woman. She had taught my mama and her sisters. She could tell story after story about their fast ways, their wildness. She could tell me ways I was like mama, ways I was most truly my own self" (p. 49). hooks (1989) refers to Miss Moore fondly, describing her work as a pedagogy of liberation, in which she allowed oppressed students to feel powerful and respected. Miss Moore wanted her students to see themselves as more than black children in a white culture. As such, she worked toward self-actualization and taught her students the power of identity development and being one's own change agent. In this way, Miss Moore carefully and thoughtfully restructured her student's worldview, so they could critically analyze the world, and strive for "wholeness, for unity of heart, mind, body, and spirit" (hooks, 1989, p. 49).

*Embodied Experience Story*

*I was deeply affected by hooks' story, and it resonated as a story that also belonged to me. Her impactful work touched my heart and mind, and I began to understand and think about oppression differently, as the world opened up for me, and I found a safe place within her work, to contemplate my own experiences with oppression. I admired Miss Moore's teaching, and her ability to engage her students. As a student of the banking concept of education, I felt my education was very oppressed. I was not allowed to explore my identity or to develop a worldview. I left with the ability to rote memorize, regurgitate information repetitively, and little understanding of myself. I certainly did not feel self-actualized, nor had any teacher made efforts toward developing critical thinking skills within me. As such, hooks' story allowed me to relive and redo a part of my education. She allowed me to explore my oppression and to free myself from it.*

In Saudi Arabia, the banking concept of education does not allow students to feel a part of the community. There is no room for student voice, nor any desire for student voice existence. From my experiences, the point of education in Saudi Arabia is to be

oppressive. The banking concept used in Saudi Arabia supports Foucault's (1980) assertion that schools are places in which authority exercises power and new dominant forms of power emerge. However, schools cannot be looked as they perform in the present day, as they are built from authoritarian structures of power and dominance. Schools, in essence, are places where oppression is built and refined. The author quips that a better description for schools is "Discipline and punish: the birth of the school"[13] (Foucault, 1980, p. 23).

The dangers of excessive use of repetition in schools is well recognized. For example, Kumashiro (2002) was an early scholar to articulate the relationship between repetitious school work and oppression. The author explained that the very nature of the school as supporting banking concepts is oppressive and encouraged social change. However, with well-meaning and pioneering visions for school reform, resistance also follows[14]. Because of the theoretical nature of educational reform strategies and claims of oppressive pedagogy, a conclusive understanding has not been realized. As such, those promoting social change are held by the same theoretical pinning as those promoting traditional teaching methods. Both proponents (supporters of the banking concept, and reformers of such an approach) believe in their theories and can provide examples and

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[13] Foucault's description of the relationship between power and oppression in schools is very powerful to me. It is important for the mind and body to explore and feel comfortable in the classroom. The classroom in Saudi Arabia met all these qualifications as oppressive. I was not comfortable, I did not feel stimulated, I was not engaged, I always had to be polite, and I certainly had no voice. I now believe it is unhealthy to memorize everything you read. Students need to understand what they like, what they want, and what skills they have. Education should be so much more than just memorizing. This oppression and form of education was built and refined with the education system. Foucault motivates me toward change agency and I welcome the opportunity to explore my own and release others' voices.

[14] In Saudi Arabia, changes to education were and are often met with resistance. Many people are unable, unwilling, and/or deeply hold traditional values they feel would be compromised by school reform. As such, gains in educational equity have often been met by protests, demonstrations, and outrage. To this day, many families choose to send their daughters to school outside of the country where their education will be safer and more engaging.

anecdotal accounts to back up their claims. Many people believe the practices and relations within traditional schools to be ideal and do see how the repetition of educational instruction can be harmful, let alone oppressive (Kumashiro, 2002).

Britzman (2003) postulated the nature of oppression within schools and brought attention to the idea that oppression may be so common and normal in schools that it becomes unrecognizable. The author explains how concepts and schematics of the teacher and student role are so deeply ingrained and operationally set that both the teacher and student do not consider the meaning of learning, or how learning may be realized and understood outside of memorization and polite classroom behavior. Ahmed (2006) explains the process by which oppression becomes normal is rooted in traditional beliefs and values of work. She considers that labor becomes effortless through repetition, as such, making labor less grueling and unpleasant. This idea transfers to the school setting with the belief that work that is hard, if practiced and memorized, will become easy. This simplistic but logical explanation for the origins of repetitious work in schools, and the punishment of failure to memorize correctly, becomes better understood through this lens. However, in modern times, the face of labor has changed and the skills and abilities needed from the workforce has changed. Yet, this is not reflected in the educational system. Ahmed (2006) argues that to move past this traditional thinking, one must critically consider the purpose and function of rote learning, and what the focus of the repetitious work is, and how this focus serves society, if at all.

*Embodied Experience Story*

I believe that memorization and rote learning can be useful at times. It's good for when you need to study and memorize a lot of information. However, there are more skills students need that are much more than just learning information for testing. In the 21st century, students need skills to build, explore, and create. They need to be fluid and flexible thinkers. I experienced the consequences of an educational system that only allowed for memorization

and contained no other focus. As such, in college, I struggled with group work. I did not know the word collaboration, and when it was explained to me, it became more confusing. Under the banking concept, the harder and more independently a student works, the better. I do not recall at any time performing any group work in school. My education failed to prepare me for college, and it failed to prepare me to engage in the modern world. As such, I vehemently believe and support educational reform and the facilitation of student voice that is indeed heard.

### *Critical Pedagogy*

Critical pedagogy informs theories on female student voice and offers approaches for diminishing the unequal power relations that are evident in the educational system (Cook-Sather, 2002). Critical pedagogy focuses on marginalized students and their relationships with people in power (Orner, 1992), and how students derive their conceptions of themselves and how social processes operate for influencing identity development (Giroux, 1986). The goal of critical pedagogy is to empower students and allow them opportunities to better understand how they are dominated by the culture of power. Further, it should provide the tools and capacity these students need to understand how and why to resist their oppression and seek liberation from dominant power structures (Orner, 1992). It is the vision of critical pedagogy that power be redistributed in a way that reduces marginalization and shows equity; this can be done through efforts to develop student voice and identity (Cook-Sather, 2002; Jones, 2006; Smyth, 2006).

Within the classroom space, Giroux (1986) suggests that critical pedagogy be applied in order for educators to understand and promote the "ways in which language, ideology, history, and experience come together to produce, define, and constrain particular forms of teacher-student practice" (p. 50). Giroux (1986) suggests that efforts to develop student voice be grounded in critical pedagogy and that the assumed power relationship between students and teachers be disrupted and redistributed within the

confines of the classroom. Similarly, Freire (2000) asserts that student voice be a focus point in the classroom, and that teachers recognize they have as much to learn from the students as the students have to learn from the teacher. Dialogue comes to be centered in the classroom, where teachers have as much to learn from students as students have to learn from teachers. Here, Freire, the father of critical pedagogy, asserts that student voice may also be facilitated through the recognition and emphasis of teachers on critical literacy. Students learn to recognize subtle ways in which power asserts itself, and the subtleties of oppression through critically analyzing texts.

An important aspect to critical pedagogy is critical literacy. According to Street (2003), literacy at its most basic involves the acquisition of skills for reading and writing. This early definition was countered by Freire (2000) who argued that literacy is not a "thing" that can be given to someone through instruction, but involves interpreting the world. Freire asserts that critical literacy provides people with the tools they need for reading and writing the world. Jones (2006) states, "critical literacy offers the tools to investigate language constructions, including silence, through the assumption that anything that has been constructed through language is saturated with perspectives or ideological beliefs and therefore can be deconstructed and better understood" (p. 56). Jones (2006) focuses on empowering women, developing their identity and breaking student silence through the use of critical literacy. She argues that critical literacy is an important skill for students in order to recognize defined identities in stories that are stereotypical, biased, and uninformed, and are based on the physical or social facts that that may or may not be characteristic or defining of the person.

### *Storytelling as Agency and Resistance Pedagogy*

Self-reflexivity is defined by Weedon (2004) as the "conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotion and desires" (p. 18). Self-reflexivity allows students to explore themselves by thinking about their own thoughts, ideas, and beliefs and sharing this understanding with others through an integrated story that relies meaning, message, and authenticity (Weedon, 2004). Through storytelling, students can learn how to write about themselves, exercise their voice, and learn to be proud of who they are and what they can do (Delpit, 2006). The process of personalizing and making meaning from stories is critical for breaking the banking model of education. Writing the narrative allows one to examine the contents of their mind as initial interpretations of others may or may not be accurate (Davies, 2003). Also, through writing we can open up strategies for resisting (Barthes, 1977; Davies and Gannon, 2009).

hooks (1990) captures the hearts and minds of many as she recalls stories from her youth, stories that inspire and engage her readers, but also stories that facilitate action toward social change. In her stories, hooks allows the reader to feel empowered and motivated to become an agent for social change, and provides the reader with the courage to do so. In her essay, "*Homeplace 'a site of resistance*" (1990), hooks describes her grandmother's home. To hooks, her grandmother's home was a refuge, a safe place where one could be heard and listen to others, and a place where her identity and values were developed. hooks (1990) aptly explains how beneficial having this safe space was, how much she learned and grew from her time in this house, and how the conversations that took place in this house prepared her for critical thought and analysis. It prepared her and gave her a path and a plan for self-actualization. hooks (1990) explains how women

nurtured, fed, listened, soothed, and took care of the people within the house. As such "in our young minds, houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as places where all that truly mattered in life took place" (p. 41).

This poignant statement, deeply felt and eloquently stated, highlights the importance and the influence strong women with clearly articulated and unique voices, have on others. hook describes her journey as a scholar as, "[a]long that trajectory, I vividly recall efforts to silence my coming to voice… I was able to tell stories, to share memories. Here again I only hint at them" (p. 147). The author makes the point that becoming a critically oriented thinker was not easy, and she struggled with traumas from the past, current feelings of oppression, and herself. She explains the importance of maintaining cultural integrity through the academic journey, not allowing others in power to diminish or slight her power and presence. In this way, hooks (1990) provides an example of what school reform may look like. A classroom that replicates the learning and development that occurred within her grandmother's house, might provide students with the skills necessary for social agency and self-actualization.

*Embodied Experience Story*

*I related to hooks' storytelling and was inspired by her journey of self-actualization and freedom from oppression. hooks was, and continues to be, extremely influential to me, as it was through hooks that I first began to understand the power of self-reflexivity. By reading hooks' story about how she addressed oppression through careful self-reflexivity, I was able to replicate the same within myself, relating back to my experiences as a young student in Saudi Arabia. As did hooks, I looked back on the places where I felt safe, and devised ways in which to begin the exploration of how theses safe feelings could be replicated in the school setting. For me, the use of digital storytelling could be a means to achieve a safe, comforting, and warm environment in the classroom where students are able to freely create and tell their own stories, about themselves, or whatever is important to them.*

According to Dei et al. (2000), students need to resist oppression and begin to insist they be heard, insist on having a voice and help the students feel empowered. It is

my belief, that if students feel empowered, they will have the courage to speak and to break their silence. Voice then can deconstruct traditional power and provide a counter-narrative that removes the influence of epistemological hegemony found in traditional schools (Dei et al., 2000). hooks (1990) asserts that though margins exist on both sides of repression and resistance, one must be careful to not try to exist and work from the center. Her story of her grandmother's home, her homeplace, provided an example of a place and space that both resist and repress simultaneously.

### *Digital Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool*

Digital storytelling is an innovative pedagogical tool that allows students to explore and express their identities through voice (Davis, 2004). Digital stories are "short personal multimedia tales told from the heart, the beauty of this form of digital expression is that stories can be created by people everywhere, on any subject, and shared electronically all over the world" (Robin, 2008, p. 1). Digital storytelling is a first-person account that connects the storyteller intimately with the story, which provides a deep connection between the storyteller and the listener (Schank, 1990; Behmer, Schmidt, & Schmidt, 2006; Barrett, 2006). Because there is no distance between the story and the storyteller, the information becomes more tangible and better remembered (McLellan, 2006; Behmer et al., 2006; Robin, 2008; Alismail & McGuire, 2015).

With DST, students express themselves and show their critical literacy processes by explaining their world to others through a wide range of literacy tools, such as words, text, images, 3-D art, music, pictures, and more (Robin, 2008; Davis, 2004). As Lambert (2002) notes, DST can provide a rich environment for student expression of literacy through more than just writing and reading alone. Digital stories bring together a mixture

of pictures, text, recorded audio narration, music, and video to present information on a specific topic. Meadows (2003) argues the integration of visual images with written text both enhances and accelerates student understanding. Digital storytelling has a variety of applications in the classroom, including telling personal stories, narrating past events, or as a means to teach on a particular topic (Jakes, 2006; Barrett, 2006).

Digital storytelling emerged from the work of Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley at the Center for Digital storytelling (CDS) in the 1990s (Robin, 2008). The CDS has worked to provide training and assistance to people who are interested in creating and sharing their personal stories. The CDS produced the Seven Elements of Effective Digital storytelling (see Figure 2-1), which helps teachers employ digital storytelling in their classrooms (Robin, 2008). These seven elements guide the incorporation of DST into the curriculum to support the learning process. The instructional method of DST as developed by Robin (2008) provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between existing knowledge and new material (McLellan, 2006). Integrating the seven elements provides the framework for the DST process as a pedagogical tool (Robin, 2008).

**Figure 2-1**

*The Seven Elements of Effective Digital Storytelling*

| Element | Definition/Method |
| --- | --- |
| Point of View | Told for a specific purpose or to make a point for a given audience. |
| A Dramatic Question | Gives a reason for the audience to stay interested; answered question by the end of the story. |
| Emotional Content | Images, tone and effects connects the story to the audience. |
| The Gift of your Voice | Personalizes the story for the audience to help them to understand the context. |
| The Power of Soundtrack | Music or other sound that supports the storyline and conveys emotion |
| Economy | Uses just the necessary elements to tell the story. |
| Pacing | Controls the story; how slowly or quickly it unfolds. |

The process of storytelling mimics social life, as one tells, retells, writes, edits, and revises their personal narrative (Leavy, 2009). Davis (2004) describes storytelling as "painting a picture instead of taking a photograph" (p. 24). This conceptualization of storytelling as an active process aligns with its usefulness as an educational tool. In this way, both the storyteller and the listener create their own meaning through the transmission and revisions of creative data. Storytelling has the dual purpose of catalyzing student imagination and priming their appetite for books, lessons, and academic content (Bendt & Bowe, 2000; Barrett, 2006). Meadows (2003) argues the integration of visual images with written text both enhance and accelerates student understanding. Behmer (2005) states, "Storytelling is a process where students personalize what they learn and construct their own meaning and knowledge from the stories they hear and tell" (p. 4). The process of personalizing and making meaning from stories is critical for breaking the banking model of education. According to Alismail (2015) states, "Students may be given assignments in which they are asked to research a topic, look for pictures, record their voice and then choose a particular point of view, as described in the seven elements of digital storytelling" (p. 127). By allowing female students to make their own meaning by telling their stories that originate from their own interests and reflects their own personalities, digital storytelling may be a powerful way to address the current limitations on female student's self-expression and ability to assert themselves through student voice.

**Digital Storytelling Facilitates Student Voice**

As a method of increasing female student voice, storytelling has been found to be effective in allowing students to break their silence and become their own social agents

(Holland et al., 1998). Student voice is an important phenomenon to consider in digital storytelling as it allows for "the active opportunity for students to express their opinions and make decisions regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their learning experiences" (Rogers, 2005, p. 3). According to Schor (1986), student voice is a means to examine the student experience within a larger framework that incorporates important theories on how students learn morality, equity, and develop their knowledge base. Students who feel their voice is unheard will feel disempowered and therefore will suffer from lack of engagement and motivation. Schor (1986) therefore encourages teachers to facilitate a risk-taking democratic classroom which allows for student voice an activity that DST provides for.

Digital storytelling enhances young children's mode of self-expression and allows children to use storytelling as a form of play in which they learn a multitude of other skills as well such as developing voice and identity (Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis, & Kalogirous, 2013; Davis, 2004; Alismail, 2015). Identity has long been practiced through the use of narratives (Ochs & Capps, 2001), lending DST nicely to efforts to facilitate student identity. As Sfard and Prusak (2005) note, identity and voice are not expressed through stories, but is the story. To that end, words and stories can only provide so much information about one's identity, because stories cannot express a student's full range of lived experiences. When children meaningfully integrate technology into their Kindergarten instruction they are allowed to depict their story digitally and enable them to become authors (Papadimitriou et al., 2013). The authors have found that when Kindergarten children created and presented digital stories, they showed increased engagement in the learning process, became more responsible, and

developed important cooperation and sharing skills between themselves and their

classmates.

## Summary of Literature Reviewed

As discussed, the history of education in Saudi Arabia has limited female power

in the educational system, as well as in society as a whole. Female students are taught

under the banking model of education which prevents student voice, thought,

empowerment, and identity. In the banking model of education, students are taught to be

quiet, memorize lessons, and be strictly obedient to the teacher. Because of this, students

are not allowed to talk amongst themselves, group work is nascent, and female students

graduate from school unprepared for any type of social or economic role other than wife

and mother. Obedience is prized and awarded, where resistance and assertiveness is

punished.

The patriarchal society in Saudi Arabia highlights the propensity for social

systems and structures to be heavily geared toward men and honor and promote the

interests of men, at the expense of women. Despite Islam's assertion that women are

powerful and are to be valued, current interpretations of religious text ignore this aspect

of Islam, instead focusing on the aspects of Islam that serve and promote the self-interests

of men. Though many women have risen to power in Saudi Arabia, and have exerted

strong influence in the facilitating the well-being and civil rights of women in Saudi

Arabia, the current landscape remains largely skewed to serve the interests of men.

To reduce, prevent, and thwart repressive educational methods that disallow

female student voice, pedagogies that promote student voice are preferred, as these

pedagogies recognize the power of female student voice for changing the lives of young

people by allowing them to develop their identities, become self-reflexive, and be empowered agents of their own change. Student voice has been successfully argued to be an important consideration for educators concerned with the oppressive and demoralizing nature of traditional pedagogy. By encouraging and training teachers on the importance of student voice, educators may begin to adopt pedagogies that support, encourage, and develop students' voices, and as such, participate in students finding their identity and resisting their oppressors as they break their silence. Despite a growing amount of literature on student voice, and how student voice can be important for empowered students and educational reform, many educational systems still employ the banking model of education that discourages student discourse and self-discovery. By understanding first the importance of student voice, and then committing to pedagogies that promote student voice, educators may begin to be important agents of change. Previous scholars have indicated that through Digital Storytelling, some students have been able to find their voice and this has allowed for the needed change in the classroom.

Digital Storytelling is a powerful pedagogical tool educators may employ in the classroom in order to increase student voice, identity, and create agency and choice. DST allows students to interact with the teacher as an equal, as well as interact with other peers, share their stories, and learn from others' stories. In this way, students are not only able to develop and share their own identity through their personal narratives, but develop and expand their understanding of the world by engaging in others' DST. This method has been shown to successfully increase student voice, student engagement, and is a powerful tool that may also bring together students within the larger community. DST allows students to break their silences and become important agents of their own change

as they practice sense-making of who they are and what is important to them. It is my hope that DST, as a multimodal composition, becomes a common practice in female education settings in Saudi Arabia, where female students struggle with identity, and under oppressive educational standards and social laws.

**Component #1,**
**Part 3 Theories I Want to Think With**

Post-intentional phenomenology is a phenomenological approach that allows me to think with and draw from theories which have inspired and engaged my scientific inquiry. According to Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) conceptualization, *thinking with theory*, the authors suggest researchers examine a specific concept taken from the work of the theorists associated with the philosophical/theoretical concept. The authors suggest researchers explore areas and spaces within themselves they have not yet described. As such, in the following section I will explore my phenomenology through the lens of critical and post-structural feminist theorists and explicate a detailed framework to understand the interconnectedness of constructs related to my phenomena, female student voice.

**Theoretical Framework**

In this research l think with critical theory and post-structural feminist (CPSF) theories to explore the phenomenon of female student voice. I use these theories to identify and explore important spaces and places within a dynamic phenomenon that allows for fluid and changing understanding of female student voice. First, I will describe how my framework supports thinking with theory to understand and explore the lived experiences of female students. Reflective exercises will allow me to draw from philosophical and theoretical concepts as a means to connect my own lived experiences as a female student in Saudi Arabia, to the current state of female students, and identify

avenues for change. See Figure 2-2 for a visual illustration of the conceptual

framework[15].

**Figure 2-2**

*Theoretical Framework*
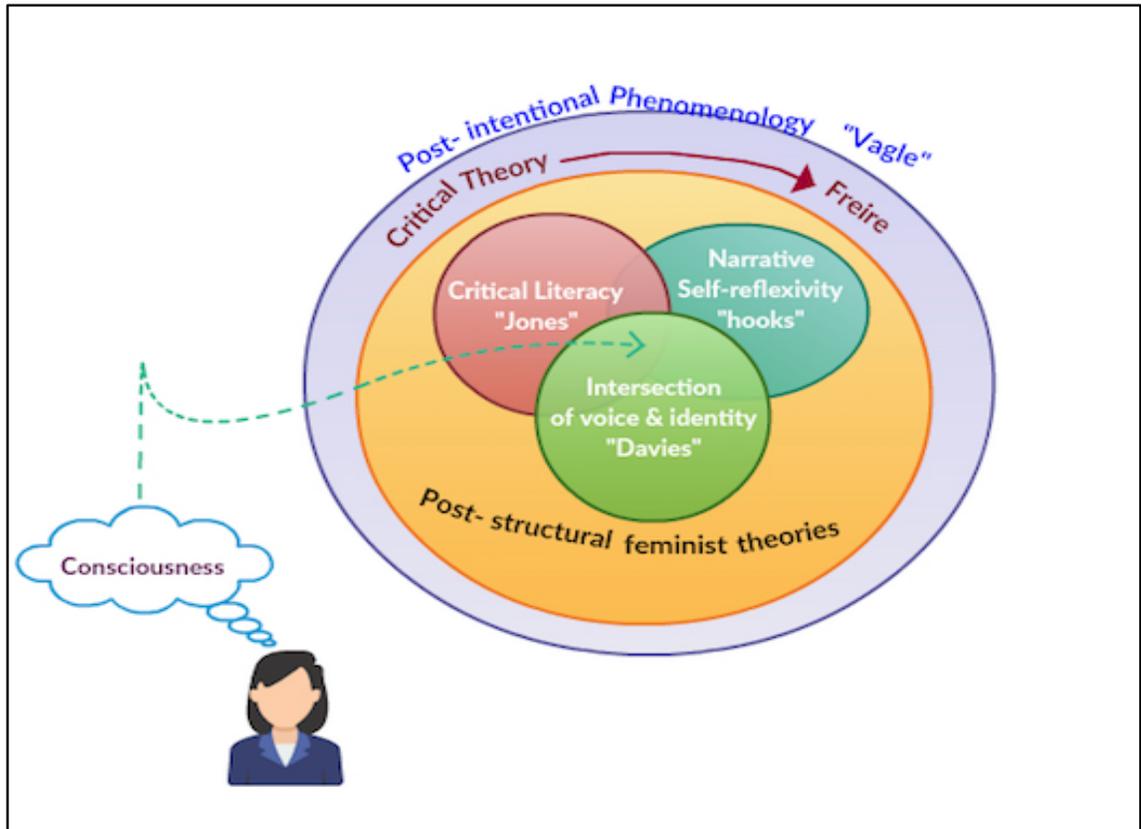


I developed this theoretical conceptualization as a way to model how critical

theory acts as an umbrella for many separate but related concepts important for

understanding the phenomena of female student voice. As discussed earlier, Freire has

had a large influence on how I understand the power and hegemony, and how this impact

female student voice in educational settings in Saudi Arabia. Here, the teachers represent

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[15] This Venn diagram depicts my own intentionality of critical post-structural feminist theories that I want to think with through the post-intentional phenomenological framework.

the power and implement the banking model in their classrooms. By doing so, the teachers assert their dominance by controlling their students' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Students become habituated to following rules and obeying commands. Each component of my theoretical framework is described below.

**Critical Theory**

As depicted in the framework, critical theory is a large umbrella for thinking with and understanding my phenomena, female student voice. I chose this conception for my framework because critical theory works well for explaining change, "Social critique may exist apart from social change, but both are necessary for critical perspectives" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 177). Conceptualized by Freire, critical theory allows for understanding the intersections and connectivity between important aspects and conditions of a phenomena. Freire developed critical theory as he realized people were oppressed by the dominant culture, and critical thinking might allow people to resist their oppressors. He believes students should reject authoritarian teaching, be encouraged to engage in lively and progressive dialogue, and become agents of change through the use of voice as they break the silence of their oppression. Freire (2000) finds the banking model of education to be a main contributor to student oppression, which he describes as a *"Pedagogy of the Oppressed."* Freire (2000) suggests here that the banking model be rejected, and this rejection arise from classroom dialogue. This viewpoint and insight is incredibly relevant for female student voice in Saudi Arabia, as female students are silenced under the restrictive banking model.

Freire first began formulating his ideas upon reflection of observations[16] he made

in Brazil. As a Brazilian educator and philosopher, Freire made important observations

about the power structure in Brazil and how the power structure affected the education of

Brazilian citizens. As such, he conceptualized a form of education that would take into

account how the Brazilian people perceived their reality and would provide opportunities

for people to learn the skills necessary to resist oppression. He rejects the notion that

people should be passive objects in their own world. Freire argues for inherent agency,

and promotes teaching students how to understand and reflect upon societal problems.

In order to organize his observations and formulate a working thesis on critical

theory, Freire (2013) provides three separate but related levels of consciousness. The first

level, *semi-intransitivity* is solely focused on biological needs. Here, people are only

concerned about satisfying biological drives such as hunger, thirst, and safety. The

second level, *Naive transitivity* is when people engage in the world in basic ways without

arguing and critically thinking about what is happening around them. The third level,

*critical transitivity* describes people who are acutely aware of their environment and

interpret the problems and state of the world through critical analysis. Here, people want

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[16] Freire worked with isolated, uneducated adults in Brazil who lived in rural communities. These people were ruled by the upper class and had no voice nor skills or education to understand that they had a voice. Freire believed that if these people were educated and taught to self-reflect they would be empowered to challenge those in power and resist their oppressors. The situation of those in Brazil reminds me of my own oppression in Saudi Arabia. Like those in Brazil, I was unaware of my oppression. Though educated, I did not have the training and skills necessary for self-reflection and analysis of the way those in power exerted control. Only through training, higher education, and exploration my own identity was I able to understand my own oppression and begin to understand how to challenge my oppressors. Like the Brazilians, I found empowerment and voice through learning how to self-reflect and analyze. I really wish that Saudi Arabia had applied his pedagogy in education in order to give me this empowerment to find my voice.

to increase and advance their understanding and knowledge, grow cognitively, and are constantly seeking and refuting their own notions and beliefs[17].

Specifically, critical theory can be applied to understanding the injustice of the voices that have been silenced in the school environment (Delgado, 2002; Fletcher, 2005; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Within the context of critical theory, female student voice may be facilitated by teachers who intentionally act to provide opportunities for critical self-reflexion, dialogue, and thought. Further, critical theorists assert that teachers silence students and allow them to continually be marginalized and regarded as passive learners and rote memorizers. This renders students powerless in their forced silence (Foster, 1986; Delgado, 2002; Cook-Sather, 2007). As such, critical theory examines the role of systems and their influence on individuals and how oppression creates silence. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) describe critical theory:

> A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. (p. 281)

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[17]  In my own journey, critical transitivity has allowed me to revisit and revise my own conceptions about female student voice and identity, including my own, and has provided for new knowledge and growth. Females in Saudi Arabia have recognized that they do not have the same access to education as do men. This awareness is consistent with Freire's (2013) level 3 of consciousness, critical transitivity. They begin to wonder why women in other places can do things that they cannot do. As discussed before, several influential women such as Fatima Amin Shakir, Effat Al Thunayan, Noura Al-Fayez, Latifa Al Shaalan, and Thuraya al-Arrayed have achieved level 3 of consciousness. These women have engaged in lively open discourse to explore solutions and next steps. As such, they are an inspiration to other women, as they have demonstrated a commitment and capacity for female reform. Their work to empower women and protect and extend the rights of others has been felt nationally. I propose including the work of critical, feminist and poststructural theories to contribute to the progress made by these influential women. My goal as an educator is to help female students to reach level 3 of consciousness in order to understand their identity and their right to have power.

Critical theory looks at how a system, such as the educational system, functions to create uniformity, rather than individuality "an institution that functions to reproduce the status quo, in particular the existing social class structure" (Merriam, Caffarella, et al., 2007, p. 253). Additionally, critical theory looks to end the cycle of oppression and dominance of power. Theorists search for "knowledge in the context of action and the search for freedom" (Crotty, 1998, p. 159). People can then search for their own meanings and resist dominant ideologies while at the same time reclaiming their lost voices and identities. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state,

> The critique and concern of the critical theorists has been an effort to design a pedagogy of resistance within communities of difference. The pedagogy of resistance, of taking back "voice" of reclaiming narrative for one's own rather than adapting to the narratives of a dominant majority. (p. 625)

Critical theory allows for change through reflection and action. Thus, critical research "calls current ideology into question, and initiate action, in the cause of social justice" (Crotty, 1998, p. 157). From this perspective, critical theory calls for fair and equal relationships between the teacher and students that involves trust and meaningful dialogue. Meaningful dialogue is strictly forbidden and is considered by Saudi teachers to be disrespectful, rude, or a sign of personality deficits. Freire however, argues that student dialogue is not a flaw, but a natural and powerful way to advance knowledge and interconnection between students and their community. Sand, Guzman, Stephens, and Boggs (2007) emphasize that listening to "student voice is equity and excellence in action" (p. 342). By doing so, students are able to create, alongside the teacher, a democratic social agenda that allows students to express their voice, facilitating

59

empowerment (Cook-Sather, 2007). Critical theory asks why facilitation of student voice is empowering for students, and in doing so, challenges students to find the truth in their world. As such, the use of critical theory may provide a direction for facilitation of female student voice so that females may be empowered to break their silence and resist oppression.

**Post-structural Feminist Theories**

The poststructural feminist theoretical framework is a second unifying concept for thinking with to understand student voice. This framework is alluring in that it allows for "rejection of absolute truths and acceptance of multiple, historical, contextual, contingent, political, and bound up in power relations" (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 25). Thus, I became interested in the social and political factors that influence female student voice and oppression of identity. Application of a poststructural feminist frame challenges dominant power structures and allows for freedom of thought and identity (Weedon, 1987; Ahmed, 1998, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000; Davies, 2003). Along with many other feminist scholars (hooks, 1990; Davies, 2003; Jones, 2006) my primary identity and affiliation is with facilitating female student voice so that female students may develop consciousness of themselves and the structures of power, which allow them to critically analyze the influence of hegemony. Poststructural feminist theories "tend to account for multiple systems of privilege and oppression and their intersections, along with people's capacity for agency or resistance" (Tisdell, 1998 p. 61).

A principle aspect of feminist poststructuralism is the concept of discourse (Kristeva, 1981; Renold, 2005). Within poststructuralism, discourse is postulated to contain beliefs and understandings that are constantly solidified through daily practice

and shape one's view of the world (Weedon, 2004). Discourse is not specific to verbal or written word, but is part of a larger language process and culturally specific language practices. These language activities produce shared cultural narratives which are "a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs," (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 485). As explained by Weedon (1987):

> Feminist poststructuralist criticism can show how power is exercised through discourse, including fictive discourse, how oppression works and where and how resistance might be possible. Poststructuralism, most particularly in its deconstructive forms, stresses the non-fixity and constant deferral of meaning. As a text-based theory, deconstruction is not interested in the implications of this for the reading subject beyond the primary assumption that this subject is not full, unitary or in control of meaning… Subjectivity is of key importance in the social processes and practices through which forms of class, race and gender power are exercised. We have to assume subjectivity in order to make sense of society and ourselves. The question is what modes of subjectivity are open to us and what they imply in political terms. (p. 167)

Weedon (1987) supports the argument that power is exercised through language and discourse to oppress others with less power. Weedon (1987) argues that everything is subjective and that people make their own meaning. As such, people can decide when and how to resist their oppressors, and determine for themselves, subjectively, whether they are oppressed and how and when to take action. By deciding when and how to resist

those deemed oppressive through discourse and analysis, people learn to find and exercise their voice. Weedon (1987) further states:

> Through a concept of discourse, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyze the opportunities for resistance to it. (p. 41)

Tisdell (1998), explains that feminist poststructuralism is partially realized by allowing the voices of marginalized others, such as women, people of color, and those economically disadvantaged, to become part of the curriculum and learning process. When this happens, students are not only shaped by the voice of those in power, but are shaped by those otherwise marginalized. According to Tisdell (1998):

> From an educational perspective, [feminist poststructuralism] is partially accomplished by including the work of women and people of color in the curriculum, and creating space in the learning environment so that the voices of women and those marginalized by race, class, sexual orientation, and age are foregrounded. These ways of providing space for voice have an impact on how participants construct knowledge on an individual level, as well as make apparent some of the politics of the knowledge production process that have marginalized or left out the voices of marginalized people. (p. 150)

Again, critical theory and feminist poststructuralism are driven toward social justice and transformation. Both theories are interested in advancing self-agency through resisting oppression and recognizing oppression both in mind and body, and

understanding that people are both subjects and actors in history. Important here is the concept of voice, which guides transformation. As people speak out and defend their rights, articulate their concerns, and express their ideas and opinions, they exercise their voice, and become aware of the power of their own voice.

Critical post-structural feminist theories, as mentioned above, is another important unifying theory in which I think with to understand female student voice. Important concepts from CPSF include critical literacy, the intersection between voice and identity, and narrative self-reflexivity. Each of these concepts are described below.

### *Critical Literacy*

Critical literacy, another component in my theoretical framework, further describes how critical theory can be applied to literacy activities. Critical literacy, as proposed by Jones (2006), a poststructural feminist theorist, encourages students to think about the nature and reason for which things are written the way they are. Students here consider what the writer's intention was and how this impacts their own thinking about themselves and others. Jones' work identifies critical literacy as a way to further explore the importance of empowering women, developing their identity and breaking student silence through the use of critical literacy. The goal is to help female students to find their own voice and look at the world through their own eyes, rather than those of the dominant culture (Jones, 2006).

Jones (2006) post-structural concepts of *deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action* allow for further exploration and thought for considering how female student voice is shaped by what is read and how what is read is interpreted. Reconstruction is an important process for recreating. In this way, students interact with

the text and create their own meaning, instead of receiving the information in the text as instructed by the teacher. Students here are constructivists, in that they are in charge of reading, interpreting, and meaning making, based on their own beliefs, values, thoughts, and processes. This process leads to identity development which is also constructive. Deconstruction explores how something was created, why it was created in such a way, and how it can be re-envisioned to better serve the people the process touches. Deconstruction allows for growth through critical analysis, discourse, and contemplation of the true nature of the world. The third component, social action, happens after the reconstructive process when enlightened and empowered people or groups of people work together to create change in their community through action[18].

The process of personalizing and making meaning from stories is important for facilitating female student voice. Developing and constructing a personal narrative, through deconstruction and reconstruction, allows one to examine the contents of their mind as initial interpretations of others may or may not be accurate (Davies, 2003; Jones, 2006). It is through constructive processes that students seek understanding beyond the superficial or surface level of texts, and open the space for different perspectives with regard to social justice. Students become active readers and writers who devise their own meanings from texts and narratives (Jones, 2004; Kamler, 2001). In this way, students are active participants in efforts for social justice as they develop their voices and examine their identities (Jones, 2004; 2006).

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[18] It is my belief that social action will be achieved through the use and application of the seven elements digital storytelling (Robin, 2008).

Critical literacy is particularly relevant for my own goals as an educator of female students in Saudi Arabia. I remember my own struggles as a female student in Saudi Arabia, and I speak out on the oppressive and authoritarian nature of the banking model of education for students. Students do not have opportunities for narrative self-reflexivity, students do not learn how to critically analyze text or how to tell their own stories. By allowing female students the opportunity to create their own narratives and to explore the content and meaning of texts, students can learn to make their own meaning and break their silence while rejecting the banking model of education.

### *Narrative and Self-Reflexivity*

CPSF theories suggest that women explore themselves and examine their identity and the pieces that make up their identity (Weedon, 1987). In this way, women are the subjects in the examination and their voice guides their exploration, which serves as an empowering endeavor. Some female scholars describe how identity is created through the senses. hooks (1990), also a post-structural feminist, speaks of her own experience with safe spaces for exploring and breaking oppression from cultures of power. She writes, "The task of making a homeplace… was about the construction of a safe space where black people could affirm one another, and by doing so, heal wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks, 1990, p. 42). hooks narrative connects me to my own narrative as a female student in Saudi Arabia, and how beneficial it would have been to join with my other classmates and talk together about our experiences as young girls, about our families, about our lives. I envision hooks, as a prominent critical post-structural feminist, leading the theoretical way for female students in Saudi Arabia to find the classroom as a

type of homeplace, a safe space to explore their voices and identities, as well as connect with each other as people.

hooks, as do other post structural feminists, proposes that challenges and barriers can bring about change and facilitate empowerment when those oppressed are provided opportunities for voice and self-reflection. hooks believes that challenges and barriers to freedom allow women to learn about their identity and become agents of social change. According to CPSF theorists, when oppressed people are enlightened and empowered, they no longer act unconsciously, but consciously make decisions to accept or reject the roles that those in power ascribe to them (hooks, 1990; Collins, 2000; Davies, 2003; Weedon, 2004). Importantly, identity is not a fixed constant. As Weedon (2004) argues, identity can change from one context to another, and through time. As such, identity is fluid and dynamic.

**Intersection of Voice and Identity**

Voice and identity are inexplicably connected. Voice and identity are never complete, as self-reflection and critical thought are skills used throughout life, throughout experiences, and are constantly being developed, updated, and revised. In this way, identity can be considered a construction, as it is constantly being *deconstructed* and *reconstructed*, as one's demographic factors, setting, and context changes in which critical thought is warranted. This is particularly helpful for me to think through a constructivist lens. I see myself, and I reflect on myself differently given the context in which I am in. I reflect on my life and experiences differently when I am with my family than when I am at work, or when I am in the US, compared to Saudi Arabia. My identity

in one place may necessarily differ from my identity in others. As such, the nature of identity, through all its complexities, is extremely dynamic.

I think with Davies's theory (2003) that asserts a feminist poststructuralist view may allow for understanding gender conceptualizations as metaphysical rather than natural. In this way, female students will not see themselves as fated toward a particular end, or something deemed natural. According to Davies (2003), "so fundamental… to our understanding of identity, that it is generally understood as a natural fact… rather than something we have learned to see as natural" (p. 7). Female students must explore their voice and create their identity by themselves and not allow their gender to be the sole determinant of who they are. Though female students may recognize themselves as female, they should look beyond their gender in determining what they are capable and what they want to do. However, this exploration is something female students must determine and take on their own.

Identity and voice is not something that anyone can give female students, it is not something that a teacher can make a student have or do. However, the culture of power presents identity to female students and ascribes an identity to them as though this identity they must adopt is a natural part of the world, where in fact, identity is metaphysical. Oppressed people, particularly those who were educated under the banking model of education, often blindly accept the dominant culture's ideas for who and what they are. Oppressive roles and identity assignments are so ingrained in the culture that no one questions why it must be that way, or why it is so. Importantly, Davies (2003) explains that dominant culture ascribes identities to people that do not allow for participation on a continuum of identity, what has been termed "a binary oppression" (p.

8). This means that identity is black or white. You are this or you are that. A little of this, and some of that, does not exist.

Davies (2003) cautions that though it is exciting for people to begin exploring their identities, it can also be unpleasant to realize how submissive, powerless, and marginalized people allowed themselves to be. Through the art and process of deconstruction, one can manage strong emotions on the reality of the oppression, accept the reality, and move on from it. Recognizing and accepting reality, though unpleasant and emotional as it may be, is necessary for reconstruction to occur. Through this awareness, one can challenge the discursive mechanisms that have contributed to oppression and fated identity.

**Phenomenology Writ Large**

Before I explore the appropriateness of the post-intentional phenomenological research methodology for the current study, I will discuss how phenomenology has developed conceptually from its early inception. Specifically, I will explore how phenomenology became philosophy, and provide context for how and why the post-intentional approach was applied as the primary methodology for this study.

*Phenomenology as Philosophy*

Phenomenology began with the work of philosophers Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (Vagle, 2014, 2015) who built the foundation for present-day phenomenology. Early phenomenology began primarily as a philosophy that suggested that one must critically examine the world in order to understand one's place in it by capturing the essences of lived experiences. (Sokolowski, 2000). Phenomenology both a research method and a philosophy (Husserl, 1970, Sokowloski, 2000). Phenomenology allows

researchers to think deeply about the intersection and continuity of events throughout spaces and places (Dahlberg, Dahlberg & Nystrom, 2008; Vagle, 2010; Van Manen, 2014). Van Manen (2014), posits that "the phenomenologist is driven by a pathos to discern the primordial secrets of the meanings of the human world" (p.17). Through reflective moments, researchers are able to look deep into themselves and others (Van Manen, 2014). These openings into the world of self and others which Husserl (1970) defines as *Lebenswelt,* foregrounds, the world of lived experiences, reflects the researchers view of the world through self-reflexion (Husserl, 1970). He was encouraging researchers to go "to the things themselves" to understand their own lived experiences and provide meaning to their lives and others (Husserl, 1970).

A key idea in phenomenology is the concept of intentionality, which was first described in Husserl's philosophical work, and is highlighted in Heidegger's conception of phenomenology. Intentionality, in the phenomenological context, refers to the way in which humans begin to understand their place in the world, and the place of objects in the world in relation to themselves. As such, intentionality refers to a subject-object relationship in which people's interactions with the world is meaningful and important (Sokolowski, 2000; Vagle, 2014). According to Vagle (2014), intentionality "is used to signify how we are meaningfully connected to the world" (p. 27). When people are willing to explore their perceptions and experiences with the world, the concept of intentionality is best realized. Here, people consider and reflect on how they are interacting with the world, how the world is shaping and molding their beliefs and ideas, and how this changes on a minute-by-minute, second-by-second level.

In American English, intentionality often refers to the purpose of doing something. It is usually believed to be one's reason, or one's purpose for doing something. However, in phenomenology, intentionality refers to watching the phenomena unfold and recognizing and exploring the multitude of factors involved in how the phenomenon manifests. Post-intentional phenomenologists regard intentionality as a means to providing an inside look into how a phenomenon works and evolves, and recognize that the glimpse is tentative, partial, and dynamic[19].

Husserl (1970) was limited in his day by the meditations of Descartes who postulated the mind-body problem. The mind-body problem asserts that the mind and the body are separate from one another and do not influence each other. Husserl had problems accepting dualism and attempted different ways of conceptualizing human experience, rather than assuming free will and God were responsible for all human behavior and thought (Van Manen, 2014). Husserl believed that the ways in which humans obtain knowledge is complex and embarked on an epistemological investigation to refute Descartes and make the conceptualization of human experience more digestible and plausible. Husserl advanced the idea that the mind and body are meaningfully connected and cannot be thought of as separate components of human experience, or

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[19] The phenomenological construct of intentionality resonates with me in many ways. For example, when people ask me, or even when I ask myself, "Why am I getting a PhD?" the answer has been one-dimensional. I respond, "I am getting my PhD so that I can teach teachers in Saudi Arabia." However, my reasons for seeking a PhD are much more complex than this. As I continue my studies, I realize that I am motivated by a multitude of factors, varying intensity and duration (some are new, some have always been there) that can paint a better picture of why I am seeking my PhD. Of course, I do want to help prepare teachers in Saudi Arabia for the classroom. But it's more than that. I also want to empower female students, I want to empower female teachers, I want to explore the use of digital storytelling, I want to encourage teachers to allow for student voice in the classroom, I want to assist students with finding their voice and breaking their silence, I want overall change in female education, I want to be a social agent of change, I want teachers and students to be their own agents of change. The list goes on, and the list will look different on a moment by moment basis. But the idea is the same, that intentionality cannot be easily explained in one sentence or with one stated purpose. Intentionality is pluralistic and variable.

studied in isolation of the other (Vagle, 2014). Husserl's epistemological efforts to understand human experience allowed him to explore conscious experience and knowledge.

Later, Heidegger, a student of Husserl, changed the emphasis of phenomenology from epistemology—knowing the essence of phenomena—to hermeneutics, a study of the interpretation of phenomena (Vagle, 2014). In hermeneutic interpretive phenomenology, what matters is not the knowledge of the phenomena, but what the phenomena mean to the subject. According to Sokolowski (2000), hermeneutics emphasizes the importance of considering the historical and cultural backgrounds of the subjects. For Heidegger, phenomenology explores how phenomena are understood by humans through human interaction and language (Vagle, 2014). Heidegger believed that all humans were naturally affected by objects in the world. As such, Heidegger believed that intentional relations in the world were constantly influencing and shaping each other. People cannot describe themselves without considering how they exist in relationship to other objects and people in the world.

In thinking with post-intentional phenomenology, I realize I cannot separate myself as a student in the United States and a woman of Saudi Arabia. I cannot erase or ignore the influence of my lived experiences as a female student in Saudi Arabia, and I cannot separate the oppression and devaluation I felt in Saudi Arabia from how I feel about myself today. Previous lived experiences interact constantly with current experiences. My opinions, thoughts, and behaviors change and adjust as new connections are made, and previous realizations are re-realized. I cannot escape from my past, and my children cannot escape from my past. However, my experience and sense of self has

developed and as this has happened, the way I view the society around me has changed.

When I first arrived in the United States, the way the world looked to me was different.

My previous experiences told me that I should remain quiet, listen, and obey, but I did

not find that to be true in the United States. As such, I had to intentionally understand my

current and past experiences and deeply reflect on how my lived experiences influence

the ways in which I view the world and my relationships throughout space and

place.

### Post-Intentional Phenomenology

Post-intentional phenomenology, a recently developed approach within

phenomenology, was born from the work of Vagle (2014, 2015, 2016, 2018). Post-

intentional phenomenology embodies many hermeneutic lines of thought, but extends

this philosophy in many different ways. Post-intentional phenomenology reflects an

awareness and commitment to post-structural studies in that it is interconnected (Vagle,

2014, 2015). As understood in early phenomenology, intentionality refers to the

purposeful nature of the relationship between the researcher and the phenomena and

suggests the interconnectedness is meaningful, directed, and circular (Vagle, 2014). The

researcher attempts to connect to the world through a sense-making within their shared

lived spaces and places (Gruenewald, 2003). This post-structural view of knowledge can

allow one to engage in a more nuanced interpretation of lived experience through the

study of phenomenology. The assumptions within post-intentional phenomenology help

allow one to better understand and conceptualize the world (Vagle, 2014).

Post-intentional phenomenology attempts to understand and explore how a

phenomenon is experienced and lived in the real world. As Vagle (2014) describes,

"post-intentional phenomenology can join the conversation about multiplicity, difference, and partiality" (p. 114) and seeks to "see what the phenomenon might become" (Vagle, 2014, p. 119) by noticing how "phenomena appear in intentional relations with others and things in the lifeworld" (Vagle, 2014, p. 122). Utilizing a post-intentional phenomenology approach also allows for honoring the lived experience of the researcher.

The post in post-intentional phenomenology refers to commitments to post-structural views, Foucauldian beliefs on how power relationship form and operate to facilitate oppression. This aspect lays a framework for recognizing that one cannot completely know or understand a phenomenon, as phenomena are "partial, situated, endlessly deferred and circulating through relations" (Vagle, 2014, p. 111-112). Also, important in Post-intentional phenomenology is the role of embodiment, as described by Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty (1974) refers to *embodiment* as the understanding and recognition of the importance of one's physical body in the world, as it is with the physical body that people access phenomena and each other. Bodies represent the beholder, in that our bodies convey our gender, culture, and social class.

As a post-structuralist, Vagle understands knowledge as something that is constantly being constructed and deconstructed, an understanding that he incorporates into post-intentional phenomenology. In doing so, Vagle (2015) recognizes that knowledge is incomplete and depends greatly on the context it is situated in. This post-structural view of knowledge also allows for a deeper, richer, and more complex interpretation of lived experience. Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology borrows from Husserlian and Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. Here, Vagle emphasizes the importance of intentionality, though Vagle conceptualizes intentionality post-structurally.

In doing so, Vagle assumes intentionality is pluralistic and deviating. Vagle (2015) deliberately conceptualizes intentionality as a move to understanding a phenomenon in pluralistic ways, "For me, intentionality is running all over the place, all the time" (p. 113). Additionally, Vagle's understanding of intentionality is so complex that it is impossible to understand its origins, whereas in Husserlian phenomenology, intentionality can be traced through the subject's intending toward the world. I am appreciative of the way in which post-intentional phenomenology honors my connectedness to the phenomena, and does not ask me to disregard it. Post-intentional phenomenology, through post-reflection, has allowed me to explore my own lived experiences in relation to the phenomena and provided me with an avenue to explore my thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a deep way that connects me further with the phenomena.

French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987) were also very influential in Vagle's construction of post-intentional phenomenology through their introduction of the concept of *lines of flight*, *assemblages*, and *rhizomes*. Vagle (2014) credits the lines of flight concept as guiding him to understand the multidimensional and mercurial nature of phenomena. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), lines of flight relate to the lines where avenues of life intersect and entwine and highlights the complicated nature of phenomena, as well as the creative, recursive, and fluid nature of the phenomena. By considering the lines of flight of a phenomenon, one is able to understand the directions in which various aspects of the phenomena ebb and flow and how they interact to produce powerful living spaces. I was inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of lines of flight, which allowed me to connect the importance and

utility of using Digital storytelling with my phenomena female student voice. This style will allow me to study and examine that assemblages and lines of flight, and their relatedness, in my study. Lines of flight acknowledges that students will progress through their Digital stories in different ways and at different rates and stages, as lines of flight "elude, entangle, and take on various intensities in and over time, and across contexts" (Vagle, 2015, p. 11).

As Vagle (2015) describes, lines of flight allow the researcher to understand how different aspects of the phenomena "flee, elude, flow, and leak" (p. 11). Lines of flight afford provides for mental agility and patience so that one can recognize and consider the connectedness of the assemblages. Incorporating the lines of flight concept allows one to intuitively understand how assemblages interact with the way in which one experiences their world and sense of being (Vagle, 2015). In this way, the researcher may consider the way in which one enters the phenomena from the middle and thereby becomes entangled in mystery, constantly working to discovery how to explore unknowns.

Vagle (2015) distinguishes post-intentional phenomenology from other phenomenological and methodological philosophies by urging researchers to consider what the phenomena may look like in different spaces through time. As Vagle (2014) suggests, it is significant to note in post-intentional phenomenology, "We treat all knowledge and all philosophical ideas as partial, fleeting, malleable, and ever-changing" (p. 124). Vagle (2014) has now evolved into a new term and practice he calls post-reflexivity. This simply refers to adherences to the doubt and questioning of what is understood through the natural attitude. Vagle (2014) asserts post-reflexivity requires researchers to "document, wonder about and question connections/disconnections,

assumptions of what we take to be normal, bottom lines, and moments we are shocked"

(p. 132). Vagle emphasizes that because life is not stagnant, nor should the research

methodology applied to understanding the connectedness of life be stagnant—and the

methodology should encourage deep understanding and meaningfulness. Vagle (2014)

states that *through-ness*[20] be a highlighted component in post-intentional phenomenology,

so that the experience of others' lives may be felt by others, so that others may

understand what it is like to live in another's world. Furthermore, *through-ness* is

highlighted in this methodology to demonstrate how it is like to be in the world (Vagle,

2014). Even the use of the hyphen between post and intentional is meaningful in that it

symbolizes that the methodology does seek an end (or an essence as other approaches to

phenomenology do), but for a continuance.

My decision to incorporate post-intentional phenomenology in my research was a

deliberate attempt to surround myself with a powerful theoretical framework of my study

for better understanding how female students from Saudi Arabia, currently living in the

United States, experience patriarchal domination and oppression as a female student in a

traditional Arabic school modeled closely and operated as schools in Saudi Arabia. This

method does not seek to find correct answers or to solve problems conclusively, but

acknowledges that phenomena are complex, dynamic, and ever-changing, much like the

world and the people in it. This method allows me to study female student voice as a

construct that is without boundaries and definitions. The space and place in which these

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[20] Through-ness refers to the idea of the phenomenological researcher not necessarily making a distinction between, or oscillating between, describing the existence of the phenomena and interpreting their origins (Vagle, 2014). Rather, there are intentionalities of different shape, sizes, and contours running all over place" (Vagle, 2014, p. 41). Through-ness (Vagle) developed from the ideas of of-ness (Husserlian) in-ness (Heideggerian).

students find themselves is within a classroom facilitated by instructors applying the banking concept of education. As such, the students who will be interviewed for my study, are those who experience education through an oppressive, punitive, and repetitive system that disallows student voice, critical thought, and self-identity.

In my study, the specific focus is on the lived experiences of female student's voice from Saudi Arabia who are studying at an Arabic school in the United States, in order to understand how students may be empowered to be change agents and break their silence. One reason I have chosen to use post-intentional phenomenology to study female student voice, is the fact that it provides a wonderful way to explore female student voice in a complex and layered way that is multi-dimensional, fluid, and allows for error. As post-intentional phenomenologists, we go beyond conceptualizing phenomena through lived experience and knowledge, and we allow our thinking to be like lines of flight and "take off" in ways that we may not be able to anticipate" (Vagle, 2014, p. 119). It is ever changing, and as I embark on this journey, I myself will be changed. However, the change is not linear, it is not circular. Change goes in all directions, and there is no state of realization that is more advanced, better, or valid than anyone that precedes it. As I understand and explore my phenomenology, I accept and learn from my own lived experiences, as well as the lived experiences of those who participate in my study. This research will help us all, myself as the researcher, and my student participants, understand how voice is experienced inside the school, and how this facilitates their identity within the world. In this way, may better understand how voice and identity may take shape and change through the use of DST. This method may also allow for a deep

political and social analysis of the culture of Saudi Arabia, and how hegemony affects and impacts female student voice and facilitates oppression.

## Summary of Framework

The development of my theoretical framework allowed me to think deeply with critical theory and post-structural feminist theories. Important also were the theorists Freire (2000), hooks (1989), Jones (2006), Davies (2003) and Vagle (2018), among many others. My theoretical framework begins with a close analysis of critical theory which is the overlying foundational concept in which I think with. Critical theory, and the work of critical theorists, has allowed me to deeply explore my own lived experiences as it relates to how I understand myself as a female from Saudi Arabia. I have allowed myself to think through my experiences as a female student in Saudi Arabia, and explore how restrictive political systems have maintained and unjust educational system that oppresses young girls through the banking model of education. The banking model of education, a restrictive pedagogical practice in which students are expected to obediently obey the authoritarian teacher, prohibits voice and stunts identity development. As I think through the spaces and places of my lived experiences as a female student in Saudi Arabia, I realize the need and appropriateness of research in this area.

Critical theory encompasses the ideas of other related theories such as post-structural feminist theory and post-intentional phenomenology. These concepts have also been integral in my thinking with the theory, and as such, take a prominent position in my theoretical framework. Post-structural feminist theory has afforded many opportunities to better understand and conceptualize the concept of female student voice, though examination of constructs of discourse, deconstruction, and intersectionality, and how

these concepts can be exploited in order to maximize female student voice and end oppression. Post-intentional phenomenology has allowed me to deeply consider my lived experiences as they relate to several intersecting lines of fight, and see the interconnectedness in my experiences. This has allowed me to understand how the phenomenology of female student voice looks different over time, as phenomena take on different shapes throughout time and space This has allowed me to understand why and how my experience as a female student in Saudi Arabia is conceptualized in different ways, as I grow and develop through thinking with theory. I realize that I am a victim of oppressive political systems that secured the use of restrictive educational practices. However, through theory I also realize my experiences have empowered me to be an agent of change, advocating for a change in the political landscape of Saudi Arabia as it affects female students and stifles their voices.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology for my post-intentional phenomenological examination of the phenomena of female student voice.

# Chapter 3: Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Approach

*"Following a way (a path, an approach) to do something allows us, as phenomenological craftspeople, to have parameters, tools, techniques and guidance, but also allows us to be creative, exploratory, artistic and generative with our craft."*

- Vagle (2014, p. 48).

In this chapter, I continue to describe my use of post-intentional phenomenology in my study of how female student voice may facilitate female resistance of oppressive educational systems. My first exposure to post-intentional phenomenology occurred in the Summer of 2017. It was then I read Vagle's 2014 book, *Crafting Phenomenological Research*. It was interesting to learn more about the power of phenomenology as a research methodology in capturing authentic voice as I was not previously exposed to such a method in my earlier studies. Today, I consider myself and define myself as a research phenomenologist. I feel it to the core of my being. My professional scholarship and the type of research I have always wished to pursue centers on exploring the nature of meaning of daily experiences as human beings. As such, *Crafting Phenomenological Research* has helped me understand effective approaches for the study human meaning making. I knew that this was a method I had to learn more about and that it was essential to who I was as a scholar, dedicated to facilitating female student voice. This method allows for empowerment of both myself as a researcher, and the empowerment of the female students who have been oppressed by current educational systems. As such, this method always a way to both study and encourage human empowerment and guide social change.

From my initial readings, I became aware that it was possible to weave my own musings and experiences with those of others, thereby elevating my own self-awareness

and exposing my vulnerabilities. In doing so, I am able to explore myself and critically think about how my experiences connect and intersect with the experiences of other. By using this evidence-based approach I have be able to offer explanations and provide science-based support for the power of phenomenology. I have been allowed to infuse my heart, soul, and mind into my phenomena of interest, while at the same time connecting complex and fleeting thoughts and feelings intellectually with existing literature. These early experiences with post-intentional phenomenology allowed me to define myself and my purpose. Through this definition, I am able to live out my purpose and work as a scholar using both the heart and the mind.

Fundamental themes provided by post-intentional phenomenology that align with my goals as a phenomenologist include: slowing down and becoming mindful, leaning into the complexity, opening up and being vulnerable, recognizing that there is always room to learn more about myself, approach my life as a never-ending story, and understanding that personal transformation and growth is a perpetual and never-ending process. My scholarly theorizing aligns well with core ideals that underpin post-intentional phenomenology:

It means trying to be profoundly present in our living—to leave no stone unturned; to slow down in order to open up; to dwell with our surroundings amidst the harried pace we may keep; to remain open; to know that this is 'never nothing' going on and that we can never grasp all that is going on; and to know that our living is always a never-ending work in progress. (Vagle, 2014, p. 12)

My position as an educator has led to my interest in and commitment to understanding current perspectives and the intentionality of the phenomena of female

student voice. This includes a concerted effort in understanding how student voice can be facilitated in a school setting to support student empowerment and agency.

The multiplicities in post-intentional phenomenology allowed me to focus on how things connect and to understand how my own intentionalities interact with the dynamic nature of the phenomena. I employed Deleuze and Guatarri's (1987) conceptualization of lines of flight when thinking through the phenomena of female student voice. The application of lines of flight is important as it allows the researcher to explore some of the "connective nature of social, ethical, and political relations does not lend itself to simplicities and essence" (Vagle, 2018, p. 135). Applying the Deluezoguattarian philosophical conceptualization of lines of flight allowed me to consider "things as fluid, shape- shifting assemblages continually on the move in interacting with the world, rather than perceiving them as stable essences" (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p. 4).

Lines of flight can also be understood as an important concept for "resisting the tying down of lived experience and knowledge" (Vagle, 2018, p. 136). By resisting accepting static, unchanging meaning of experiences, I entered into the shape-shifting assemblages that are perpetually moving and interacting within the world. These shape-shifting assemblages allowed me to conceptualize female student voice as a complex construct that lacks a formal definition. According to Delueze and Guattari (1987), "[a] multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing the nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows" (p. 8). I used Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) thinking with theory concept of "plugging in" to

further connect to the analytical process. I plugged in theoretical concepts and

understandings to phenomenological material.

In this study, I used Vagle's (2018) five-component process for conducting this

post-intentional phenomenological exploration the phenomenon of the female student

voice. The five components are:

Component #1: Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue This component consists of seven parts that assist the researcher exploration of the phenomenon.

Part 1: State the Research Problem
Part 2: Partial Review of the Literature
Part 3: Theories I Want to Think With
Part 4: Contexts
Part 5: Social Change
Part 6: Participant Selection
Part 7: Research Question(s)

Component #2: Devise a clear, yet flexible process for gathering phenomenological material appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation

Component #3: Make a post-reflexion plan

Component #4: Explore the post-intentional phenomenon using theory, phenomenological material, and post-reflexions

Competent #5: Craft a text that engages the productions and provocations of the post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue

This chapter elaborates on Component #1: identify a post-intentional phenomenon

in context(s), around a social issue with emphasis on parts 4, 5, 6 and 7. Together, these

parts develop a comprehensive methodological account for applying post-intentional

phenomenology to my research study. Specifically, Part 4 emphasizes the contexts of the

phenomena. Part 5 discusses how post-intentional phenomenology might contribute

meaningfully to social change. Part 6 describes the participant selection process. Part 7

presents the research questions. I follow with a discussion of Component #2 where I

"Devise a Clear, Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Phenomenological Material Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation." This chapter concluded with Component #3, "Make a Post-Reflexion Plan."

**Component #1,**
**Part 4 Contexts of the Phenomenon**

Part 4 of component #1 addresses the need for post-intentional phenomenology researchers to actively critique (Vagle, 2018) and be responsive to contexts of the phenomena in its shifting and changing form. In post-intentional phenomenology, phenomena are seen as being "shaped, produced, and provoked by context" (p. 145). Context is encompassed by local aspects (places, embodiments, situations, and moments) as well as broad aspects (social norms and assumptions, dominant narratives, policies) that are multiple, partial, and amenable to shape shifting. To determine the context for female student voice, I considered Vagle's (2014) assertion to:

> situate the phenomenon in the multiple and varied contexts in which you believe it resides; keep in mind that this decision will guide your data-gathering and analysis plan and also serve as merely a starting point. You will need to remain open to the phenomenon as you are studying it. (p. 127)

I carefully considered some of the varying and interacting contexts for the present study. Contextually, this study focused on female students who are taught in an Arabic school in the United States. The Arabic school chosen for the current study mirrors the educational standards and systems of schools in Saudi Arabia. As such, female students at the Arabic school in the US receive the same education and experience the same standards for conduct as do schools in Saudi Arabia. That is, both the US Arabic Elementary School and Saudi Arabian school settings operate under the same

pedagogical understandings and philosophy in many ways. First, both settings aspire to teach the highest academic standards in subjects as Qur'an, Islamic Studies and Arabic language by using a strong curriculum with the help of very experienced and trained teachers from different Arabic countries. Both schools have a similar message, which is to prepare students for success in their current lives and the afterlife by instilling within them education based on ethics, Islamic values, and high academic standards. Both schools provide instruction in Arabic and English, and adhere to the banking concept of education for teaching the curriculum where students are instructed to memorize information, particularly information that is religious and language oriented. As such, female students lack opportunities to express their voices and develop their identities through discourse. Both operate with the understanding that the teacher is the authority and students must listen to the teacher and exercise complete obedience. Both settings provide instruction in math, religion, languages, science; there are no music or physical education classes nor teachers. As both settings insist students memorize everything they read, there is no value placed on critical literacy. Indeed, students are not allowed to critically analyze and think with texts. Students are allowed to socialize at designated times, such as at lunch and recess. There is little group work, group discussions, or small group activities. All peer-to-peer student conversation and dialogue occurs at recess or at other times where teachers are not present.

**School Setting**

For purposes of confidentiality and anonymity, the US Arabic school is herein referred to as the "Arabic Elementary School." The Arabic Elementary School is a private school located in a large working-class suburb of a large Midwest metropolitan

city in the USA. The school is on one level and there is one classroom for each grade (K–4). The Arabic Elementary School enrolls approximately 128 students (113 girls and 15 boys), with an additional grade 5 that was proposed for opening in the Fall of 2019 and ended up happening in the Fall 2020. All of the students are Muslim (100%). The students' country-of-origin include: The Middle East (20.2%), North Africa (0.7%), Somalia (0.2%), and Western Asia (70.5%). The Arabic Elementary School is staffed entirely by female teachers and headed by a female principal. Though there is a small percentage of male students (11.5%), I did not see any males while I was there except the Imam[21] who came to lead the daytime prayer. All teachers are assigned a grade level where they are the primary teacher. There are also special teachers for subjects such as math, Islamic studies, English language, science and art. At Arabic Elementary School, students are expected to behave in an Islamic manner towards themselves and others (see Figure 3-1).

The Arabic Elementary School enforces strict rules that students are expected to adhere to. This code of conduct is published on the school website page for parents' reference and review. The intention behind publishing the code of conduct is two-fold. First, it allows students to know exactly what is expected of them and what the consequence of misbehavior will be. Secondly, it allows parents peace-of-mind knowing that their children will be held to the strictest and highest of standards and will be taught to obey authority. Respecting authority is extremely important to school parents; as is

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[21] The Iman is an Arabic religious man who leads prayers in a mosque or Arabic schools and exercises spiritualism in the Muslim community.

assurance their children will be punished if they disobey. The Arabic Elementary School published this table showing their student discipline code on their website.

**Figure 3-1**

*Student Discipline Code*

| Level 1 | Consequences |
|---|---|
| – Talking in the hallway when unauthorized<br>– Possession of unauthorized gum, candy, drinks, etc.<br>– In unauthorized area or hall without permission<br>– Not following directions<br>– Inappropriate items (water pistol, electronic games, etc)<br>– Inappropriate electronic devices during classroom hours (personal cell phones, pagers, laptops, Ipods etc.) unless cleared with the office for specific reason. | Intervention plans<br><br>**1st Offense** – Verbal Warning (3 times) **2ndOffense** – Take a Break<br>**3rd Offense** – Buddy Teacher<br>**4th Offense** – Office<br><br>• After 3 office visits, home suspension 1 day per trimester. Every office visit after this for the same level of offense means automatic suspension for 2 days, then 3 days, then exclusion. |
| Level 2 | Consequences |
| – Lying, cheating, gambling, etc<br>– Pushing, shoving, hitting, etc.<br>– Disrespect/defiance to school staff or volunteers<br>– Verbal disrespect to other students (swearing, name calling etc)<br>– Spitting, spit wads, food throwing<br>– Inappropriate use of classroom/school equipment | – **1st Offense** – sent to the office immediately, call home, student talks to the Counselor<br><br>– **2nd Offense** – In-school suspension<br>– **3rd Offense** – Out-of-school suspension<br>– **4th Offense** – 2 days out-of-school suspension<br>– **5th Offense** – 3 days out-of-school suspension<br>– **6th Offense** – Expulsion |
| Level 3 | Consequences |
| – Damage to school and private property (including bathrooms)<br>– Possession of matches or lighters<br>– Profanity, obscene gestures, possession of indecent materials, violent pictures<br>– Threats<br>– Stealing<br>– Fighting<br>– Truancy<br>– Leaving school property unauthorized<br>– Running away from staff | **1st Offense** – In-School Suspension<br>**2nd Offense** – Out-of-school suspension<br>**3rd Offense** – 2 days out-of-school suspension 4th **Offense** – 3 days out-of-school suspension 5th **Offense** – Exclusion<br><br>* Out of school suspension is day after incident (day of incident student can return back to class for the rest of the day unless it is for fighting). If a student is returned to class and not acting correctly, he/she will be brought back to the office for the rest of the day |

Further contextual considerations for the current study involved situating the phenomena within a specific space and place (Vagle, 2018). Within the Arabic Elementary School, study participants included five female 2nd and 3rd graders, all of whom originate from the Middle East and speak Arabic and English. In order to ensure the female students felt safe within the study context, careful consideration and emphasis was given on the inherent openness and explicit willingness of the young girls to explore their voices and express themselves through digital storytelling. In this way, the openness

and subjective space and place within the girls' own worlds could interact with the study space and place, and allow for growth, development, and understanding to occur. Because an overarching contextual consideration of the current study is related to the dominant social norms and political context in Saudi Arabia, careful attention was paid to evoking, within the Arabic School context, a sentiment that supported female voice empowerment. This contextual consideration was essential for understanding how the phenomenon might be socially provoked, produced, re-produced, and take shape over time.

**Space and Place**

Vagle (2014) asserts that human beings "find themselves in the experience in the world" (p. 21). These are moments of reflexivity and contemplation on the meaning of living and relating to one another in various spaces and places opening up the meaningfulness of such lived experiences. According to Vagle (2018) "spaces, places, embodiments, situations, and moments, all of which are partial and fleeting" (p. 145). These contexts are important to me as a researcher in order to ensure the highest quality of student engagement and comfort. In the current study, evidence of student voice is ultimately shown through the development and narration of their own story, in their own words, through digital storytelling.

In this study, student participants were intimately engaged and encouraged to exercise voice. All work was conducted in various settings, including, but not limited to classrooms, hallways, the school cafeteria, the school library, and the playground. These alternative learning spaces facilitated the female students to feel comfortable using their authentic voice. Subsequent conversational interviews between the individual students

and I allowed additional practice for exercising authentic voice, and important confidence

and agency-building opportunities. The specific setting in which I engaged the student

depended upon the needs and expressed desires of the student; this also allowed an

opportunity for the students to begin making decisions for themselves and understanding

the spaces and places in which their own mind could best make connections. The text

below is from my post-reflexion journal entry after my first visit.

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry September 12, 2018*

*When I first stepped into the school, I felt it was very peaceful and serene. I did not hear much background noise and I did not see any students aimlessly roaming the halls. This feeling of peace continued as I find my way to my assigned classroom, the classroom in which I will be working. The students are third grade females, who are sweet, quiet, and respectful. They are considerate to each other and to the teacher. After I got there my participant Sara asked me, "Where we are going?" I told her that, "We will go out at the school backyard since the weather is nice and warm for the first meeting." Sara said, "So we are not going to work at a classroom?" I said, "No, we can change our space each time." She said, "Wow, I love that and it will be fun, it will not feel like we are sitting at classroom and listening to the teacher." Myana, another student participant said, "Each time when we go to the school library, I feel I do not want the time to run out. I want to spend most of the school time there. It is so much more comfortable than the classroom. I wish we could have a class at the school library sometimes." I wonder if their experiences will resonate differently or similarly than within classroom? I know that feeling: when I was in secondary school I loved Science in the lab, Art in the studio, and home economics mostly because I got to spend two hours of unstructured time in the kitchen with my friends. There we could talk and share our thoughts about different subjects far away from the classroom and related to our own personal thoughts and opinions, an activity not encouraged nor even really allowed in the structured environment of the traditional classroom. I understand Myana's thought when she said, "I feel I am in a prison or a narrow room and becoming [suffocated]."*

**Student Interaction Context**

Throughout my study, I considered how to study context would facilitate the

development and execution of the participants DST activities. It was important to focus

on student interactions and the specific discussions that would arise from the

development and creation personal narratives and the framing such narratives within a

digital story. Consideration of the contexts for student interaction are derived from

Robin's (2005) four-step approach (see Figure 3-2).

**Figure 3-2**

*Approach to Creating and Integrating Digital Storytelling*

| Steps | Procedures |
|---|---|
| 1. Define, collect and decide | <ul><li>Select a topic for your digital story</li><li>Begin thinking of the purpose of your story</li><li>Create a folder on the desktop where you can store the materials you find</li><li>Search for image resources for your story, including: pictures, drawings, photographs, maps, charts, etc.</li><li>Try to locate audio resources such as music, speeches, and sound effects</li><li>Try to find informational content, which might come from web sites, word processed documents, or PowerPoint slides</li></ul> |
| 2. Select, import and create | <ul><li>Select/ draw the images and audio you would like to use for your digital story</li><li>Select the content and text you would like to use for your digital story</li><li>Import images into Photo Story</li><li>Import audio into Photo Story</li><li>Modify number of images and/or image order, if necessary</li></ul> |
| 3. Decide, write, record and finalize | <ul><li>Decide on the purpose and point of view of your digital story</li><li>Write a script that will be used as narration in your digital story AND provides the purpose and point of view you have chosen</li><li>Use a computer microphone and record the narration of your script</li><li>Import the narration into Photo Story</li><li>Finalize your digital story by saving it as a video file</li></ul> |
| 4. Demonstrate, evaluate and replicate | <ul><li>Show your digital story to your peers</li><li>Gather feedback about how the story could be improved, and used in your classroom</li></ul> |

Robin's approach allowed me to examine additional contexts where the

phenomenon may be produced and provoked. My goal as the researcher, was to provide

participants the opportunity to develop their voices, and realize through authentic

experience how development of voice may promote agency and self-expression.

**Component #1,**
**Part 5 Social Change**

In this dissertation, I explored the phenomena of female student voice with the educational tool of digital storytelling as a method for facilitating social change. Vagle (2018) describes social change in post-intentional phenomenology as a "concept/commitment/goal that needs to be articulated and explicitly located and named" (p. 146). By developing original digital stories that allow students to develop and communicate their voices, they were able to momentarily break their silence and deviate away from learning through the oppressive banking model of education. Here, the participants increased their opportunities for practicing and developing their unique voice through critical literacy and discussion. They communicated their unique voice and showed their developing identity through multimedia. This communicative and interactive exhibit gave them opportunities to help the students and to make new connections within themselves. This lead to students having a chance to learn outside of the banking model and making this practice common-place, the post-intentional phenomenological research approach will evoke social change in education.

**Component #1,**
**Part 6 Participant Selection**

To begin the process of selecting participants, I worked closely with the school principal and classroom teacher at Arabic Elementary School. On March 14, 2018, I first introduced my idea and explained my interest in diving deeper into the phenomenon of female student voice and the importance of allowing female students to break their silence and resist oppressive teaching methods such as the banking model. I was very encouraged by the support I received. The principal and classroom teachers were

enthusiastic and supportive of my research, happily agreeing to work with me in

obtaining participants from the student body. I documented my experience and

subsequent feelings from this support in my first post-reflexion journal entry. This entry

describes how I experienced my initial contact with the school as I sought research

support. Ultimately, I received this support through verbal agreement and a written

documentation from the principal, explicitly stating her support (see Appendix A).

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry March 14, 2018*

*The fact that the principal was open to working with me, provided me a great deal of hope. My assumption is that because the principal is young, her youth contributes to her openness to try new things. I am hopeful that this will also be true of the young teachers in Saudi Arabia. My assumption and hope is their youth contributes to their openness to try new teaching methods. Most of the teachers' style of teaching reminded me of when I was a student. I recall feeling stressed in the classroom and that I may be punished by the teacher if I talk. This fear was shared by all my classmates, and in that way, it is oppressive. As such, I was more appreciative of the principal being open to a new learning style and teacher. I hope this will help to gain a better understanding of my phenomenon from the participants' experience.*
*I continue to be impressed by how organized the school is. Everyone knows what they are going to do, and the teachers are very responsible and stay on task.*

*I also noticed that the students received a lot of homework at the end of day. Students did not judge the teachers or complain, they just did what they were told without protesting. This was very interesting to me. I continue to be amazed by how calm and peaceful the classroom is. This made me wonder who decided to create so much homework for the students. Was it the principal? The teacher? Perhaps the parents wanted this type of homework load? In addition to the amount of homework, who decided on the type of assignments, and what was the point of these assignments. I wonder if the assignment type and workload is to make the students better students or more academic. The students are very obedient and the routines are very clearly defined, practiced, and utilized. The students know exactly what is needed and expected from them. I did not observe a single behavior problem and students seemed confident in their abilities. The large amount of homework the students received concerned me. It reminded me of the lengthy assignments that I was doing when I was a student, and how it is too much pressure for students and they end up hating school because of all of the work they have to do. I was worried that all this homework would hinder achievement, rather than promote achievement. My assumption is that students did not say anything to the teacher because they were scared that they would be looked at as not very smart or as someone with a personality*

> *problem. I base this assumption off my own experiences with outrageous homework loads as a student in the past.*

The procedure for recruiting participants with the desired characteristics included purposive sampling. This method is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain some insight and must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, Caffarella, et al., 2007, p. 61). Purposeful sampling was also recommended by Vagle (2014) as an ideal selection method within phenomenological research. IRB approval was obtained (see Appendix B), after which consent and assent forms were emailed to all parents/legal guardians at Arabic Elementary School with a female child in grades K–4 in September 2018.

On September 2018, I began my research at Arabic Elementary School. The consent form (see Appendix C) described the purpose of the study and allowed parents/legal guardians to choose whether or not to allow their daughter to participate. If the parent/guardian agreed to allow their daughter/ student to participate, the student was asked to read and sign the assent form (see Appendix D). For eligible students without an email on file, a hard copy of the consent and assent form was mailed to the student's home. The principal provided the email and contact list for the parents/legal guardians of all eligible students. Parents/guardians were asked to return the completed and signed consent and assent form to the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher then returned the completed consent and assent form to the researcher, who compiled a list of all students with completed forms.

Of the 113 parents contacted, a total of five agreed to allow their daughters to participate. As this study allowed for a maximum of five students, there was no need for

additional sampling methods for participant selection. The five students whose consent

was received automatically were included in the study. All participants were female

students and native Arabic speakers. Four of the students were in 3rd grade, and one

student was in 2nd grade. Students were given pseudonyms and all identifying

information was removed from their profile. See Figure 3-3 for the student pseudonyms,

age and grade, and student background and interests.

Completed consent and assent forms were separated from all participant data.

Between September 2018 and April 2019, participants attended two hour-long meetings a

week for 20 weeks. These meetings were in group format with the researcher leading the

group. Each student spent a total of time of 64-hours in these sessions with the other

students and the researcher. The process was three-fold: *deconstruction* (reading and

discussion texts), *reconstruction* (writing their story), and *social action* (creating their

digital stories). At the end of study, the students participated in a one-on-one interview

with the researcher (see Appendix F). This allowed for exploration of the connection

made between session content and context with the phenomena of female student voice.

**Figure 3-3**

*Participant Details with Pseudonyms Selected by Students*

| Pseudonym | Age/ Grade | Student Background and Interests |
|---|---|---|
| Malaak | 7 years old/ 2nd grade | Malaak is youngest of four girls. She loves to draw, color and be creative. According to her teacher, Malaak's reading level is lower than her peers. Malaak is the only child in her family. She is shy when she talks, but she has very thoughtful and important things to share with her friends. She speaks Arabic better than English and she needs more help with English. She said, "I know Arabic more than English, I think Arabic language helps me more than English because my parents are speaking Arabic at home the whole time. I think I can speak English just during the school" (Malaak's personal |

| | | communication, 9-20-2018). Malaak's family is very conservative and upholds traditional values. They do not support her involvement in extracurricular activities. She spends time after school with her mom who volunteers at the local food shelf for the Arabic community. She talks often about how important it is to her to help others, as she believes this will put her in better favor with God and she will go to a better place in the afterlife. |
|---|---|---|
| Nora | 8 years old/3rd grade | Nora's favorite subject in school is reading. She likes playing with her friends at recess and talking about "Arabs Got Talent" show. She is very good with art and she talks about wanting to take art classes when she gets older. Her dream is to be a famous celebrity. "I want to be famous, so everyone will love me and the life will be easy" (Nora's personal communication, 9-20-2018). She has an older and younger brother; she is the middle child. Both of her parents are teachers. Her mother teaches Middle School, and her father teaches High School. She tends to speak dramatically compared to her peers and is not inhibited to speak her mind, share her ideas, and tell stories to others. She is involved in extracurricular activities including swimming and gymnastics. She swims every weekend with her mom, and attends gymnastics during the week with her dad. It is very important to her father that she be strong and physical, and therefore, he is very supportive of these activities. |
| Alla | 8 years old/ 3rd grade | Alla is a strong reader, writer and good at math. She started wearing a hijab this year. Her father died in the summer 2018 when she was in 2nd grade. She lives with her mom, uncle, and 3 sisters. Her uncle recently moved in with the family to provide a male figure in the house as her mother felt safer with a male present and her family is all female. She was very sad when her dad died and she wishes to meet him again. She writes to him when she misses him. She said that "I am so worried when I grow up and my dad is not around. I think I need him" (Alla's personal communication, 9-20-2018). Alla is very loved and supported in her school due to her family hardships. Subsequently, she feels as though the people at the school are her family. |
| Sara | 8 years old/3rd grade | Sara's father speaks Arabic and English, and her mother speaks Arabic, English, and French. Sara speaks English, French, and Arabic as well. Both her parents are from the Middle East, but different countries. They moved to the US before Sara was born. Sara lives with her parents and older brother who is in 5th grade and a younger sister. She also has three cousins which she loves very much and looks forward to playing with them on the weekends at her uncle's house. She loves dancing and singing. She said that "I have a Fitbit watch, but I am scared to wear it at school to not get |

| | | taken from teachers and the school principal because they are not allowed" (Sara's personal communication, 9-20-2018). She wishes she could bring her Fitbit to school so she can continue dancing and singing as she has downloaded games and music that she enjoys sharing with her friends and family. |
|---|---|---|
| Myana | 8 years old/3rd grade | Myana has one older brother who is 10 years old. She likes to play video games, Legos, and watch TV with him. She visits her grandma every weekend and spends some time with her and her cousins. She loves sports, drawing, and coloring. She takes Taekwondo classes with her brother, which she loves. She said that "school is good, but is boring sometime. There is not a lot of thing to do" (Myana's personal communication, 9-20-2018). Her brother is in an American school, and Myana wishes she could also go to an American school where she would be able to be with her brother and enjoy more activities especially physical education classes. Her parents want her to stay in an Arabic school, so she can have intensive exposure to Islamic teachings, be a teacher, a learn how to be a good mom. |

**Component #1,**
**Part 7 Research Questions**

As stated previously, the purpose of this post-intentional phenomenological study was to examine student voice in a marginalized student population. The population of interest is Arabic female students studying at Arabic Elementary School. The School adopts the traditional banking concept of education, common in all Arabic schools. The assumptions within post-intentional phenomenology align with those necessary for exploring the complicated phenomena of female student voice. Post intentional phenomenology also resonates with my own commitment to female student voice and allows me to engage dynamically with the research. This method also allows me to understand how the phenomena may actualize (Vagle, 2018) and how the phenomena interacts with different components of the world, notably how female student voice is expressed between people within the same and different spaces (Massey, 2005) and

places (Gruenewald, 2003). As foregrounded, "places make us as occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity, and our possibilities are shaped. It is also clear that people make places and that places make people" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 612).

Post-intentional phenomenology recognizes that phenomena consist of interconnected relationships that are dynamic and endless. These centers of experience are intentional and their movements are endless. In this way, post-intentional phenomenology assumes that the student's voice and identity is dynamic in nature; as such, student experience may be conceptualized in many different ways. Phenomena are always expressed through bursts within relationships (Vagle, 2014). Researchers therefore are committed to exploring these bursts and how they dynamically change the lines of flight of the phenomenon. I employ Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of lines of flight and multiplicities in this research. This allows for one to focus on how things connect rather than what things are and recognizes the dynamic nature of the phenomena. As such, post-intentional phenomenology allowed me to consider the intricate lines operating dynamically that ebb and flow in student voice. Post-intentional phenomenology recognizes that the lines of flight are constantly changing and the phenomenon is always evolving. Lines of flight are conceptually important for understanding the phenomenon and for the researcher to understand the nature of student voice. This understanding allows for the phenomenon to inform and direct the research as it is produced, provoked, and takes shape.

As I developed my research questions I was guided by the motivation to better understand the lived experiences of female students at Arabic Elementary School in the United States. This school employs the banking concept of education, which has

traditionally halted self-expression and speech. I looked to better understand the phenomenon through the student's use of personal narrative and storytelling, which is prohibited in the banking model. I am committed to conceptualizing the cultivation of the phenomenon of female student voice through my own lived experiences and knowledge as well as allow myself to be privy to the lines of flight that may suddenly emerge and burst (Vagle, 2018). I am working to cultivate the phenomenon of the female student voice in this study, and I aim to be open and receptive to the ways it might be produced, provoked, and take shape. I investigate the lines of flight as "resisting the tying down of lived experience and knowledge" (Vagle, 2018, p. 136) which helps me think differently about the phenomenon as a post-intentional phenomenologist.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this post-intentional phenomenological exploration.

The Primary Research Question:

> *How might expressions of student voice take shape for K–4 females in an Arabic school in the U.S. through digital storytelling (DST), the historical role of females in Saudi society, and political analysis of Saudi Arabia?*

Secondary questions:

> a) *How might empowerment, as exhibited through student voice, relate to students' identity development?*
>
> b) *What do the stories developed by the female students through DST tell us about their lived experiences?*

*c) How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political*

*decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender*

*roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia?*

## Component #2: Devise a Clear, Yet Flexible Process for Gathering Phenomenological Material Appropriate for the Phenomenon Under Investigation

I have worked at Arabic Elementary School as a volunteer in the past. As a

volunteer, I had the opportunity to participate in school activities, observe classroom

routines, and become comfortable with the school and students. These volunteer

experiences were beneficial for me as a researcher, as they allowed me to transition into

the role of researcher with ease, as the students and school staff were familiar with me,

and we had established relationships. In September 2018, I began my study at the school.

In the researcher role, I led classroom instruction. This allowed me to have an active

rather than passive role in the classroom, which enriched my relationship with the

students. These teaching interactions gave me an opportunity to experience and hear the

students' voices while building a trusting relationship with the entire school community.

My goal was to learn from students' lived experiences, guide and support voice and

identity development, and provide an avenue for expression of voice and identity through

digital storytelling. My goal was also for each student to develop a digital story in the

form of a short film presentation. To meet my goals, this necessitated active planning in

curriculum development, as well as intentional and thoughtful attention to listening,

supporting, and respecting female students' voices as they emerged and the articulation

of their lived experiences.

From the moment I began in my researcher role, I was explicit about the purpose

of study being for my dissertation research. As a researcher and adult, I realize that I hold

a great deal of power over the students who are minor children, and dependent on adults for care, love, and support. I worked to avoid making students feel obligated to participate in my study, and reassured them that their involvement would not influence their relationships with me. I assured the students that I liked them and valued them regardless of their participation in my study. I emphasized and assured the students that participating in my study was something they could do because they wanted to, and thought that it would be fun and/or interesting. I explained that their participation was voluntary and confidential, and no one would know what they did or did not say, or even if they participated. I realized why confidentiality is so important when one of my participants, a student named Myana, told me after our first meeting that she did not feel comfortable sharing her thoughts and opinions with her parents, especially her mom. Myana was concerned that I would tell her parents what she said during our time together, and she did not want her parents to know what we talked about. Myana said, "I am sure that my mom does not want to hear what I am going to talk about. I know what she wants to hear from me! I want to tell you what I want, but I am scared to tell. I cannot talk about it and I do not want to get in trouble" (Myana's personal communication, 9-20-2018).

Given the nature of the research, and my responsibility as the researcher to create a space for the students to develop and express their voices, confidentiality was of utmost importance. The silencing of student voice contributes to children feeling as though their lives are worthless; this is detrimental to their growth as learners. Silencing student voice contributes to a hostile and competitive school environment, as opposed to welcoming and accepting space for personal growth. By assuring the student participants that their

work would not be shared with their parents, I avoided silencing the students. I also believe that ensuring confidentiality was important given the age level of the student participants, and the opportunities that exist when young students learn how to develop and express their voices. The earlier students begin practicing and expressing their voices, the deeper their internal search for identity will be. With this will come a sophisticated sense of personal agency and capacity for social change.

**Selecting Data Sources**

In effort to fulfil the responsibility of working with and questioning assumptions related to the phenomena, this dissertation critically examined female student voice. This dissertation sought to understand how female student voice is produced, provoked, and takes shape in elementary education settings and how these things connect dynamically to the phenomena. To do so, it was essential to remain open and flexible to changing constructs as the phenomena materials were gathered and constructed. Data sources were carefully constructed, with the intention to gather information necessary to understand and "to study how things are being and becoming" relative to the phenomenon of female student voice and how things are connected. The primary and supporting phenomenological materials were identified and aligned to the research questions (see Figure 3-4).

**Figure 3-4**

*Alignment of Research Questions to Phenomenological Materials*

| Primary Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Question | Phenomenological Materials |
|---|---|
| How might expressions of student voice take shape for K–4 females in an Arabic school in the U.S. through digital storytelling (DST), the | • Participant engagement in three phases: deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action. |

| historical role of females in Saudi society, and political analysis of Saudi Arabia? | ● Transcripts from audio-recorded lived experiences<br>  o Sessions occurred for 20 weeks (two visits per week)<br>  o Building relationships and trust with the group at each session<br>  o Reading group to develop critical literacy; 4 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Deconstruction/discussion of the literature; 3 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Reconstruction/ writing stories; 6 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Social action/ Creating DST using Robin's (2005) approach to apply DST in the classroom; 4 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Sharing stories and feedback; 1 week/2 days per week<br>● Analysis of the students' stories<br>● Researcher's direct observation/ field notes of each session/post-reflexivity journal<br>  o Journal/ field notes/ voice recorder taken before, during, and after each daily session<br>  o Participant interviews |
|---|---|
| **Supporting Post-Intentional Phenomenological Research Questions** | **Phenomenological Materials** |
| How might empowerment, as exhibited through student voice, relate to students' identity development?<br><br>What do the stories developed by the female students through DST tell us about their lived experiences? | ● Participant engagement in three phases: deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action.<br><br>● Transcripts from audio-recorded lived experiences<br>  o Sessions occurred for 20 weeks (two visits per week)<br>  o Building relationships and trust with the group at each session<br>  o Reading group to develop critical literacy; 4 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Deconstruction/discussion of the literature; 3 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Reconstruction/ writing stories; 6 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Social action/ Creating DST using Robin's (2005) approach to apply DST in the classroom; 4 weeks/2 days per week<br>  o Sharing stories and feedback; 1 week/2 days per week<br>● Analysis of the students' stories<br>● Researcher's direct observation/ field notes of each session/post-reflexivity journal<br>  o Journal/ field notes/ voice recorder taken before, during, and after each daily session<br>  o Participant interviews |
| How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia? | ● Observations of Saudi Arabia's current historical context<br>● Research and political analysis of leadership speeches and presentations, announcements, information |

| | dissemination include online reports, news briefs, social media, televised, newspapers, journal articles |
|---|---|
| | ● Self-reflexivity |
| | ● Analysis of student described and illustrated conceptualizations of gender role and gender development |

The identified phenomenological materials facilitated exploration and allowed me to theorize potential productions and provocations of the phenomenon. The phenomenological materials are described and aligned with notes that provide support for inclusion of the material. Much attention was given to the selection of books appropriate for the female students to maximize engagement in critical literacy. It was important that the selected books were age-appropriate, developmentally relevant, and connected to the student's interests and lives. It was important that the students felt connected to the literary material, and could identify with the characters. I encouraged the students to suggest books and to provide recommendations of books to add to the reading group list sessions. In the event a student provided a recommendation, I would make the book available to the students. This practice aligned with the efforts of Green (2001) who explains, "Before critical literacy can occur within the classroom, students need the opportunity to engage in meaningful use of literacy, or in other words, to use literacy in ways that relate to their interests and needs. Without the opportunity to write and read for a range of purposes, with access to a variety of texts, there is no basis upon which critical discussion of and reflection on literacy can occur" (p. 12).

I used many resources to find the reading materials. I explored the library at the Arabic School and conducted internet searches. I also visited the Curriculum and Instruction department at the UMN library where they have a large selection of books available. The resulting collection of books shared important qualities. First, they

provided a feminist voice. They also provided multiple perspectives of power, discrimination, female empowerment, and oppression. Below is a selection of books that were incorporated into the reading group (Figure 3-5).

**Figure 3-5**

*Phenomenological Materials – Text Artifacts*
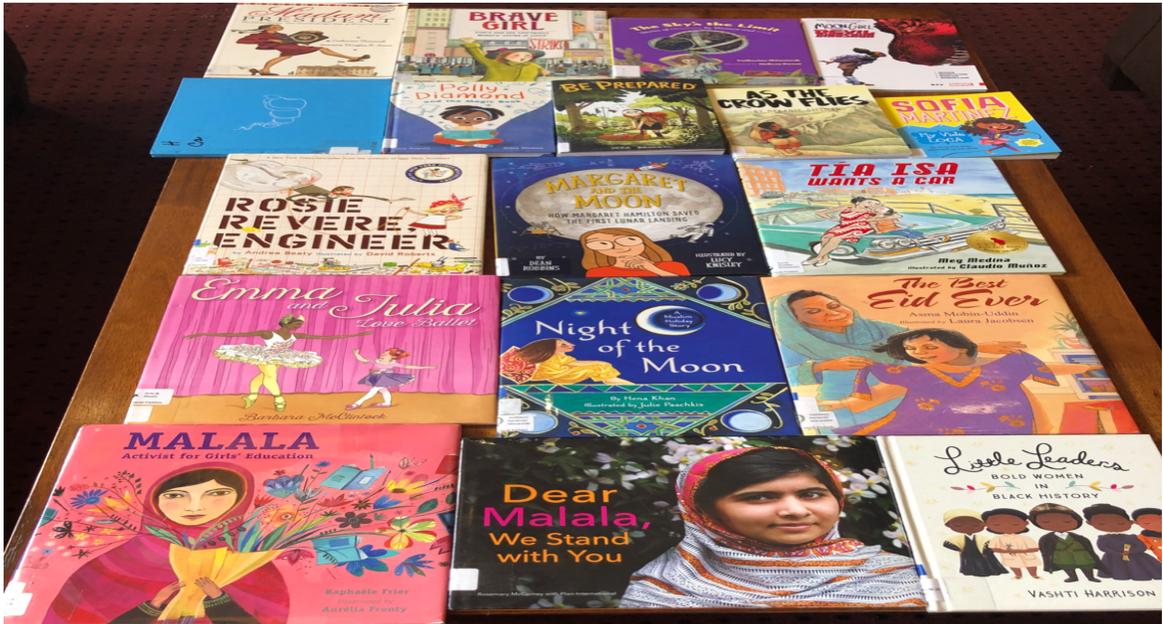


After four weeks of becoming acquainted with the literature, the students entered three phases of engagement with the phenomena: *deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action*. The timeline for the phases was flexible and depended on the readiness of the individual student. This allowed students to explore their voices, while allowing me to identify and document how the phenomena was produced, provoked, and took shape over time through multiple productions. I paid particular attention to observing the lines of flight, and documented how the lines of flight emerged though each stage; as such, it was

critical to not force or rush the process. The three phases are described in greater detail below.

### *Deconstruction*

The selection of books was made available to the students, and students picked which books that they were most interested in reading. The first four weeks were spent on the reading process. Here, I encouraged students to think about the texts, make sense of the texts, and make connections to the characters. I recalled as a young person enjoying books that allowed me to form deep connections to the characters, and it was important for students to experience this connection as well. The reading sessions did not always go the way I planned. The students at Arabic Elementary were not always prepared to analyze texts, connect to the texts, and to respond to the texts in creative ways. The students were not always prepared to critique and recognize oppression, because critical literacy was a new concept and they were only beginning to become skilled in this area. I hoped to foster an understanding that being connected to the literature can open up spaces for critical conversations around the texts, images, and social norms. I also wanted the students to be exposed to, and critically think about, females that were dissimilar to themselves. In my Post-reflexion Journal I wrote the following:

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry October 9, 2018*

*I want students to be able to read and connect to the texts in order to increase their opportunity to feel comfortable. This will help me support their knowledge and prepare them to challenge the "ideal lives" which are represented in the texts. I noticed them reading and looking at the texts and pictures thinking about it very deeply without any comment, and they did not grumble about the books. It seems there is no issue, frustration, concern or negative*

*feelings about the books chosen. While reading, I told the participants to "think about the connections between you and the text that you read, or between the text to world/event connections to you, or between this book and other thing in your memories. Also, do not ignore the part that does not seem to relate to your life. How is it different from your life? What do you think about it? How do you feel?"*

Participants spent a good portion of the session time critically reading the books guided by my encouragement for deep thought and analysis (see Figure 3-6). My goal was to encourage my students to be open to critical conversations and break the culture of silence that can overwhelm people who feel like they are outsiders in society, such as females in a male dominated society.

**Figure 3-6**

*Phenomenological Materials – Reading Texts*



After the initial reading period, the students spent the next three weeks deconstructing the book through a series of questions (see Appendix E). The questions were written as suggested by Jones (2006). The purpose of the questions was to

encourage the readers to "use perspective and power to position readers and characters inside the text in particular ways" (Jones, 2006, p. 129). These post reading discussion sessions provided the place, space, and reflection opportunities to continue to explore the phenomenon.

### *Reconstruction*

The reconstruction process took place through open dialogue. Open dialogue helps to break the silences of the past. In breaking the silence, space that was once used for oppression can become more free for authentic voice, and can allow for new representations in physical text, multimedia, and social interactions. In this phase, the participants construct their own story in part inspired through the texts they have read, and reacted to. They are also influenced through our biweekly sessions in which deep thought and conversations emerge. The students develop photo illustrations and essays of their lived experiences. Participants open up a writing space where they may develop and express their lived experiences and use their imagination to express themselves and break the barrier of fear. This allowed the writing process to be an empowering experience. Students were encouraged to use strong action verbs and practice expressing their voice through descriptive language. Students had full freedom to choose their words and illustrate and create their pictures.

The children's pictures and words were not a complete picture of their struggles, but shone a light on some of the challenges they face. Their essays were a starting point for acknowledging and discussing, in their own voice, their identities and developing a sense of personal agency. In this way, students were deeply engaged in the experience

(see Figure 3-7). The process was entirely self-guided, I only provided assistance when

asked, and encouraged the students to direct themselves and help each other.

**Figure 3-7**

*Phenomenological Materials – Participant's Writing and Coloring their Stories*



At the end of the reconstruction sessions, students worked to write their stories

and create their pictures. They illustrated with the colors of their choice, directed only by

their imagination. Students used rich details that represented the story and indicated

unique voice (see Figure 3-8). In the pictures, students used many bright colors and

intricate details to tell their stories. Each student's story represented herself and her

unique qualities, traits, and desires. Each student put herself in the center of the story, as a

suitable protagonist. They were allowed to be as creative and imaginative as they desired.

The most important thing was that the process was an empowering and enriching

experience that illustrated the acquisition of critical thinking skills and the use of voice.

**Figure 3-8**

*Phenomenological Materials – Storytelling Artifacts*

Malaak
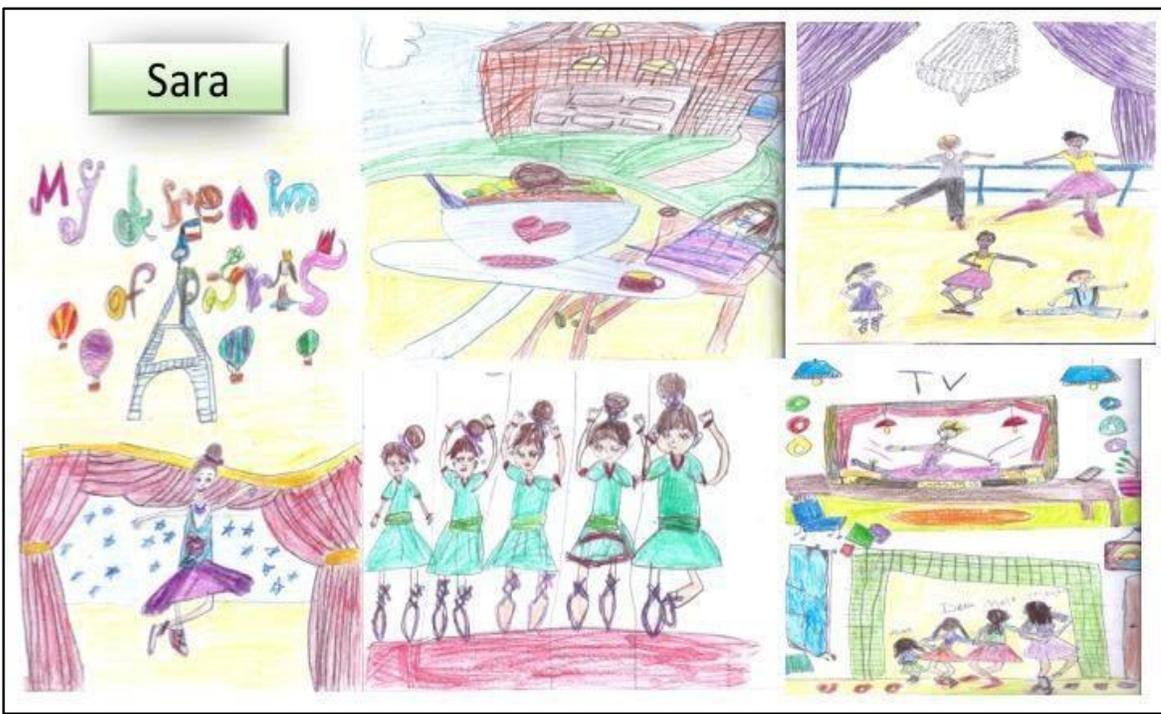
Sara
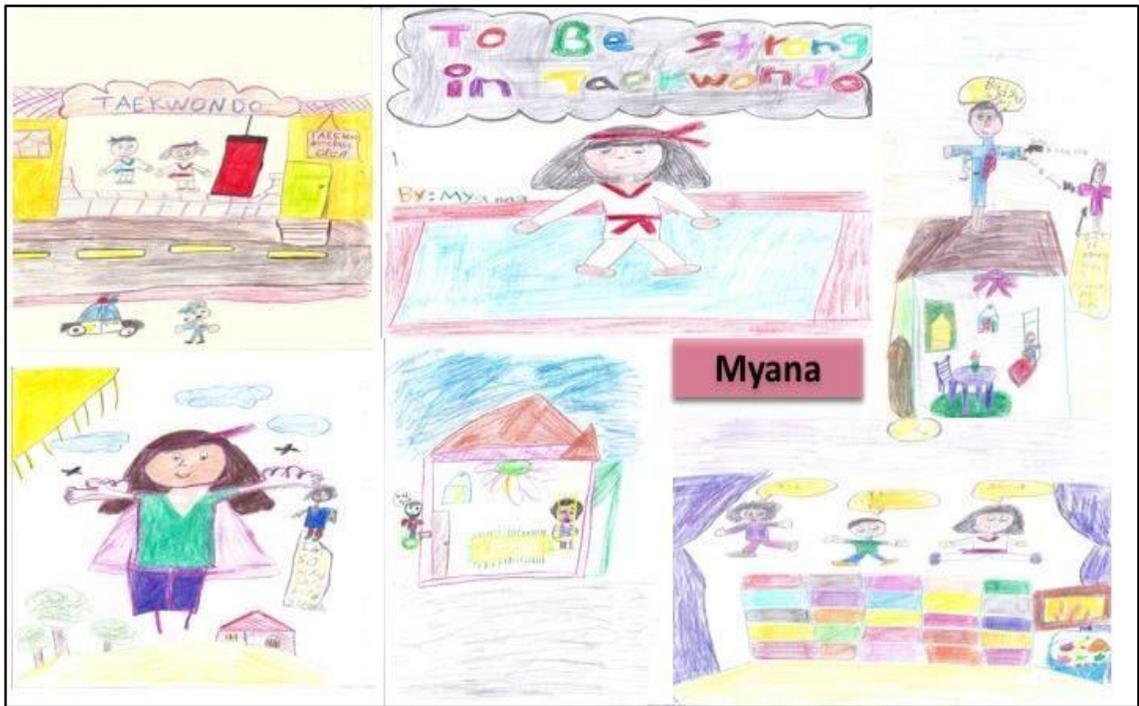
*Social Action*

Robin's (2005) four-step approach (for reference see Figure 3-2) was introduced to help participants create their own digital stories and oriented their work toward social action. The students were dedicated and committed to telling their stories. Evident in the story making process was the acquisition of technical skills, including the use of multimedia tools and digital media, which they used to present their pieces professionally. I observed the students enjoying working as a group, and supporting each other in their literary journeys. The students successfully created their own collaborative learning environment spaces, where they exercised their voices. The students engaged in several elements of digital storytelling: picking the topics, drawing pictures, recording their voice and choosing a particular point of view. Students use the iMovie app which allowed students to learn through collaboration, production and project management (Sadik, 2008). An example of a student's use of the iMovie App (see Figure

3-9).

**Figure 3-9**

*Phenomenological Materials – Screenshot of Digital Media*



Student interviews were important sources of knowledge production. These

interviews allowed for a space to reflect upon the phenomenon of female student voice

and explored the production of the phenomenon. Careful examination of interview data

revealed how female student voice was evident through their expressed beliefs, language,

and critical analyses. Interview data allowed for the realization of access points that

provided the entry to understanding the student's lived experiences. Careful notes were

taken of authentic voice and how the experience of digital storytelling might serve as an

empowering means to break the silence of females and allow for freedom from

oppression (see Figure 3-10).

**Figure 3-10**

*Phenomenological Materials – Interviews*

| Phenomenological Materials | Details |
|---|---|
| Participant interviews | Documented protocol for conducting interviews<br>• Identification of safe spaces for conducting interviews<br>• Conducting one-on-one student interview<br>• Recording and transcribing interview content<br><br>Collection and documentation of visual data (i.e., drawings, sketches) provided during interview<br><br>Documentation of interview observations and field notes |

My reflexion journal, the last of the phenomenological materials, allowed me to explore past understandings of the phenomena and how the phenomena might emerge through the phenomenological tasks and activities. The post-reflexivity journal allowed for documentation of reactions to the emerging phenomena throughout the process in various settings and stages of the research process, and noted instances that surprised or facilitated greater knowledge or understandings of the phenomena. This also allowed for exploration of changing and shifting understandings and beliefs, "Examining your own assumptions gives you a better chance of taking hold of them, rather than the assumptions taking hold of you and in turn the phenomenon under investigation" (Vagle, 2014, p. 133). I consistently engaged in post-reflexing to try to better understand how the phenomena was connecting and disconnecting throughout the research process.

**Figure 3-11**

*Phenomenological Materials – Researcher's Post-reflexivity Journal*

| Phenomenological Materials | Details |
|---|---|
| Researcher's post- reflexivity journal | • Protocol for post-reflexive journaling<br>• Application and documentation of post-reflexion within journal (Google Docs and/or audio)<br>• Documented reflexions before, during, and after sessions<br>• Recording and transcription of voice memos; transfer to journal<br>• Analysis of post-reflexion experiences and processes |

**Component #3: Make a Post-Reflexion Plan**

Creating a post-reflexion plan is an important component of the post-intentional approach. Creating a post-reflexion plan requires the researcher to be humble and open to new ideas and understandings. Lather (1993) explains reflexivity as a method that allows researchers to recognize the complex ways in which qualitative research becomes recorded, written, and interpreted. She points out that the researcher not only needs to look through a careful lens, but also should consider how they themselves constitute reality and how this may affect their perceptions of power and knowledge. Post-reflexion therefore allows the researcher to react to what is uncovered through the research and serves as a guide for the researcher to challenge their own biases in move beyond their own assumptions in order to explore how the phenomenon is provoked and produced (Vagle, 2018).

Considering the intention and importance of a post-reflexion plan prepared me to undergo the arduous process of post-reflexing. Here, I needed to learn to pay careful attention to the complex expression of social and cultural norms, and how these norms

are constructed and expressed as a qualitative researcher. How I wrote and documented

the phenomena may be framed through a personal bias of which I was not aware (Vagle

& Hofsess, 2016). "Examining your own assumptions gives you a better chance of taking

hold of them, rather than the assumptions taking hold of you and in turn the phenomenon

under investigation" (Vagle, 2014, p. 133). My post-reflexion plan helped me

systematically put myself in the middle of the phenomenon (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

In committing to the self-reflexive process, I prepared myself to explore and document

the complexities of the phenomenon. This allowed me to engage with my reflexivities as

swells of intensities which is engaging "with my reflexivities as clusters and intensities"

(Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p. 4). My post-reflexion journaling revealed my reaction to many

complex and dynamic activities during the student sessions and throughout my data

collection. This allowed me to examine how female student voice is provoked, produced,

and shifts over time. An example of my post-reflexion Journal (see Figure 3-12).

**Figure 3-12**

*An Example of Post-Reflexion Journal Entry November 20, 2018*

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***Before arriving at the school:*** *As I prepared my visit to the school this morning I reflected on my own experiences with the phenomenon of female student voice. This provided an excellent time for centering and self-reflection. As a former female student in Saudi Arabia, I experienced many of the same banking education components and consequences as current students do. I reflected on how as a student, I did not have a voice, and I had no one to take my hand and listen to me, share with me, and discuss things that were important to me. I did not have anyone to discuss what I wanted to do, what I wanted to say, and what I wanted to be and what I should believe about myself. As an educator today, I believe that students should not have to go through these same feelings and emotions. I believe that all female students should have the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop as a unique and individual person with a strong and confident voice. I reflected on the banking model and how this model does not provide any space or place for reflection or identity development. I feel empowered by the current opportunity to continue to support my students and discover their voices. I am*

---

*concerned about what I will do if the students aren't comfortable and do not feel engaged in the process. I wonder, "How can I help them? Are they going to think that banking model is easier for them? Are they going to open their feelings, thoughts, and conversations?" I am heading to meet my participants today with full of hope that they will tell me what they think, what they want, and what they believe.*

***During my visit:*** *After recess, I met my participants in the school library. The girls had finished lunch and were very excited. We started with books that we had read at our last meeting. During our last meeting, we explored books that identified a hero and heroic acts. I asked the girls, "who is your hero in your life?" Sara said, "my dad because he is helping me with my homework." Nora said, "my baby brother because he was sick for a very long time and had a couple of surgeries and he fight for a very long time to be home with us." Myana said, "my older brother because he always helps me and plays with me." Alla chose her dad to be her hero. She said, "My dad is my hero because he taught me to be tough and he always smiles even when he was on his death bed. He was always there for me when I needed him, but he is not here anymore." Malaak identified her dad as her hero "because he is strong and can do hard stuff and he is working whole the day and when he came home at night he wants play with me" I was surprised that none of the students picked a female, such as their mom, teacher, or sister. I was wondering why this was. I thought that maybe the girls do not think a female can be a hero. I wonder if they have stereotypes of men as being the hero. This lead me to open another conversation. I asked, "Do you know any girl who is a hero in your life?" Everyone tried to think about an example. I think it is interesting that Nora told me, "Yes! I remembered when my mom and my big brother was talking about the girl that she is from Saudi Arabia and she is the first Saudi girl who worked with NASA, but oh! I do not know her name...I forgot." I told her, "Yes, you are correct, she is Mishaal Ashemimry, and she is the first woman from Saudi Arabia to join NASA." Myana said, "Cool! How is space going to look?" Alla said, "I think you need to be a scientist, smart, and study hard so you can go to the space." Sara said, "One day I saw a movie of Astronauts and it is cool, there is no gravity there, so people can fly, they can see the moon and the planets." Malaak said, "I do not want to go to space, it is scary, I do not like it!" All the students tried to persuade Malaak that space is going to be a wonderful and fascinating experience and they talked about how they could challenge themselves and work on themselves to be a brave and believe in their power and strength.*

***After my visit today:*** *I am so happy with what I saw today during our session. For example, during the session, Sara asked an important question, "Why do all the books have strong and great girls?" At this moment I was thinking, "What did she mean by strong? And great? What the difference between these words?" Myana answered our questions immediately "girls love to be a hero and strong. It feels that you have the control and you can help anyone. I asked the students, "What is the definition of hero?" The girls' answers were themed around "strong, big muscles, helpful, can do anything, famous, do not feel weak." It was so impressive to see*

*the students shift their conversation from identifying male heroes, to discussing themselves and other females as heroes. They shifted from thinking of themselves as supporting males as heroes, to realizing they can support themselves and other females as heroes as well.*

### Initial Post-Reflexion Statement

A post-reflexion statement allows the researcher to examine his or her own assumptions and background as it relates to and potentially affects the post-intentional research process. It is important for the initial statement to explain how the researcher may be affected by the research process. For example, Vagle (2018) advises that researchers "begin to try to see what frames…that is connections/disconnections, assumptions of normality, bottom lines, and what [is shocking]" (p. 155). Therefore, I considered my own experiences and background as I developed this statement (see Figure 3-13).

**Figure 3-13**

*Initial post-reflexion statement*

*As an upper middle-class citizen of Saudi Arabia, I was privileged in that my parents challenged many of the common beliefs about the role of women in Saudi Arabian society. My father expressed to me that I was not limited by my female classification, and he ensured that I was able to participate in experiences that other females in Saudi Arabia were not privy to. For example, my father made sure that I played sports, even though this was not allowed in the schools. He also encouraged me to get my PhD and become gainfully employed in Saudi Arabia, rather than submitting to a life as a wife and mother.*
*Despite my parents' uniquely progressive approach to the role of females in society, I was ultimately limited as a female, despite my father's best attempts to compensate for the inequities I experienced. Inequity between men and women was unavoidable for me to experience, as a child and still today. As a student in Saudi Arabia, I was taught under the banking concept of education. Strict adherence and obedience to the teacher was expected and I did not have any opportunities to develop my voice and express myself. Therefore, I am particularly interested in changing this and allowing female students in Saudi Arabia to begin to use their voice, and resist the oppressive nature of society. I found success with using DST in my own family, and I saw how DST allowed my children to develop important social and personal skills, and facilitated their own voice and empowered them as social agents.*

> *My desire is to return to Saudi Arabia where I will train pre-service teachers on DST. I hope that by training teachers in the use of DST, they may become agents of change and inspire this in their students. As a female, my goal is to work with female pre-service teachers, who will teach female students. Gender segregation is a reality in Saudi Arabian society that I am forced to work within. This forces me to consider the unique needs of female students independent of the needs of male students.*

I revisited my statement throughout my work with my female participants in order to continually update and reflect upon my statements and beliefs. I questioned how the banking model of education could be disrupted. I questioned my own ability and resolve to disrupt such a traditional practice. I also wondered how the students might be affected in the long run, once I had left the classroom. Would they get into trouble with their regular teacher for doing and saying things that I had previously encouraged from them? I also wondered how this would affect their relationships with their peers, and if they would feel socially isolated. I did not want the students to feel left-out or out-of-place, and I did not want these feelings to interfere with their academic achievement. I also revisited my statement to reflect on the parent experience, and how DST and the process of DST would be interpreted by the parent. My hope was the parent would appreciate their child's thinking and self-expressions, and continue to encourage her to speak up and use her voice.

### Post-Reflexion Journal

I created a document in Google Docs where I recorded the date, time, and setting of each interview and observation. Each submission consisted of a three-column table, with space for my thoughts before, during, and after the interview. I used the comment feature to add and include thoughts and feelings that occurred to me after the interview and as my understanding of the phenomenon developed. I also used footnotes to

reference the origins of my thoughts and beliefs. I followed the advice provided by Vagle (2018) when considering the elements to include in my journal. Therefore, I paid attention to connections and disconnections with the phenomenon, my own assumptions of what is normal and supposed to happen, beliefs that are hard to discontinue and persist despite evidence to the contrary, and moments that are especially surprising and shocking. By paying attention to these four strategies, I uncovered the various lines of flight that emerged, shifted, and changed, throughout my exploration. The assemblage between student voice and the DST process became more defined for me as an example of lines of fight, and allowed me to see the connections between seemingly unconnected concepts. The lines of flight proved useful for understanding the dynamic nature of student voice and the relationship between student voice and DST.

### Researcher Positionality

The researcher position is defined as one in which he or she is intimately involved with every aspect of the post-intentional research. As an adult in the class, I realized that I held a great deal of power over the students as an elder and adult, and this provided me an opportunity to guide my students as a change agent role model. I felt particularly prepared and qualified for this research—personally, professionally, and intellectually, as I welcomed the opportunity to become entangled in the phenomenon, just as my students would. As a woman from Saudi Arabia who attended Arabic school, I was very comfortable around young female students who are familiar with the banking model of education. I also was prepared to explore the relationships between the banking model of education, myself, and my students, and how this affected and developed as female voice. As a former female student in Saudi Arabia, I also experienced a lack of student voice,

119

and I realized that I must be able to explore my own feelings with the phenomenon, and how my early experiences may intersect with my relationships and feelings toward my students. My position as a researcher, but also a mother of children who attend this school, also provided opportunities for exploration and self-reflexion, as I contemplated how my children's experience with DST compared to my students. Also important is not only my role as a researcher, but also as a teacher and education reformer in Saudi Arabia. I have a vested interest in this topic, and there is a great deal at stake for me in regards to my career and facilitating female student voice in Saudi Arabia. As such, I had to be willing to accept change within myself and be flexible in my approach in the present and in the future. My position as a researcher therefore forced me to give up rigidity and certainty and become simple and open. Awareness of these complicated dynamics all shaped my perspectives and intentionality of the phenomenon of student voice, and the interest in understanding how student voice can be provoked, produced, re-produced, and take shape.

I positioned myself in my role as both a researcher and an active participant, an observer as well as insider-outsider in relation to my research. I intentionally recognized and positioned myself so that I could practice active mindfulness and encouraged my students to become deeply entrenched in the process as well. According to Clark and Creswell (2010):

> As a participant, the researcher assumes the role of an inside observer who engages in activities at the study site and records information at the same time as participating in activities. This role offers opportunities to see experiences from the view of the participants to truly learn about a situation. (p. 261)

I also recognized the need to be aware of my students and their comfort levels. I made sure that I was always monitoring the students and checking their levels of comfort and ease with the topics, especially new topics that require deeper analysis and may accompany discomfort or feelings of unease. Therefore, I positioned myself as an insider because I have an "intimate knowledge" (Griffith, 1998) of my participants and I shared many of the same feelings, values, and identity (Kanuha, 2000). This position allowed me as a researcher more rapid and more complete acceptance by my participants. Also, being an insider allowed my participants to be more open with me so that "there may be a greater depth to the data gathered" (Talbot, 1998, p. 172). I found myself as an outsider sometimes when I thought about my data outside of the session and found my experience is different from my participants. I positioned myself as an outsider to avoid leaving the impression of fully understanding or speaking from the experience of being silent as a female student. Understanding how my role and position in this process could induce productions and provocations that extend beyond the phenomenon under study, I wanted to encourage deep reflection and shape-shifting, while also being mindful of the developmental capability of my students, as well as their individual capacities.

As an extension of this thinking and awareness of the cautions that may take shape during the course of the research, I did not want students to feel obligated to participate in my study. As such, I systematically separated their research participation from their relationship with me and their teacher. I assured my students that participating was something that was completely voluntary and that there would be no negative consequences from not participating or taking a break during sessions. This was particularly important because my role at the school extends beyond that of a researcher;

I am also a volunteer, student-parent, and teacher. I did not want my students to feel that their experience with this research and intense process would affect their relationship with my children, who may be their friends at school. As such, I was particularly mindful that as I carried out the steps of the post-intentional research and welcomed in the complexities of such a project, the comfort and safety of the students was prioritized.

## Summary of the Methodology

Chapter 3 provided an in-depth examination of the post-intentional phenomenological research approach that I have implemented in my research study. Guided by the assumption that post-intentional phenomenology research was the best fit, to me, for examining the phenomenon, I applied all aspects and components of this method to the study. The phenomenon, female student voice is an important first step for facilitating female resistance to oppressive educational systems. I discussed my interest in female student oppression, as a personal victim of such unjust educational structures, and how *Crafting Phenomenological Research* resonated with me. I was excited about the opportunity this method posed for addressing female oppression in Saudi Arabia. I now consider myself a true research phenomenologist. My exploration began with a deep dive into Component #1, where I identified the phenomenon of female student voice, and the social issue of female oppression. Within Component #1, I emphasized the contexts of the phenomenon and explained how female student voice may contribute meaningfully to social change. I provided a detailed account of the participant selection process, and the methods by which my five female students were recruited into the study and how I used this methodology to discover how female students experience voice. I applied digital storytelling as the medium for which to understand how the phenomenon can be

produced, provoked, and shaped over time. To achieve this, the students read texts that advocated for female protagonists as the main character in the story, and connected their own lived experiences to that of the female protagonist. This was significant, as children's literature often features males as the protagonist, and females play a supporting role to the male. I used self-reflexion journal entries to note my observations with the dynamic phenomenon. In the next chapter, I present Vagle's (2018) post-intentional component #4, which required me to intentionally explore the phenomenon of female student voice using theory, phenomenological materials, and post-reflexions.

## Chapter 4: My Intentionality and Data Analysis

*"Make me feel I can do it and I am not afraid and not left out."*

- Alla, age 8, third grader

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of how the post-intentional researcher thinks through the post-intentional research with intention. Thinking with intention involves several components that have been well established and documented in the post-intentional literature. I share how I used my understanding of intentionality to examine my phenomenon of female student voice in this study. I also describe how I used Vagle's (2018) whole-part-whole process to engage with the data in order to explore the phenomenon more deeply with the three parts of data analysis. Thinking through the provocations allowed for a deeper, more intense, phenomenological experience.

Post-intentional phenomenology conceptualizes events as intentional. These intentionalities are always moving as they take multiple shapes and evolve organically through social relationships. Vagle's (2018) interpretation of intentionality employs the lines of flight concept postulated by Deleuze and Guattari. In this interpretation, phenomena are linked to social contexts intricately and dynamically. Importantly, intentionality is not a static state inside people or objects, but are found throughout all forms of being and experience. Intentionalities are examined through people as they reflect on their lived experiences, and interpreted as products of social relationships and existence (Vagle, 2014, 2018), which expands on Husserl's (1970) conceptualization of intentionality as a relationship between people and the world.

My interpretation of intentionality for purposes of the current study requires being physically, emotionally, and mentally present in the classroom, school, and community.

In this way, I am allowed to understand and examine how students interact with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1974). Therefore, as a post-intentional phenomenologist, I made concerted efforts to try to see what was invisible but implied, and listen to what the silence was saying to me. I listened to what the silence implied while also being aware that what I was learning was incomplete and dynamic (Vagle, 2014). As Vagle (2014) states, "Intentionality is running all over the place, all the time-at times with clarity, but most often in the gnarliness of life" (p. 113).

Through my engagement with the data collection process, I was able to identify tentative clues about the phenomena as they emerged and through this, was able to gain perspective into the lived experiences of the students as members of the social world. My experience in the classroom was rooted in my belief that the classroom was a vessel of energy that carried a great deal of power and experiences through and within the students and their interactions between and among each other. Together, the students created a tangled web of stories and identities that I worked to uncover. I sought to provide a safe space for students to exercise and hear their voices. I encouraged student empowerment by affording the students unlimited opportunities for power expression.

Reflecting on my own position and experience as a social being in the classroom, I noted that the teacher's intentionality differed from my own. The teacher was focused on teaching the curriculum and her energy was devoted to maintaining decorum so that she could stay on time and get through the lessons as planned. As such, the teacher was not aware of the expression of student voice, nor exerted effort into engaging student voice and examining the tangled stories that student voice evoked. In an effort to distinguish myself from the teacher, I purposely and intentionally thought about how I

would experience the classroom if I were a young female student, and what I would implicitly understand about my social identity. I thought about how my future might be affected by these experiences in the classroom. I wondered about how this would affect myself in different contexts, such as the power I would feel in Saudi Arabia as a student, teacher, and mother. I also wondered about the current student experience in Saudi Arabia. I imagined classrooms where students were encouraged to talk, wonder, and discover the world around them as they became entangled in DST and experiences.

### Component 4: Explore the Post-Intentional Phenomenon Using Theory, Phenomenological Material, and Post-Reflexions

There are many ways for a researcher to explore a phenomenon. I listened, wrote, examined, studied, read, and played with the phenomenological material in order to capture provocations and productions of how female student voice might take shape for my young female students. As a post-intentional phenomenology researcher, I applied a whole-part-whole analysis. First, I conducted a holistic reading and carefully examined all of the phenomenological materials. I then applied thinking with theory from Jackson and Mazzei's book *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research (2012)* to consider how to best conceptualize the phenomenological materials through data analysis and data interpretation. I intentionally post-reflexed the phenomenological material mindfully and thoughtfully. I applied Vagle's (2018) three parts within component four to carry out this process.

### *Part 1: Deconstruct the Wholes of Phenomenological Material*

To deconstruct the wholes into parts, I first initiated a careful analysis of students' discussions, story books, interviews, think-aloud observations, and digital storytelling. I analyzed this data through whole-part-whole analysis. This is where Deleuze and

126

Guttari's (1987) philosophical theory of lines of flight were used. Application of the lines of flight concept allowed me to slow down and reorient my thinking beyond yes or no logic. I avoided static thinking of the phenomena, and allowed my thinking to "take off" in ways that I could not otherwise anticipate (Vagle, 2018). I looked at the whole and then applied concepts about lines of flight to operationally and analytically discern the manifestations of the phenomenon and break it into parts. Here, I refrained from taking notes and attended only to my thoughts as I gave myself time for reflection. I read each of my participants' conversations one at a time, followed by reading my field notes, voice recorded observations, and post- reflexive journal. I then asked myself, "What doesn't seem to fit? If I follow this 'mis-fit' notion, idea, insight, perspective, what might I learn about the phenomenon that is not yet think-able?" (Vagle, 2018, p. 157). I noted how each part of the whole connected dynamically in relation to the other. I investigated this through deconstruction in order to understand the fluid nature of the phenomenon.

I interrogated how the phenomenon was produced, provoked and ultimately took shape as a continuous process of construction. For example, in Myana's discussion, she created her story in which she was strong in Taekwondo. I labeled this provocation as a moment *of constructing identity* (which will be discussed in Chapter 5). There was a moment in her discussion that she realized she had placed herself as a strong- lead character. Previously, Myana had compared herself to her father, who she admired as a strong capable adult and hero-figure. Later in the post-intentional process, Myana identified herself as an "extraordinary hero." As such, Myana broke a previously held gender barrier where she had unwittingly submitted to an assigned gender role as hero

supporter. She was able to construct a vision and image of herself as a hero and a female, and communicate her perceived strength and value to others in her digital story.

Embodied intensities allowed me the opportunity to notice, reflect, and document on these emerging and fleeting productions and provocations and how the students identified themselves as social entities. Here, I noted Myana's critical moment where she realized that she herself could identify as both female and a hero. Examining Myana's work from the beginning to the end of her digital story, she started as a young female who was resistant to challenging herself and her image and self-identity. Examining Myana's reading, discussions, pictures and artwork, and her digital storytelling, I was able to realize how all elements came together to produce a whole digital story where her identity was formed and exhibited. Here, I engaged in deep thinking about the productions and provocations. In these moments of noticing, I began to notice lines of flight intensities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) where Myana started to wrestle with and challenge her thoughts, ideas, and traditional beliefs, slowly becoming open to new ways of thinking of herself and the world. It was also in these moments where I was able to appreciate the opportunity to understand how these dynamics took place and shape.

I created a safe space in my home to allow me to consider all the phenomenological material that I collected, anticipate lines of flight and connect these lines of flight to my thoughts and phenomenological materials. This safe space took shape in my hallway, where I deeply engaged and connected with my phenomenological materials and the productions and provocations realized. During this process, I wrote across the complexities and entanglements of my phenomenological materials as indicated in the coloring, pictures, post-it notes, my reflections, and theories. It was here

within this safe space that I became aware of the lines of flights' intensities and where I

saw how the phenomenon of female student voice was produced over time and space, and

how the phenomenon was produced and provoked over multiple contexts (see Figure 4-

1).

**Figure 4-1**

*Productions" and "Provocations" of the Phenomenological Material*
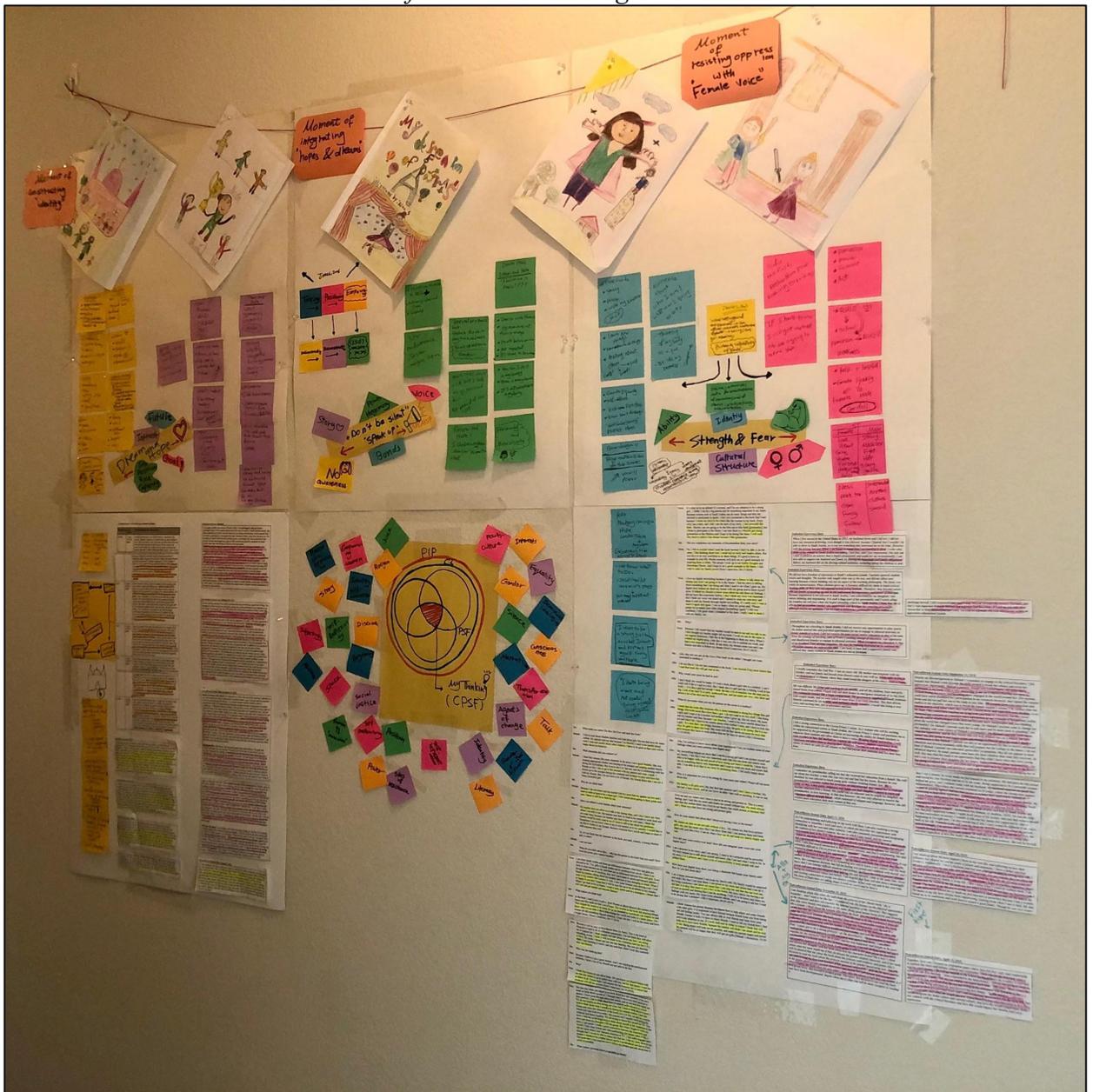
*Part 2: Thinking with Theory*

Thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) encourages the opening up and contemplation of phenomenological material, and allows the researcher to understand how the material may find itself in other spaces that were previously not used for the phenomenon. This is helpful in post-intentional phenomenological research, as it allows the intentions of the phenomenon to "be philosophized—conceptualized, discussed, opened up, and contemplated" (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p.3) in multiple ways. This analytic approach of "plugging in to produce something new is a constant, continuous process of making and unmaking" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 1), and "should not be viewed in a linear 'methods' fashion, but in an open and shifting cyclical pattern" (Vagle, 2018, p. 139). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) consider theory to be a purposeful act that is fluid and dynamic, and may change as the researcher reacts and uses the data. Thinking with theory works well with post-intentional thought, in that thinking with theory necessarily involves a willingness on behalf of the researcher to be open and willing to explore new identities and webs of fluid entanglements. As such, reacting to the data along with thinking with theory involves allowing oneself to plug in and make new connections (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Thinking with theory is also useful to elicit productions and provocations of the phenomenon. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) provided three requirements for researchers to consider and apply when thinking with theory in post-intentional research:

1. Putting philosophical concepts to work while disrupting the theory/practice of encountering events as binary by decentering each and instead showing how they constitute or make one another.

2. Allowing analytical questions that are used to think with to emerge in the middle of "plugging in" made possible by accessing specific theoretical concepts.

3. Showing the suppleness of both theory and data when "plugged in" by revising meaning as new interpretations emerged through the plugging-in process.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) encourage researchers to explore themselves "in spaces which we no longer know how to describe" (p. xi). Following this approach, I identified and plugged-in theories and theorists to my thinking in order to analyze my students' lived experiences as displayed in their digital storytelling. To think with theory, I employed Critical post-structural feminist (CPSF) theories advanced by Jones (2006), Davies (2003), and hooks (1990), (For review, please see the conceptual framework from Chapter 2). The iterative cyclical process of Vagle's (2018) methodological components were exercised in addressing my research questions.

*Part 3: Analyze Post-Reflexions*

Analyzing post-reflexions is a process that implies an intentional focus on post reflexivity. To record this data for analysis, post-reflexions are recorded by the researcher in what is referred to as a post-reflexivity journal. The journal allows the researcher to understand and explore knowledge that was acquired before, during, and after presentation of the phenomena. Post-reflexions allow the researcher to explore and assess knowledge gained through lived experiences and bring these experiences unto awareness, so that the researcher may understand how their past experiences shape their interpretations of the phenomena. This is important for the researcher to consider as they observe the dynamic lines of flight and complexities of the phenomenon. By being aware of how their past experiences impact their interpretations of the phenomena, the

researcher may challenge previous assumptions about the phenomenon. Attending with intentionality to critical moments of intrigue, connections, disconnections, concern, perplexion, and constructions of the phenomenon as it takes place and shape, deepens this exploration and allows the researcher to see the phenomenon being shaped, produced, and provoked (Vagle, 2018).

## Component #5: Craft a Text that Engages the Productions and Provocations of the Post-Intentional Phenomenon in Content(s), around a Social Issue

The final component of the post-intentional phenomenological analytical process involves a process for crafting text to illuminate the phenomenon as it is experienced in the temporal and social context. It is important here that I remember that the phenomenon is always changing and fleeting. I am free and encouraged through the post-intentional process to play with the form and shapes the phenomena takes. It is important that I bring all I can to the surface so that the intensities may be realized and explored (Vagle, 2018). Vagle describes how tentative manifestations are invoked and inferred within the phenomenological material, and how the provocations can bring to light specific aspects of the phenomenon. Vagle has described these provocations as Deleuzoguattarian assemblages (Delueze & Guattari, 1987), where many forms of knowing come together to craft a momentary depiction and understanding of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014; Vagle & Hofsess, 2016; Vagle, 2018).

As the researcher, it is important to understand that any post-intentional realizations and manifestations are partial and incomplete. As such, all engagements with the phenomenon are simply snapshots in time, subject to continuous shape-shifting in and over time. As such, the shifting nature of the phenomena, provides a partial, time-limited understanding that must be continually revisited, addressed, and reflected upon. This step

is described in detail in Chapter 5, where all productions and provocations of the phenomena will be uncovered.

## Summary of My Intentionality and Data Analysis

Chapter 4 provided a detailed examination and a description of why it is important for the post-intentional researcher to deliberately and thoughtfully analyze and interpret the post-phenomenological materials with intention. I discussed how I created a safe space for examining my post-intentional materials in my home. This allowed me the opportunity to think carefully and become open to seeing the lines of flights, the intensities of the phenomenological events, and how the phenomena took shape over time. I used a "plugging-in" process in which I connected my thinking with theory to the phenomena, and tested my assumptions of the phenomena that I brought into the analytical process due to my previous lived experiences. I discussed the importance of carefully constructing and deconstructing the phenomena so that no provocations could be missed, and the importance of a post-reflexion journal to document these fleeting productions and provocations of the phenomena. In order to complete this process, I applied the three parts of component four. This involved an overall process in which I deconstructed the wholes of the phenomenological material into parts, and connected these parts together through thinking with theory. I then analyzed these post-reflexions in a similar manner, in which I applied theory to my interpretations and to my post-reflexion analysis.

In the next chapter, I present my findings through the post-intentional data analysis process. I provide a discussion of my findings, in which I discuss the productions and provocations I discovered of the phenomenon. I discuss how illumination of the

phenomenological constructs reveal the productions and provocations of female student voice as they emerged throughout the digital storytelling process. The three phenomenological constructs that were illuminated include: (*Moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity*, and *moment of resisting oppression with female voice*). These three moments are also explored in great detail in Chapter 5.

**Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion**
**Productions and Provocations of the Phenomenon**

*"Every story has a hero, and I feel I am the hero of my story."*

- Nora, age 8, third grader

The use of post-intentional phenomenology allowed me to understand, describe, interpret, and explore the phenomenon in its multiple forms (Vagle, 2018). Through rigorous application of the post-intentional phenomenological methodology, I sought to explore the phenomenon of female student voice in a K–4 Arabic classroom in the United States. In this chapter, I review my analysis process, specifically as it relates to capturing productions and provocations of the female student voice. In post-intentional phenomenology, it is important to understand how the tentative manifestations of the phenomenon in the early stages shift toward productions and provocations in the later stages (Vagle, 2018). Vagle (2018) describes a post-intentional provocation as the emergence of a phenomenon and the way in which it is elicited. The production refers to how the phenomenon takes shape over time, and a provocation is what facilitates the phenomenon taking shape. As such, the production is the ongoing shaping of the phenomenon, and the provocation is the mechanism by which the phenomenon is influenced and instigated.

My role as the phenomenologist required me to bring myself as fully as possible into the post-intentional process and to be open to the productions and provocations of the phenomenon. As such, I carefully read, re-read, and considered the productions and provocations of the phenomenon throughout the research process. The illumination of what I describe as phenomenological constructs emerged, including: *Moment of*

*integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity, and moment of resisting*

*oppression with female voice.* These phenomenological constructs regularly came to

mind and occurred in jottings and musings in my Post-reflexion journal and observational

case notes, allowing me the opportunity to explore the relationship between these themes

and the phenomenon under investigation. Upon further reflection on the productions and

provocations, I noted where the phenomenological constructs emerged, and this is when I

became more aware of how female students exercised and developed their voices in an

Arabic educational setting.

<div align="center">**Illumination of the Phenomenological Constructs**</div>

Illuminations of the emerging phenomenological constructs revealed the

productions and provocations of female student voices as they emerged throughout the

digital storytelling process. The provocations were illustrative of how female students

discovered their voices while grappling with their identities as Arabic females.

Each female student explored her experiences, identity, and voice through critical

analysis of a short story featuring a strong-minded, willful young girl, and discussion of

how that story was exercised in varied, partial, and fleeting ways. This allowed

participants to see themselves through the female character and allowed this provocation

to be produced through digital storytelling. The phenomenon manifested in different

ways. I was able to capture this through documentation and analysis of how the

phenomenon's "productions" and "provocations" emerged throughout my

phenomenological material (for review, refer to Figure 4-1 in Chapter 4). As the

phenomenon's assemblage is constantly being made and unmade, I captured and wrote

about the productions and provocations in the moment. As I explored these provocations,

reading within theory, I began to see how female students' voices might be taking shape through digital storytelling, the historical role of females in Saudi Arabia's society, and political decisions. Illumination of the following phenomenological constructs is discussed below: *Moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity, and moment of resisting oppression with female voice*.

**Moment of Integrating Hopes and Dreams**

I refer to the first provocation I uncovered as the *moment of integrating hopes and dream*s. This phenomenological construct describes the female students' burgeoning ability and propensity to think about and plan for future events. Specifically, hopes and dreams refer to a dual process in which the student can hope or wish for something to happen to her in the future, and then dream about this happening through mental pictures. Hope is demonstrated through verbal utterances and reflection (Lopes da Silva, 2003); dreams are illustrated through mental imagery, pictures, and drawings (Kaski, 2002). Students' use of dreams reflects hope, where they not only wish for something to happen, but also mentally explore the event that they hoped for. Hope indicates a belief that something can happen, and may invoke a desire, where dreams provide space for the exploration necessary to actualize what is hoped for, and to work to make this happen in the future (Bernier, 2015). Hopes and dreams are important and salient indicators of identity development and are closely tied to the overarching examination of the phenomenon of this particular study.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, to chase down the "lines of flight" that I produced, I applied Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) *thinking with theory* as a "plugging in" process. Therefore, I plugged in theoretical concepts and understandings to phenomenological

material. More specifically, I utilized Jones' (2006) critical post-structural feminist (CPSF) theories focusing on critical literacy. This allowed for a reference point when analyzing the emergence of hopes and dreams in the phenomenological material. In my early interactions with the participants, I introduced developmentally appropriate critical literacy practices by providing feminist books for reading. I asked the students to read and reflect on the characters and to connect those reflections to their own lived experiences. Here, I facilitated group discussions and asked several questions to provoke critical thinking and document manifestations of the phenomenon, such as, "How does the identity of the female character contribute to the story? How is the female character's life similar to your own life? What feelings emerge within you when you think about the female character? Why do you think this is? In what ways can this text be challenged? Who is marginalized? What is normal for the female character?" I also asked more deconstruction questions (see Appendix E). The purpose of asking these deconstruction questions was to allow for critical thinking and self-reflection and encourage students to think about and develop their own identities. The deconstructive process allowed them to become more aware of who they are, how being female defines them and others, and how they can position themselves (e.g., central or marginalized) in their own lives through connection to the story (Jones, 2006).

Jones (2006) explains how important it is for researchers to create spaces for students that allow for talk about class status, background, interests, and abilities. In an effort to accommodate this type of safe space, I encouraged students to talk about their experiences and reactions to the readings. I encouraged students to move around and explore their feelings in different spaces throughout time. By doing this, I was able to

create environments where students were comfortable talking about and sharing their moments of thinking about their hopes and dreams with others. The resulting discussions allowed the students to think about what was normal in the story and then compare that with their own identities and what "normal" means to them (Jones, 2006). It was here that students began to think about their hopes and dreams for the future. This was reflected in students' discussions, writings, and digital stories. It was possible to locate and define examples of hopes and dreams that were elicited through these activities. It was also possible to see where the connections and interconnections between hopes and dreams emerged, and how they presented themselves through space and time. For example, students discussed how their gender and identity affected their sense of self, and explored how this impacted their dreams for the future.

To understand this more, I focused on the lived experiences of two participants, Nora and Sara. I interpreted their constructions and deconstructions of the critical literacy concepts and how their voices took shape and expressed hopes and dreams for their futures through the phenomenological material. The participants thought of themselves as daughters, sisters, and friends, and talked about how the role they played with people varied depending on how they felt about themselves and feelings of power and autonomy between others and themselves in those relationships. They exhibited enthusiastic interest in developing their identities and locating and positioning who they would be in the future.

The importance of providing safe spaces within a school setting that follows traditional Arabic principles for female students to explore their voices and identities should not be underestimated. As described in Chapter 2, female students in traditional

schools in Saudi Arabia are limited in their opportunities for self-expression and self-exploration. This greatly impedes the likelihood of female students in Saudi Arabia to identify moments of thinking about themselves and discover their interests. Despite the tremendously rapid changes experienced by women living within Saudi society now, my participants are largely unaware of their ethnicity, social norms, the restrictive nature of a patriarchal society, and Islamic values. The participants I worked with believe Saudi Arabia to be a wonderful and good place where they would be unlimited in opportunities for growth and self-expression. They do not realize the restrictive political laws and the history of Saudi Arabia that highlight both the progress that has been made for women's rights, and the amount of work yet to be done. They are also unaware of the internal fighting between the liberal and conservative members of Saudi society, and how there are two distinct lines of thought regarding how women should be treated in the country. Even though the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has publicly supported women's rights, the majority of Saudi society does not echo his sentiments. As such, there is a big discrepancy between political statements and speeches, and what society accepts and allows in practice. It will take a long time for society to change in reality.

My participants accept this hegemony. For example, one participant, Nora, shared her hopes and dreams to become a female athlete when she returns to Saudi Arabia. She is not aware of the challenges she will face in actualizing this dream. It is very possible that society will not accept her as a female athlete; she may experience public humiliation and ridicule. What follows below how Nora responded when I asked her to, "Please tell me about your personal experiences when writing your story." She shared:

Nora:   I am from Saudi Arabia and there are differences between what boys and girls are allowed to do. Yes, girls in Saudi Arabia can do anything boys can do. There is no

140

limit to what females can do, and there are no differences between boys and girls. Even though females can do anything, they don't participate in sports and become athletes. I heard my parents talking about my country and how it was changing so much. When I went to my country this summer to visit, I saw some women were driving a car. I was so happy to see this! I hope that it will be easy for me to be an athlete in my country. When I go back to SA in future, I want to play sports and be a champion. I dream that I will win and get medals and become famous.

Me:     What makes you think that?

Nora:   In the book, I read [*Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History*] the women were heroes and this made me feel a lot of hope. The women in the book did amazing things. They helped the world to be better for us [as females] so everybody can respect us and know what we are able to do to help change the world and make it a better place. The women all did something big and amazing. I hope one day I will do the same and have a bright future. (Nora's interview, 04-17-2019)

In my post-reflexion journal, I processed and analyzed how I initially found Nora's comments to be surprising, because I was operating under the assumption that she would have a more deeply ingrained understanding of the hegemony that exists in Saudi Arabia--which would influence her beliefs about what is possible for females in her position. This made me begin to question why the realities of the current and historical context of female empowerment in Saudi Arabia were not more evident in Nora's belief system. My assumptions for why Nora did not express an understanding of the restrictive laws and practices follow.

First, Nora is a young, 8-year-old girl, and has likely been protected from the realities of Saudi Arabia by her parents, or she may have been told about the realities and refuse to accept them. She is likely not aware of the political speeches that have been performed by leaders and how what the leaders say and what society accepts are different. I assume that, because Nora is currently residing in the U.S., she is able to compare Saudi Arabia only to the U.S., and does not understand that there are differences between the countries because she is too young to understand how religion and politics

differ around the world, both educationally and experientially. On the other hand, Nora expressed pride and excitement for the changes to advance women's rights in Saudi Arabia, suggesting she has some awareness of the rapidly changing political climate. Lastly, she may have had previous opportunities to practice critical thinking skills that have prepared her to resist oppressive social structures, break her silence, and understand that restrictive laws and social practices can be changed (Jones, 2006).

To begin processing and unpacking the experiences that Nora shared, I revisited the phenomenological material throughout time and space. For example, I listened to Nora's interview (Voice Memo: 04-17-2019) when driving to the Children's Hospital Minneapolis to see my baby after leaving the Arabic school. I noted that I felt anxious about what Nora expressed as her dreams for the future. I also felt very proud of her, and of her strength and sense of purpose. I wondered if her dreams would come true, and I thought about the challenges that she may face in Saudi Arabia as she pursues her hopes and dreams. Is she going to have support from everyone around her? Or will they make it hard for her? What are the social norms that she lives within? I thought about her experiences with patriarchal hegemony at home and how this may connect to SA society. Nora has a father and two brothers. Will they accept her and support her dreams? I also thought about what the political climate may be when she returns to Saudi Arabia. It is possible that society may be more accepting of female autonomy, and that politicians will exert more energy into changing laws and developing new policies that will allow women greater freedoms.

Drawing upon and thinking with Jones' (2006) critical theory and critical literacy practices provided the lens (for me) through which to explore the *talking-positioning -*

*empowering* process. This allowed me to conceptualize and interpret my assumptions about the phenomenon of female student voice. I recognized and thought about Jones' (2006) assertion that living as a marginalized member of society can be overwhelming and oppressive, and connected these thoughts to the experiences Nora shared. Overall, Nora expressed a great deal of disconnect from the realities of Saudi society, but she expressed a great deal of connection to the powerful and heroic women in the critical literature. I wondered if it would be easier for Nora to pretend that discrimination does not exist and that she would not be a victim of discriminatory practices. Thinking with Jones helped me process Nora's lived experiences and visualize her as a girl who has the power, energy, and will to develop her identity and express her voice. Nora titled her story "Dream Big!" (to review, see Chapter 3, Figure 3-8: Phenomenological materials – Storytelling artifacts). In her story, she described herself as the first female professional gymnast in Saudi Arabia. Nora chose Gabby Douglas and Dominique Dawes from the book that she read as great examples for her to build her dream. Nora used her voice and expressed, "If you really like sports, can follow your dreams and work hard, learn about other people that can do this too" (Nora's digital storytelling, 4-15-2019).

In considering Nora's storytelling process, and her journey toward finding her voice, I connected hooks' 1994 reflections to Nora's. Nora exhibited deconstruction of the critical literature as she composed her own story. In thinking with Jones' (2006) domination concept, it appears that Nora was able to deconstruct the language in the critical literature and consider how this story could be used to dominate and also free others from oppression. She expressed understanding that females were oppressed, but also that liberation was not only possible, but desirable and beautiful. This was evident in

her happy and colorful stories. I connected my post-reflexion to hooks' 1994 reflection, in which she describes her teacher's political motivation to deconstruct dominant discourse while at the same time ensuring that students in her care were able to access and use critical literature that would help them grow in mind and character while becoming connected and functional in the dominant culture and the larger society. As hooks describes in her reflection, Nora's lived realities were made known and validated, and she then designed her own creation of reality related to her life.

Nora positioned herself in her story as a larger-than-life character, free from marginalization and oppression, implying her understanding of the realities of the world around her. As Jones (2006) points out, some people are more vulnerable to critical literacy than others, and some people are able to develop and exhibit their power more freely than others. Nora seemed to relish the opportunity to exert her freedom and power, developing and growing right along with the characters she read about. The language (*talking*) that Nora used in her story positioned herself within the center and not at the margins (see Figure 5-1). As Jones (2006) argues, positioning is a "poststructural concept and term that refers to the power of language and ideology that is most often visualized as a series of circles beginning with a common point and others moving out from the center" (p. 81).

**Figure 5-1**

*Phenomenological materials – Storytelling Artifacts*



Examination of Nora's facial expressions indicated her excitement and
enthusiasm for being identified as a powerful and strong female. I observed her eyes light
up as she explored and described her dreams. She talked without hesitation, clearly and
articulately, which demonstrated her confidence and pride for the character she developed
within herself. Nora showed her power by making herself central in her story. In doing
so, her voiced hopes and dreams also became central and magnified. Nora's classmate
and fellow participant, Sara, followed a similar strategy as Nora.

In her story, Sara used -*talking*- to position herself inside the text in order to show
empowerment through expression of her identity through voice. This was a new
experience for all my participants. They had not used the *talking-positioning-empowering*
concept before, and I noted how their voices flourished under this model. They were able

to play a powerful and productive role as they challenged their oppressors and resisted oppression. These students did not experience *talking-positioning-empowering* before because they were always outside of the content, and therefore unable to connect to the literature. In my study, I allowed the students to experience *talking-positioning-empowering* directly and explicitly. In doing so, I discovered that the phenomenon moved and took new shape as the participants' silence was broken. This approach helped me to open up spaces for mainstream and marginalized perspectives to be considered in the name of social justice.

Sara engaged in deconstruction as she read and connected to the phenomenological material, the story *Emma and Julia Love Ballet*. Upon reading the literature, Sara positioned herself as the main character Emma, who in the story was a young girl who takes ballet lessons, hoping and dreaming to be a ballerina one day. Sara empowered herself by connecting herself to Emma, developing her own story in which she assigned herself power of domination to be a successful ballerina. In Sara's story, she developed her identity and portrayed strength and power. Sara's story encompasses the overt reconstruction of her new identity outside of the current political and social climate in SA. Sara reconstructed her story to be one in which she was a ballerina in Paris. It surprised me that she chose Paris, rather than her country of origin or current country. She named her story, "My Dream of Paris" (to review, see Chapter 3 Figure 3-8. Phenomenological materials – Storytelling artifacts). Sara wrote in her digital storytelling, "My dream is to become a ballerina in the first palace in content of Paris" (Sara's digital storytelling, 4-17-2019). Sara's story took shape through her voice and digital story. I chose to interview Sara outside, where the weather was warm and the

season was changing. It was early in the morning, and the back of the school was quiet

and serene. There was a gentle breeze of fresh air, and birds were chirping in the

distance, enjoying the escape from winter. This setting allowed for Sara's story to

emerge, as Sara enjoyed quiet places to work and talk, and I thought she would enjoy a

beautiful setting outside of the classroom. In this setting, and through our work together,

Sara's story began to take shape. Sara developed and explored her assumptions about her

dream to become a professional ballerina in Paris and escape from her reality. I asked

her, "How did your voice evolve over time?" Sara responded:

Sara:    The first day when you asked us to think about how the character in the story made us think about ourselves" I thought that it was a very hard question to answer. I have never thought about that before, and no one has ever asked me that question. I had to think about how to connect with someone in a book. We do not usually do that during our class, but I tried to think about it more. I tried to think about what I usually do during my normal routine. I feel like Emma and Julia [the characters in the book] are a lot like me and my cousins. Emma and Julia both love ballet. My cousins and I usually meet during the weekend and dance together. We are trying to dance like people on TV. You know, I felt shy at the beginning to think about myself as the characters in the story and share my thoughts with the group. But when I began to write my story, it got easier. I made a good connection between the characters and myself. I feel when Emma saw Julia performing, her dream came to life. I felt the same when I saw someone dancing on TV. I felt really engaged and I thought that I would be able to dance like that too. I felt my story showed my dreams. I dream to be a ballet dancer and be a professional one day in Paris. The book that I read inspired me to follow my dreams and talk about how it could be possible.

Me:    What makes you think that it is possible [in Paris]?

Sara:    Because it will be easy to be a dancer there [in Paris]. This is the kind of thing that is hard to do in a Muslim community. I do not think they will allow me or support me. I think people will talk about me or say that I am doing something wrong. I think it will be better to be a ballerina here [in the U.S.] or Paris. My mom's friend saw me one day dancing. She saw me dancing while I was listening to music, and she said that I didn't look like someone who was Muslim.

Me:    Why was she thinking that?

Sara:    Because I believe I am a good dancer. And I am copying the professional ballerina. I think a lot of my friends are not able to do that.

Me:     Why?

Sara:   I think their moms do not allow them. Do you know my friend Fatima told me that she wishes to go to ballet class with me, but her dad doesn't want her to dance at all. Fatima didn't tell anyone but me because she is scared that someone will tell her parents (Sara's interview, 04-23-2019).

In this moment, rather than accepting the gender norms that are reinforced in her social environment, Sara began to open up spaces to think about an alternative place to help her realize her dream. Sara realized that there were places in society where her dream would be difficult to actualize, and was therefore able to imagine alternative spaces to explore her dream. Sara practiced critical literacy, which provided her the tools for insight and (re)positioning, and allowed her to (re)construct her identity to be at the center of the story, as did Nora. Sara is aware that her marginalized position in her country may prevent her from realizing her dreams. However, she worked to find her voice to re-create a "safe" space for her to tell her story and develop her identity as a ballerina. In her story, Sara recalled the positive feedback she received from her friends and family about her dancing, and that she did not look like a Muslim girl. She was able to see that it is possible for her as a female/Muslim/Arabic/Saudi national to connect with the spirit of a dancer, despite the strong stereotypes Muslim girls face. Sara challenged the assumption that it would be hard for her to achieve her dream, and that it would not be possible for her to have a professional career. She challenged the assumption that she would be unable to express herself as an adult and through her work. She challenged this assumption by putting herself, as a professional dancer, in the middle of the story. She rebuffed Fatima's position that she could not dance because it was not allowed by her father, and did not allow it to affect her own dream to be a dancer.

In my post-reflexion journal, I explored Sara's comments and my connection to her words. I wrote about how I came to the U.S. to learn a new strategy and method to improve female education in Saudi Arabia. I recalled my experiences as a young female student, becoming bored and tired with always having to sit in the classroom and listen to the teacher. As such, when I took classes in the U.S. and was encouraged to talk in class and express myself, I was shocked by how wonderful and free I felt. I grew socially and professionally through these open-ended classroom discussions. I always dreamt about being part of a change in my country by helping young female students feel empowered and know more about themselves, be conscious of their privileges, discover their voices and identities, and share those with others without fear of failure. It can be difficult for young girls who begin bearing the burden of oppressive gender norms (Jones, 2006). As such, I explored my fears that my students might be scared or traumatized by exploring their female identities. They may also feel fear or disappointment when understanding the reality of the oppressive nature of their home country.

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry, April 10, 2019*

*Together, Sara and I located an alternative space where Sara felt free, safe, and comfortable to explore her voice and identity without any constraints. I saw this for the first time when I told my participants, "We will go outside to the school backyard since the weather is nice and warm for our first meeting." Sara responded to me immediately, "Are we not going to work in the classroom?" I said, "No, we can change our place each time." She said, "Wow, I love that and it will be fun, it will not feel like we are sitting in the classroom and listening to the teacher, I like being adventurous and discovering new things." In this instance, I felt very connected to Sara at a personal level, and I was excited and interested to see the direction that Sara would take, and what she would discover about herself. I was also interested in how Sara would integrate her home culture and current culture, and how she would compromise these two cultures with the critical literature and how this would impact her identity and voice expression.*

Ultimately, I do not want my students to be burdened by their ascribed gender roles and be silenced. I believe it is time for young females to *speak up* and put their dreams on the table, and in doing so, start the process of breaking silence and resisting oppression. I firmly believe that my students have the power to promote social change and work to liberate females from oppressive gender norms. Therefore, in order to develop and explore female power, it was of utmost importance that I create safe spaces for my students where their voices could be heard and valued. Sara's experience of the phenomenon continued to take shape as she explored her voice through writing her story. This contributed to her construction of a new identity as she explored her dream. After reading the book *Emma and Julia Love Ballet*, Sara felt more comfortable bringing her voice and personal stories to the group discussion. Sara was able to share her interpretations of the text, and brought these thoughts and ideas into her digital story (see Figure 5-2).

**Figure 5-2**

*Phenomenological materials – Storytelling Artifacts*
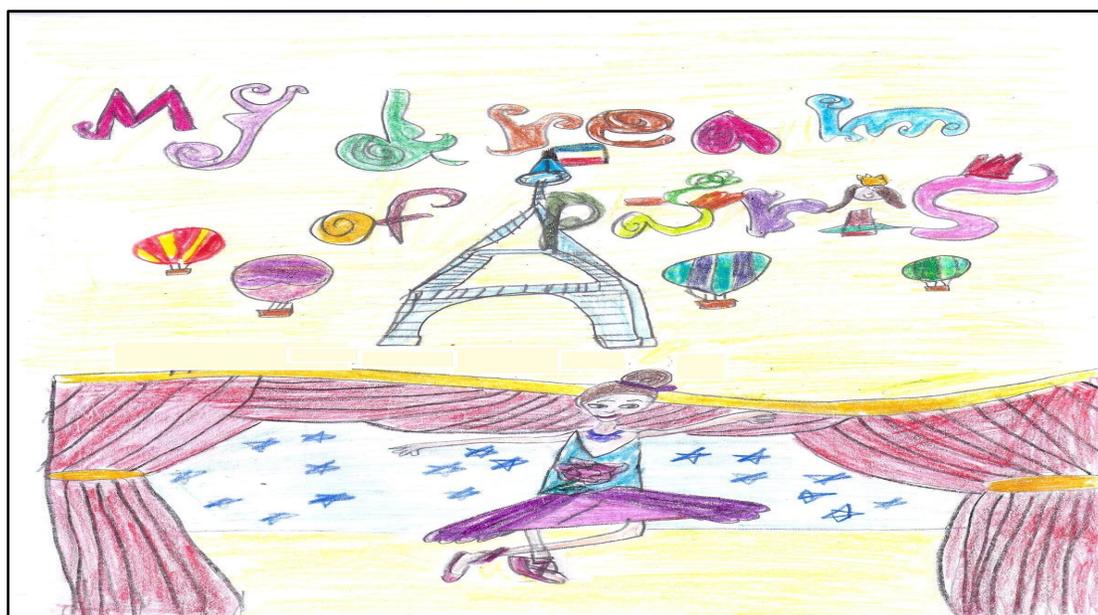
I paid close attention to opportunities for engagement, and to scaffold the building

of *"hybrid identities."* The concept of hybrid identities, when realized, refers to

embracing a hybrid consciousness that allows for flexibility and allows young females to

identify and adopt more than one reality (Jones, 2006; Anzaldúa, 1987; Delpit, 2006).

Sara did this when she merged her identity at home and the identity she developed

through her reading of the critical literature. Sara's story and process also align with

Anzaldúa's (1987) interpretation and perspective for identity. For example, Anzaldúa

provides the term "la mestiza" to refer to the complex, fluid process of attaining one's

identity when confronted with other complex ideas such as culture and gender norms. As

Anzaldúa (1987) expects, and Sara experienced, identity development comes with

significant challenges. For example, Anzaldúa found that she identified as a Mexican

woman and with the Mexican culture. However, she also identified with other cultures,

and she realized this connection shaped her personality, interests, and attitudes. Similarly,

Sara realizes that there is a difference between SA and American culture, and she finds

each culture relevant to her experiences and identity. I describe this connection in my

post-reflexion note.

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry April 15, 2018*

*As I'm contemplating and reflecting on my work with Sara, I am also realizing a strong connection to Anzaldúa's work and story, in which she describes her experiences with identifying with her own and other cultures. I am also constantly processing and integrating the realities of two distinct cultures, the one in which I was raised, and my current environment here in the U.S. This is similar to what Sara is experiencing as well. Additionally, I relate to Anzaldúa in how she describes the difficulty and spiritual awakenings that she felt and experienced when examining how different cultural experiences affected her identity and voice. I also find myself entrenched in this discovery process, and find it enlightening, but also extremely difficult as I try to process my own "mestiza." I wasn't satisfied by how I was treated in Saudi Arabia, and felt oppressed as a woman, having limited rights and voice. It was a difficult decision to leave for nine years. I left my family and those that I loved. But like the*

*author, it was important for me to try something new and to learn a new culture, and this bold move, this courageous decision, has left me feeling very proud and confident with myself, and I know that I can manage difficult emotions and feelings, as I have the tools to process dynamic forces and concepts and integrate them into my life and lifestyle, while at the same time, never losing my foundational values and beliefs. I am hopeful that Sara will also have a meaningful and exciting connection to rectify two distinct cultures, in her own way and in her own time. The lines of flight here are taking shape in both my world and in Sara's.*

The phenomenon of the female student voice continued to take shape through the reconstruction process (writing), and emerged within the digital stories through which students explored their identities. Students developed their self-identity by thinking through how the characters in the stories they read and reacted to, contributed to their identities and shaped their voices. They exhibited the impact of these interactions with the text through discussion and articulation of their hopes and dreams. They found themselves making conscious their struggles and ideas as they moved through the identity-building process. This reflexive work allowed them to come to new conclusions for understanding their experiences and to discover their identity and themselves. The students also thought about how they felt about their changing identities and considered ways in which they could express their feelings. The goal here was for the students to critically analyze and respond to the texts in order to promote voice and identity development and, ultimately, become agents of social change. An example of how their voices were provoked may be seen in Nora, who read the story *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History*. I asked her, "How can you describe your connection to the story?"

Nora: It's okay to be an athlete! It's normal, and I'm not ashamed to be a strong girl... I think I can be a big person and do something important in my future. Because women now in Saudi Arabia can do many things and they are allowed to participate in sports. I feel very connected to the book that I read because I wrote my story to be a hero like the

women in my book. Every story has a hero, and I feel I am the hero of my story. I feel powerful like them. Maybe I am not going to be the first one in this field [gymnastics], but I hope to participate in the future. I am sure there is a Muslim girl doing gymnastics at the Olympics and I hope to be strong like them. I will work very hard to achieve that dream because I like gymnastics.

Me:     Did you experience any moments of disconnection from your story?

Nora:   No. I felt so excited when I read the book because I feel I'm able to do the same. I like thinking about how I could tell my story and inspire others. But you have to be very confident to do these things. It's good to have an example in your life. Maybe someone will pick me as a good example for inspiring them in future. The people I look up to are Gabby Douglas and Dominique Dawes. And I hope to set a good example in the future. I also want to make my family proud (Nora's interview, 04-17-2019).

Reflecting on Nora's dream, and how she connects to Gabby Douglas' and Dominique Dawes' experiences, I began to think through how she answered the questions about her identity. Nora described being a female gymnast as "normal" and "not shameful." Nora developed her identity through analyzing and critiquing the experiences of the characters in the book. Nora positioned herself at the center of her story, showing that she sees herself as a valid example of a powerful and dominant person. Nora expressed that her story could be of value to others, and that others could learn from her, just as she learned from Gabby and Dominique. In doing so, Nora showed that she could see herself as powerful. I observed and noted examples of Nora showing herself as powerful. I thought about how this could contribute to her feeling in control over her future conditions (Jones, 2006). However, this kind of power can also be dangerous. For example, in considering the historical context of Saudi Arabia, feeling powerful could contradict the views of traditionally minded people who believe that females should strictly adhere to the customs and norms of society. This could lead to Nora being criticized or shamed over her feelings of power. Importantly, power is not

constant, but moves and shifts over time and over contexts depending on who the person is relating to (Jones, 2006). As such, it is inevitable that there will always be times when Nora does not feel powerful, regardless of how developed and strong her voice and identity are.

In my analysis, I identified instances of varying intensities within the phenomenological materials. For instance, Nora told me that, "all the characters are women and they are special and did something for their nation" (Nora's discussion, 11-14-2018). Nora dreams to be the same. Her dreams are very big, very high intensity, as they move, shift, and shape from the personal level to the global level. Nora shows a great deal of ambition that was not apparent until she began her digital story. Both Nora and Sara were inspired to be powerful through the words and stories of others from the same gender. The girls they learned from had power that allowed them to do something big for women and their society that they cannot practice in other places. Because of gender discrimination and strict norms stemming from religion, racism, classism and/or political and oppressive social practices can be considered as normal and accepted. Sara interprets her power as a way to resist oppression and domination. Sara's voice shows that she is aware that her power can help others like her, and can be wielded to liberate in terms of deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action in order to pursue social justice. I noticed that Sara creates a democratic society in which she lives.

By creating some breathing room, I was able to explore how voice took shape through digital storytelling. Nora worked to develop her identity by focusing on her dreams, and through this process was able to think about what she wanted for her future and develop her voice and identity. Our conversation related to this process follows.

Nora: I love my digital storytelling because it gave me a chance to talk about my dreams and what I am going to be in the future. I feel my story is talking about something that I am doing and what I need to do when I grow up. My digital story helped me share my dream with my group and to know myself more. It helped my friends to know more about me and share my feelings. I did not have this experience before. I don't think my voice was important. I don't think my voice was heard until I started to write my own story and share it with my friends through digital storytelling. It's really cool. I want to watch it again and again. I was so happy when my group said, "Please, please let us watch your video [digital storytelling] again!" I felt very confident. I felt great when I presented to the class. I really want to share it with my family, too.

Me: How did you feel your voice was not heard?

Nora: I do not know. I felt mad and I wished I could do something. I wished everyone could hear me.

Me: Did you do anything about it?

Nora: No

Me: Why?

Nora: Because I felt scared that my teacher would be mad at me and not talk to me. I also thought my teacher might tell my mom. I wish we can do the same in our regular classroom. I felt shy at the beginning to share my story. When I created my digital story, I felt like it was very fun to publish my work, and that it was important to share. In my story, my dreams come true and I am famous and able to follow my dream (Nora's interview, 04-17-2019).

Jones (2006) explains that "conversation is one way of breaking a culture of silence that can overwhelm people who are consistently positioned as outsiders of a mainstream society…people can challenge narrow representations and work toward change" (p. 60). In my conversations with the students, I found that our discussions contributed greatly to their voice development and facilitated the creation of their digital stories. I asked all my students to consider their goals for their futures and to think about the current political climate in Saudi Arabia, in order for the students to carefully and critically think about what they believe is possible for their futures and lives back in Saudi Arabia. As there are big changes going on, it is important to think about what our

155

role will be, and how we will support the changes (Jones, 2006). It is important to think of ourselves as agents for social change, and powerful women capable of changing gender roles in society. Nora's digital story opened up a space for her to explore how she experienced empowering herself, and helped her to understand her world and how to achieve her goals.

Jones' (2006) theory, as a poststructural feminist, explains that students must be fully engaged in the entirety of an activity, rather than just a part of an activity. As such, participants engaged fully in the digital storytelling activities, developed their critical thinking, and followed the process through to the conclusion. Participants were able to see the final products and productions of their work and analyze how they were able to break oppression and exercise their voices in the traditional classroom. In this way, the digital storytelling process as a whole was part of a larger learning strategy that was tailored to be appropriate for the developmental level of the participants and illustrated the *talking-positioning-empowering* process. Nora and Sara critiqued the current situation and created a comfortable space to work and process new information. They found a safe space for articulating their hopes and dreams, where they could tell their digital story and share their lived experiences in their own unique ways. For example, Nora and Sara share commonalities, but they also have individualized perceptions of life, and their interpretations of the same situations are different. Digital storytelling, therefore, provides the ideal medium by which to allow students to express their uniqueness and celebrate their individual identity and voice. This provocation facilitated developing students' identities and empowering themselves through DST, which helped the

phenomenon take a shape from what participants can do and say, and what we know about their hopes and dreams.

**Moment of Constructing Identity**

I refer to the next provocation as the *moment of constructing identity*. This phenomenological construct describes how the female student voice challenges gender inequality through critical analysis and discourse, and provides a way to think about dominant power structures. As identity is constructed, females begin to unravel parts of themselves and consider what gender equality means, and express this understanding and value in their digital storytelling. In deconstructing identity development and construction, I used Alla's and Myana's phenomenological materials. I found that both Alla and Myana exhibited excellent examples of how agency is developed through critical literature, and showed that the extent to which the critical literature is integrated provides the means for females to resist and/or transform the gendered meanings of texts. For unpacking the phenomenological construct further, I thought with Davies' poststructural feminist theory, as recommended by Jackson and Mazzei (2012), who proposed methodological requirements for using thinking with theory. I observed how the questions aligned with each theoretical concept and plugged into the data. This allowed for constant revision of the meaning of the phenomenological material to create a new lens through which to think about and analyze the data.

Within the moment of constructing identity provocation, I thought with Davies' (2003) theory and the concept of *identity* in order to address the secondary research questions of *"How might empowerment, as exhibited through student voice, relate to students' identity development?"* and *"What do the stories developed by the female*

*students through DST tell us about their lived experiences?"* Davies (2003) is appropriate in this context, as she explains in her work that children can discuss and bring into existence new ways of considering the concept of gender and what gender means to them. By doing so, children can construct new ways of approaching the meaning of gender that challenge the static gender roles found in texts. As such, Davies provides a poststructuralist framework that encourages children to question the content in the literature and develop new meanings from the reader-text relationship.

In my work with the participants, I observed a significant change in how the students encountered gender in the texts. These gendered interactions with text allowed the students to build their identities and challenge the hegemony of their primary culture. In this section, I reflect on two of the participants I worked with, Alla and Myana, who represent female students who presented with a typical and expected range of gendered behavior at the surface level. Alla and Myana represent female students who occupy many gendered constructions, such as athletes, victims, aggressors, popular, and tomboys. Realizing that underneath this surface-level gendered behavior lies a great deal of complexity, I believed that Alla and Myana would be great examples here, as they appear on the surface and through expression of their lived experiences to both confirm and challenge gender norms and stereotypes. In my attempt to explore the intersection between voice and identity through examination of female students' reactions to and constructions of feminist literature, I notice I am able to capture the way in which female students engage in the reading process (deconstruction, reconstruction, social action). I noticed Alla and Myana were more engaged when talking about the gendered

relationships they read about in the literature. The books provided an appropriate medium for the intersection between voice and identity to become realized.

To inspire the emergence of phenomenological material, I provided the literature and allowed the students to self-select which story they would like to read (to review, please see Figure 3-5. Phenomenological materials – Text artifacts). Alla initially chose the story *As the Crow Flies*, which served as a vehicle for both of us to engage with the phenomenon and explore the gendered nature of interpreting and responding to text and its subsequent provocations. Alla merely picked up the book, looked at the cover, and quickly put it back. She was visibly anxious at the prospect of reading this book. Her visceral reaction to the book cover illustration surprised me, and I promptly turned my attention to unpacking why she rejected the story. *As the Crow Flies* features an illustration of a young person with a backpack walking in the mountains, looking up at the sky. In looking at the illustration, it is not obvious whether the young person is a male or female, as the character was purposely designed to provoke gender ambiguity. I wondered if this ambiguity created an uncomfortable dissonance within Alla. I wondered if the lack of salient references to gender would provoke Alla's thinking about what it means to be a boy or a girl. I prompted Alla to break her silence and explore her experience of the phenomenon. Our conversation follows:

Me:      Alla, why did you put *As the Crow Flies* back on the table? I thought you were interested in reading it.

Alla:    I do not like it. I do not feel connected to the book. I am worried if my mom knows that I read that book she will get mad at me.

Me:      Why would your mom be mad at you?

Alla:    I don't think she would be happy if I read a book about a girl who is a tomboy. I can't really tell if she is a girl or a boy. But I think she is a girl and she is hiking. Look at her body — it is like a girl but strong! I think she has a lot of muscles, but she may just be big. Look at her hair! It is curly, tomboyish hair, and her pants are very, very short and shows a lot of her skin and her body.

Me:      What do you mean when you say the person on the cover is a tomboy?

Alla:    I mean that she looks like someone who is more interested in doing boy things than girl things. She looks more like a boy than a girl. I do not want to do boy stuff. I like being a girl, and I want to be a teacher and mother when I grow up, like my mom. My mom and my teacher said that, because I am Muslim, I need to be more careful about how I act and what I do. I have to be careful about what clothes I wear, and I have to look like a girl... It's okay that I am strong, because it is okay for girls to be strong. But it is not okay for girls to dress like boys. My mom told me that sports are more for boys than girls because they have to wear clothes that are for boys in sports (Alla's discussion, 11-15-2018).

Alla's anxiety about reading a story that contradicted gender norms, suggested a

gendered assumption that certain books are for boys, and other books are for girls. Alla

began to deconstruct the way the character looked. She explained that the character

looked like a boy because of her body shape, hair, and clothes. As such, Alla exhibited

hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity. Alla's mother strengthened these

beliefs by supporting the Islamic view of gender roles and acceptance of the Islamic

social structure regarding gender. I believe her mother's input contributed to Alla's

construction of her own identity and prompted her strong response to the book cover.

Here I think with Davies (2003), who argues that it is very common for children to begin

to challenge power first through opposing their parents, as their parents have the most

obvious and direct power over them. This observation led Davies to adopt poststructural analysis because it provides a framework for children "embedded in the ways of seeing, knowing, and being that were made available to them" (Davies, 2003, p. 10) to challenge gender roles through gender discourse. As Davies explains, "Poststructuralist feminism recognizes that masculinities and femininities are constituted in relation to each other" (Davies, 2003, p. x). As such, the poststructuralist framework shows that gender terms are only meaningful in relation to each other; the terms male and female, masculinity and femininity, are viewed as a false dichotomy that hides their mutual dependency. In particular, feminist poststructuralists work to deconstruct the gender binary and disrupt discourse that supports false gender dichotomies. With gender deconstruction follows a general excitement about uncovering the sources of power that maintain female oppression. Davies, therefore, focuses on how children "take up" their gendering within their immediate family, and how the family is also often the first place where children challenge these gender roles.

Alla ultimately decided to read *Sofia the First,* a book that was slightly below her reading level. This fact prompted inquiry. Sara asked her, "Why did you pick this book? It is for young kids!" Alla responded, "I like it! She got to be a princess after her mom married the king. She was poor before. Look at her fashion, and her face. She is beautiful. She is wearing a tiara and a poofy purple dress. I want to be like her" (Alla's discussion, 11-15-2018). Here, I paid close attention to the gender stereotypes that Alla postulated and extended value to. For example, Alla focused on the exterior beauty and ignored the internal qualities of the character. In thinking with Davies here, this supports Davies' assertion about how subjectivity is determined through discourse with others. Alla's

relationship with her mother suggests the learning of the "right way" to approach gender

identity — the "right way" being an emphasis on physical beauty, fashion, and eventual

marriage to a desirable man. Alla emphatically stated, "I want to be like her!" I unpacked

this in my post-reflexion journal.

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry November 25, 2018*

*I am thinking about Alla when she said about the princess in her chosen book, "she is beautiful… and I want to be like her." I wondered why she focuses on the physical appearance of the character and does not consider the internal qualities of the character. This suggests that Alla views beauty and goodness as the same. Being good means being pretty and dressing like a female. I think about the reasons Alla chose the book. Did she pick the book based solely on the fact that the character was a princess? Does she want to be like a princess? Does she judge the character because she looks pretty? Does she feel comfortable reading this book because of her relationship with her mother? Perhaps her relationship with the text is a reflection of her relationship with her mother. I was also struck by the moments when Alla described the character's access to wealth and possessions, and how the character changed from "a poor girl to be a strong princess," as she described it…My assumption is that Alla realized the connection between wealth and power and agency and desire. I see Alla's empathy for the character when she is poor, and her true happiness and delight in the poor girl becoming a princess with access to money and goods. I am still thinking about her quick and negative reaction to the first book. Is she going to talk to her mom about the first book, and discuss her thoughts with her mom about how the character looked like a boy? I think about what her mom might say if they do discuss the gender-neutral character, and if her mom will be pleased that she chose the book about the princess and reinforce and praise Alla's decision to read the book about the princess instead of the gender-questioning teen. Did Alla not want to read the first book because of her personal subjectivity? Will she be more curious in the future about gender-neutral characters and change her perceptions and assumptions about reading the book when she gets older? Also, Alla did choose a book that was written at a first-grade level; Alla herself is in third grade. Therefore, her decision to not read the book may have been developmental. Maybe when she is older she will be more receptive to reading it.*

As Davies (2003) explains, gender bias is a regular occurrence in schools, and is

evident throughout the curriculum. It is typical for the school setting to affirm young

children's understanding of gender to be static and fixed, conforming to gendered beliefs

about what being a boy means and what being a girl means. Davies (2003) continues, this

binary subjectivity of gender is not explicitly taught, but is embedded in the political and social structures in which children live. As such, the subjectivity of children's agency and desire is relevant. Children often identify with who they are subjectively by what they desire. According to Pearce (1989), desire defies logic and rationality. Desire has often been thought of as an indicator of who we really are at our core. However, Pearce (1989) explains that desire is shaped through discursive and interactive practices, such as discourse. Desires are revealed through narratives and storylines, and how these themes integrate into the social world (Davies, 1989, 2003; Davies & Harre, 1990). Desire provides data for interpretation of ourselves and of others, and there is often much subjectivity between them. Through a feminist deconstruction of common fixtures in society, we can come to realize different patterns of desire that transcend gender norms and allow movement among gender terms such as "feminine" and "masculine" to allow for multiple ways of being (Davies, 1989; Davies & Harre, 1990). As Davies (2003) explains, desire can be fluid and ever-changing. Examination of desire can facilitate voice and identity development, be liberating, and a critical exercise. Particularly, when girls connect terms such as competence, dominance, and power, they can begin to restructure their desire and develop a new identity construction.

Desire is a traditionally humanist influence that predominates children's social worlds. As such, children view what they believe and want as a reflection of themselves. This practice reinforces gender stereotypes and seals these stereotypes into the child's identity. Such was the case with Alla. She explained that she chose to read about the princess (who embodies traditionally held values regarding femininity) over the gender-questioning teen (who does not ascribe to widely held societal values regarding gender).

Through deconstructive processes, I began to unpack the phenomenon to explore the dynamic relationship and influence of subjectivity and agency on female student voice and how this related to students' identity development. I came to realize that the female student voice can be provoked by exploring underlying gender identities. Some responses will be more explicitly gendered than others, and some responses will challenge typically gendered behaviors and beliefs. I approached my analysis of Alla's experience through a deconstructive lens. Alla's family consists of her mother and three older sisters; her father passed away when she was seven years old. As such, she lives in a household where she regularly encounters female-gendered behavior from four females. This is significant because Alla is quite literally surrounded by gendered behavior, living amongst four females who all ascribe to, value, promote, and reinforce traditionally held views on gender. Alla wants to be connected to and identify with her family, and also protect her mom and sisters from the pain and suffering associated with grief following her father's death. At any given time, Alla dreams of being beautiful and rich, and she believes that through beauty and wealth, she will find power.

At the same time, Alla is being groomed to be a woman subservient to men, as it is a culturally bound expectation that she will conform to and abide by her husband's wishes. By obeying men, she is being a "good" girl, and by ascribing to gendered beliefs about her role as a female, she is increasing the odds she will meet and marry a man that accepts her and will take care of her. At the present time, Alla is beginning to map out the changing landscape of femininity. Alla's shape-shifting beliefs around "girlness" may be realized through her expressed voice and her connection to the book she read. She said that:

I feel so connected to the princess in *Sofia the First* because she is a girl, and she is brave and pretty. She wears a pretty dress and makes sure her hair is pretty and she looks nice. She loves to have parties for her friends and family. She cares for her new family, animals, and people around her. She is trying to make the world good and working so hard to help people in need, like old and poor people, because she is a princess and this is the princess job, to be good and caring and helping others. My mom bought me a tiara like a princess, and I like to wear it everywhere except school because we are not allowed. I like to follow the rules because the princess followed the rules. I do not want to be a princess because of the lifestyle, I want to be a princess because she is a brave girl and helpful (Alla's digital storytelling, 03-20-2019).

Alla's sentiments about being a princess and her preference for feminine characters aligns with the outcomes one would expect within the Islamic model. For example, the Islamic model suggests facilitation of traditional beliefs and adherence to gender roles and norms. These norms are first instilled and reinforced by the Islamic child's mother, who has power over the child and instills fear so that the child is unable to renounce her need and desire for identity. To gain her mother's approval, the female child obediently conforms to expected gender roles and behaviors. In working with Alla, I saw her begin to develop a new identity that was not based on parental approval. She described and discussed her new self-designed identity through the reading of the critical literature; this new identity was one in which she was strong and brave. Alla talked excitedly about her strength and power, and imagined how she would help other people, make her family strong, and be a source of comfort and strength in the absence of her father. Prior to the critical analysis and discourse, Alla did perceive herself as being able to support her family. She found her voice and agency through engaging with the phenomenon, and realized her relations with others in the world through feeling while thinking of herself and her family. I understood Alla's connection to the story, and her

interpretation of the meaning of the story with relation to her own life, as a representation of voice and identity attainment that she did not exhibit before.

That Alla was provided opportunities to develop her voice and identity within an Arabic school setting is in itself a victory. A long-standing practice in Arabic schools is strict adherence to the banking model, which permeates the child's entire academic life. Under the banking model, the child is indoctrinated to obey, and is punished for any infraction. As such, the banking model prohibits voice and identity development. A child who tests the banking model is punished and intentionally humiliated. As such, the banking model uses fear, shame, and humiliation to control student thought and expression. The banking model prohibits critical thought, questioning, and exploration of ideas and concepts. Students are expected to sit, listen, memorize, and attend diligently to what the teacher says. The classroom is vacant of any type of discourse that will allow females to question the expectation that they will be a wife and produce children for their husband. Though examples of professional women are becoming more common in Saudi Arabia, they are often reserved for women who come from great wealth and power and are provided with resources and protection from their powerful families. Barriers for the common girl to become a professional woman are many, as they are less likely to be inoculated against hatred and criticism. As such, expressions of voice and identity in the typical female youth remain rare in the school setting. Accordingly, breaking the banking model of education is essential for female student liberation. On the macro level, social change in Arabic schools is beginning to show movement toward liberation, but much work remains to be done.

In thinking through the phenomenon of female student voice, discourse ultimately provides the medium for voice to be expressed and identity to be developed and realized. Digital storytelling serves as the medium for communicating voice and identity to others. As such, both discourse and digital storytelling allow for the phenomenon to begin to take shape. Digital storytelling is conceived here as a tool to halt and challenge dehumanizing practices in Arabic schools. Discourse allows for the discussion and integration of new ideas and beliefs (Davies, 2003). Davies (2003) points to the importance of "discourses and practices to questioning" (p. 169) and provides guidance for breaking prohibitive systems to allow for open discourse. Through discourse, participants are able to hear and learn about, and think through, different examples of female power and begin to understand how feminism has broken oppressive systems that undermine female empowerment through negative stereotyping that perpetuates subordination. This is a form of "category maintenance" (Davies, 2003).

Category maintenance assumes gender is a relational term; you are either male or female. Gender categories are reinforced in environments where boys and girls are assumed to be different and thus treated differently, and there are no opportunities to engage in the activities of the other gender. Alla exhibited category maintenance when she rejected the story about the gender-questioning person with an ambiguous gender, instead choosing to read a story about a stereotypically female princess who exhibited traditionally held beliefs about the category of femaleness. Through discourse, Alla began to think about and experience for the first time her feelings about being a female; she was provided the opportunity to choose her book, but was also given the opportunity to explain why she felt that way about the book and how it challenged her to think about

167

her categorization of gender. Though Alla did not fully embrace a different conceptualization of a female, she did begin to think about how the princess embodied traits normally reserved for males. For example, in her illustration (see Figure 5-3), she portrayed the princess fighting with a sword. Alla's conceptualization of a strong female princess demonstrates both progress and maintenance of the standard quo. As a researcher and educator driven to facilitate gender equality and thoughtful discourse regarding gender identity, Alla's insistence on reading a story that conformed to gender norms was disheartening. However, I focused on the positive. I noticed the steps toward gender equality that Alla did exhibit, such as a sword-yielding princess, a princess with bravery and power, and a princess with the integrity to help others through strength.

As a post-intentional phenomenologist and qualitative researcher, I must acknowledge and be aware of my own experience and identity development that is occurring as I am immersing myself in the middle of the phenomenon's tentative and perpetual manifestations. Given the importance of pursuing gender equality for female liberation, the conversations I led with the students intentionally focused on female examples of a "hero." However, it was also important for me to meet the students where they were at. For example, Alla was not at a place developmentally and/or socially to accept that females do not have to be pretty and wear fancy dresses and have long hair. Alla was, however, ready to think about females as being powerful and holding strength, even if her preference was for the female to look pretty and have a strong social position while exhibiting this strength. In my conversations with the students about the term "hero" and what being a hero means, I encouraged the students to think about how gender affects who can be labeled a hero, and what heroic behaviors are. In doing so, I was also

168

able to examine how the student voice was modulated by the traditional historical role of females in SA society, which was particularly salient in Alla's process.

To encourage dialogue toward understanding the effects of the historical context of females in SA society, I introduced a SA female hero: the first woman from Saudi Arabia to join NASA (for review, see Figure 3-12. Post-reflexion Journal Entry November 20, 2018). I was encouraged by the enthusiasm and excitement that the students exhibited toward this woman. Through discourse, the students came to realize that the female role can shift in Saudi Arabia, and that women can be productive in a way usually reserved for men. The students began to discuss the role of women in Saudi Arabia and how the current political climate may serve as a stepping stone for achieving female independence and autonomy in decision making. For example, Alla was able to connect her story to the female astronaut's story and compare her trials and tribulations to the astronaut, which she found to have many similarities. This deepened Alla's connection to the character, and also helped to shape her own identity as she saw herself in another female who defied traditionally held gender roles.

As Alla continued to construct and deconstruct the role of females in SA society, her voice began to take shape, which she documented in her digital storytelling. Alla's work and progress toward gender equality was demonstrated in her digital story, where she described herself as transitioning from a dependent, helpless female who "needs to be taken care of," to a female who is able to "take care of herself and her family." Alla wants to prove herself to her mother and sisters and also win their admiration and respect. I connected with Davies' (2003) work here, which allowed me to reconcile my desire for female autonomy and gender equality with the realization that gender stereotypes have

powerful influence on children and that the influence of gender categorization is an inevitable component of their digital stories.

Alla exhibited her gender identity and challenged traditional views on gender (see Figure 5-3) when she drew a picture of a princess wearing a long, full, and pink dress. The dress has many details, including a bodice emphasizing a narrow waist and puffy, full shoulders. She has long flowing hair, big blue eyes, and is wearing a tiara. She faces the prince, who's wearing pants and a cape. The prince's body shape is concealed. His eyes are simple and brown. Interestingly, the princess yields a longer and sharper-looking sword than the prince. The princess also appears to be threatening the prince; her sword is drawn and pointing at the prince. The prince has a smaller sword that he's pointing away from the princess, and he appears to be leaning away from the princess, cowering from her sword. As Alla explained, "A princess can do anything a prince can do! She can fight for herself and her family. That's why I like being a princess!" (Alla's digital storytelling, 03-20-2019).

**Figure 5-3**

*Phenomenological Materials – Storytelling Artifacts*



Alla relished in the opportunity to begin to examine femininity in the text and

within herself. In doing so, she began to challenge the destructive, often contradictory,

stereotypes of females that intentionally perpetuate women's subordination with which

she's been raised. Alla took action to develop her identity through her digital storytelling

when she realized that she can be feminine and a strong fighter who protects the needs of

her family. She challenged her beliefs to follow the status quo, and showed reflective

thinking about the historical landscape of gender equality in her world. She was able to

express her voice and shape her identity through the creation of her digital storytelling.

Alla's examination of the historical role of females in SA helped her think through and

challenge the expectations for her in SA society as a passive female without a voice and a

fated identity. Through her historical examination, Alla was able to recognize female

leaders in SA and how they have fought to make a change and help other women to

recognize their own rights and gender equality in Muslim Saudi society. Through group discourse, Alla's eyes were opened to women's abilities and capabilities in resisting oppression and becoming empowered to engage fully and be free to entertain a world in which gender equality is the norm.

In her discussion, Alla exhibited excitement about and agreement with SA's claim for change, and agreed that women are morally and intellectually equal to men and should be treated as such with equal rights. This echoes the current SA climate, in which women are gaining more rights and privileges. Alla wants to be powerful and believes that by building her own wealth, she can be strong and empower herself. Her desire to be a princess illustrates her desire to have resources that will enable her power and strength. Alla has learned the connection between wealth and power through examples from her own country, where the common scenario shows that people can make change through wealth. Throughout SA history, the women who have made changes toward gender equality were women of means, who were born into a privilege that allowed them the freedom to explore and challenge their rights as females. Alla's story shows awareness of the dynamic between privilege, power, and social change. Alla's connection to the princess was her attempt to be empowered to face her fears and challenge her mother's expectations for her as a female. In her story, Alla was able to express to others that she is strong and powerful. This may be how Alla intends to show her mother that she should be trusted, her efficacy should be believed in, and she should have higher expectations set for her as a female. Based on this assumption, I infer that Alla connects to the princess Sofia's identity as a way to eliminate feelings of fear and oppression that surround her. By being a princess, she can begin to make a change. Alla reflected on that fear:

Me:     Alla, I'm curious to know more about your experiences! Can you explain some of your feelings when you were creating your digital story?

Alla:   My storytelling helped me show that I can be a strong girl and I can protect myself and my family. I felt like I was very important, and I felt like my mom and sisters were able to be happy with me and proud of how strong and brave I could be. I think that I can do something that is very important, and I want to make my mom and sisters feel safe. I was able to do that in my story by protecting them. I felt really happy about this.

Me:     Why is it important for you to be strong for your mom and sisters? Please tell me more about this.

Alla:   My family is all girls now. My dad died last summer and I don't have a brother. My dad had a heart attack, and no one knew he didn't feel well or anything. It was so sad. Now me and my sisters don't have a dad to be strong and protect us. This is a scary feeling, and I feel like my mom and sisters are scared without him. My mom always says that she wishes there was a boy in our family that could protect us because Dad can't. Mom says that boys are strong and protect girls.

Me:     How do your sisters feel about this? About not having a boy in the house?

Alla:   My sisters say that we are not safe without a boy... My sisters say that boys protect girls, too, just like mom says. But I can show them that I can protect them and keep them safe, just like a boy. I can do what a boy can do and keep my family happy and safe.

Me:     How did your voice evolve over time? How did you integrate your voice into your digital story?

Alla:   I am a princess in my story, and I am strong. I want to be a princess and be powerful. My story helped me to talk about myself and know who I am and what I want to be. In my story, I'm a princess and I have a lot of responsibility to keep people safe and protect them.

Me:     How does your digital story show you being a character that keeps your family safe? How do you feel about this?

Alla:   I am a happy princess because I can keep my family safe. My family would be surprised and really like that I can help them. I can prove to my mom and sisters that I can do it… By being a princess I can show my mom that I can help her and that she can trust me, and that it is okay that there is not a boy in the house. My story shows me having a lot of trust in myself and feeling like I can do anything. I will try to be brave and share my feelings with my mom. My mom loves princess stories, and I am going to tell her I want to be strong like a princess (Alla's interview, 04-24-2019).

My conversation with Alla brought about a lot of strong feelings inside of me. I can feel the fear and panic that her mom and sisters have for their young daughter and sister, and I understand how they must feel very worried about her. Because Alla is the youngest, she had the least amount of time with a male role model, while Alla's mother and her sisters spent a significant amount of time with the father before he passed away. Alla does not have as much fatherly influence as the others in her family. I worry about Alla's sense of agency and power, as I am unsure if her family can support her newfound voice and identity. This fills me with dread and panic, as I do not want Alla to feel disconnected from or ostracized by her mom and sisters, especially since they are such an integral part of her life and make up her support system. I hope that her mom and sisters will support her desire to be strong and protective. I wonder what her story might be if her father were still alive or if she had a brother — would she still have the same drive to keep her family safe? I wonder if she is going to hide her voice and identity in the future, or if she will be braver and continue to show her mom and sisters that she is capable and strong. I found myself developing a strong connection with Alla and her story, which I wrote about in my post-reflexion journal after I finished Alla's interview.

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry April 24, 2019*

*I am thinking about the male support I have in my own life, and reflecting on how their influence has shaped me and my sense of power and autonomy. I have a father and four brothers. Additionally, , I have a husband, three sons, and one daughter. I'm surrounded by strong men, who I am sure will protect me and take care of me if I need help. For any reason, they are there for me, and it doesn't matter what my gender is. They would be there for me if I were a boy as well, and their love for me would be the same. Alla's story helps me see how important this is, and how influential my family is in my life. I don't know what I would do without them. I am thankful that the males in my life make me feel empowered and do not limit me because I am a woman. The males in my life are so strong, so supportive, and I appreciate all the men in my life who have never limited me or made me feel insecure or powerless because I am a woman. The males in my life have always been empowering, starting from*

> *when I was a child. My dad raised me to be ambitious and work hard to secure a good future. Though he was very aware that I was a female, he never made me feel limited in my potential. My dad gave me this power and raised my four brothers and me to be the same. Being supported to be a powerful woman helped me grow, and continues today with my husband. My husband supports my goals and independence. This echoes the current sentiment in SA today, where the strong men support women in gaining agency and use their power to release their oppression, instead of continuing to keep them oppressed. I connected that to the famous leader in Saudi Arabia, the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He was integral in changing and transforming Saudi women's status and empowering women to pursue careers in different fields. Here, I remembered his famous statement, "I support Saudi Arabia, and half of Saudi Arabia are women. So, I support women" (Alarabiya, 2020). He was the only one that fully supported women's rights in all areas of SA society, and said that women should be seen everywhere in society. I wonder if Alla and her family feel supported by what is happening in SA right now. I'm also wondering if Alla's story would be different if she had a male in her life. I wonder if she will read the book she initially put down, about the gender-neutral teenager. I'm curious about what Alla's story will be. Will she continue to show her strength through feminine faces and bodies? Or will she see that she can be strong and powerful regardless of how she looks? She does not need to be a princess. She can be herself.*

Fear of a new identity was common in my female participants. Like Alla, Myana showed fear and hesitation in exploring her gender identity and thinking about her lived experiences. Myana came into the digital storytelling process with a clear fear of her mother. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Myana said, "I am sure that my mom does not want to hear what I am going to talk about. I know what she wants to hear from me! I want to tell you what I want, but I am scared to tell. I cannot talk about it and I do not want to get in trouble" (Myana's personal communication, 9-20-2018). Myana initially preferred to be silent and was obviously worried about punishment from her mother, similar to the feelings that Alla had about her mother. Myana's story is a bit different, in that Myana has a great deal of support from her father. Her father raised her to be empowered, encouraging her to participate in Taekwondo class with her brother and allowing her to practice with her brother at home. Myana shared with me that she spends most of her

time with her brother and that they do many activities together, including reading books.

However, Myana said that she did not relate to the books at her house because, "All the books that we have at home have boys be the strong character and the girls do not go on adventures. I would like a book that shows both the boy and girl going on an adventure together. I think I will go with *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*" (Myana's discussion, 11-18-2018). After she read the book, Myana shared with the group her connection to this book:

> I found myself experiencing several things while reading the *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*. I like to read horror fiction, I like horror movies, and reading *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* was so much fun. There were a lot of adventures in this book, and it was a lot like adventures in Spider-Man or Batman. I like the endings because they are surprising, frightening, and there is always a twist that I didn't see coming. I think the character in the book that I read is very brave. I like to read about brave girls that are strong like boys. I am more interested in the character if she is a girl and not always the victim, because girls are usually the ones that are rescued. But I like to read about strong girls that can protect themselves. I have many adventures in my life and I wish I can talk about them at school, but there is no time. Also, the teachers don't allow me to talk about it at school either. I shared some of my adventures with my friends. My friends think my stories are really fun and they say they love to hear my stories (Myana's interview, 4-26-2019).

After listening to Myana, I noticed that there are many distinct features in her lived experiences that may impact her openness to exploring her gender identity and voice. First, I noticed that Myana understands that the books at home do not feature strong female characters, and she has strong feelings about this. She does not have exposure to books with strong female characters at school either, so Myana was excited and grateful to be able to choose books that feature a strong female lead; she was very impressed with the books that I presented. Second, I noticed that her father's influence is very apparent in her needs and desires for reading about strong females. Her father encouraged her to be strong and be brave, and to not be limited by her gender. She

expresses independence and confidence in herself, and is secure in the books she chooses to read. I speculate that her father and brother have greatly impacted her desire for adventure. She chose to read stories that featured a female hero, showing immediate resistance to the notion that females are weak and powerless. In her openness to gender equality, I wondered why she did not have suitable books to read at home. I thought that perhaps the books at her home were typical "boy books" and that the family may not have access to or awareness of books that show females in hero roles. Also, as she is young, she may not know to ask for or to seek out alternative books. It is also possible the family chose books that they liked to read when they were young, and assumed that Myana and her brother would share the book, not realizing the impact the lead character would have on their daughter's identity development. I wanted to know more about the books that she had at home, but also did not want to cause her to question her family and perhaps get her into trouble. I am also aware that there are differences in her mother's and father's approaches to parenting. Her mother appears to prefer that females conform to traditional gender roles, whereas her father's expectations and allowances are more liberal and open.

Myana's situation presented three important considerations for me as a researcher, teacher, mother, and woman. First, I realize that offering a wide variety of reading materials allows girls to feel more engaged and involved in the process. Second, allowing girls to reflect on their thoughts and feelings during reading allows them to reflect on who they are and develop their voice and identity, and shows the intersection between themselves and others. Third, offering books that tell different types of stories and introduce different ways of life and living allow girls to think about the world in new and

unique ways. This is an important mental exercise to see a wider picture of their experiences and begin to see the limitless possibilities for life. This is particularly relevant for Muslim girls, who may not have many opportunities to be exposed to ideas related to gender equality, either at home or at school. These three considerations are absent in the Saudi public education system. Teachers and school administrators focus solely on the curriculum and rote memorization while ignoring children's connection to the material. As such, children's voices are absent. They do not have the opportunity within public schools to build their identities and develop an awareness of themselves separate from what is expected of them.

In our discussions, Myana deconstructed the character's identity and connected her experiences to that of the character. The character, Moon Girl, loves to imagine and invent. She is described as a girl with a huge intellect, but because she is in a poorly run school, she is not given many opportunities to express herself and use her talents. Myana found many instances in which she identified with Moon Girl, particularly feeling limited because of expectations from others. We discussed Myana's experiences in her own life, particularly the challenges she encounters from a society that values gender dichotomies. Through our deconstructive conversations, I learned that Myana saw Moon Girl's potential to facilitate girls' belief in themselves and promulgate persistence in the pursuit of self-defined excellence and individuality. In her digital storytelling, Myana described herself as an "extraordinary hero." Myana's reconstruction of her gender identity through the story impacted her voice as she engaged with the phenomenon. I see Myana here wants to correctly position herself as a strong female, rather than passive and vulnerable,

and her voice reflects her self-expression and choice. She portrayed this in her DST where she shared the new identity that she dreamed about.

Myana's story showed her connection to literature, to Moon Girl, and reflected her own experiences and interests. She connected her talent for Taekwondo with her body's mental and physical strength and power. I believe Myana's confidence in her strength and power originated from her father. Unlike her mother, who encouraged her to be a traditional female, her father encouraged her to be strong and powerful. In her story, Myana drew herself in the center of that page as a very large, looming character with a long cape (see Figure 5-4). Her arms are drawn as very muscular and strong, which allows her to fly and protect people from anything that could pose a danger to them and their lives. In her picture, Myana has a large smile and appears to be very pleased with and confident about what her body can achieve. Myana draws herself pulling what she describes as the "bad guy" from her grandma's house. The bad guy expresses his fear of Myana, exclaiming that he, "is so scared because she is so big and strong!" (Myana's digital storytelling, 3-27-2019). Myana's grandmother's house represents a safe space for her to be a hero. She was very specific in her DST that her grandmother's house held special significance and importance. I realized that Myana's decision to read *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* was not random. I assume that Myana was very inspired by the cover of the book, which showed Moon Girl as very strong and powerful. This book challenges the traditional femininities and masculinities that we ascribe to children, and makes the invisible visible. Even before opening the book, we can see that traditional beliefs about gender are challenged. Opening the book allows for in-depth exploration of the complex world and expectations for girls within it.

**Figure 5-4**

*Phenomenological Materials – Storytelling Artifacts*



Myana further explored her voice as she described the rationale behind her story through her lived experience. Her story is essentially an extension of her relationship with her grandmother, and her desire to protect her grandmother. Myana told me about a recent lived experience in which she was very worried about her grandma's safety because she was not answering her phone. Being that she is older and losing her sight, she is vulnerable to falls and accidents. Myana shared that:

> We live next to our grandma's house, and one day me and my family were out. We called my grandma but she didn't answer her phone. This made us very worried because she doesn't see well and she is fragile. We were all so worried and scared something happened to her. My dad drove very fast to check on my grandma. We wanted to get there as quick as possible. She was okay, but we were all so scared and so worried. We noticed that the window was broken, and my dad checked everything around the house to make sure that no one had broken in and nothing was stolen. Nothing was stolen, but later we heard shooting in the neighborhood. My father checked the sound to see what was happening. After that day, I have been so nervous and always dream about the bad guy. I always want to take Taekwondo and continue to get strong and brave so I can protect my

grandma if anything happens to her. I see myself as an extraordinary hero because my goal is to protect my grandma and my family when they are in danger (Myana's digital storytelling, 3-27-2019).

The sustainability of Myana's empowerment is questionable, given the historical and present-day context of Saudi Arabia. Myana's home conforms to the traditional roles and norms present in the typical SA household. As such, Myana may have limited support at home for continued identity development. Though her father is encouraging and open to Myana being strong and individualized, he is still influenced by cultural expectations for males and females. Myana's mother also holds very traditional beliefs, which she communicates clearly, and expresses disapproval at any deviation from the norm. This is very common for women of her generation in SA, as they were raised to accept traditional gender roles and to teach those to their children. The younger generations are not as oppressed as the older generations, but the older generation still exhibits a great deal of influence over the younger generations. Like most young girls, Myana is deeply influenced by her mother and seeks her approval. Myana worries about being criticized by her mother and not pleasing her. As such, Myana's voice may be stifled in her home environment, and she may have limited opportunities to construct her identity. Being taught to put her family's needs before her own, Myana will likely suppress her desire to exhibit traditionally masculine traits and instead conform to what her mother expects/desires.

Despite the obvious limitations, there exists a great deal of potential for Myana to continue developing her voice and identity. As she explored her "true self," she found her identity had multiple, seemingly contradictory, ways of showing itself. This may be expected, as Myana is demonstrating multiple ways of living as a girl in the world and

relating to others. After reading *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* and engaging in subsequent gendered discourses, Myana was able to imagine new ways of thinking about the world. Davies (2003) explains that literacy is an important connection for children to the world and allows children to make themselves recognizable. As such, Myana was provided an opportunity, through character exploration, to develop her own identity and continue down a path of agency and empowerment. Through the story, Myana was able to "re-vision" her self-representation from a vulnerable girl to "an extraordinary hero." Myana's depiction of herself as an extraordinary hero allows her to explore alternative narratives about her lived experiences and explore the relationships between subjectivities and literacy (Davies, 2003). Thinking with Davies, I understand how children can speak about new ways of envisioning gender and gender dualisms that are often confronted in children's literature. I understand that it is crucial to build experiences that allow gender expectations to be challenged and refuted. Here, I learned the importance of attending to the multiple ways that my participants positioned and repositioned their identities around the characters they read about. Throughout this process of critical analysis and discourse, participants positioned themselves in the text in relation to their desires, interests, and personal connections to the stories, and how their lived experiences aligned with those stories. This process allowed the participants the positioning to construct new visions and understandings of themselves that reflect growing confidence and self-actualization in their power and agency. Positioning is a discursive process by which people can observe themselves in a story and develop themselves within the storyline (Davies & Harre, 1990; Davies, 2003). Below follows a

conversation held between Myana and me regarding how she positioned herself in the story:

Me:      How do you feel about your experiences creating your digital story?

Myana:    Digital storytelling is very cool. I am creating a real movie, and I feel I am the star and the actor. I like all the pictures that I drew, and I used my own words and recorded my voice, and then I was able to edit the story and put them into iMovie. It was so cool. My movie helped me to think about myself and share my thoughts with you. I can't wait for everyone to see my digital story! I want to be like the girl in [the] *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* story because she is a very strong and smart girl. She worked hard to protect the world around her. My teacher in Taekwondo, Mr. Menave, told us to be strong so when the bad guy wants to come and hurt us, we know what to do. I want to tell the girls that they should learn how to run, how to kick, and know what to do in order to protect themselves and others. Being strong is very important for your muscles and your brain. I want to be strong to do what I want and not feel scared. My digital storytelling helped me to imagine what I wanted to be in my future (Myana's interview, 4-26-2019).

This moment of the interview was distinctly different from our previous conversations where we discussed the story and explored the character through discourse. Here, we were able to discuss the power of DST to shape Myana's voice and showcase her lived experiences. DST allowed Myana to show her thoughts and voice as a "real movie" and her positioning as "an actor." Myana saw her DST as an opportunity to share herself with an audience and showcase her unique identity for me and her classmates to learn from. Accordingly, the female student voice took shape in different ways for Myana and Alla in their DSTs. However, both Alla and Myana did enact power and agency in their identities toward autonomy and social change. They explored their voices through their DSTs, which fostered their discourses and increased their awareness.

**Moment of Resisting Oppression with Female Voice**

I use Malaak's phenomenological materials to further unpack the phenomenon of female student voice and the third provocation, *moment of resisting oppression with*

183

*female voice*. This provocation refers to the student's realization of oppression, and the active and intentional use of voice to overcome and resist oppression. Malaak provided the content through examination of her lived experiences, conceptualized in her digital storytelling, which served as a tool for resisting her oppression. Engaging Malaak with the literature and discussing reactions through dialogue served as a conduit for Malaak to break her silence. Malaak and other girls in the Arabic school are necessarily silenced within conventional schooling, which subscribes to the banking model. They are also marginalized as females.

Malaak, at seven years old, was the youngest girl among my participants. She is very shy in her regular classroom and in my group discussions, choosing to stay quiet and listen and observe the world around her. When asked a question, Malaak will answer, but her answers are short and devoid of details or elaboration. However, she is very attentive and listens intently to what the other students are saying. Compared with the other students in my group, Malaak's parents are more conservative, and her dad is Imam at the mosque in Saint Paul. She is also an only child. These factors combined may contribute to her reluctance to openly share her thoughts and feelings with others and, as such, she was effectively silenced compared with other girls in the group. Malaak required a great deal of time to warm up and feel comfortable speaking and openly sharing her thoughts and feelings with me. As such, I met with her five times to establish a trusting relationship and allow her the time she needed to become open to talking to me and to see me as a support rather than as a traditional teacher. Despite my best efforts, my attempts to engage with Malaak were unsuccessful at times. For instance, Malaak was not

interested in reading any of the books that I brought to the table, although the critical

literature was very varied and written from multiple perspectives.

Initially, I assumed that Malaak would pick a book that she could connect to her

own life, as all of the books featured a female student. Malaak looked through the books

but would not choose one to read. I encouraged Malaak to think through her process by

asking probing questions such as, "What do you think?" and "What book do you feel is

related to you?" I could sense that Malaak was not connecting with the literature, hence

her reluctance to select a book to read. After a couple of minutes, Malaak asked me, "Can

you pick a book for me to read?" (Malaak's discussion, 9-24-2018). I responded, "You

can choose a book that you would like to read. The decision on what book to read should

be made by you, not by me. Please think about what book is most closely related to your

own interests and background." At this time, I felt very close to Malaak, as I understood

her background and could see that she was oppressed and did not have the skills for

making decisions based on her interests, as her ideas and identity had not yet been

explored or even considered. I provided my thought process as I unpacked Malaak's

journey toward finding her voice in my Post-reflexion journal below.

*Post-reflexion Journal Entry September 24, 2018*

*Despite my discouragement at Malaak's reluctance to engage in the critical literature, I felt hopeful that Malaak could develop the skills needed to break her silence and resist her oppression. Importantly, Malaak's parents, though very conservative, did allow her to participate in my study. This is very interesting to me, as it implies that they are open to Malaak finding her voice and becoming more engaged in the world around her. Her parents could have easily dismissed her participation in my research; however, they signed the consent forms and did not pull her out of the study at any time. The consent form was very clear and explicit in the objective, which was to break the female student's silence. I'm curious what her parents said to each other when they read the consent form, and what they were thinking about the study. They could have reached out to me with questions or concerns, but they never expressed any concerns or a need for more information to me. I wonder if her parents realize*

*that she will be disadvantaged if she does not become more independent and free-thinking, given the world has changed since they were young. Do Malaak's parents want to change her personality? Do Malaak's parents want her to talk more and be more open to speaking? Are they unhappy with some aspect of Malaak's personality? Do Malaak's parents want her to resist her oppression, and do they realize this will help prepare her, as a female, for her future? Are they going to feel happy about any change in Malaak after the study? Another consideration is that Malaak's parents see this as an opportunity for her to receive advanced education and develop academic skills that will prepare her for college in the future. I do not know if Malaak's parents are educated; given their occupations, they do not appear to have advanced degrees. As usual, parents want more for their children than what they received. As such, they may find this study is an opportunity that they didn't have when they were young, and a way to prepare their daughter for her future. I also wondered about sustainability. Are they going to support her voice and allow her to grow and resist her oppression in the future? I realized my own feelings and desires to work with Malaak and continue encouraging her to challenge herself. I felt responsible for supporting Malaak through this process because I felt that it was important to guide Malaak and help her find her voice. It's not my job only as a researcher to help Malaak find her voice, but also as a female who was also raised within an oppressive educational system.*

Eventually, Malaak chose the book *The Best Eid Ever*, by Asma Mobin-Uddin. This book allows readers to learn more about Eid, a religious holiday celebrated by Muslim families. The book also discusses the Hajj pilgrimage, when some Muslims travel back to Mecca for Eid. I gave Malaak more time to read and spent more time and visits with her discussing the book, as her reading level is lower than some of the other students. However, *The Best Eid Ever* was a perfect match for her reading skills, and there were many pictures in the book to help guide her through the story. During the deconstruction process, Malaak was challenged to respond to the literature. Initially, Malaak was silent and did not share her thoughts about the story. However, it is very normal for an oppressed child to be reluctant to engage with her thinking, as this is a new activity and she is unsure what to do (Jones, 2006). Her traditional parents may not encourage her to make decisions and discuss her thoughts and feelings about different

options she could choose from. I noticed that Malaak felt more comfortable and was more willing to talk openly and engage with the phenomenon when we worked in the school hallway. The school hallway is a bright and decorated area for the students to enjoy (see Figure 5-5). My assumption is that the school hallway is a great space for Malaak because this is where she feels most free to talk to her friends and enjoy recess. The hallway is not an area for teacher instruction, but a space for the students to relax and talk to each other, which may make it feel more safe and relaxing.

**Figure 5-5**

*School's Hallway*



As a post-intentional phenomenologist, I considered the role and value of this space (hallway) for Malaak as she engaged in the phenomenon, as well as the effect of the space on the phenomenon. The wall was adorned with well-placed pictures and illustrations. I noted the following in my post-reflexion journal.

*I wondered about who put the pictures on the wall, and why they were placed as they were. I wondered about who made the decision to put the pictures where they were, and why they did so. Was it one person or more than one person? Did the students have any input into how the wall was decorated? Did the students take any of the pictures? If not, who did? I wonder about the status of the people that placed the pictures on the wall. Was it school leadership or teachers? Perhaps students who are studying at the school created the wall as part of an assignment. Or the teachers on staff at the school created it. It's not clear who the people featured in the pictures are. Are they parents? Or the students? Or some students who have good behavior or have high academic achievements? Do they know that their pictures are on the wall? Did they consent to having their pictures placed on the wall? Are the people on the wall from America or other countries? Are they originally from the Middle East? Or American? Which countries do they belong to? Why are these specific flags on the wall? What about the others? Who made the decision on what countries to feature on the wall?  Ultimately, I wonder about the purpose of the pictures, and how the people in the pictures feel about how they are portrayed. Would they approve of their portrayal? Many of the flags are Arabic countries. I wonder if Malaak is mostly comforted by the wall because it symbolizes recess time, or if it's because it's a reflection of Muslim culture. Perhaps Malaak worked on the wall and knows the people that created the wall. Or perhaps she remembered her hometown and felt more comfortable when she looked at the wall. Maybe it is related to a special experience. Malaak's comfort and contentment when working by the wall indicates it has special meaning for her and allows her to reflect and feel safe. The wall may provide a comfortable area where she can explore her identity while still staying true to her Muslim culture.*

When I saw Malaak happy and feeling comfortable, I started to explore her voice

and experience of her reading in order to break her silence. Our conversation took place

in the hallway in the Arabic school next to that creative wall.

Me:        What made you select *The Best Eid Ever* and read this book?

Malaak:    I like to read about Muslim families and read about girls like me that have the same culture. My parents told me that because I'm Muslim, I need to be careful about what I wear and careful about what I believe. I have to be good so that God will be happy about my behavior.

Me:        What characters did you connect to?

Malaak:    I liked that Aneesa [the main character in the story] was a good Muslim. She was wearing appropriate clothes and praying at the mosque and helping another family

during the Eid holiday. She lives in the U.S. like me, and she is celebrating with her friends on Eid. I like to go to the mosque with my parents and wear a hijab. I always go to the mosque during the weekend and holidays to pray and have fun with my friends. But I do not have a lot of friends. My friends think that I am not a funny [sociable] girl.

Me:        Why do you think that?

Malaak:    Because I am not smart and my teacher told my mom that my grades are low and I need to work so hard to be a smart girl. I feel scared about going to third grade next year. I know it will be so hard for me.

Me:        Have you talked to your teacher about your concerns?

Malaak:    My teacher does not allow us to talk to her during class, and I don't have any time where I can talk to her. My teacher says that we need to be careful to work hard and not waste time, because our teacher says that is how we will learn. I think the teacher would be really mad at me if I tried to talk to her about my problems... Sometimes I do not know what to say to my teacher or to my parents. I would like to say this in Arabic to my friends. Because everyone has a secret and hopes to share it with someone they trust.

Me:        So, do you think that the character in the book you read, Aneesa, a young Muslim girl, is smart?

Malaak:    I am not sure!

Me:        What do you think about this… who has the power in the book that you read? How does the power give Aneesa benefits?

Malaak:    I think Aneesa has power, because she knows how to help others and make friends with other girls. It is important to have friends because friends keep you from being sad and feeling lonely. You can always talk to your friends and learn from them. Aneesa is lucky to have so many friends. I want to tell my friends how I feel and to pay attention to me. If I work hard and do better in school I think that will help me to have more friends, because the teacher will think I am smart and be nice to me. Being smart will help me be popular, and make my parents happy and proud. My parents will be so happy that they will get me gifts (Malaak's discussion, 10-20-2018).

Through our discussions, Malaak was able to think about how she could

reconstruct her story to illustrate a connection to the world around her. To begin, Malaak

considered how she was similar to the main character, Aneesa. Malaak realized that both

she and Aneesa were very religious, and also desired to be socially connected to others and have many friends. To Malaak, having friends illustrated that she was well-liked, good in school, and that her parents were proud of her. Having friends and being smart were, to Malaak, intimately related. Malaak used her voice to tell her story through DST. She wrote about herself in a story she titled "All About Eid," where she detailed her routine on Eid holiday (see Figure 3-8. Phenomenological materials – Storytelling artifacts). Her story indicated a process of self-reflection and personal growth, as Malaak began to discover and develop her identity. She discussed aloud her feelings about friends and religion, and how important approval from her teacher and parents is. She began to realize how important these qualities are to her, what she wants for herself, and the type of person she wants to be. Malaak expressed her desire to spend time with her family and friends outside of the mosque.

In her DST, Malaak showed her desire for having her friends and family united by portraying them enjoying time together in a family fun center and in different places around the city. She knew the places she wanted to go and imagined herself with friends and family at local recreational spots, such as Valleyfair, city parks, Sky Zone, and Chuck E. Cheese. These places are all typical for girls her age to enjoy and look forward to spending time at. In her story, she was able to show that other places were important to her besides the mosque, and she was comfortable showing another side of herself, in which her wants and desires for friends, fun, and family were made clear. In one of Malaak's illustrations, Malaak drew a picture of herself with her parents. Together, they are entering an entertainment center, where her friends are already inside, playing, and waiting for her to arrive (see Figure 5-6).

190

Importantly, in her illustration, she and her family are not at the mosque, indicating that she desires connecting with her parents outside of a religious setting. To show that her mother is interested in having fun, she drew a star on her mother's dress. The star provides insight into Malaak's desire to have her mother join her in having fun with her friends, and her desire to have her mother be an equally excited participant in her adventures. My assumption here is that Malaak views her mother as a person to go to for safety, refuge, and happiness. Like police officers and hero figures wear stars, her mother also wears a star, showing that she is a trusted and valued person in Malaak's life. This may be why Malaak drew a star on her mom's dress, because her mom is quite literally her star. Because Malaak struggles making friends, her mother may serve as both her protector and her friend, thus her desire to have her mother join her and her friends in her story.

**Figure 5-6**

*Phenomenological Materials – Storytelling Artifacts*

Malaak's DST illustrations demonstrate her use of voice to share with others and reveal to herself her lived experiences. It becomes possible to understand the suffering she has endured in her life, both at school and in her social relationships. Her DST helped to shape her voice and provides insight into the oppression she has encountered in her life. Her DST provided an avenue for Malaak to begin to process these painful feelings in a way in which her confidence and identity could flourish and thrive. Malaak began the DST process as a quiet, shy, and reserved young girl who was unhappy and lonely in her life. Her social life was tied to her religious life, and the majority of time she spent engaged with others was at the mosque, since her father is the Imam there and, as such, she necessarily spends a great deal of time at the mosque. She did not feel empowered to make friends and express her concerns to trusted adults about her insecurities with friends and school. Malaak desperately desires a more mainstream childhood filled with fun and friendship. She desires a relationship with her parents that extends beyond the mosque. Her desire for an active social life outside of a religious setting may provide insight into why Malaak gets poor grades in school. Malaak may be overcome with feelings of loneliness and sadness, which prevent her from being able to focus on school. She could be preoccupied with negative emotions, which deplete her mental resources for learning. Malaak clearly expressed how important her mother's approval and friends were to her.

Malaak also lamented, matter-of-factly, that she is not smart. Prior to the DST experience, Malaak's narrative was that she wasn't smart and, as such, not deserving of friends or of her parents' approval. She believed that if the teacher liked her, she would gain friends, as her teacher's approval and kindness would indicate her intelligence. Her

intelligence would bring her more admirers, she would have friends, and her parents would buy her gifts. Malaak believed that she needed to be smart in order to receive gifts from her parents. As such, her teacher's approval, parents' approval and peer friendships all depended on how well she could do in school and how good her grades were.

Malaak expressed a great deal of distress about her position as a girl who wasn't very smart. She was worried that third grade would be very hard for her and, as such, making friends would be that much more out of her reach. When I pressed her to consider talking to her teacher about her concerns, Malaak was instantly resistant. She did not want to talk to her teacher about her grades or think about ways she could improve her situation. Instead, she accepted that she was not smart and that there was nothing that she could do about it. Her lack of agency and oppression was abundantly clear. This suggests that the school's environment facilitates oppression and creates a competitive atmosphere where students are either "in" or "out." This supports hooks' (1994) assertion that when people experience deep sorrow, these strong emotions can become the catalyst needed to act for change. Malaak experienced a great deal of sorrow and was desperate to change her situation, but she was not empowered to try. Her DST provided the impetus to begin to challenge her negative beliefs and become empowered by developing a personal narrative in which she was smart, happy, and had friends. Her DST allowed her voice to take shape, and she began to challenge and resist her oppression and show her progress in her fight for liberation from oppression. In order to strengthen and shape her personal voice, I encouraged Malaak to reconstruct her story and think about the happy moments she would like to have. I encouraged her to focus on narratives she would like to believe,

rather than narratives that highlighted negatives. I encouraged her to think beyond the cultural and social limitations that have been placed upon her. In doing so, Malaak's voice flourished. Her voice took on shapes and lines of flight in all directions as she liberated herself from hegemony.

To further explore and capitulate on Malaak's phenomenological materials, I called upon hooks, who inspired me to resist my own oppression and become critical of hegemony. Thinking with hooks, a poststructural feminist theorist, allowed me to understand how my research questions aligned with each theoretical concept and how this tied to the data. To do this, I applied a "plugging in" process. This allowed me to think more about how voice connected to liberation from oppression. Resisting oppression is expressed eloquently by hooks (1994) when she says, "No need to hear your voice. Only tell me your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way" (p. 152). Malaak, like other young students and adults, is always speaking from complex positions — "not single but multiple...always located" (Kamler, 2001, p. 36) and always evolving. It was my job as a researcher to uncover these complex positions. One way I did so was by reviewing my own suffering and oppression from childhood, in my role as a female student. I was able to uncover and share with my students what hooks (1994) describes as the "particular knowledge that comes from suffering. It is a way of knowing that is often expressed through the body, what it knows, what has been deeply inscribed on it through experience" (p. 91). The connectedness of human experiences and modes of expression show how voice is an important concept in feminist thought (hooks, 1990). The process of creating a critical consciousness encompasses awareness of the need for voice and self-expression. However, finding voice, and courage to do so, is not

without struggle. The struggle for liberation and the liberation from the groups in which we belong is necessary to strengthen our personal voice. Paying attention to how inequality creates oppression exposes the commonality between our different types of oppression (hooks, 1989).

hooks' (1990) grandmother's home was a very special and important place for hooks to begin the process of resisting oppression and becoming empowered to be her own agent of change. hooks' grandmother's home was a sanctuary of sorts, allowing hooks the freedom to shape her voice and identity. It was here hooks first learned how to critically think, which allowed her to develop the mental tools for resistance. As hooks (1990) captured the hearts and minds of many by recalling stories from her youth, I attempted to do the same with my students. I encouraged them to recall their own stories, and to tell their stories in a way that left them empowered and motivated to be an agent for change. Malaak particularly flourished after application of hooks' approach. Malaak's home life was very important to her, and the first place where she began to resist oppression and understand her need to be academically and socially successful. Her revelation was something I deeply connected with, having my early resistance efforts realized in my own family home. For Malaak, her resistance began in the mosque, guided by her mother's support. Malaak indicates in her DST that her mother is happy with her growth and newfound voice through the placement of a bright, cheerful star in the middle of her dress. A theoretical model for Malaak's resistance to oppression is shown below (Figure 5-7).

**Figure 5-7**

*Understanding Student's Resistance*
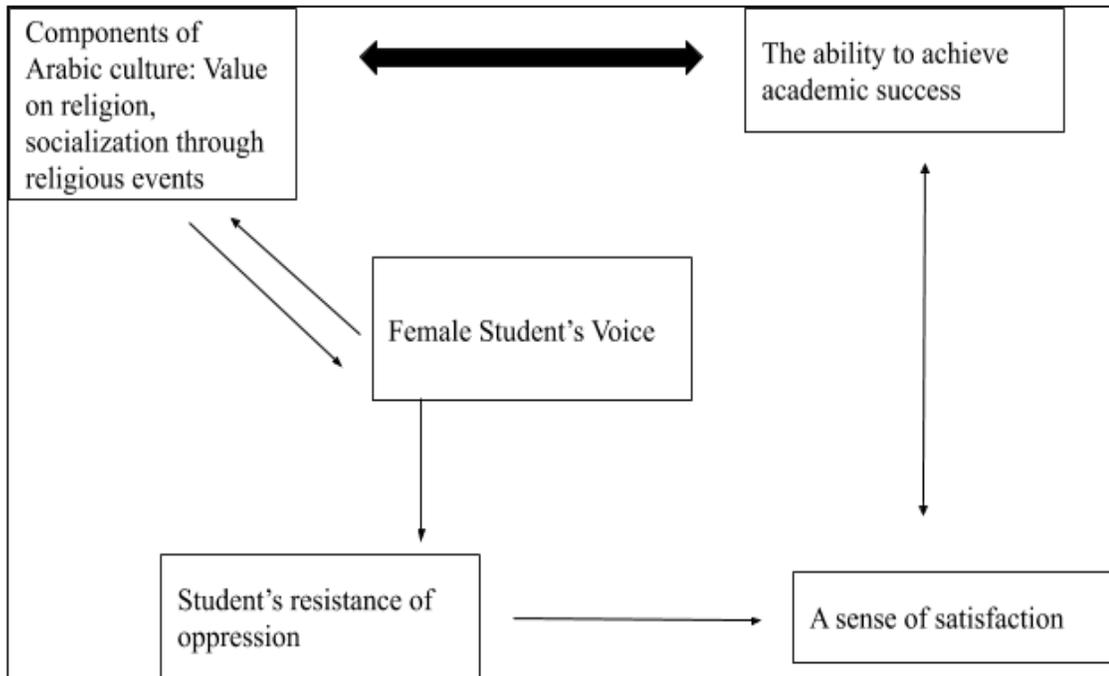


This conception shows that Malaak's major source of socialization is through the mosque, where her father is a religious leader. Her parents want her to be religious, but they also want her to be successful academically. However, in order for Malaak to be academically and socially successful, she needs to find happiness outside of the mosque and break her silence. In my conceptual analysis (Figure 5-7), Malaak develops her voice, and realizes the need to resist oppression. Her starting point for resistance is the mosque, where she explores how to compromise Arabic cultural norms with social and academic success outside of religious settings. In doing so, she feels better and more confident, which affords her the mental space, through the alleviation of anxiety, to attend to her studies and make friends. Malaak's parents want to help their daughter to overcome her insecurities and social anxiety and find her voice by allowing her to be involved in this

life experience, which shows their support of her resistance. By allowing her to participate in this study, her parents show they understand how Malaak is underserved by having the mosque serve as her place of socialization and self-actualization.

Malaak's story of finding her voice began in the mosque, which became what hooks (1990) describes as the "sites of resistance, alienation, silence" for Malaak's desire. Malaak challenges her placement in the margin, as "margins have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance" (hooks, 1990, p. 151). Malaak accepts that she loses privileges by moving away from the mosque and into mainstream society. The power relations she has with others begin to shift as she understands her importance and power as a young female with placement in the margins. Malaak begins to find agency within these relationships, relationships that once contributed to her oppression. Malaak notes that "[me and my friends] celebrate in Eid and we need to have fun outside of the mosque and go to different places" (Malaak's interview, 4-27-2019). While Malaak does not blame her parents for her suffering, she acknowledges that "maybe because I do not have friends and no one knows about that [her suffering] because I did not tell anyone... I wrote [about my suffering] in my DST" (Malaak's interview, 4-27-2019). Malaak's voice shifted and took shape as she developed her DST, which became a tool for her resistance. Malaak grew as she developed her agency and learned how to resist oppression, a process that we worked through together. In our conversation, Malaak shared:

Me:     Malaak, please tell me about your experience with DST. Was it different than what you thought it would be?

Malaak:  I felt very comfortable and happy after I finished my digital storytelling. It helped me to think about what I want to be and to feel better about myself and talk more. Instead of being quiet and blaming others because I am sad, I think about how I can be happy and smart. I've always been very quiet, and my digital storytelling helped me talk about my ideas with other girls. My teacher doesn't help me to feel good

197

about myself, which I don't like. In my story, I am very happy and I feel good about myself. I drew pictures to show myself being happy and having fun with my parents and my friends, just like the girl in the book I read was happy and had lots of friends (Malaak's interview, 4-27-2019).

As hooks (1990) found her grandmother's house to be a safe space to heal, "The task of making homeplace was not simply a matter of black women providing service; it was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (p. 42), I have provided a safe space for the students at the school through this study. Prior to the study, Malaak's safe space was the mosque. However, Malaak indicates that she wishes she felt safe at school with her teacher. If Malaak could find this safety in school and feel that her teacher cares about her and affirms her desire and need for social connection, her voice and identity would flourish. This is what I want for Malaak — I want Malaak to find the safe space at school that she finds at the mosque. Because she does not feel connected at school, her DST and drawings are focused on events and settings outside of school. She is not engaged socially or academically at school and, as such, her liberation and voice are not developed or found there. She experiences oppression at school, which is why she needs resistance.

The Deleuze and Guattari concepts of lines of flight and assemblages "privileges how things connect rather than what things are'" (Lorraine, 2005 as cited in Vagle, p. 118, 2014). As a post-intentional phenomenologist exploring female student voice, I was consciously aware of the need to be receptive to the phenomenon's bursting of lines of flight that "resist the tying down of lived experience and knowledge" (Vagle, 2014, p. 135). I am chasing the lines of flight between my participants' DSTs and the leaders in Saudi Arabia who are calling for social change and transition. Chasing the lines of flight

and engaging in discourse with Malaak allowed me to shape my response to my sub-research question: *How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia?*

Malaak's lived experiences provided insight into her immediate need to feel connected to the social world. Through achieving this connectedness, Malaak will break her silence and find her voice and identity. This will power her to resist oppression and be an agent of change. This is an appropriate time in history to embark on such an adventure, as Saudi Arabia has entered into a transformational era of growth. Saudi Arabia's progress and current focus on female rights and gender equality present unique opportunities for Malaak and other young girls looking to break their silence and resist oppression. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has led efforts and disseminated ideas through articulation and promotion of Vision 2030. Vision 2030 (2016) documents[22] the need for economic and social development to leverage the potential of all social sectors to promote culture, entertainment, and social life for all.

Support for opening theater and arts to the public is part of an ambitious plan for social reform supported by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, despite opposition from politically powerful conservative circles (Kinninmont, 2018). Al-Alshikh (2017) declares the Crown Prince "The great reformer and God's gift to the Kingdom" on Twitter, in response to his 2017 win as TIME's Person of the Year online reader poll. The Crown Prince earned more votes than other influential political leaders. According to

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[22] Evidence of the impact of Vision 2030 was found through leadership speeches, presentations, announcements, and information dissemination including online reports, news briefs, social media, televised, newspapers, and journal articles.

Biography profile (2018) on Mohammed bin Salman, he was born in 1985 and holds a

bachelor's degree in law from King Saud University. As a young man of 34, he

understands youth voice and how important it is for young people to have avenues and

opportunities to resist oppression. He has seen firsthand the oppression young people in

the country experience. He has observed the effects of Saudi female deprivation, and how

denying women the right to obtain an education, work, travel, and drive, among other

issues, is a result of extremist action and served to significantly oppress women and girls.

Mohammed bin Salman has said about Saudi oppression, "I don't want to waste my time.

I am young. I don't want 70 percent of the Saudi population to waste their lives trying to

get rid of this. We want to spend 70 percent of our time building things, improving our

economy, creating jobs, creating new things, making things happen that are beneficial for

both sexes, male and female" (TIME, 2018). Mohammed bin Salman's sentiments align

closely with those of Freire, who says, "As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take

away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the

humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression" (Freire, 2000, p. 30). As such, both

have recognized and publicly challenged leaders to confront the oppression that their

power and control facilitates. They have both encouraged people to believe in their own

power and in a better, more just, society.

Mohammed bin Salman has worked tirelessly to promote Vision 2030, a national

program with one of its goals aimed at increasing female voice and decreasing

oppression. Vision 2030 aims to reorient Saudi political decisions to favor social life and

family togetherness in Saudi society. In support of Vision 2030, Mohammed bin Salman

declared, "We will not waste another 30 years with the extremists ... we will eliminate

them" (Rasooldeen & Hassan, 2017). In a *60 Minutes* television interview, Mohammed bin Salman said, "Undoubtedly after 1979, we were the victims of extremist thought, namely my generation, who suffered greatly from this thought… Saudi women still have not obtained their full rights to this day, and there are rights stipulated in Islam that they still do not possess, we have come a very long way and there is a short way to go" (Norah, 2019, p.1). During his second appearance on the second day of the Future Investment Initiative, Mohammed bin Salman said, "The Saudis' strength is like that of the Tuwaiq mountain[23], unbreakable unless this mountain is leveled and equaled to the ground" (Alarabiya, 2018).

Policies arising from Vision 2030 challenge conservative viewpoints that women should be maintained and controlled by the government. Through review and analysis of Saudi Arabia's history, we see many instances of opportunities for women to become present in society. A recent example of the impact Vision 2030 has had on the country may be evidenced through Saudi Arabia's decision to allow both genders to go to the cinema. On April 18, 2018, the 35-year ban on movie theaters was lifted, allowing for families to connect together and enjoy social time with one another outside of the mosque and institutional settings. This initiative is particularly important, as it illustrates that the government is both economically aware and understands the need for the country to provide more facilities and services that will allow both genders to join together, socialize, and enjoy their time (Alarabiya, 2018). The importance of social connections recognized by the Crown Prince aligns with Malaak's need for social connection that she

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[23] The Tuwaiq mountain, formed of solid limestone, can be seen from the southern border of al-Qasim in the north to the northern edge of the Empty Quarter desert in the south. The word "Tuwaiq" means a beautiful surrounding, one that inspires the most beautiful desert in the world. Over 200 flowering plants blossom each spring here (Tuwaiq, 2020).

voiced in her DST. This example also shows how interconnected people and society are and how affected all levels of society are.

A second example of the policy impact of Vision 2030 occurred in 2018, when the Saudi government allowed both men and women in families to attend a soccer match for the first time in the country's history. Previously, only men were allowed into the sports arena. Now, by allowing families to come together and enjoy sporting events, all family members and friends can gather socially and enjoy friendship and fellowship, while also engaging in society[24]. Women played a large role in executing the event, providing evidence that Saudi leaders believe in women and their ability to organize important soccer events such as the Seasonal Games, Saudi Championships[25], etc. Saudi women were assigned various roles and tasks in this work, such as ticket distribution, organizing seating, and security. Women also were assigned to more complex roles like organizing games dates, coordinating the event, and supervising the performance (Alarabiya, 2018). According to the women who worked at the event, they felt appreciated and respected by others. They reported receiving words of thanks and praise from others, and comments that seeing families come together was a very pleasant experience (Aldkhyl, 2019).

These sentiments show the progress that Princess Reema bint Bandar has helped facilitate for women in Saudi Arabia. The princess has worked hard to encourage and support women in SA; she is a symbol of the empowerment of Saudi women, and is well

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[24] For review, visit Chapter 2, which explains how women and girls won the rights to attend sporting events on January 18, 2018.

[25] The Seasonal Games and the Saudi Championships are both seasonal soccer competitions that last for several months throughout the year.

known for her positions supporting women's rights to attend sporting events and drive. She has also favored the Saudi government dropping discriminatory male guardianship systems that oppress women. She states on her Twitter account, "For the day you brought happiness into the heart of every Saudi family and woman by attending the first match. It is considered a historical moment in the Kingdom" (Reema, 2018, p. 1). As vice president of the General Authority for Sports for Planning and Development since 2017, she stated that, "That is, I do not call them organizers but heroines because they deserve this attribute for what they presented on this important day and the expected event" (Alarabiya, 2018). Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud talked about women's role in achieving Vision 2030 in 2017, at a press conference titled, *The Role of Saudi Women in Vision 2030.* Here, she discussed her involvement in policy that would allow women and girls the right to participate widely in sports. She also discussed current opportunities for women in the areas of planning, engineering, education, marketing, and advertising. She has championed the Kingdom to make investments in infrastructure and to build economic opportunities for women. Princess Reema recognizes that women face particular obstacles in the workplace, and has also asked for resources and policy that will support women in the workplace (Alriyadh, 2017).

The most recent example for change in Saudi Arabia may be evidenced through the creation and implementation of Riyadh Season on October 11, 2019. The Riyadh Season was created by the General Entertainment Authority through a royal decree in Saudi Arabia and adopted Riyadh as the host city for the three-month-long event from October to December (Riyadh Season, 2019, October 11). Riyadh Season invites people from different parts of Saudi Arabia, and the world, to come together to experience the

festivities. Al-Alshikh, chairman of the General Entertainment Authority, said on his

Twitter account, "Riyadh Season will bring the world to Saudi Arabia" (Al-Alshikh,

2019). Riyadh Season is the largest of 11 Saudi seasons aimed at transforming the

Kingdom into one of the most important tourist destinations in the world[26]. This event

allows mixed-gendered groups of people to experience major attractions for the first time

in Saudi Arabia. Popular attractions include performances by K-pop group BTS,

international and Arabic artists, Michelin-star chefs, and sports events like WWE Crown

Jewel and the Super Classico. This is part of a larger goal for women and girls to have

employment opportunities, engage the economy, and allow Saudi Arabia to be equal to

other first-world nations (Riyadh Season, 2019).

The above examples provide evidence of Saudi leaders' support for breaking

down gender roles and their belief that women should be as equally present in Saudi

society as men. These gradual changes over time in Saudi Arabia have supported female

voices and allowed women to realize their power and identity. However, there is still

working to be done in this regard. For example, women and girls were not allowed to

participate as athletes in the sporting events, and there are currently no opportunities for

girls to pursue certain interests. It is my hope that, by 2030, it will be acceptable in Saudi

society for Nora to pursue gymnastics, Sara to pursue ballet, and Myana to pursue

Taekwondo. There is evidence that demand for these opportunities will grow as more

women become successful in sports, such as Sarah Attar, the track and field athlete who

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[26] Promotional materials encourage visitors to "Enjoy the many colors of major events and unique tourist experiences filled with joy and fun throughout the year in most of the cities and regions of the Kingdom, where they discovered the heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its unique culture, and the charm of its beauty through the varied seasons of Saudi" (Saudi Seasons, 2019. p.3).

competed at the 2012 Summer Olympics. As the feminist movement builds and women

gain more rights and freedoms, it is likely that opportunities for girls and women will

continue to expand. It is my hope that, someday, all the young girls in my study will be

able to realize their dreams in their home country if they move back. I believe my

participants can make their dreams come true, and I believe they have the qualities of the

Tuwaiq mountain. They have become tall and strong, confident in their strength and

value. As my participants developed their voices and identities, they realized their

freedom and became confident in their authority. Like the Tuwaiq mountain, their

strength cannot be taken away and their beauty cannot be destroyed because they are

fighting for their freedom. As Freire (2000) identifies, freedom is not given but earned

through hard work, determination, and conquest. Freedom is an important quality for an

individual to feel, to have a sense of completion and security in their value to themselves

and others. In this context, my female participants experienced freedom. They were

allowed to read, question, write, and ask questions, and be rewarded for their voice rather

than punished and silenced. They have begun the process toward self-actualization

through resistance.

Current events in Saudi Arabia continue to demonstrate that the female voice is

important and valued. Much work is being done to advance women's role in society,

engage in the economy, and be free from oppression. The country is engaged in a new

stage of empowering women by supporting their contributions toward sustainable

developments in the economy and affording them full rights within society. The 39th

session of the Arab Women's Committee, the official authority in Saudi Arabia that

represents women, families, children, and the elderly, kicked off on February 9, 2020.

Under the slogan "The Woman is a Nation and an Ambition," the Committee declared

Riyadh as the capital of Arab women for the year 2020 (Arab News, 2020). Dr. Hala al-

Tuwaijri, secretary-general of the Family Affairs Council, said on CIC Saudi Arabia's

Twitter account, "Women are half of society, half of ambition, half the possibilities. And

if we invest in women, we invest in the entire country" (CIC Saudi Arabia, 2020).

Many influential Saudi women representing a wide range of occupational fields

have found success in their chosen professions. These women were recognized and

honored at the Arab Women's Committee's annual conference. Some of these women

include: Lubna Olayan, the first Saudi woman to be elected as a board member of the

Saudi Hollandi Bank; Hayat Sindi, a medical scientist and one of the first female

members of the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia; Lama Alsulaiman, the first

woman to be elected as vice president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in

Jeddah; Noura bint Abdullah Al-Fayez, the first woman to hold the position of deputy

minister; and Khawla Al Khuraya, the first woman to receive the King Abdul Aziz Medal

and the Harvard Award for Scientific Excellence. The Arab Women's Committee warned

that in order to build and maintain the capacity and infrastructure for Saudi society to

grow and keep pace with other countries, girls and women must be adequately prepared

for the future. They discussed many issues that are necessary to support girls and women,

and reported the general secretariat's activity toward these goals. The 2030 agenda

centers around plans for sustainable development and female empowerment. They

followed up with recommendations of the Ministerial Conference that focus on ensuring

social impact and development become and remain a priority (Alarabiya, 2020). The

committee emphasized the importance of the Saudi education system to provide support

and empowerment to female students, and to understand the role of the educational system for achieving Vision 2030. Political influencers in Saudi Arabia appear to be on the side of the oppressed, and recognize that political action must be pedagogical in nature (Freire, 2000). As Freire cautions, political leaders and those in positions of power who work for the oppressed toward liberation must be careful not to exploit their power by taking advantage of the emotional vulnerability of the oppressed. The dependence that arises from the oppressed is an artifact of the oppressed inauthentic view of the world; to exploit the vulnerabilities of the oppressed and create greater dependence is a common oppressor tactic (Freire, 2000).

These facts highlight the importance of my current study, which coincides with a very important time in Saudi Arabia for girls of all social classes. My study allows for the education system to consider ways in which female students may be empowered to find and use their voices, to gain a sense of identity and autonomy, and to resist oppression. It is my hope that this study will help motivate Saudi educators toward female enlightenment, and provide educators a framework for developing female voice through DST. This is particularly important for educators of young Saudi girls who are not able to study overseas, and who do not come from privilege and wealth. By making DST a standard practice in Saudi educational settings, young girls will have a chance to develop their voices and be able to someday compete with girls who were able to study overseas or who were raised in an economically or politically powerful family. This will allow young Saudi girls to discover their voices and break their silence.

## Summary of the Finding and Discussion Chapter

In this chapter, I utilized Vagle's 2018 post-intentional phenomenology to explore and unpack the phenomenon of the female student voice and its multiple presentation of forms. Rigorous application of this methodology allowed me to understand how the female student voice presented in a sample of five female students in a K–4 Arabic classroom. Illuminations of the phenomenological constructs emerged through the DST process and provided data for analysis of how female students' voices are shaped while maintaining identity as Arabic females from Saudi Arabia. Through this process, I was able to illuminate the phenomenological constructs and worked intently to capture three moments: *moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity,* and *moment of resisting oppression with female voice*. Analysis of each moment required that I chase down the "lines of flight." I applied Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) *thinking with theory* and plugged in theoretical concepts and understandings to phenomenological material. I utilized Jones' (2006), Davies' (2003), and hooks' (1990) critical feministic theories to think with as I chased the lines of flight.

In the first *moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, the importance of female students having hope and imagining positive future events was verified as an important contributor to voice and identity development. The female students read critical feminist literature and discussed their dreams for the future through critical discourse. The female students expressed hopes and dreams for future success and happiness. They described and created stories in which they were important athletes, dancers, and protectors of loved ones. The female students' progress and work was analyzed by utilizing Jones'

(2006) critical literacy theory, which also provided the necessary reference points to think from.

In the second moment, the *moment of constructing identity*, female student voice was realized to be important for developing a sense of gender identity and challenging unfair and unjust systems that oppress girls and women. By reading feminist critical literature, the female students transformed the gendered meaning of the texts. Analysis and exploration of their digital stories provided insight into their lived experiences and their development from engagement in a poststructuralist framework, and developed new meanings of gender though the text-reader relationship. Gender discourse was at times met with resistance from the students, who in some cases preferred to read gender-typical books in which the female character provides a supporting role to the male. To encourage critical thinking and dialogue, I introduced a Saudi female hero, the first woman from Saudi Arabia to join NASA, and worked off their energy and excitement about her successes to encourage their own experiences with the texts. Thinking with Davies (2003) allowed me to understand how to provoke the phenomenon from my students as they used their voices and uncovered the gender dualisms that are often found in children's literature. Utilizing Davies' theoretical framework allowed me to understand the students' processes for arriving at a deeper understanding of themselves as females. I realized they were more confident in their agency and felt powerful to break their silence. The DSTs provided evidence of their lived experiences as they constructed new visions for themselves.

In the *moment of resisting oppression with female voice*, I analyzed the students' realizations of oppression and their active and intentional use of voice to overcome and

resist this oppression. Malaak in particular grew tremendously through this provocation. In the beginning of the post-intentional process, she saw herself spending time with her parents at the mosque. She did not see herself as smart or as a girl with friends. Thinking with hooks' (1990) recollection of the safe space her grandmother's home provided her, I realized that Malaak found the mosque to her also be a safe space; however, this environment was not helping her develop a voice or identity. Through the DST process, Malaak began to understand what was truly important to her, and developed options for making friends and opening up for support. We worked together through the process of resisting oppression. Important here was Malaak's realization that she desperately wanted to connect to the social world. I chased the lines of flight in my discourse with Malaak to shape my response to my third sub-research question: *How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia?* The connection was made between Malaak's desire for social life, and current and recent events in Saudi Arabia. For example, the country is opening up many arenas for mixed-gender social gatherings for the first time. Men and women, together with their friends and family, can enjoy national events, parties, festivals, sporting events, theater, opera, and many other social events. The desires of the people in Saudi Arabia for extended social contact was expressed by Malaak as well, as she also struggled with understanding how to connect being a good Muslim with being a good friend and having an active social life.

In conclusion, Chapter 5 provided detailed analysis of the lines of flight through application of the post-intentional phenomenological methodology. In the next chapter, I will discuss the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

# Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

In this final chapter, I provide an overall summary of my research. This includes a summary of my study including a brief overview of the literature, methodology, and my research findings as related to the phenomenon of female student voice. I discuss my research questions and provide conclusions for each research question. I will conclude with the implications of my research for educators and researchers, and recommendations to others for extending the research.

## Summary of the Research Study

In this study, I applied Vagle's (2018) post-intentional phenomenology methodology to explore the phenomenon of female student voice in young female students at an Arabic grade

K– 4 elementary school in the United States. The choice to use females from an Arabic elementary school in the U.S. was made in an effort to approximate a school setting similar to what would be typical in Saudi Arabia, where my research is intended to be applied. My interest in female student voice came about from my own experiences, first as a young female student, and later as a professional female educator in Saudi Arabia. I was fortunate to have a family that was supportive of my non-traditional career and personal goals; however, despite my family's support, I encountered many challenges due to the oppressive and traditionally patriarchal norms around which Saudi society was built. Much of Saudi culture is conservative and opposed to the idea of women working outside the home or pursuing higher education. This research is motivated by my commitment to freeing girls from oppression and enhancing the educational environment so young female students may find their voices, resist oppression, and become women

who may find happiness and peace outside of traditional settings. It is my belief that, if young females break their silences, they may become adults who strive to actualize their dreams, particularly if their dreams reside outside of marriage and motherhood.

I expand on my belief in the power of female voice to lead to empowerment, and provide context and evidence for the need of female student voice, in my literature review (for review, see Chapter 2). I focus on the first component and sub-parts of Vagle's (2018) post-intentional phenomenology:

Component #1: Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in contexts, around a social issue.

Part 1: State the Research Problem
Part 2: Partial Review of the Literature
Part 3: Theory I Want to Think With

As explored in my literature review, education in Saudi Arabia has historically been oppressive and closely tied to religion, a trend that has not changed and remains true today. Male and female students are taught in separate schools under the banking model of education, which instructs students to be obedient, listen to the teacher, and memorize information. Any deviation from these expectations is met with severe punishment. Many students are scared of the teacher and of getting into trouble; as such, the school day is very stressful and worrisome for young students. Female students ultimately graduate from the banking model of education unprepared to do or be anything except a homemaker and caretaker. This prevents women from gainful employment, making their own money, and contributing positively to the economy. Though Islam asserts that women are to be valued, the current interpretations of Islam in Saudi Arabia have bent toward female suppression and subservience to men.

My study is built on the foundational thought that female power can be realized through development of voice and identity, which will lead to female students becoming agents of change. This may all be initiated and constructed within the educational system, provided that teachers have the proper tools to motivate and encourage student voice. The power of female student voice to break silence and resist oppression has been well documented, yet many educational systems are reluctant to abandon the banking model of education. By maintaining the banking model, the educational system facilitates oppression and limits self-discovery and critical thinking, resulting in young female students, eventual high-school graduates, who are at a complete disadvantage within a competitive job market. I hypothesize that critical literacy and discourse will provoke student voice and identity that students may exhibit and explore in their digital storytelling. This will liberate females from the banking model of education. My ultimate goal is that DST will be applied within Saudi schools, aiding in the liberation of females from their struggles for identity under oppressive traditional practices and beliefs.

I closed Chapter 2 with a description and explanation of sub-part 3: Theory I Want to Think With. Development of my theoretical framework provided me the opportunity to critically think with influential critical post-structural feminist (CPSF) scholars and relate my own lived experiences to the foundational concept. Important scholars here were hooks (1990), Davies (2003), Jones (2006), Freire (2000), and Vagle (2014, 2018), among many others. Applying theory to my critical analysis allowed me to connect my lived experiences as a female student in Saudi Arabia to the phenomenon of female student voice. I was able to expound on the importance of data in this topic area, and secured belief in the appropriateness of this research for liberating female students

taught under oppressive systems and forced to think with the banking model of education. Specifically, critical post-structural feminist theories allowed me to think about how the phenomenon is shaped through critical literacy and discourse. The post-intentional phenomenology process provided me an avenue through which to connect my lived experiences with the various lines of flight the phenomenon provoked. Thinking with theory provided a conceptualization for how female students may experience oppressive educational models and political systems, and how female students may break their silences and become agents of change. I realized my own victimization at the hands of restrictive educational practices, and solidified my resolve to ensure female students in Saudi Arabia have opportunities to develop their voices, build identity, and resist oppression.

Chapter 3 provided an in-depth examination of post-intentional phenomenology as a research approach for studying how female student voice may facilitate female resistance to oppression. The multiplicities in the phenomenon were carefully documented, explored, and examined. This provided a way for me to connect and interact with the dynamic nature of female student voice as a phenomenon. Employing Deleuze and Guatarri's (1987) conceptualization of lines of flight assisted with understanding that the "connective nature of social, ethical, and political relations does not lend itself to simplicities and essence" (Vagle, 2018, p. 135) and considering "things as fluid, shape-shifting assemblages continually on the move in interacting with the world, rather than perceiving them as stable essences" (Vagle & Hofsess, 2015, p. 4). Application of Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) "plugging in" concept allowed me to deepen the analytical process of "thinking with theory." By plugging in the theoretical concepts, I was able to

better understand and connect with the phenomenon. I continued to use Vagle's (2018) framework for conducting an exploration of the phenomenon, exploring in detail the first three components to post-intentional phenomenology research. The components I kept discovering and analyzing in-depth include:

Component #1. Identify a post-intentional phenomenon in context(s), around a social issue. This component consists of seven parts that assist the researcher's exploration of the phenomenon. This included an in-depth explanation of the following:

Part 4: Contexts
Part 5: Social Change
Part 6: Participant Selection
Part 7: Research Question(s)

Component #2. Devise a clear, yet flexible process for gathering phenomenological material appropriate for the phenomenon under investigation.

Component #3. Make a post-reflexion plan.

In Component #1, Part 4, I addressed the need to be aware of the changing forms of the phenomenon. Context was important here. To determine the context for female student voice, I followed Vagle's (2018) direction for careful consideration of the varying and interacting contexts for understanding the phenomena. Contextually, this study focuses on female students who are taught in an Arabic school in the United States that mirrors the educational standards and systems of schools in Saudi Arabia. As such, female students in the U.S. school, referred to as the Arabic Elementary School, lack opportunities to express their voices and develop their identities through discourse, as do female students in Saudi Arabia. The school is set in a large Midwestern city. It is a private school with 100% Muslim attendance. My study participants included five second and third graders who speak both English and Arabic. Consideration of the space and place in which the study would be conducted was important. As Vagle (2014) asserts,

people find themselves experiencing the world through both space and place. It was, therefore, extremely critical to get the context right in order to ensure student comfort and trust. The specific settings differed by student, and were responsive to the students' desires. Allowing the students to choose their space and place afforded them the opportunity to begin making their own decisions. Consideration of the student interaction context was inspired by Robin's (2005) four-step approach, which allowed me to see the additional contexts for provocation of the phenomenon. I worked off the assumption that personal agency can be derived through digital storytelling, as digital storytelling challenges traditional perspectives of how the learning environment should operate (Erstad & Silseth, 2009).

Also in this chapter, I explored the phenomena of female student voice and DST as a method for facilitating Part 5, social change. Social change in post-intentional phenomenology is a concept that needs to be explicitly described and defined. As such, I considered DST to be the tool by which social change may occur. Allowing students to learn outside of the banking model of education, and making alternative educational practices commonplace, will evoke social change in education. Part 6, participant selection, considered the process of identifying and securing study participants. First, IRB approval (see Appendix B) was sought and secured, after which I began my research at Arabic Elementary School. My research was undertaken from September 2018 to April 2019. A total of 113 students and their parents were sent invitations to participate. The invitation included a study description that delineated the risks and benefits of participating. A total of five students and their parents returned signed consent (see Appendix C) and assent forms (see Appendix D). These students included: Malak, 7

years old, second grade; Nora, 8 years old, third grade; Alaa, 8 years old, third grade; Sara, 8 years old, third grade; Myana, 8 years old, third grade. A total of 64 hours (two-hour sessions) over 20 weeks were spent exploring the phenomenon. Sessions were spent with each student, and the researcher engaged deconstruction (reading and discussion texts), reconstruction (writing their story), and social action (creating their digital stories). All sessions ended with a one-on-one interview with the student, facilitated by the researcher.

In Part 7, I described and discussed the research questions this study intended to answer. The primary research question was:

*How might expressions of student voice take shape for K–4 females in an Arabic school in the U.S. through digital storytelling (DST), the historical role of females in Saudi society, and political analysis of Saudi Arabia?*

Secondary questions:

a) *How might empowerment, as exhibited through student voice, relate to students' identity development?*

b) *What do the stories developed by the female students through DST tell us about their lived experiences?*

c) *How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia?*

Component #2 and Component #3 focused on planning for gathering the data for understanding the phenomenon, and making a post-reflexion plan. To select data sources for analyzing female student voice, it was important that I identify data sources that

would lead me to answering the research questions. The phenomenological materials included: participant deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action; transcripts from interviews, analysis of student stories, journal and field notes, analysis of political processes in Saudi Arabia, and self-reflexivity. My post-relexion plan was a crucial element of the post-intentional approach.

Reflexivity (Lather, 1993) allowed me to see the complexity of how the phenomenon was presented. My post-reflexion plan documented the nuances of reflexivity and prepared me to embark upon this nuanced and cognitively challenging component. I was careful to examine the expression of social and cultural norms and my own biases in relation to these expressions. As Vagle (2014) explained, examination by the researcher of his/her own assumptions allows the researcher to be free of bias and critically examine the phenomenon. My post-reflexion journaling revealed my reaction to many complex and dynamic activities during the student sessions and throughout my data collection. This allowed me to examine how the female student voice is provoked, produced, and shifts over time.

In Chapter 4, I explored the intentionality of my data analysis. The purpose of this chapter was to deeply explore the phenomenon with intention, which required a whole-part-whole process, thinking with intentionality, and exploring the provocations and productions that emerged from the post-intentional material that allowed for a deeper, more intense, phenomenological experience. Component #4 provided an exploration of the post-intentional phenomena, through the use of theory, the phenomenological material, and my post-reflexions. Here I applied many strategies and techniques to exploring the phenomenon. In Part 1 of Component #4, I focused on deconstructing the

whole of the phenomenological material into parts, which required deep analysis of the material. I applied Deleuze and Guttari's (1987) theory, in which I explored and attended to the lines of flight, purposefully and with intention. I provided myself ample time for reflection as I worked through the material. Thinking with theory required a "plugging-in" process, in which ideas from theory were applied to the phenomenological material. I applied the three requirements for thinking with theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) to my examination of the post-intentional material. This required that I view the phenomenon as a continuum, rather than binary, developing questions to answer through the plugging-in process, and revising meaning as meaning changed shape. Focusing on the critical post-structural feminist (CPSF) theories of Jones (2006), Davies (2003), and hooks (1990), I connected the phenomenological material to theory in order to answer my primary and secondary research question(s).

In Part 3 of Component #4, I analyzed my post-reflexions. To do this, I explored my past lived experiences, and considered how the assumptions I brought into the phenomenological process may impact my interpretations of the phenomenon. Recording my thoughts and observations of the phenomenon taking shape, the lines of flight, and connections to theory allowed me to test my previous assumptions and examine how I was being shaped by the phenomenon. In Component #5, I crafted text to engage productions and provocations of the phenomenon in the context of a social issue. I discussed the importance of documenting the fleeting and changing nature of the phenomenon as it is provoked. Important here is that I recognized and used my power as a researcher to play with the forms of the phenomenon as they emerged and took shape. I

discussed how the shifting nature of the phenomenon necessitated that I continually

revise my interpretations as the phenomenon moved through time and space.

Chapter 5 provided an exploration of the phenomenological moments as they

were produced, provoked, and took shape through time and space. I captured and wrote

about the productions and provocations, and connected these assemblages to answer my

research questions. I explored the use of digital storytelling as a medium for female voice

expression and presented a historical account of women's rights in Saudi Arabia,

followed by a political analysis of recent and current policy-level changes in Saudi

Arabia that are allowing people to connect and collectively share lived experiences. This

process provided the illumination of three phenomenological constructs: *Moment of*

*integrating hopes and dreams*, *moment of constructing identity, and moment of resisting*

*oppression with female voice*. Each moment provided the data for answering my research

questions, and evoked greater attention and discovery into the phenomenological material

as I connected my observations, post-reflexions, interviews, and the students' digital

stories, as well as the history of Saudi Arabia and current political landscape, to

answering the research questions.

For the first moment, *the moment of integrating hopes and dreams*, I described

how the students began imagining their futures, and how they exhibited hope that their

dreams for the future would come true. This was provoked through the critical feminist

literature and subsequent critical discourse. The students expressed their hopes and

dreams through their digital stories, where they were athletes, dancers, and protectors of

loved ones. Jones' (2006) critical literacy theory provided the theoretical foundation to

think from, which highlights the importance of full engagement in the post-intentional

process. This allowed the students to see from start to finish the progression of their resistance, incorporating a *talking-positioning-empowering* process. This provocation facilitated hope and dream-making, which in turn took shape as a source of empowerment and agency-building for previously voiceless female students. They were now able to break their silences.

In the second moment, *the moment of constructing identity*, the students examined their gender identity. Here, female student voice served to provide a medium for challenging prescribed gender expectations that keep females from achieving their dreams. Through engagement with the feminist critical literature, the female students transformed the gendered meaning of the texts though the text-reader relationship. To encourage critical thinking and dialogue, I utilized Davies' theoretical framework. This allowed me to understand the students' processes for arriving at a deeper understanding of themselves as females and understanding their identities. As Davies (2003) postulates, children may challenge oppressive gender expectations by embedding and applying lessons learned through the feminist critical literature. By adapting new ways of seeing and knowing gender, they may challenge restrictive gender expectations and break their silence from oppression. As Davies explains, both masculine and feminine qualities are part of all of us, and we cannot deprive ourselves of either of these expressions of identity.

Through the third moment, *the moment of resisting oppression with female voice*, the students used their voices to overcome oppression. The students talked about how they wanted to be strong, fearless, and have exciting and meaningful social lives. They wanted to be active participants in their social worlds, rather than passive observers. The

students illustrated instances of what hooks (1990) described as "sites of resistance, alienation, silence" for working through their desires and the realities of their worlds, as they questioned their placement in the margins. These placements are detrimental to female voice; as hooks (1990) explains, the margins are sites for oppression, but also offer opportunities for resistance.

In conclusion, using Vagle's (2018) post-intentional data analysis technique and Deleuze's and Guattari's (1987) concepts of lines of flight, I looked at how events connected rather than what they were on their own. Chasing the three moments provided the phenomenological material for analysis and synthesis to answer my research questions. I was aware of the importance of being receptive to the lines of flight that burst through the phenomenological material. These lines of flight are important events that fight oppression by letting lived experiences be explored and realized (Vagle, 2018). These lines of flight led me to understand the relationship between female student voice and the social and political landscape in Saudi Arabia. Like the people of Saudi Arabia, the female students desired social connections and engagement with the public part of society, while also maintaining their Muslim identities. These ideas and thoughts burst through the critical discourse and exposed a deep need to be connected to their full selves.

**Implications**

This is the first known study that has used the post-intentional phenomenological methodology to explore the phenomenon of female student voice as it relates to Arab students who live in the U.S. and attend an Arabic Elementary School. This study pursued the discovery and elucidation of female student voice in an Arabic Elementary

School, grades K–4, as the phenomenon under investigation by applying the post-intentional phenomenological methodology (Vagle, 2018). The post-intentional phenomenological method allowed for exploration of the different ways in which the phenomenon of female student voice was produced, provoked, and ultimately took shape as a continuous process of construction. This study is also the first known attempt to highlight and apply key concepts such as critical thinking, feminist literature, and discourse to the phenomenon of female student voice, specifically in an effort to break the destructive and debilitating effects of the banking model of education on female identity. Though the climate in Saudi Arabia is changing to be more equitable for women and girls, these changes are not yet reaching the public educational system. As such, Saudis may enjoy active social lives and engagement in public events and celebrations, but the educational system is still oppressive and traditionally rigid. This is because the educational sector in Saudi Arabia lacks educators and staff who are experienced and trained in supporting students' voice exploration, especially with marginalized students, such as females. Female students currently do not have the opportunity to explore their voices and resist their oppression in the educational system; this study provides an impetus and method for social change.

This study may carry important implications for researchers, educators, and female students in Saudi Arabia, as it provides a robust examination of the use of digital storytelling for freeing female students from oppressive educational systems like the banking model that restrict their voices and keep them from exploring their identities. Three priority implications of this research may be considered. First, the application of post-intentional phenomenological philosophy and methodology into teacher education at

King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia may be considered. This would allow educators to consider the benefits of alternative learning approaches to the banking model of education, and consider the benefits that application of digital storytelling may provide. For example, I plan to teach the post-intentional phenomenological philosophy and methodology from Vagle's book (2018) *"Crafting Phenomenological Research"* (2018) in my methodology class, as well as incorporate it more generally into my work as a teacher educator, scholar, and a human. Researchers may integrate their thinking, connection, and disconnection through application of post-reflexion and journaling the lines of flight to identify the changing and shifting phenomenon under investigation as it is provoked.

Researchers may understand the phenomenon in unexpected and surprising ways that will facilitate creative and empowering curriculum and instruction for female students. They may also understand, through the experience of being immersed in and entangled with the phenomenon, that post-intentionality is a way of being and thinking about the world (Vagle, 2018). Researchers may recognize that the world is neither linear, nor organized in a sequential manner. The tension and conflict that this realization evokes is an important component of the post-intentional process. As Vagle (2018) postulates, phenomenology is a craft that involves creativity and dedication to exploring how the phenomenon relates to all aspects of the world.

As a researcher, I contemplated and explored my own culture, religion, social experiences, and ideals as I conducted my research. This allowed me to better understand myself and my own position in the world, and how my position changes through time and space. I connected these thoughts and feelings to my reactions to the phenomenological material, and considered how my own lived experiences interacted with my analysis. As

such, researchers engaging in this methodology must be open to investigating how the phenomenon affects the craft and art of teaching, and how educators must be open to becoming, feeling, and living through the phenomenon.

The second implication centers on a practical, rather than academic, application to the research. This study provided a methodology for researchers to develop a foundational understanding of how their lived experiences are interconnected with the phenomenon under investigation. This may provide support and guidance to pre-service teachers (undergraduate students at KFU) to engage with my lived experiences and use my experiences to guide their own explorations. This would facilitate the pre-service teachers' ability and motivation to develop and implement curriculum and instruction in their classrooms that will encourage their students to break their silence in the classroom and experience learning through different strategies that are opposite of the banking model of education. These strategies include: deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action (Jones, 2006). Application of these strategies may help young students to empower themselves, construct their identities (Davies 2003), and resist oppression (hooks, 1990). In-service and pre-service teachers who intentionally exert time and energy into getting to know each individual student, spending time conversing with each student in a one-on-one setting, and being friendly, interested, and asking open-ended questions, may empower students to develop their voices and resist their oppression. By sharing power with the student, the teacher shifts the power dynamics to be equal to the student. In this way, the student may feel accepted in the classroom, and may feel comfortable to explore building different skills and engaging in new learning experiences (Cook-Sather, 2007).

Lastly, I will be applying the post-intentional phenomenological philosophy and methodology into my teacher education instruction, which will be a new course at KFU. Those studying Curriculum and Instruction, particularly those who teach, or will teach, will be specifically prepared to teach female students in grades K–4. This will be the first time education training is focused on elementary education. I will be implementing post-intentional phenomenology and digital storytelling into my instruction and preparing teachers to engage with and apply these strategies in their classrooms for the purpose of developing student voices and breaking the silence of oppression. Digital storytelling will be an important project for the young students to complete, and will allow them to build the skills necessary to navigate through their social worlds. This study is particularly applicable for the education of young students who will be social beings in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Given the adoption of Vision 2030 and the current educational system in which the banking model of education is standard, students will not be prepared to understand and live in society as Vision 2030 prescribes. As such, it is imperative that teachers prepare students for Vision 2030. Preparing female youth to be ready for Vision 2030 that Saudi Arabia aspires to achieve in the future requires empowering females and making their voices present in all fields and sectors.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Post-intentional phenomenology resists completion and adheres to the Deleuzo-Guattarian approach of understanding how different events and experiences connect, rather than what those experiences mean alone. The lines of flight concept recognizes that all things, ideas, beliefs, etc., are constantly moving, fleeting, and constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing; post-intentional phenomenology is never final (Vagle,

2014). As such, the concept, lines of flight, does not assume that anything, idea, belief, goal, phenomenon, person "... can be thought of as stable, singular, and final" (Vagle, 2014, p. 118). Thus, unlimited options exist for further research into the study of female student voice and how the application of a post-intentional phenomenological approach may contribute to further knowledge for educators and researchers. It is here I provide some examples of an unlimited array of possibilities for further research. It is important that all future studies be generative and facilitate and strive for understanding new concepts and asking new questions that may be explored and examined.

This is the first study to examine the phenomenon of female student voice and explore the usage of DST to break student silence facilitated by the oppressive banking model of education. Opportunities for additional research are abundant and highly encouraged. First, future researchers and educators may replicate this study in Saudi public schools, with the same target population (elementary-aged female students). This may help to better understand whether Arab female students living in the United States are similar to Arab students living in Saudi Arabia regarding how the phenomenon takes shape, is provoked, explored, and produced, and how this encourages voice development when the same research approach is applied. Also, this study may be replicated so that pre-service teachers in Saudi Arabia are the primary investigators for studying female student voice. This may help understand the influence of teacher training and instruction methods on the use of deconstruction, reconstruction, and social action (digital storytelling) processes and how this affects pre-service teachers' use of the banking model of education. This may also help the pre-service teachers understand different ways of teaching and offer different teaching strategies rather than the banking model of

227

education. This may also provide pre-service teachers practice and insight into how they may become agents of change as classroom teachers. In the future, it's likely that I will observe and assist teachers in this capacity and offer guidance and suggestions on how to apply the post-intentional phenomenological approach in a real-world classroom setting and gauge their use and understanding of the phenomenological materials, as well as offer support and guidance along the way.

Future researchers may wish to replicate this study with Saudi pre-service teachers as the lead investigator. This may also help educational leaders in Saudi Arabia understand the educational climate, and whether Saudi teachers are ready to be open to change and will be able to encourage students to develop their voices and identities. In addition, more research is needed to understand how to prepare pre-service teachers to listen to students' stories and voices and help them discover their identities. As such, future researchers may wish to focus on how to encourage teachers to get to know the students in their classrooms, who they are, where they come from, their dreams and beliefs, and their abilities.

Further research is needed to better understand how digital storytelling may be used for developing female student voice utilizing different types of critical literature and bringing up different topics for discussion. Researchers may want to explore answers to the following questions: 1. How can digital storytelling break the silence of female students in public school classrooms in Saudi Arabia? 2. In what ways can pre-service teachers develop trusting equal relationships with students so the students will feel comfortable to share their stories and experiences with their teachers? 3. What type of training and expertise is needed in order to prepare educators to engage elementary

students in the classroom, including how to develop students' voices, identities, and resistance to oppression?

Lastly, future researchers may wish to further explore and investigate my third secondary research question, "How might changes over time in Saudi Arabia regarding political decisions and policies, including rules and regulations regarding gender roles, impact female student voice in Saudi Arabia?" Here, future research may carefully examine how female student voices present under different historical time periods and under different current events that are important for the country on a social, political, and economic level. For example, how does Vision 2030 influence female student voice? Future researchers may wish to explore different kinds of data sources, such as interviewing and very closely observing (e.g., female political leaders, social behavior at social events), that they would need to plug into in order to answer these questions.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Support Letter from the School's Principal

Research Support Letter

March 14, 2018

To the University of Minnesota IRB:

I am familiar with Halah Ahmed Alismail's research project entitled, *Student Voice and Breaking the Silence: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Females Using Digital Storytelling* and her plan to work with our female students during Fall 2018. ▨ Elementary School involvement will be (1) facilitating initial research introduction via email to potential participants' parents/guardians, and (2) allowing the research to be hosted onsite at ▨ Elementary School. Students/ Participants who choose to participate in the research will engage in the interview and observation.

Halah Ahmed Alismail's research will provide our students time and space to explore different readings, discuss their perspective, and create their digital storytelling. I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that participant involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary and provides confidentiality of research data, as described in the protocol. Further, participation for our educators is in no way tied to their employment, nor will their participation or non-participation have negative consequences (e.g. disclosure of stigmatizing information; connection to seniority, promotion or tenure, etc.) on their employment.

Therefore, as a representative of ▨ Elementary School I agree that Halah Ahmed Alismail's research project may be conducted at our school.

Sincerely,
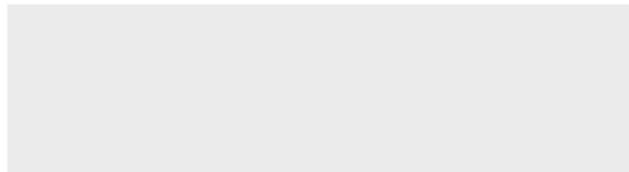
# Appendix B: IRB Approval

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

*Twin Cities Campus*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Human Research Protection Program** | D528 Mayo Memorial Building |
| | *Office of the Vice President for Research* | 420 Delaware Street S.E. |
| | | MMC 820 |
| | | Minneapolis, MN 55455 |
| | | Phone: 612-626-5654 |
| | | Fax: 612-626-6061 |
| | | Email: irb@umn.edu |
| | | http://www.research.umn.edu/subjects/ |

### APPROVAL OF NEW STUDY

April 10, 2018

Mark Vagle

612-384-2262
mvagle@umn.edu

Dear Mark Vagle:

On 4/10/2018, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Review: | Initial Study |
| Title of Study: | Female Student Voice and Breaking the Silence: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Females Using Digital Storytelling |
| Investigator: | Mark Vagle |
| IRB ID: | STUDY00003084 |
| Sponsored Funding: | None |
| Grant ID/Con Number: | None |
| Internal UMN Funding: | None |
| Fund Management Outside University: | None |
| IND, IDE, or HDE: | None |
| Documents Reviewed with this Submission: | • Halah's Consent Form .pdf, Category: Consent Form; <br> • CITI, Category: Other; <br> • Halah's Assent Form .pdf, Category: Consent Form; <br> • Halah'S SOCIAL TEMPLATE PROTOCOL .docx, Category: IRB Protocol; <br> • Research Support Letter.pdf, Category: Letters of Support / Approvals (Location); |

**Driven to Discover**℠

The IRB determined that the criteria for approval have been met and that this study involves no greater than minimal risk.

This study was approved under Expedited Category:

• (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

• (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The IRB also made the following determinations for this study:
This research has been approved to include children (individuals under 18 years of age) 45 CFR 46.404 because the IRB finds that no greater than minimal risk to children is presented and that adequate provisions are made for soliciting the assent of the children and the permission of their parents or guardians.

The IRB approved the study from 4/10/2018 to 4/9/2019 inclusive. You will be sent a reminder from ETHOS to submit a Continuing Review submission for this study. You must submit your Continuing Review no later than 30 days prior to the last day of approval in order for your study to be reviewed and approved for another Continuing Review period. If Continuing Review approval is not granted before 4/9/2019, approval of this protocol expires immediately after that date.

You must also submit a Modification in ETHOS for review and approval prior to making any changes to this study.

If consent forms or recruitment materials were approved, those are located under the Final column in the Documents tab in the ETHOS study workspace.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the HRPP Toolkit Library on the IRB website.

For grant certification purposes, you will need the approval and last day of approval dates listed above and the Assurance of Compliance number which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003).

Sincerely,


Bri Warner
IRB Analyst

We value feedback from the research community and would like to hear about your experience. The link below will take you to a brief survey that will take a minute or two

to complete. The questions are basic, but your responses will help us better understand what we are doing well and areas that may require improvement. Thank you in advance for completing the survey.

Even if you have provided feedback in the past, we want and welcome your evaluation.

https://umn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5BiYrqPNMJRQSBn

# Appendix C: Research Consent Form

## Research Consent Form

**Title of Research Study:** Student Voice and Breaking the Silence: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Females Using Digital Storytelling

**Researcher:** Halah Ahmed Alismail

**Supported By:** This research is supported by the University of Minnesota.

## Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you have a female child who is in grades K- 4 at Pioneers Academy Elementary School.

## What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

## Who can I talk to?

*For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call or email the researcher at:*

> **Faculty Researcher Advisor:** Mark Vagle
> **Email Address:** mvagle@umn.edu
> - OR -
> **Researcher:** Halah Ahmed Alismail
> **Email Address:** alism006@umn.edu

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Page 1 of 6

## Why is this research being done?

I am inviting you to consent to your child's participation so that she may be part of my research study. This study will be conducted at Pioneer Academy Elementary School, where your child attends. I am an elementary educator who is interested learning more about the effects of integrating technology into teaching and student learning. I am interested in exploring how female students may develop their identities through self-expression, use their own thoughts and feelings to explore literature, and learn important 21st century skills (i.e., use of technology, critical literacy, critical thinking) that will help them succeed as they grow older.

**Background Information:** This research is being done to explore how creating digital storytelling can help female students express themselves. Digital storytelling is a teaching approach that allows students to create and tell their own stories by using a mixture of pictures, writing, pictures, music, and videos. Digital storying helps students understand and engage in classroom curriculum. Students share and tell their digital story to others, and in doing so gain confidence. This research will provide the student opportunities to select, read, and reflect on literature that is important to them. The student will discuss her thoughts about the literature, and will analyze the literature to help develop her own writing. Students will be encouraged to be creative, and create a story that depicts what they are thinking and feeling and reflects their interests. This process is student-centered and student-directed, and it meant to be a fun and engaging learning experience for the student.

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this study is to understand how the exploration of literature, self-expression, discussion, and digital storytelling can help female students develop their identity and find their voice. This study attempts to understand how digital storytelling can be used as a platform for self-expression and speech.

**Who Can Participate?** Female students who are in grades K - 4 at Pioneers Academy Elementary School.

## How long will this research last?

If you and your child agree to participate, your child will meet with the researcher for 1 - 2 hours twice a week during the Fall 2018 school semester (16 weeks x 4 hours per week = 64 hours). Your child will also participate in one 30-minute interview with the researcher at the end of the Fall 2018 semester.

## What will I need to do to participate?

You will be asked to complete this consent form and sign it. Your child will need to read the assent form and sign it and return it to their teacher. If your child is a beginning reader, you will need to read the assent form to your child, and ask your child to sign the assent form. If your child is selected to participate, she will meet with the researcher two times a week for a total of 2 - 4 hours a week for 16 weeks. The researcher will read and discuss literature with your child. The researcher will also support your child in creating her own digital story. At the end of the semester when the research is over, your child will participate in a 30-minute interview with the researcher, so that the researcher can understand your child's experience as a participant in the research study.

Page 2 of 6

*More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under* "What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?"

## Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?

Your child may find meeting with the researcher for 1 - 2 hour sessions is too long and become tired and fatigued. The meeting length will be adjusted to meet the needs of your child, and your child may end her participation in the meeting at any time. The researcher will ask your child throughout the session how she is feeling and whether she would like to continue, and take cues from your child on when a good ending time would be. Your child may become frustrated with the technology used for digital storytelling. The researcher will support your child's use and learning of the technology. Your child will make the decisions on the technology they use. Technology will be introduced to your child in a developmentally appropriate way.

## Will being in this study help me in any way?

I cannot promise any benefits to your child for taking part in this research. However, possible benefits may be found through your child's work with the researcher. Your child may feel more confident in their abilities and be more engaged and excited about learning and school.

## What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

If you do not want to participate in this research, do not sign the consent form, and do not ask your child to sign the assent form. If you decide not to participate after signing and returning the consent form and assent form, please contact the researcher, Halah Ahmed Alismail, and she will remove your name from the list of eligible participants.

## How many people will be studied?

I will randomly select **five children** from all children who return consent and assent forms, and who have consented and assented to participate in the study. If fewer than five children return consent and assent forms, all children who consent and assent will be included in the study. There must be a minimum of one child to conduct the research.

## What happens if I say, *"Yes, I want to be in this research"*?

If you and your child agree to participate in this research, you may expect the following procedures to occur. Participants will work with the researcher during their reading class and/or their technology class and will not miss any instructional time.

<u>Timeline</u>:

- Your child will begin meeting with the researcher early in the Fall 2018 semester.
- Your child will finish meeting with the researcher at the end of the Fall 2018 semester.

<u>Length and duration of visits, activities, and procedures:</u>

- Your child will meet twice a week with the researcher.
- Each meeting will last between 1 - 2 hours. Meeting length will be adjusted to meet the needs of your child.

- During these meetings, the researcher and your child will read literature, discuss literature, and the researcher will support your child in creating their digital story.

- At the end of the semester, your child will participate in a 30-minute interview with the researcher. This interview will be conducted to understand your child's experience as a participant in the research.

**Interaction:**

- Your child will interact with the researcher.
- Your child will interact with other participants that are in her same grade.

**Location:**

- The research will be done at Pioneers Academy Elementary School.
- A meeting room will be allocated for this study. Some meetings may occur outside if the weather is nice.
- The meeting room and location may change throughout the semester; however, all meetings will occur inside the school or on the school grounds. The principal will determine and reserve the meeting spaces.

**What is being performed as part of the research study:**

- *Introduction to digital storytelling.* The researcher will introduce digital storytelling your child and explain to her what digital storytelling is and how this tool can be used in the classroom. The researcher will explain to your child that she is not limited in any way to design and develop her digital story.
- *Critical literacy activities.* The researcher will work with your child to select texts to read together. These texts will be selected based on your child's interest and reading level. The text will be selected from the school library and will be appropriate for her developmental level.
  - The researcher and your child will read the selected text together, and discuss the text together.
  - Your child will write their own story. She will draw pictures that reflect her thinking and her story. Her story will reflect her analysis of the reviewed and discussed text.
- *Creating the digital storytelling.* The researcher will work with your child to create her digital story throughout the semester. She will be encouraged to use creativity and explore her thought and feelings as she develops her story. The researcher will assist her, as she requests, however, independence will be encouraged. The digital story will be participant directed and participant led. The digital story will be complete when your child has indicated she is finished. There are no requirements for the digital story; she may create it in any she chooses. The researcher will provide support and encourage her independence.
- **Exit Interview.** At the end of the semester, the researcher will interview your child. The researcher will ask your child about her experience with critical literacy and creating her digital story. This interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

## What happens if I say "Yes", but change my mind later?

You can leave the research study at any time without penalty.

## Will it cost me anything to participate in this research study?

Taking part in this research study will not lead to any costs to you.

## What happens to the information collected for the research?

The protection of your data is important and the following plans are in place to ensure ethical research practice:

- All data materials will be anonymized and identifying features will be removed, where this is not possible pseudonyms chosen by you will be used to code the secured data.
- All data collected will be secured on a private and password protected device and backed up on a password protected external hard drive.
- Items held in online platforms (Google Drive) will remain password protected and stored online.
- Physical consent forms, the researcher's journals, and identifying materials (although limited) will be stored in a locked file cabinet.
- Pseudonym and identifying information alignment will be maintained in a password-protected document on a password-protected computer.
- Only the researcher will have access to the data.
- The researcher will honor any additional requests you make regarding privacy.
- The researcher will not have access to any other sources of private information about you.

## Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?

The HRPP may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous.

If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the HRPP. See the "Investigator Contact Information" of this form for study team contact information and "Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?" of this form for HRPP contact information.

## Audio Recording

The following research activities are optional, meaning that you do not have to agree to them in order to participate in the research study. Please indicate your willingness to participate in these optional activities by placing your initials next to each activity.

**Yes,**          **No,**
**I agree**       **I disagree**

_____   _____   The researcher may audio record my child's 30-minute interview at the end of the research study. The investigator will not share these recordings with anyone and will be stored on a password protected server.

Page 5 of 6

248

## Research Consent

**Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research. You will be provided a copy of this signed document.**

_____     _____
Signature of parents/legal guardians                                    Date

_____
Printed name of parents/legal guardians

_____     _____
Signature of person obtaining consent                        Date

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent

**Appendix D: Research Assent Form**

## University of Minnesota
## Assent to Participate in Research

**Title of Research Study:** Student Voice and Breaking the Silence: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Females Using Digital Storytelling

**Researcher:** Halah Ahmed Alismail

**Supported By:** This research is supported by the University of Minnesota.

### Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to do so. It is up to you if you want to participate and if you want to, talk to your parents about any questions or concerns you have about the study. You can choose not to take part now and change your mind later if you want. If you decide you do not want to be in this study, no one will be mad at you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

### Why is this research being done?

In this study, I want to find out more about what kids like to read and the stories they like to tell. You will be able to use computers and other technology to create a story about yourself or something that you like.

### How long will the research last?

You will be in this study for three months during the Fall 2018 semester.

### What happens if I say *"Yes, I want to be in this research"*?

If it is okay with you and you agree to join this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Sign this assent form and return it to your teacher
- Make sure your parents sign the consent form and return it to the teacher
- Meet with the researcher in a classroom or on the school grounds for 2 - 4 hours a week
- Learn about Digital Storytelling
- Pick out books you want to read
- Talk about the books you are reading
- Draw pictures
- Create your own story
- Share your story using technology

### What happens to the information collected for the research?

Everything you do and say will be private. No one will share your thoughts and feelings without your permission.

Page 1 of 2

## What else do I need to know?

You will work with a researcher and talk about stories and books you like. You will create your own story using technology. This is only for the Fall 2018 semester.

## Who can I talk to?

*For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call or email the researcher at:*

| |
|---|
| **Faculty Researcher Advisor:** Mark Vagle |
| **Email Address:** mvagle@umn.edu |
| - OR - |
| **Researcher:** Halah Ahmed Alismail |
| **Email Address:** alism006@umn.edu |

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people that look at the research before it starts. This group is part of the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP). To share concerns privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team or your parents.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide feedback about this research.

## Signature Block for Child Assent

_____          _____

Signature of child                                                                  Date


_____

Printed name of child


_____          _____

Printed name of person obtaining assent                              Date


_____

Signature of person obtaining assent

**Appendix E: Deconstruction Questions**

1.  What made you select the book you chose to read?

2.  What character's voice was most important in the story? Why?

3.  What character's voice was least important in the story? Why?

4.  What characters did you connect to?  Why?

5.  What characters were you disconnected with? Why?

6.  Who has the power in this text? How does the power give the character benefits?

7.  Who does not have power in this text?

8.  What is presented as a "social norm" in this text?

9.  Does that social norm connect to you and your community? How?

10. If we only knew about girls from this book, what would we think was "true?"

    about girls? Why?

11. If you were the girl in the book, what would you have done? How? Why?

**Appendix F: Interview Questions**

The following interview questions were designed as a tool to guide the researcher's unstructured one-on-one interviews with each student participant. Questions were designed to elicit the phenomenon of female student voice in its multiple, partial, and varied contexts. The purpose of this interview was to examine how the phenomenon is provoked, produced, and shaped, and how the various emerging elements of the phenomenon are connected together. It is crucial to note that questions were designed as a tool for eliciting discussion only.

Each student interview was personalized and the interview questions were adapted as necessary to be relevant to the individual student. Additionally, not every student was asked the same questions, and not every student was asked the questions in a certain order. For example, one student was asked one question; other students were asked 2 - 4 questions. The focus was on the appropriateness of the questions to the student, rather than the number of questions asked. The questions follow below. As noted, these questions are not in any particular order; relevance, order, and importance of the questions was dependent on the individual student.

1. Please tell me about your experience with writing your story.

2. Did you experience any moments of connection to your story?
    a. Describe your connection to your story.

2. Did you experience any moments of disconnection from your story?
    a. Describe your disconnection to your story.

1. To develop your story, we have worked in many different places (i.e., hallway, classroom, outside, school library).
    a. Which place that we worked did you like the best, and why was this a good place to work?
    b. Which place was difficult to work at? What made working in this place difficult?

1. Were there any challenges you faced while creating your story?
    a. Please describe these challenges.
    b. Please describe how you overcame these challenges.

1. How did your voice evolve over time?
    a. How did you integrate your voice into your digital story?

1. How do you feel about your experiences creating your digital story? (i.e., identity shaping and voice development)
    a. How did you experience your digital story? Was it different than what you thought it would be? (i.e., assumptions/thinking)

1. How does your digital story portray your experience of being a girl?
   a. Being a girl at school…
   b. Being a girl at home…
   c. Being a girl in your community…
   d. Being a girl in the world at large…

1. Tell me about a time you have felt that your voice was not being heard in the classroom or the community?
   a. How did you feel about it?
   b. How did you deal with it?
   c. Did someone support you or help you? Who? How?

1. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience pursuing related to this experience?