

“I FORGOT HOW STRONG I HAVE BEEN”:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF ONE AFGHAN WOMAN’S
STORIED EXPERIENCES

Cathy Raymond

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Doctoral Committee

Dr. Mary Beth Hines, PhD

Dr. Mitzi Lewison, PhD

Dr. Barbara Dennis, PhD

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Ever since the tragic events of 9/11, popular news media have either overlooked Afghan women completely, or they have consistently and repeatedly portrayed them as silenced victims in need of saving (see, e.g., Chowdury, 2016; Cloud, 2004; Fowler, 2007; MacDonald, 2016; Rasul & McDowell, 2015; Terman, 2017; Zeiger, 2011). Colonialist rhetoric abounds in news reports about Afghan women, and arguments in favor of “saving the brown women from the brown men” (Cloud, 2004, p. 289) developed in tandem with and in support of a pro-war discourse during the post-9/11 era. Since 2001, this “gendered orientalism” (Terman, 2017, p. 489) in news reports has repeatedly diverted the focus from the actual lived experiences of Afghan women to the silencing or marginalization of them—intentionally or not (see, e.g., Fowler, 2007; Rasul & McDowell, 2015).

This dissertation is a narrative inquiry study with Parvana, a 23-year-old Afghan woman living in Afghanistan. A postcolonial feminist framing offers a critique of western *single-story* portrayals of Afghan women while simultaneously shedding light on “gender domination within a patriarchal society” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 28) and opening possibilities for focusing on resistance and resilience. Narrative inquiry pursues deep and personal explorations of individual storied experiences which shed light on Parvana’s actual lived experiences and multiple literacy practices while also challenging the static narrative in western news cycles which presents Afghan women as invisible, voiceless, and agentless.

The overarching research questions guiding this study include the following:

- What key moments have shaped the life of a young Afghan woman?
- What nuances, complications, and tensions do her storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan reveal?
- What do her stories reveal about her multiple literacy practices for navigating daily life?

Data collection includes open-ended interviews, written stories, book talks, photographs, and artifacts. Data analysis includes enthymematic/syllogistic analysis, three-dimensional narrative analysis, thematic analysis, design analysis (available designs, designing, the redesigned), artifactual analysis, and poetic re-storying. Findings include Parvana's complex and creative multiliteracy strategies for coping, finding strength, and resisting in the face of precarity.

Potential contributions to the field include a focus on collaborative approaches for organizations interested in developing culturally appropriate strategies for understanding and supporting Afghan women; new models for cultivating online transnational collaborative relationships; and creative approaches to decolonizing report writing while honoring participants' stories in more authentic ways.

Mary Beth Hines, PhD

Mitzi Lewison, PhD

Barbara Dennis, PhD

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

In his foundational work *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) traces and attributes a complex and patronizing Othering of the “Islamic Orient” by the west to colonialist, linguistic, and ideological underpinnings (p. 74). He identifies extensive examples of negative stereotyping of Islamic cultures as ignorant, brutal, or aggressive in art, literature, film, and news reports from the 18th and 19th centuries but also in more recent media and academic research writing. Said argues that these stereotyped images are not representational and realistic but are, rather, part of a well-developed and static repertory of recyclable images, such as the *Muslim terrorist*, who poses a constant threat to the west, or the *Oriental woman*, who is dependent on others and has no ability to speak for herself. Because she has no voice, she is naturally also unable to represent herself and requires a representative to speak on her behalf. This representative is most often “foreign, comparatively wealthy, male” (Said, 1978, p. 6), and these are the same factors which allow him not only to dominate and speak for her but also to tell the world how she is “typically Oriental” (p. 6). This brief example is illustrative of the strategic “Orientalist” discourse through which the west discursively obtains power over the east through a hegemonic othering of majority world cultures.

Cloud (2004) identifies a similar paternalistic strategy in modern news reports about Afghanistan where it becomes the “white man’s burden” (p. 285) to save the Afghan woman. The colonialist metaphor of Afghan women in need of saving is then discursively associated with and attached to a post 9/11 pro-war sentiment which involves demonizing Afghan men, silencing Afghan women, and portraying the entire country of Afghanistan as an inferior nation:

Although an enemy nation’s men often represent “the enemy,” the women (and children) of that same nation often are represented as victims needing rescue from the men of their

society. In the “clash of civilizations” rhetoric as it appears in the United States, women’s oppression is a marker of an inferior society (Cloud, 2004, p. 289).

In a review of thirty-five years of news coverage from the New York Times and the Washington Post, Terman (2017) discovered that portrayals of Afghan women are consistently marked by a “gendered orientalism” (p. 489), or a rhetoric which frames a constructed dichotomy between the “oppressed Muslim woman” and the “liberated Western woman” (p. 500).

In her study, Terman (2017) found that journalists were more likely to report stories about Muslim women only in cases where their rights were being abused—even in Muslim countries with overwhelmingly positive human rights’ records. Seen from the comparative viewpoint of global women’s rights, news reports about Muslim women tended to focus generally on stories of oppression while reports about women in non-Muslim countries included virtually no stories of oppression but rather a wide range of stories of women’s rights being respected (pp. 500-501).

In an analysis of extensive television, radio, and print reporting in the U.K. from September to December 2001, Fowler (2007) found that, regardless of the gender of the person doing the reporting, a persistent focus on oppression, injustice, and civil rights existed in reports about Afghan women. Very few of the reports involved testimonies from actual Afghan women, and the images were further developed through recurring discussions of the role of the veil and/or the burqa; as passive victims with no voice to speak of, women and their bodies were eventually reduced “to ideological battlefields for the moral high ground” (p. 7). Fowler goes on to argue that the implications of this practice are grave not only for reporting on the real lives of

Afghan women but also for the “widespread practice by mainstream politicians and their associates of co-opting the discourse of women’s rights to justify military conflict” (p. 4).

Ever since the tragic events of 9/11, popular news media have either overlooked Afghan women completely, or they have consistently and repeatedly portrayed them as silenced victims in need of saving (see, e.g., Chowdury, 2016; Cloud, 2004; Fowler, 2007; MacDonald, 2016; Rasul & McDowell, 2015; Terman, 2017). Colonialist rhetoric abounds in news reports about Afghan women, and arguments in favor of “saving the brown women from the brown men” (Cloud, p. 289) develop in tandem with and in support of a pro-war discourse during the post-9/11 era (Cloud, 2004, p. 289). Since 2001, this “gendered orientalism” in news reports has repeatedly diverted the focus from the actual lived experiences of Afghan women to the silencing or marginalization of them—intentionally or not (see, e.g., Fowler, 2007; Rasul & McDowell, 2015).

With these studies and findings in mind, it should come as no surprise that persistent stereotypes of Afghan women as silent and uneducated continue to dominate the modern narrative today despite the growing presence of Afghan women who are working in a wide range of professional positions, getting an education, and participating in government. A report from Hedayat and Harpviken (2014) for the Peace Research Institute in Oslo details some of the changes in Afghan girls’ and women’s participation in the realms of education, public life, and business in recent years. For example, the report states that girls’ enrollment in school has grown from “close to zero (with a very limited number in clandestine home schools) during the Taliban, to 3.4 million at present, as reported by the Afghan Ministry of Education (and backed up by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Yearbook 2013-14)” (p. 2). In addition, according to a report by Ibrahim (2014), the number of Afghan women pursuing degrees in higher education has also

improved markedly from rates in 2001, “when female students were once non-existent in the university and higher education population. Among approximately 163,142 tertiary school students, 132,145 were male, and 30,997 were female – who constituted almost 19 percent of the student body” (p. 142).

Although there are disparities across the country and between rural and urban areas of Afghanistan in the numbers of women engaged in educational and vocational pursuits, there has been a sharp increase in the field of business, “from a situation where female businesses were exclusively in the form of small home-based production, largely as subcontractors, to a growing number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that have women at the lead” (Hedayat & Harpviken, 2014, p. 2).

Parvana, the 23-year-old participant in this very study, is herself is a prime example of these dramatic changes; in the past five years alone, Parvana has pursued and completed an undergraduate business degree, taken on and thrived in the role of CEO at a new company in Kabul, and co-launched an Afghan literacy initiative which aims to encourage citizens of Afghanistan to engage more actively in book reading by selling a wide selection of easily accessible and affordable books.

In the following chapters, I will outline and describe a narrative inquiry study that I conducted with Parvana, an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan whom I have known for the past ten or so years. Through the theoretical lens of postcolonial feminism, this narrative inquiry study seeks to shed light on Parvana’s actual lived experiences and multiple literacy practices while also challenging the dominant and static narrative in western news cycles which presents Afghan women as invisible, voiceless, and agentless.

1.2 Purpose of the study

Said's (1978) analysis of the "Orientalist" Othering of non-western cultures by the west is unfortunately still very relevant today. Even at the end of his fourth year of presidency, Trump actively and repeatedly attempted to fuel anti-Islamic sentiment through public policy, divisive hate speech, and attempts to enact laws restricting entry into the USA by Muslims. From claiming that Muslims in New Jersey joyfully celebrated the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, to arguing for the creation of a database to track Muslims, to attempting to implement a "Muslim ban" in 2017, Trump's anti-Islamic tactics persistently and consistently targeted Muslim populations with fear-mongering diatribes and draconian policies (Key, 2020).

In a research study of Islamophobia during the 2016 election, Khan et al. (2019) cite a 57 percent increase in anti-Muslim activity in 2016 (p. 4). In addition, the ACLU created a [timeline](#) of Trump's Executive Order of the "Muslim ban", a clearly anti-Muslim order which was intended to prohibit "foreign nationals from seven predominantly Muslim countries from visiting the country for 90 days, suspended entry to the country of all Syrian refugees indefinitely, and prohibited any other refugees from coming into the country for 120 days" (Timeline of the Muslim Ban, 2020). Not surprisingly, the most recent entry on the ACLU "Muslim ban" timeline is as recent as February 2020 (Timeline of the Muslim Ban, 2020).

In their study, Khan et al. (2019) also conducted a critical discourse analysis of Trump's announcement of his Muslim ban Executive Order in 2017 and found clear evidence of a persistent Orientalist Othering of Muslim populations through the very same linguistic strategies that Said and others had identified in their own work; the authors state that "Trump does indeed draw upon the self-other binary to keep Islamophobic discourses in regular circulation in the United States" (p. 12). In fact, the Muslim ban was only the beginning of a long series of anti-Muslim statements and policies which were put into place during the Trump presidency (p. 12).

Disrupting bias through counterimages

A number of studies have looked for effective ways to interrupt or reverse harmful bias; several of these have found that repeated exposure to counterimages, or images that disrupt commonly held stereotypes, are some of the most effective strategies for challenging stereotypes and increasing empathy for others (see, e.g., Vedantam, 2013; Lai et al., 2014). Social empathy, or “the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations” (Segal, 2011, p. 266), has been shown to be a powerful tool for increasing cross-cultural sensitivity and “insight into structural inequalities and disparities” (p. 267).

One effective way counterimages can be strategically used for developing greater understanding of others’ individual lived experiences is through stories. Narrative inquiry and other arts-based approaches to research offer innovative and creative ways to conduct research that has the potential to deliver transformative insights to diverse audiences. Narrative inquiry focuses on the individual stories of participants and the “multidimensional meanings of society, culture, human actions, and life” (Leavy, 2015). Creative re-storying through personal narrative, creative non-fiction, fiction, or poetry has the power to reach a wide audience while focusing on themes of shared humanity, empathy, and mutual understanding. As Leavy (2015) aptly notes, the arts “can connect us with those who are similar and dissimilar, open up new ways of seeing and experiencing, and illuminate that which otherwise remains in darkness” (p. ix). Additionally, arts-based research, such as narrative inquiry, has the power to “jar people into seeing and/or thinking differently” (Leavy, 2019, p. 9). The implications for disrupting persistent and harmful stereotypes are powerful and far-reaching.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry research project is to offer one contribution towards disrupting persistent stereotypes of Afghan women as silenced victims in need of saving through

an exploration of the actual lived experiences of Parvana, an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan, and the literacy practices she engages in as she navigates the broader Afghan context. Over the past ten or so years, Parvana and I have had frequent and regular conversations via Skype, WhatsApp, and email about Afghanistan, Parvana's personal and professional goals; the lives and struggles of Afghan girls and women; Parvana's daily life and educational experiences; and Parvana's heart-felt wish to show the world a different image of her home country and of Afghan women than what is frequently seen in popular media. In this project, Parvana and I co-constructed stories through open-ended life story interviews, book chats, ongoing conversations, and artifacts with the goal of honoring Parvana's expertise about her own life story and her creative literacy practices for navigating daily life and education.

One potential contribution that this project might make is to offer a strengths-based counter-narrative which challenges the dominant deficit-based narrative of Afghan women as silenced, invisible, and in need of saving. I hope this project will be the first of many future collaborations with Parvana which seek to remind those who might have forgotten and to inspire those who have never wavered in the knowledge that every person's story is valued, and our shared humanity is what makes us strong.

1.3 Research questions

The current overarching research questions guiding this narrative study include the following:

- What key moments have shaped the life of a young Afghan woman?
- What nuances, complications, and tensions do her storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan reveal?
- What do her stories reveal about her multiple literacy practices for navigating daily life?

1.4 Researcher positionality

Ruth Behar (1997) speaks eloquently and expertly about the unique challenges of locating the aspects of self that are relevant for an examination of positionality in relationship to one's research choices:

To assert that one is a “white middle-class woman” or a “black gay man” or a “working-class Latina” within one's study of Shakespeare or Santeria is only interesting if one is able to draw deeper connections between one's personal experience and the subject under study. That doesn't require a full-length autobiography, but it does require a keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and, more particularly, the topic being studied (p.13).

As Behar notes, awareness of positionality is intricately tied to how identity, experience, memory, and self-reflection are connected to one's research interests and choices. I self-identify as a middle-aged white woman from the United States who has extensive experiences as an international teacher of English and a deep commitment to identifying and challenging prevalent and negative stereotypes about non-western populations. These aspects of my identity have informed my decision to pursue this research project with Parvana. My desire to conduct this study has been inspired by Parvana's lived experiences as an Afghan woman, but it has also developed in response to ongoing and pervasive Islamophobic sentiments in the west which have unfortunately become increasingly common.

Through my collaborations with predominantly Muslim students and educators in Central Asia and my experiences living and working in Afghanistan and in neighboring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, I have born witness to the power that exists when we share stories and recognize and honor our shared humanity. As a result, I am personally and professionally committed to my topic, my research partner, and my overall research approach.

With a master's degree in Applied Linguistics/TESOL, I have been fortunate to work on several projects with Central and South Asian educators and students. Many of these projects have involved educators, students, and local citizens from Afghanistan. Every new project with Afghans over the years has served as a scaffold for building my knowledge about Afghan culture, but it has equally importantly led to long-lasting personal and professional friendships and connections along the way.

Between 2008-2010, I worked with the Afghan Higher Education Project at Indiana University, Bloomington. During that time, I visited Afghanistan to interview potential students for graduate study at Indiana University, I explored Kabul, met previous students and their families, and further deepened my knowledge base of the educational, political, and social context of Afghanistan. I then worked closely with the first cohort of Afghan Master's degree students studying at Indiana University.

In 2010, I left the HEP project and stepped into a volunteer English teaching position with a non-profit organization which offered Skype-based English language lessons to girls and women in Afghanistan. As I tried on the various hats of English teacher, coordinator, and then executive director at the non-profit over the next seven years, I became intimately familiar with the organization's mission of supporting women leaders and future women leaders in Afghanistan through one-on-one English language courses and professional mentoring by international female volunteers.

Every day during that time, I had daily email and skype exchanges with international volunteers in our programs and with local Afghan students and program coordinators at our partner organization in Afghanistan. As an organization, we also introduced cultural sensitivity training about culturally appropriate teaching practices; this training offered guidance on the

practical aspects of teaching via Skype but also incorporated cultural do's and don'ts of teaching young Afghan women. We created online opportunities where Afghan students could anonymously publish vignettes about their lives. Teachers and students met weekly and talked about their daily lives, food recipes, families, holidays, and education. Together with a small group of international and Afghan coordinators, I navigated the challenges of running a distance program: internet and electricity outages, dropped calls, international time zone confusions, unexpected security issues, last minute closings, cross-cultural issues, missing headsets, and missing students.

As the years passed, I saw deep friendships blossom as individual lessons and cultural exchanges brought students and teachers closer. Those years were critical for me in shaping and deepening my understanding not only about daily life in Afghanistan but also about the immeasurable power of careful sharing and listening to each other's stories.

Parvana

During that time, I also met Parvana, a young Afghan woman who started working from a very young age to convince Afghan parents and children that education could be a powerful tool for opening many doors. Over the next several years, we had many conversations and exchanged many stories about our lives and our families, and our relationship deepened. In the spring of 2018, Parvana agreed to share her life story with me as part of a course assignment for a graduate course I was taking on narrative inquiry. I did not expect it at the time, but that interview and the ensuing analysis and discussion would bring us even closer. When I worried about how I had interpreted and written up my findings, for example, I shared my analysis and interpretation with Parvana. I waited nervously for her to respond; I was afraid I might have

‘gotten it all wrong’. I was surprised when she told me that she had learned something about herself from the experience, that she had forgotten how strong she had been in her life.

In that very moment I felt the transformative power of narrative inquiry. After a second lengthy interview for a *Women We Love* project in a feminist theory course I was taking, Parvana invited me to join her in a weekly peer coaching course which focused on exchanging stories of our individual personal struggles while actively listening to each other and providing feedback. Our relationship continued to grow stronger, and we decided to move forward with a larger research project. We had several discussions about anonymity and concerns about her safety; I reiterated that she could walk away from the project at any time if she became uncomfortable. She then shared that she had had several experiences with social media, journalism, and international publications and told me that I did not need to keep asking about her safety and that she was comfortable participating in the project. I told her I was excited to work together but that I would also occasionally check in with her to revisit the topic of consent and participation, so she could opt out at any time. In addition to underlying concerns about her safety, I was also aware of and concerned about potential issues with representation and strategies for honoring her story without compromising it. If I ever thought her privacy, friendship, and trust were at risk, I was prepared to set the project aside.

Over the years, I have become frustrated and dismayed by the discrepancies I have seen between official reports of Afghanistan and my personal experiences. Persistent stereotypes of Afghanistan as a country of terrorists and Afghan women as silenced and uneducated dominated the news cycle years ago and unfortunately continue to dominate the modern international narrative today despite the growing presence of women who have increasingly been entering the

workplace, getting an education, and participating in the Afghan government. My professional and personal experiences with my Afghan friends and colleagues over the years have shown me firsthand that many news reports about Afghanistan are often replete with thinly veiled racism and anti-Islamic sentiment. My own international experiences have repeatedly shown me that the reductionist *us* versus *them* images that are so often portrayed in news cycles are not an accurate reflection of the universal complexity of everyday life and the diversity of human experience. In fact, the very notion of *us* and *them* is a carefully constructed image designed to obfuscate the myriad of deeply meaningful ways in which we are all connected.

A common thread woven throughout this, however, is my concern about the absence of rich stories, authentic lived experiences, and everyday realities of local individuals in Afghanistan. For the purposes of my dissertation, my goal is to focus on exploring a narrative inquiry study with Parvana, a young Afghan woman living in Afghanistan, to explore a possible counter-story to the static and monolithic portrayals of Afghan women as being without agency and in need of saving—portrayals that have been repeatedly reproduced through military interventions, western-centric educational programming, and stereotyped media images. By combining a postcolonial feminist framework with narrative inquiry, I hope to challenge stereotypical portrayals of Afghan women by exploring one woman's stories and literacy practices for navigating Afghan society. This study is not generalizable to all Afghan women, nor is it intended to be. Instead, it seeks to offer one rich example of one Afghan woman's life story.

1.5 Conceptual framework

This project is framed by postcolonial feminist theory and narrative inquiry. While postcolonial feminism sharpens the focus on the dynamics of discursive and material Othering,

narrative inquiry opens up avenues for a deep exploration of Parvana's actual lived experiences as an Afghan woman.

Postcolonial feminism offers a critique of western *single-story* portrayals of Afghan women, while simultaneously shedding light on “gender domination within a patriarchal society” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 28) and opening possibilities for focusing on resistance, resilience, and the “collaborative and nonexploitative relationships [which] place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 28). Narrative inquiry offers a natural fit for this theoretical framework in that it breaks away from the single-story portrayals through deep and personal explorations of individual storied experiences.

For around ten years, Parvana and I have exchanged many stories about our lives, families, lived experiences, challenges, and successes. During our talks, Parvana has told me stories about key moments that have shaped who she is today; she has talked about her family, her schooling, her struggles as an Afghan woman, and her challenges and successes with developing strength and resilience in the face of harassment, marginalization, and gendered oppression.

Role of the researcher

My relationship with Parvana goes well beyond the relationship of researcher and participant. Because of this, I took on the roles of co-researcher and co-participant to cultivate and maintain a spirit of close collaboration which involved Parvana in each step of the research process to honor her story while also challenging the aspects of western-oriented research that often ventriloquate non-dominant voices. Our aim was to keep the focus on Parvana's experiences and expertise on her own lived experiences throughout the project; framing the

project with postcolonial feminist theory and working to decolonize the research process through ongoing collaboration, regular member checking, collaborative interviewing, and robust co-construction of the project guided our efforts to remain true to this goal.

1.7 Organization of the study

In this initial chapter, I have presented a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the corresponding research questions. I offered a positionality statement with personal and professional background information which ultimately informed my decision to conduct this study and described my role in this study; I concluded with a brief overview of my conceptual framework and my role in the study.

In Chapter 2, I will provide an overview of my theoretical framework—postcolonial feminist theory. This theoretical discussion speaks to my “philosophical assumptions or worldview” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 59). Additionally, I will offer working definitions for key terms, such as majority world populations, postcolonial, postcolonial feminist theory, epistemic violence, epistemic privilege, Orientalism, gendered Orientalism, positional superiority, subaltern, ethnocentric universalism, double colonization, and decolonization of research, in order to establish a transparent argument for the case of using postcolonial feminist theory in my study. Finally, I will draw connections between my theoretical framework, multiliteracies, and my research study with Parvana throughout this chapter.

In Chapter 3, I will follow Creswell and Poth’s (2018) procedures guiding a research study, including “qualitative research approach used, ... data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, strategies for validating findings, proposed narrative structure of the study, and anticipated ethical issues” (p. 59). I will also discuss my rationale for choosing narrative inquiry and a single subject study, my procedures for obtaining participant participation, and additional

relevant background information about Afghanistan and the current situation facing Afghan women.

In Chapter 4, I present the research findings in the form of a poetic re-storying. This approach allows us to present the findings by carefully selecting and strategically arranging excerpts from the research data to create a “standalone story as research representation” which shows “how participant transformation progresses through time” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 157). In addition to offering us a way to honor Parvana’s lived experiences authentically by using her own words to present the findings, the poetic re-storying also offers a possibility to “provoke emotional engagement and human connection between the author, the person being represented, and the audience” (Leavy, 2015, p. 92). This allowed us to create a sense of verisimilitude “by creating good stories that are lifelike” (Kim, 2016, p. 10).

Chapter 5 offers final reflections about the project and findings as well as potential implications for the field. At the end of the dissertation, I provide a complete reference list, along with details about the IRB process, instrumentation, and a timeline for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Postcolonial feminist theory

Postcolonial feminist theory offers a unique framework for my research project with Parvana because of its focus on honoring and highlighting the perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing that have historically otherwise often been marginalized, erased, or subsumed under a master narrative which privileges western-centric research approaches and perspectives. A number of postcolonial feminists have stepped forward to challenge this pattern of “epistemic violence” (Spivak, 2010, p. 35), or a phenomenon whereby nondominant epistemologies that “emerge from the knowledge outside the western purview are not only rendered silent and invisible, but are often absorbed or destroyed” (Darder, 2018, p. 97). This subsumption or silencing of nondominant epistemologies is often enabled through the construction of “the colonial subject as Other” (Spivak, 2010, p. 35) and is further reinforced by the “incapacity of westerners to listen or hear the other, beyond enforcing and projecting their own Eurocentric sensibilities upon them—rendering the subaltern unseen and unheard” (Darder, 2018, p 94).

Postcolonial feminist theory offers a productive framework for exploring Parvana’s lived experiences, multiliteracies, and strategies for navigating the Afghan context. To develop and support my argument for a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework, I will conduct a literature review of selected works to make a case for the distinguishing features of postcolonial feminism, including its affordances and limitations, and the possibilities for my specific research project with Parvana.

A brief note about terminology: In this chapter, I will include terms like “Third World” and “developing world” based on their usage in key texts from postcolonialism and postcolonial feminism. For the purposes of constructing my own argument, however, I will substitute the term

“majority world” (Norsworthy, 2017, p. 1036) for “Third World/developing world” in an effort to disrupt the hegemonic implications of the terms “first/developed” and “third/developing” world. Similarly, I will use lower case letters when referencing the west or the western world.

Considering that up to 80% of academic research which is published in social and behavioral sciences is based on data from WEIRD populations (western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic), even though those populations only make up only about 12 percent of the world’s populations, the term “majority world” seems to be a more fitting and less demeaning way of representing the actual majority of the world’s population, especially considering the fact that generalizations are often generated about majority world populations based on the experiences of the few (Azar, 2010, p. 11).

2.2 Postcolonial terminology

Because the term *postcolonial* has had an ambiguous and sometimes contested history and reception, I will briefly review the term before setting up my own definition for the purposes of discussing postcolonial feminist theory as a framework for my research project. This is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of how the term has been used but rather a brief overview which aims to highlight the challenges and importance of using this term with reflection.

The field of postcolonial studies has generally focused on the effects of colonialism on societies that were colonized and controlled during the imperialist expansion of Europe. More specifically, the field of postcolonial studies concerns itself with the processes and discourses through which the dynamics of hegemony and inferiority were established between colonizers and colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006). Postcolonial scholars tend to view this dynamic from either a material perspective, which focuses on “several historical, cultural, political, and economic factors” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 10), or a discursive perspective, which sees the “Western academy as the site for the discursive production of the oppression of

non-Western knowledge forms” (p. 10) and which focuses on the analysis of discursive strategies which serve to marginalize or subsume subaltern epistemologies while privileging western ones.

Mutua and Swadener (2004) understand discursive and material colonization to be simply “two ends of the same pole” (p. 10), and they therefore argue for establishing an agenda of decolonizing research because this agenda would allow scholars and activists strategies for eroding “colonization that is discursively located and colonization that serves a materialist function” (p. 10).

Some indigenous scholars critique postcolonialism for its lexical alignment with other *posts*, such as post-Marxism or poststructuralism, which imply the end of one thing and the beginning of something new. These scholars argue that, because many populations still suffer under the effects of colonialism, the term postcolonialism implies that colonialism is a thing of the past; utilizing the term *postcolonial* therefore serves to negate or ignore the material colonization that continues to exist in some parts of the world today (see, e.g., Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

Other scholars have focused on analyzing the term postcolonial discursively; that is, they have theorized how postcolonialism perpetuates an intellectual colonization via discursive strategies which privilege certain types of knowledge over others. They argue, for example, that academic knowledge production is based on “Western knowledge and its privileged ways of knowing” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 9) which serve to marginalize majority world epistemologies. In effect, western-centric epistemologies colonize, or subsume and silence, voices that do not conform to western-centric, or more so-called *legitimate* approaches to research (Darder, 2018, p. 97).

Finally, some scholars, such as Shohat (1992), have investigated the cultural and political ambiguities of the term postcolonial, noting that the term often conflates highly diverse spatial, cultural, literary, and temporal contexts and content with a single term (p. 102). In essence, Shohat argues here that the term postcolonial has often been used in widely ambiguous terms depending on the topic or agenda in question. She ends her essay not by suggesting that scholars do away with the term entirely, however, but rather that they critically reflect on how they are using the term, especially in terms of identifying moments of resistance:

Flexible yet critical usage which can address the politics of location is important not only for pointing out historical and geographical contradictions and differences but also for reaffirming historical and geographical links, structural analogies, and openings for agency and resistance (Shohat, 1992, p. 112).

To sum up, the term postcolonial has been applied in a wide variety of ways and is often interpreted from either a materialist perspective which examines diverse historical, social, and political factors which “intersect at the site of the production of the postcolonial condition” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 10) or from a discursive perspective which points to the western academy as the site of oppression and marginalization of majority world epistemologies (see, e.g., Mohanty, 2003; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Said, 1978). The resulting ambiguity from the term postcolonial has the potential to create confusion or misunderstanding if the term is not defined carefully.

2.3 Postcolonial feminism: Defining the term for my project

In this dissertation, I argue for a definition of postcolonial which is not synonymous with a fixed period *after* colonialism has *finished*, but which more closely resembles the meaning of *actively moving beyond* colonialism. The following passage from Shohat (1992) is illustrative of this meaning:

Here, the prefix "post" would make sense less as "after" than as following, going beyond and commenting upon a certain intellectual movement - third worldist anti-colonial critique - rather than beyond a certain point in history – colonialism (p. 108).

By arguing for a movement *beyond* rather than a static ending, Shohat is imbuing *post* with an active forward motion, or a “description of ‘post’ as signifying a “politically more active mode of engagement” (Shohat, 1992, p. 108). This correlation of post with the notion of a “politically more active mode of engagement” reflects the focus in my project with Parvana on the exploration of one Afghan woman’s storied experiences through our active collaboration and the co-construction of storied data with the ultimate goal of disrupting stereotypical and static images of Afghan women which have been generated largely without the input of Afghan women and their lived experiences.

Having now aligned my definition of *post* in postcolonial as signifying a “going beyond” or a “politically more active mode of engagement” (Shohat, 1992, p. 108), the next important step is to consider how to define the term *postcolonial feminism*.

The definition of postcolonial feminism that I am using for my conceptual framework draws upon a number of key ideas from postcolonial feminism, such as Mohanty’s (2003) complex description of “feminism without borders” (p. 1) which is a feminist vision that critiques colonizing discourses which serve to marginalize non-dominant epistemologies; makes space for diversity in race, class, and culture; encourages the forging of feminist alliances across difference; and aims to decolonize pedagogy and research through the development of empowering discourses and liberating ways of producing knowledge.

As Alexander and Mohanty (1997) assert, these decolonizing acts of resistance are often “anchored in the daily lives of women” (p. xxxviii). By focusing on the intricacies of the

struggles in their everyday lives, feminists can then demonstrate “that these issues are an integral aspect of the epistemology of anticolonial feminist struggle” (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, p. xxxviii). In terms of what this means for my narrative inquiry project with Parvana, postcolonial feminist theory offers us a framework for exploring Parvana’s multiliteracies and diverse ways of knowing which include nuanced accounts of her everyday experiences as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan. The exploration of Parvana’s stories, struggles, and successes from her everyday life is “an integral aspect of the epistemology of anticolonial feminist struggle” (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, p. xxxviii). The basic tenets of postcolonial feminist theory and, as I will later argue, narrative inquiry, offer the possibility for a conceptual framework which honors our collaborative explorations and the forging of our ongoing feminist alliance across borders. Together, postcolonial feminism and narrative inquiry work in tandem to create spaces for decolonizing the research process through empowering discourses and liberating ways of producing knowledge. In this project, this includes opportunities for non-traditional research processes, such as co-generative interviewing, book talks, re-storying of the findings as poetry, and robust member checking.

Because I am exploring connections between postcolonial feminism and narrative inquiry for my conceptual framework, I would like to draw particular attention to the final point from my definition of postcolonial feminist theory which focuses on the decolonization of pedagogy and research. The project of decolonization has an agenda which understands that “[t]he transformation of relationships, selves, communities, and the practices of daily life leading to self-determination and autonomy for all peoples is central” (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, xxviii). In other words, it is critical to actively push against colonizing tendencies through the development of alternatives which allow us “to see the complexities, singularities, and

interconnections between communities of women such that power, privilege, agency, and dissent can be made visible and engaged with” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 244). This focus on identifying and challenging colonizing tendencies requires that Parvana and I identify and analyze potential imbalances in power and privilege in our own research relationship and the research process while also developing strategies for resistance and transformation.

To sum up, my working definition of postcolonial feminist theory for this dissertation includes the following key descriptors:

- It understands the *post* in postcolonial to mean a “going beyond” or a “politically more active mode of engagement” (Shohat, 1992, p. 108);
- It is a feminist vision which is critical of colonizing discourses and research practices which intentionally or unintentionally marginalize non-dominant epistemologies;
- It recognizes and embraces diversity in sexuality, race, class, culture, and other diverse areas of the human experience;
- It encourages the forging of feminist alliances across difference, and, finally;
- It aims to decolonize pedagogy and research through the development of opportunities for exploring and analyzing power, privilege, and gender oppression while also developing strategies for resistance and transformation.

As previously mentioned, postcolonial feminist scholars understand that recognizing the centrality of daily life experiences opens up new avenues to “explore and voice the particularities of our lived experiences; and by so doing, unveil colonizing and erroneous western pronouncements of subaltern conditions” (Darder, 2018, p. 95; see also Spivak, 2010). By exploring individual and unique lived experiences within context-specific and situated realities,

in other words, researchers can honor individual authentic experiences and literacy practices while also exposing the colonizing tendencies embedded in dominant research paradigms.

Actively engaging in decolonizing research practices involves attention to disrupting power dynamics in research collaborations. This might include special activities and attitudes, including the following and more: “radical reflexivity” (Norsworthy, 2017, p. 1040), mindful listening, cultural humility, cultivation of relationships, trust building, collaborative interviewing and writing, co-generative writing, journaling, frequent member checking, meaningful dialoguing, and/or leveraging researcher privilege (see, e.g., Falcón, 2016; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Norsworthy, 2017; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). These strategies and others offered me ongoing guidance for a meaningful collaborative research experience with Parvana.

This collaborative transnational research project was completely conducted online through Skype, WhatsApp, and email and was driven by a mutual desire to share one Afghan woman’s life stories in an effort to challenge stereotyped images. Although the principles for decolonizing research methodologies discussed in this report are practical and useful, none of the literature reviewed included concrete examples of transnational collaborations which take place virtually and online (see, e.g., Staeheli & Nagar, 2002; Lock Swarr & Nagar, 2010; Falcón, 2016). As a result, many of the logistics, benefits, and challenges of conducting collaborative research online were addressed without extensive guidance from the literature. As we charted this new territory, including the unexpected and devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, it became necessary to experiment with a retooling of some of the strategies that successful transnational collaborations before us have relied upon (see, e.g., Lock Swarr & Nagar, 2010; Falcón, 2016).

For example, Falcón (2016) offers useful strategies for setting up transnational feminist collaborations that have potential to decolonize the research process, including a focus on shared knowledge production, robust member checking, and repeated and frequent shared reviews of transcriptions and analyses. However, these strategies are contextualized in face-to-face settings that do not reflect the challenges of online and distance collaborations which are often interrupted by technology issues, power outages, or lack of access to the internet, so many relevant principles needed to be adapted to the dynamics of a collaborative online project which is guided by mutually shared goals.

The adaptations we made, new strategies we created, and lessons we learned in this online project have potential implications for other researchers interested in distance research partnerships. Expanding future collaborative partnerships to embody the ideals of un-bordered collaborations found in postcolonial feminist theory could also open up new opportunities for humanizing research which is mutually supportive and driven by shared goals and solidarity.

In addition to a lack of examples of online and distance research collaborations, the question of exploring current day Afghan women's stories has also remained understudied. Certain studies have examined Afghan women's writings published online or Afghan women's stories from diaspora populations, but virtually none have involved life story interviews with Afghan women who have spent their entire lives in Afghanistan (see, e.g., Rostami-Povi, 2007; Naghib, 2018).

2.4 From postcolonialism to postcolonial feminism

Said's (1978) analysis of Orientalism, or the "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and their culture" (p. 7), extensively explores the complex and persistent "positional superiority" (p. 7), or the representation by the west of "Orientalist" cultures as primitive, uneducated, and violent in contrast to the portrayal of western cultures as

civilized and educated (p. 9). This representation results in the creation of a false dichotomy of *us* versus *them* which positions majority (non-western) world cultures as inferior to the minority (western) world (p. 7).

Although Said's (1978) detailed analysis of the discursive positional superiority of the west over the east is richly developed and sets the stage for the ongoing development of postcolonial theory, a discussion of how majority world women fit into this paradigm is largely absent, subsumed almost entirely under the broader discussion of postcolonialism.

Postcolonial feminist theorists address this significant gap by systematically identifying, naming, and challenging the ways in which the west has traditionally viewed and represented majority world women and female voices as marginalized, silent, and inferior, or "subaltern" (Spivak, 2010). With a focus on a critique of second wave feminist discourse, postcolonial feminists consistently expose a double colonization of non-white majority world women, or a double colonization which occurs not only through patriarchal discursive strategies but also through colonial ones (see, e.g., Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Mohanty, 2003). The following section explores how the postcolonial feminist critique of second wave feminism reveals this double colonization.

Postcolonial feminism developed in response to postcolonial theory but also as a critique of second wave (white western) feminism which focused primarily on white western women's issues. It also emerged parallel to other non-white feminist movements which highlighted and celebrated a diversity of experiences related not only to gender, but also to sexuality, race, class, and culture. In her essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," for example, Audre Lorde (1984) critiques second wave (white western) feminism for viewing women as a unified category which ignores "difference within the lives of American women:

difference of race, sexuality, class, and age” (p. 1). In her essay, Lorde argues that, with the exclusion of “input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians” (p. 1), second-wave feminists implicitly assume there is no “mutuality between women, no systems of shared support, no interdependence as exists between lesbians and women-identified women” (p. 1). In other words, Lorde sees second wave feminism as operating under a type of internalized patriarchy where different lived experiences are marginalized or rendered invisible and where “racism, sexism, and homophobia are inseparable” (p. 1).

Lorde (1984) goes on to argue that it then becomes “the task of women of Color to educate white women—in the face of tremendous resistance—as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival” (p. 3). The result is nothing more than “a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought” (p. 3). In other words, when the category of race is subsumed under the category of gender, it becomes virtually impossible to “claim the experience of racism” (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997, xvii). This logic also applies to other categories of difference, such as sexuality, religion, culture, history, or geography. When other categories of difference are subsumed under the category of gender, they are also rendered invisible.

Lorde’s (1984) critique of second wave feminism and her argument that feminists need to “take our differences and make them strengths” (p. 2) is shared by postcolonial feminists who agreed that feminists should work across their differences in a spirit of alliance building and solidarity. Mohanty (2003), a foundational figure for postcolonial feminism, sets up her argument for alliance building and solidarity by starting with a detailed analysis and critique of the discursive strategies employed by second wave feminists in the way they represent and claim knowledge about “Third World” women which results in the homogeneous portrayal of “Third World” women as a unified and oppressed category (p. 17).

In her essay “Under Western Eyes”, Mohanty (2003) develops her argument by critiquing and dismantling analytical principles found in second wave feminist discourse on women in the “Third World.” In her analysis of how colonizing discourse operates in some western feminist writing, Mohanty takes aim at the discourse of “ethnocentric universalism,” or a discourse of power which “sets up its own authorial subjects as the implicit reference, that is, the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural others” (p. 21). As an aside, she refers to ethnocentric universalism as a general critique which is applied to second wave western feminist writing but could also apply to any group—minority or majority world—which seeks to establish itself as an implicit authority.

This ethnocentric universalism implicitly positions the west as “developed” by defining and judging non-western cultures as “underdeveloped” or “developing” (Mohanty, 2003, pp. 21, 40). This discursive strategy results in the positioning of the west as an unstated or implicit authority. In addition, the discursive strategy of labeling so-called *underdeveloped* cultures as *Third World* further serves to create a *First World* reference position for the west by implication. In other words, it is only through the creation of a conceptual Third World that the west can then occupy the position of First World.

To support her argument, Mohanty (2003) critiques the following three analytical principles in some white western feminist writings:

- the tendency in white western feminist discourse about “Third World” women to subsume all women under the unified and homogeneous category of “women” which implies “a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy that can be applied universally” (p. 21);

- the assumption that this notion of universality can then be uncritically applied cross-culturally;
- and the way in which power operates as a result (p. 22).

A closer examination of these three principles reveals how white western feminist discourse constructs the image of the “average Third World woman” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 22). It begins with initially categorizing women as a homogeneous group and as dependent victimized objects—powerless and exploited by patriarchal systems. Relegated to a homogeneous and unified category, all women are thereby exclusively and universally defined by gender and unified based on their shared oppression. The focus is not based on an actual material reality, in other words, but on an archetypal category which is static and frozen. The presence of agency and differences related to race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and other differences get lost or misrepresented in the process.

In her examination of a variety of white western feminist texts that represent “Third World” women, Mohanty (2003) identifies underlying themes that repeatedly represent women universally as victims: of male violence, of the colonial process, of Islam, and of economic development (pp. 23-32). The resulting average “Third World” woman is locked into a double colonization based on her gender but also due to her being from the *Third* World. She leads a “truncated life based on her feminine gender (meaning: sexually constrained) and her being “Third World” (meaning: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)” (p. 22). This discursively constructed image then stands in stark contrast by *implication* to the self-representation of western women as modern, educated, and free (p. 22). In effect, a kind of gendered Orientalism is created, much like Said’s description of the othering of

majority world cultures but with very specific respect to the construct of women in the “Third World.”

When these ethnocentric universalist principles are then applied to an analysis of social and cultural interactions in majority world cultures (e.g., in family, economy, and law), the resulting “average Third World” woman is then cast in unified terms as poor, uneducated, and silent in contrast to her white western female counterparts who emerge as wealthy and educated by implication (Mohanty, 2003, p. 40). The rhetorical result is a Third World, subaltern, or inferior, woman who is rendered voiceless. As Spivak (2010) states, “In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak, as cited in Morris, 2010, p. 287).

To sum up, although second wave feminism claims to be acting in solidarity with majority world feminists and women of color, it actually “contributes to the stereotyping of Third World cultures as ‘barbaric’ and ‘uncivilized’” (Sudbury, 2000, as cited in Zine et al, 2007, p. 272). As a result, the representation by the west of “Third World” women becomes a doubly hegemonic Othering whereby majority world women are colonized twice: first, through the patriarchal categorization of woman as victim (and man as perpetrator), and, second, through the Othering of majority world women through colonization. The resulting “gendered Orientalism,” or a rhetoric which frames a constructed dichotomy between the “oppressed Muslim woman” and the “liberated Western woman” (Terman, 2017, p. 500), constructs majority world women as powerless victims of the colonial process and the Muslim family system (see also Mohanty, 2003).

Spivak (2010) takes this critique one step further in her discussion of the discursive creation of “Third World” women. Through a discussion of the British abolition of the Hindu

widow immolation ritual, Spivak argues that the representation by the west of “Third World” women becomes a reductionist relationship whereby “the protection of woman (today the “third-world woman”) becomes a signifier for the establishment of a good society” (Spivak, 2010, p. 50); in essence, it becomes a case of “White men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak, 2010, p. 50). In other words, educated and powerful western men are uniquely positioned (by discursive implication) to save non-western brown women (who are uneducated and silent by implication) from non-western brown men (who are violent by discursive implication).

Understanding what the concept of *double colonization* means for the portrayal of Afghan women in news media and popular culture will illuminate my decision to frame this research project with a postcolonial feminist theoretical lens. The discursive strategy leading to the double colonization of Afghan women is virtually identical to the strategy identified elsewhere by postcolonial feminist theorists.

In their analyses of how Afghan women have been portrayed and represented in western media, for example, several researchers have identified a unified portrayal of the Afghan *woman* as silent, victimized, and oppressed (see, e.g., Cloud, 2004; Terman, 2017). This unified and universal category of *woman* is then universally applied to all Afghan women, regardless of any differences in language, ethnicity, personality, or other features. This universal portrayal of the Afghan woman is then further subsumed by colonial assumptions about Afghan society in relationship to the west. In other words, the Afghan *woman* is also doubly colonized: first through the patriarchal categorization of woman as victim (meaning: oppressed by Afghan men, Islam, Afghan society, Afghan family, and so on), and, second, through the Othering of Afghan

women through colonialism (meaning: oppressed by virtue of the fact that Afghan women are from Afghanistan).

In her critique of western representations of Afghan women, Fluri (2009) examines the “socially and politically constructed western ideologies for ‘saving’ Afghan women” (p. 241). As Fluri argues, the “US, acting as the most recent power with the self-appointed mission of ‘saving’ Afghan women, provides yet another political context for the identification of the female body as a site from which to measure liberation” (p. 244). In this context, she argues, the “white western savior” has the duty to save Afghan women, “due to the perceived lack of information, talent, and equipment in Afghanistan” (p. 249); as a result, “the Afghan women in this project are positioned once again as in need of their western, fully modern counterpart” (p. 249).

Fluri (2009) goes on to note that “the prescribed and (pre)scripted liberation associated with corporeal modernity ... places the ‘first world’ white female as the ‘gentle savior’ of her third world ‘sister’, which orientalizes Afghan woman’s suffering under the burqa, as imposed by the Taliban. This is presented in stark contrast to her western counterpart’s corporeal liberation” (p. 251). Once again, the resulting “gendered Orientalism,” or a rhetoric which frames a constructed dichotomy between the “oppressed Muslim woman” and the “liberated Western woman” (Terman, 2017. P. 500), constructs Afghan women as powerless victims of the colonial process and the Muslim family system (see also Mohanty, 2003). Through this double colonization, Afghan women are viewed as in need of saving, and they can, by implication, only be saved by powerful white men. As Spivak (2010) might argue, it once again becomes a case of “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak, 2010, p. 50).

2.5 The project of decolonization

It is significant that Mohanty (2003) also frames white western feminist writing within the larger context of dominant western scholarship. As she states, “Western feminist writing on women in the Third World must be considered in the context of the global hegemony of western scholarship—that is, the production, publication, distribution, and consumption of information and ideas” (p. 21). In other words, by virtue of its mere association with the hegemonic attributes of western scholarship generally, western feminist writing also assumes a position of privilege when it comes to claiming knowledge about majority world women.

One of Mohanty’s (2003) main goals for postcolonial feminists is to focus on the creation of a culturally, geographically, and historically relevant and independent feminism, which is geared towards building a new postcolonial feminism. In short, this new feminist vision not only makes space for diversity in race, class, and culture but also for the possibility to forge alliances across difference.

This understanding of postcolonial feminism simultaneously critiques the discursive strategies of “hegemonic ‘Western’ feminisms” (Mohanty, 2003, p.17), particularly in regard to the misrepresentation of “Third World” women by second world feminists, while also arguing for the “formulation of autonomous feminist concerns and strategies that are geographically, historically, and culturally grounded” (p. 17). In short, while critiquing the discursive strategies of west-centric knowledge production, this definition also simultaneously argues for the construction of alternative approaches to knowledge production which are culturally, historically, and geographically appropriate (Mohanty, 2003).

Circling back now to the earlier discussion of the various interpretations of *post*, Mohanty’s interpretation of post in postcolonial feminism seems to align with the sense of an opportunity to actively *work against* or *beyond* colonialism through context-appropriate

identification of feminist concerns and the creation of new feminist strategies. Linking these postcolonial feminist aims with decolonization, or a project which simultaneously chips away at both “colonization that is discursively located and colonization that serves a materialist function” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 10), is a necessary next step for pushing back on western-centric colonizing discourses. In other words, it is necessary to investigate, critique, and push back against the colonizing assumptions behind western centric research practices which privilege western researcher authority and ways of knowing.

Pushing back against colonizing discourses includes the development of decolonizing practices which allow individuals who have historically been excluded from research to “produce themselves in ways that are emancipatory and also committed to producing empowering discourses and knowledges” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 13). Spivak (2010) emphasizes this point as she encourages other subaltern scholars to “explore and voice the particularities of our lived experiences; and by so doing, unveil colonizing and erroneous western pronouncements of subaltern conditions” (Spivak, 2010, as cited by Darder, p. 95). By exploring individual and unique lived experiences within context-specific and situated realities, in other words, researchers can honor authentic experiences while also exposing western colonizing claims about majority world women’s lived experiences.

2.6 Multiliteracies: Exploring connections between language, community, agency, power, and social futures

While postcolonial feminist theory offers a unique framework because of its focus on honoring ways of knowing that have historically otherwise often been marginalized or subsumed, an exploration of multiliteracies offers opportunities to explore Parvana’s individual, context-specific, and situated multiliteracies. By moving beyond traditional notions of literacy and honoring Parvana’s unique ways of knowing and engaging with the world in her daily life,

for example, we can potentially discover the strategies she utilizes to “produce [herself] in ways that are emancipatory and also committed to producing empowering discourses and knowledges” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 13).

As the New London Group (1996) noted, “traditional language-based approaches” (p. 60) to literacy are no longer sufficient for accounting for the “multiplicity of communications channels” and the “increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today” (p. 60). This call for rethinking traditional approaches to literacy reflected the changing landscape of the time, including the need and desire to “create access to the evolving language of work, power, and community” (p. 60) as well as to nurture “the critical engagement necessary for [students] to design their social futures and achieve success through fulfilling employment” (p. 60).

With its focus on the “evolving language of work, power, and community” and “critical engagement” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 60), this revised understanding of literacy acknowledges connections between language, community, agency, power, and social futures. In my project with Parvana, attending to subtle connections between language, community, agency, power, and social futures opens avenues for us to explore Parvana’s unique strategies for navigating Afghan society, for positioning herself at work and in her community, and for shaping her own social future.

Thirteen years after the New London Group had their historic meeting, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) revisited the initial call for multiliteracies in light of an ever changing social, technological, and communication landscape. They recognized that new communication practices also created “new social practices” (p. 167) or “ways of working in new or transformed forms of employment, new ways of participating as a citizen in public spaces, and even perhaps new forms of identity and personality” (p. 167). In their renewed exploration of multiliteracies,

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) applauded the initial arguments from the New London Group for multiliteracies while also digging deeper into the notion of design, the idea of multiliteracies as “dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction,” and the centrality of agency in the meaning-making process in order to work towards “a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative and even perhaps emancipatory, pedagogy” (p. 175). In my project with Parvana, this increased focus on transformation and agency in the meaning-making process offers an invitation to explore the ways in which Parvana might utilize multiliteracy practices in emancipatory or transformational ways in her daily life.

A closer look at the notion of “designs of meaning” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 176) will illustrate what transformational strategies in daily life might look like and how they might be relevant to this project. In their conception of the “what” of multiliteracies, for example, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) developed the figure below to illustrate the different elements of available designs, designing, and the redesigned (p. 176).

Figure 1: Multiliteracies—designs of meaning

Available designs	Found and findable resources for meaning: culture, context and purpose-specific patterns and conventions of meaning making.
Designing	The act of meaning: work performed on/with Available Designs in representing the world or other’s representations of it, to oneself or others.
The redesigned	The world transformed, in the form of new Available Designs, or the meaning designer who, through the very act of Designing, has transformed themselves (learning). (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 176)

In Figure 1, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) define the notion of “available designs” (p. 176) as available resources for making meaning. In my project with Parvana, these available designs might be resources related to culture, Parvana’s specific context, or social conventions related to gender expectations of women’s dress, behavior, or interaction, for example. The notion of “designing” (p. 176) refers to the work of drawing upon “the unique mix of meaning-making resources the codes and conventions they happen to have found in their contexts and cultures” (p. 177). In my project, this might be reflected in Parvana’s strategies for interpreting the original “available design” and working towards “re-presenting” herself, for example. Finally, the element of “the redesigned” (p. 176) describes how, “through the act of Designing, the world and the person are transformed” (p. 175). In other words, by transforming the “available design” through working towards a new “design”, an individual can be transformed and re-present him or herself as “the redesigned.”

By framing multiliteracies in terms of “designs of meaning,” Cope and Kalantzis (2009) offer literacy scholars a productive framework for exploring contextually specific expressions of multiple and potentially transformative literacy practices. In my project with Parvana, for example, the notions of available designs, designing, and the redesigned present a conceptual framework for exploring Parvana’s unique acts of agency and her context specific strategies for navigating Afghan society as an Afghan woman. By moving away from static definitions of literacy and teasing out possible moments where Parvana transforms an “available design” and works towards a “new design,” for example, we might discover the ways in which Parvana herself is transformed and redesigned in the process. This focus on transformation and agency offers a unique lens through which we can view Parvana’s literacy practices in active, agentive, and transformational ways rather than in static or reductive ways.

Including an exploration of multiliteracies in this project also allows for a deeper exploration of the “multiplicity of communication channels” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 60) available to Parvana and how she might utilize them in her daily life; it also opens up pathways for understanding the ways in which Parvana produces herself “in ways that are emancipatory and also committed to producing empowering discourses and knowledges” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 13).

Connecting postcolonial feminist theory, decolonization, and possibilities for literacy studies

Through its incisive critique of the language and ideologies that are used to create power imbalances and its call to recognize and work across difference, postcolonial feminist theory offers opportunities to decolonize the practice of literacy research by destabilizing what feminist Sylvanna Falcón (2016) refers to as the “dynamics that ... privilege English, liberalism, the global North, and so-called objectivist scientific modes of knowledge production” (p. 176). Critically naming and questioning those dynamics while forging alliances across difference offers feminists a potential platform for developing new possibilities for literacy studies.

Among other things, by identifying and challenging the dynamics of privilege and power, postcolonial feminist theory has the potential to inform literacy research, teaching, and learning in powerful ways, including the following:

- by forging alliances across the vast diversity of lived experiences and literacy practices around the world and in specific contexts while developing greater appreciation of participants’ epistemic privilege;
- by increasing awareness of the ways in which power, privilege, and agency interact in classrooms, research, and in daily lives; and

- by decolonizing the research process through collaborative processes which honor epistemic privilege and majority world knowledge structures and literacy practices.

I will examine these elements from a postcolonial feminist conceptual framework in greater detail as they relate both to my specific project with Parvana and to the broader field of literacy studies.

Forging alliances across different experiences and literacy practices

First, with its attendant focus on how the “differences and borders of each of our identities connect us to each other” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 250), postcolonial feminism offers opportunities for alliance building across difference by recognizing and embracing the complex and diverse “funds of knowledge” which researchers, teachers, and students draw upon when engaging in literacy practices in the classroom and beyond (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

As global communication continues to create connections between people across various locations in the world, it is becoming increasingly important to engage in literacy practices that work across difference. This engagement across difference can be facilitated through what Perry (2018) refers to as “literacies of globality,” or the “practices of sense making in fluid and interrelational global contexts through the multiple texts of culture, language, place, and materials that we navigate from our various positions on the globe” (p. 1). In short, “literacies of globality” are not tied to a particular group or place, but rather to the practices of sense making through the language, culture, and literacy texts available to us in a constantly evolving global context (Perry, 2018, p. 2).

For my project with Parvana, this means that Parvana engages in sense making practices through the languages of Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Hindi, and English while she navigates her life in

Afghanistan at work, university, or daily life, but it also means she is engaging in sense making practices through the platforms of Skype, WhatsApp, or other online formats where she can communicate and collaborate virtually and internationally. It means bridging the distance in a second between Afghanistan and the United States, Germany, Pakistan, or India. It means the ability to develop deep meaningful relationships over years without ever meeting people in person.

For my project with Parvana, this means that I engage in sense making practices through the various languages available to me while I navigate my life in the United States at home, university, or daily life, but it also means that I might join Parvana in engaging in communal sense making on Skype, WhatsApp, or other multimodal formats where we communicate about our families, lives, life challenges, and successes, and we collaborate about our specific project or other projects. It means the distance between us is minimized by the relationship we have developed over time and our ability to imagine each other's personal and professional situations across "interrelational global contexts" (Perry, 2018, p. 6).

Engaging in sense making in "interrelational global contexts" requires the ability to imagine other places, contexts, and times; the role of the imaginary is therefore central for "literacies of globality" (Perry, 2018, p. 1). In fact, the increasing engagement across multiple locations in a global context can lead to a "new collective space" (p. 6) which emerges when our individual "imaginaries of teaching, of social change, of disciplinary literacy [interact] with those of another" (p. 6). As an example, as Parvana and I communicate across our individual locations and individual imaginaries of literacy, social change, and education, we work across our differences. As we share our frames of reference with each other and engage in imagining each

other's perspectives, the potential for a new frame of reference, or a "new collective space" (p. 6) emerges from our engagement with each other.

Recognizing that there is no single way of viewing the world and no one set of shared values allows us then to honor our differences while exploring and "making transparent the multiple positions that people bring to a space of learning or inquiry, and of valuing multiple forms of knowledge" (Perry, 2018, p. 2). Activating the imaginary is central to the process of trying to understand different points of view; engaging across these differences then becomes an opportunity for alliance formation.

Viewing our differences as assets allows Parvana and me to acknowledge and embrace the diversity of our experiences while actively resisting privileging one epistemology over another. By viewing unfamiliarity or difference as a resource and the imaginary as a "place of convergence" (Perry, 2018, p. 5) where we can work in a "new collective space/frame/imaginary" (p. 6), it then becomes possible to view the imaginary as a space from which we can "move forward pedagogically in relevant, equitable, and globally responsible ways" (p. 6).

Seen through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory, this might be comparable to working towards shifting the hegemonic positioning of *us* versus *them* to embracing our differences as resources that allow us to form alliances and imagine more equitable research and pedagogical possibilities. The imaginary as a space of convergence then opens up opportunities for building alliances across difference that allow us to develop new research projects and pedagogies which are based on the real-life needs and the epistemic privilege of local populations and might include the following and more: research practices grounded in

relationship building, collaborative discussions, collaborative research design, and small-scale pilot projects to determine relevance and efficacy prior to rolling out full-scale projects.

One concrete example of what “unpacking the imaginary” (Perry, 2018, p. 1) in “literacies of globality” (p. 1) might look like in a research setting may be found in Norsworthy’s (2017) article “Mindful Activism: Embracing the Complexities of International Border Crossings” (p. 1035). In this article, U.S. scholar Norsworthy writes about her experiences collaborating on a cross-cultural research project with her Thai colleague, Ouyporn. As she reflects on and writes about her research experiences, Norsworthy realizes that she had initially entered the research site “assuming the ‘expert’ position” and had “enacted a hegemonic global politic in which the knowledge and practices of ‘first world’ countries set the standard by which those outside the West—the so-called ‘Third World’—are defined” (pp. 1035-1036).

Once she realizes she had been operating under assumptions which created significant power imbalances in her working relationship with Ouyporn, Norsworthy (2017) took a step back, engaged in discussions with Ouyporn about how Ouyporn imagined the project developing, and together they finally “rejected a hierarchical model, and shifted to a feminist liberation-based framework of solidarity, partnership, and mutuality” (p. 1036) while also working towards decolonization of the research process. This new step towards a modified approach to research resulted in a greater degree of “mindful activism” (p. 1036) which required ongoing and constant attention to mindfulness, reflection, and power sharing throughout the entire research process. As a result of this shift in focus, Norsworthy and Ouyporn were then able to work more collaboratively while also authentically involving local partners in collaborative knowledge production (Norsworthy, 2017, p. 1039).

Viewed from the perspective of “literacies of globality” (Perry, 2018, p. 1) it seems that Norsworthy (2017) initially entered the research site working exclusively from her own frame of reference as a U.S. *expert* without engaging in imagining Ouyporn’s understanding of disciplinary literacy. However, once Norsworthy took note of her own underlying assumptions both about herself as the expert as well as about the role of *first world* standards for the production of knowledge, she took a step back and engaged in open discussions with Ouyporn; during those conversations, they shared their individual frames of reference with each other, engaged in imagining what a new frame of reference might look like if they worked across their differences, and ultimately reached a “new collective space” (Perry, 2018, p. 6) from where they were able to conduct research that was more inclusive and respectful of local knowledges and desires.

This self-reflective study serves as an important reminder and model for my own study. By working towards engaging in “literacies of globality” (Perry, 2018, p. 1) with Parvana, we are reminded to actively share our individual world views, contexts, and interpretations with each other throughout the research process. In working towards understanding each other’s positions and perspectives, we can then hopefully find or create a “new collective space” (Perry, 2018, p. 6) which will allow me to remain receptive to a deeper understanding of Parvana’s lived experiences.

2.7 Decolonizing research through collaborations which honor epistemic privilege and literacy practices

Finally, in terms of working towards dislodging western-centric research approaches which run the risk of privileging certain literacy practices over others, postcolonial feminist principles of decoloniality in research have powerful implications for my study with Parvana.

Falcón (2016) offers a number of powerful feminist principles for decolonizing the research process. One of these involves paying greater attention to researcher positionality and reflexivity, which includes interrogating and challenging dominant approaches to research, or the “conscious negotiation of imperial privilege” (p. 184) on the research process, where “imperial privilege” is defined as a power differential which “solidifies a global citizenship hierarchy for the minority of the world’s population and differentiates US citizens discursively and literally from virtually everyone else in the world, including other non-US academics” (p. 177). When researchers, teachers, and students alike consider the ways in which their privilege, access, and identities have been shaped and how these, in turn, inform research, pedagogy, and learning, the potential increases to offset power imbalances through the careful consideration and design of more inclusive and respectful research and literacy practices.

Norsworthy’s (2017) research work with local partners in Thailand and Burma again highlights some of these tensions and considerations. Norsworthy applies a postcolonial framework to her study to “undermine the replication of the global politic in which the United States is centered as a dominant power” (p. 1037). The postcolonial theoretical lens leads to an increased focus on research elements which seek to dislodge western-centric perspectives, including privileging the perspectives of local partners to determine main issues of concern, developing solutions relevant to local contexts and indigenous knowledge, and dialoguing and reflecting on research collaboratively while also recursively reflecting on issues of power and privilege. More specifically, the researchers engage in a mindful practice of constantly questioning whose voices are and are not being heard and how trust is being developed and encouraged throughout the research process (Norsworthy, 2017, p. 1039).

These examples offer an important reminder of the importance of ongoing reflection of my own positionality vis-à-vis my personal and working relationship with Parvana. This is particularly important because research is an iterative and changing process; as the project morphed and changed, it was vital that I regularly stopped to reflect on my own personal motivations and connections to this project with Parvana. Similarly, even though I was not required to go through an official IRB process with this project, it would have been unethical not to check in with Parvana on a regular basis to discuss her participation in the project as well as the option for her to opt out at any time with no consequences.

Other powerful principles for decolonizing research include embracing research practices grounded in relationships, community, and solidarity while building research communities that emphasize “ongoing partnerships” (Falcón, 2016, p. 184) and multilingual practices in an effort to “destabilize the colonial imposition of English as the primary or dominant method of communication” (p. 181). Together, these principles can create opportunities for the development of self-reflective, cross-cultural, and collaborative research and teaching practices (see, e.g., Doেকে, Anwar, & Illesca, 2017; Mutua & Swadener, 2004).

Additional strategies include the practice of resource sharing from those who have social and cultural capital to those who do not, or “concrete acts of redistribution” (Falcón, 2016, p. 182), interactive interviewing and “interactive consent” (p. 183), which cultivates collaboration through dialogue and empathy and allows interviewees “to make any changes and modifications they see fit to the transcript or even to revoke the interview entirely” (p. 183), and reconciling disparities in the needs of communities and researchers (p. 182-184).

Central to all these decolonizing principles and strategies is the notion that participants are the experts of their own lived experiences. This is at the very heart of my project with

Parvana; together, postcolonial feminist theory and narrative inquiry offer a powerful conceptual framework for exploring Parvana's storied experiences and literacy practices by centering her epistemic privilege as the greatest resource in our research.

Postcolonial feminism offers educators and researchers a critical framework for literacy projects which have the potential to challenge and subvert homogeneous master narratives that focus on standards and numbers while often missing or ignoring the diversity of individualized experiences. Colonizing power dynamics exist everywhere—in language, in schools, in families, in movies, and textbooks. Attention to counteracting the ways in which those dynamics operate can open transformative paths of discovery. Understanding the “underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 21) is an important first step for researchers and educators alike.

Interestingly, few scholars have explored cross-cultural and international possibilities for a postcolonial feminist framework in literacy research. Doecke, Anwar, and Illesca (2017) offer one possibility of what a postcolonial framework might look like for literacy education in a multilingual multicultural context. The authors all come from very different multilingual multicultural postcolonial societies, so they are all highly sensitive to the role that English plays in their research conversations. They state that the ways in which the English language has been used in postcolonial literature is complex. English has often been “the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated” (p. 30) as well as the tool for reinforcing the hegemony of western epistemologies while simultaneously delegitimizing the knowledges of colonized peoples. The authors also note, however, that English has also been used by formerly colonized people to “*speak back to the center*, constructing representations of their experiences on their terms, even when they might be using the language of the colonial oppressor” (p. 30).

One concrete way Doecke, Anwar, and Illesca (2017) have themselves used English to challenge its privileged position in research is through embracing multiple perspectives and voices through translanguaging by incorporating their diverse languages of Minang and Bahasa Indonesia alongside English. Because the authors are collectively invested in investigating using English in ways that challenge rather than reinforce its traditionally dominant position in academic research, they have also explored alternative inquiry approaches which highlight a sense of community and diversity of voices. For this reason, one of the authors, Anwar, turned to “storytelling as a means to challenge the truth claims made by conventional forms of research, thus resisting how she and other people from Asian cultures are constructed by the *West*” (Doecke et al., 2017, p. 30). From the perspective of postcolonial theory, Anwar investigates the power of storytelling to challenge and defy “the universalizing pretensions of *Western* knowledge” (p. 31).

Although Doecke et al. (2017) do not argue specifically for a postcolonial feminist framework, they offer key postcolonial principles which might be adapted to a more feminist-oriented framework. By including autobiography, stories, and translingual elements which illuminate perspectives which celebrate difference, for example, a postcolonial feminist approach has the potential for exploring power, privilege, access, and gender oppression within language and experience.

2.8 Affordances and limitations of postcolonial feminist theory

As with any other conceptual category for research projects in literacy education, postcolonial feminist theory also comes with its own affordances and limitations. The affordances explored in this dissertation include opportunities to closely dissect and disrupt the discursive strategies by which western cultures have historically positioned themselves as superior in relationship to majority world ones (see, e.g., Mohanty, 2003; Said, 1978; Spivak,

2010). Much is to be gained by challenging this historical tendency by western cultures to speak on behalf of majority world women. Postcolonial feminist theorists argue that it is vital to recognize that women who have been ignored or oppressed by imperialist discursive strategies possess specific knowledge that others who have not experienced the same marginalization might lack. This “epistemic authority” allows them to deeply understand “how hierarchies of race, class, gender, etc. work to uphold existing power systems” (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, xl). Alexander and Mohanty (1997) describe the power of epistemic authority:

The key to claiming epistemic authority for people who have been oppressed in a particular way stems from an acknowledgement that they have experiences—experiences that people who are not oppressed in the same way usually lack—that can provide them with information we all need to understand how hierarchies of race class, gender, and sexuality operate to uphold existing regimes of power in our society (xl).

In other words, acknowledging that participants possess intimate knowledge and information about their own lived experiences is key for all of us to better understand how power imbalances work to reinforce inequity.

Potential limitations or critiques of a postcolonial feminist conceptual framework for a research project in literacy studies include the argument by some that the mere term “postcolonial” implies the end or demise of all things colonial (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). This would, in turn, imply that there is no need to work actively against ongoing colonial structures, behaviors, and impacts. Understanding postcolonial to signify the end of colonialism would, according to this logic, serve to ignore the actual material and discursive colonization that continues in parts of the world today.

Additionally, some critics argue that postcolonialism is itself a creation of western intellectuals who attempt to reposition themselves in ways which allow them to claim that they are relinquishing their privilege and power when in fact they are simply reaffirming it. As Tuhiwai Smith (2012) states, “Many indigenous intellectuals actively resist participating in any discussion within the discourses of post-coloniality. This is because post-colonialism is viewed as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world” (p. 14). Tuhiwai Smith and others also take issue with the term ‘postcolonial’ itself when she states, "Naming the world as 'post-colonial' is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonialism as finished business" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 101; see also Mutual & Swadener, 2004).

Furthermore, some would argue that, by claiming to create space for “Others” to speak and tell their stories, postcolonialism once again reestablishes its hegemonic positionality by assuming the right to take ownership of who has the right to speak. Cary (2004) adds to this critique by arguing that many proponents of postcolonialism still reside within a colonized academic system and their claim to make space for unheard voices serves to maintain the existing western hegemonic order:

With the best of intentions, the idea that postcolonial theory might ‘provide’ or ‘create’ space for Other voices and Other theories is as dangerous as the critical guys and gals saying, “We’ll give voice to the voiceless.” We still exist within institutionally dominant and oppressive colonizing structures (p. 70).

Finally, some might argue that by focusing on a single Afghan woman’s experiences, multiliteracies, and stories as a strategy for disrupting static images of Afghan women which are not generally based on the actual lived experiences of Afghan women, this study once again runs

the risk of universalizing the notion of the “Afghan woman.” To counteract this danger, I am intentionally framing this study not only with postcolonial feminist theory but also with narrative inquiry, an approach to research which focuses on “individuals’ experiences but [which] is also an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narrative within which individuals [*sic*] experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). In other words, my study primarily highlights the socially situated stories and experiences of a *single* Afghan woman within Afghanistan. It is not intended to represent all Afghan women’s experiences.

Keeping the affordances and limitations mentioned in this dissertation in mind, it is critical to remain mindful of the ways in which researchers run the risk of reinforcing systems of oppression even when their intentions are good. Engaging in cultural humility and a “practice of not knowing” which encourages us to “genuinely engage with others across difference” (Perry, 2018, p. 9), opens possibilities for us to conduct research which starts from common ground rather than from a position of power imbalances. In my project with Parvana, I took care to engage in ongoing and careful self-reflection of my own positionality as I pursued respectful and responsible collaborative approaches to research guided by a conceptual framework informed by postcolonial feminist theory and narrative inquiry.

In this chapter, I have offered an overview of my theoretical framework—postcolonial feminist theory. This theoretical discussion speaks to my “philosophical assumptions or worldview” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 59). Additionally, I provided working definitions for key terms, such as majority world populations, postcolonial, postcolonial feminist theory, epistemic violence, epistemic privilege, Orientalism, gendered Orientalism, positional superiority, subaltern, ethnocentric universalism, double colonization, and decolonization of research, in

order to establish a transparent argument for the case of using postcolonial feminist theory in my study. Finally, I drew connections between my theoretical framework, multiliteracies, and my research study with Parvana throughout this chapter.

In the following chapter, I will follow Creswell and Poth's (2018) procedures guiding a research study, including "qualitative research approach used, ... data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, strategies for validating findings, proposed narrative structure of the study, and anticipated ethical issues" (p. 59). I will also discuss my rationale for choosing a single subject study, my procedures for obtaining participant participation, and additional relevant background information about Afghanistan and the current situation facing Afghan women.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a multidisciplinary approach to qualitative research which has had diverse application across the humanities, social sciences, medicine, and other areas. One of the unique and central premises of narrative inquiry is that the story is central to human experience (see, e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) and that human beings are, by nature, “storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). As “storytelling organisms” (p. 2), we do not live our lives as a series of individual disconnected events, however. Instead, we seek to understand our daily lived experiences by creating a “storied narrative” which is, as Polkinghorne (1995) argues, “the linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts” (p. 7). Because of this premise that humans tell stories to make meaning of their everyday lived experiences, narrative inquiry pursues a “narrative way of knowing” (Kim, 2016, p. xv) which attaches importance to “the everyday, the ordinary, the quotidian stories that have frequently gone unnoticed” (Kim, 2016, p. 23). Finally, because of the contextualized nature of experience, narrative researchers are also interested in exploring the “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals [*sic*] experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68).

The procedures for conducting a narrative inquiry project are not written in stone but rather follow a general set of fluid guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the stories that participants share make up the main data in narrative inquiry. Researchers might collect stories

from participants in multiple ways, such as through interviews, observations, writing samples, drawings, documents, or cultural artifacts (see, e.g., Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2020). Because stories can be shared by the participant or co-constructed between researcher and participant, there is often a strong collaborative aspect to data collection in narrative inquiry. With a focus on the collaborative generation of the data, the relationship and interaction between participants and researcher often become central to a narrative inquiry study (see, e.g., Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertova & Webster, 2020). Because narrative inquiry is also best suited for deep explorations of individual stories, lives, and experience, narrative inquiry often focuses on individual participants or small numbers of participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this chapter, I will argue that narrative inquiry is the most fitting methodological framework for my study. I will support this argument by linking fundamental principles from narrative inquiry to each element of my research design, including my research questions, the focus on collaborative practices, data collection procedures, and narrative analysis of the data. I will also explore validation procedures, limitations, and potential implications as they relate to narrative inquiry generally and to my project specifically. Finally, I will argue that because narrative inquiry offers an opportunity to re-story findings in creative and accessible ways, it is a unique approach for sharing research with academic and non-academic audiences alike; this makes it a powerful approach for a project like mine which seeks to offer a counter-narrative to the dominant, static, and single-story narrative about Afghan women.

3.2 Research questions

The following overarching research questions inform this narrative study:

- What key moments have shaped the life of a young Afghan woman?

- What nuances, complications, and tensions do her storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan reveal?
- What do her stories reveal about her multiple literacy practices for navigating daily life?

Exploring these questions with Parvana has allowed us to explore her lived experiences in Afghanistan while also developing a counter-narrative that begins to challenge the monolithic narrative which is often prevalent in western news cycles of Afghan women as silent and in need of saving. Supported by our long-standing relationship which has been built on trust, active listening, and cultural humility, we celebrate and honor Parvana’s detailed “stories or life experiences of a single individual” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 71 through the exploration of the richness and depth of her individual life story.

The move to narrative inquiry in educational research

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) are widely considered to be the first scholars to discuss narrative inquiry within the framework of education. In their work, they link the turn to narrative inquiry to a methodological response to positivism and to new ways to think about the concept of experience. Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) narrative concept of experience draws from two primary principles from Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience: *interaction*, or the notion that people are always living and acting in connection or relationship to others (p. 38); and *continuity*, or the idea that experiences are not isolated events but rather exist on a continuum, “an experiential continuum” (p. 33). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, “Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum – the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future – each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future” (p. 2). In other words,

experiences are connected to different points along a temporal continuum and are interrelated with each other.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) combine Dewey's concepts of *interaction* and *continuity* with his notion of *situation* to create a narrative view of experience. The inclusion of the concept *situation* allows researchers to consider deeply the contextual aspect which is essential for a narrative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 72). The resulting "metaphor of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54) includes three dimensions: "the personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present, and future (continuity) along a second dimension; and place (situation) along a third dimension" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47).

This metaphor of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space draws attention to the importance of collaboration and relationships between researchers and participants in narrative inquiry (*interaction*) while also emphasizing the temporal aspect of stories (*continuity*) which are contextualized social events (*situation*). Many narrative inquirers have adopted the Deweyan view of experience as a starting point for narrative inquiry (see, e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2006; Hutchinson, 2015; Kim, 2016).

The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space

One particularly strong example of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space may be found with Ciuffetelli Parker's (2017) study on the impact of teacher professional development on teacher conceptualization of poverty, schooling, and literacy. Ciuffetelli Parker's (2017) collaborative inquiry study seeks not only to identify attitudes towards poverty and literacy but to actively begin to "disrupt deficit conceptualizations of students and families living in poverty" (p. 3). Throughout her study, Ciuffetelli Parker (2017) integrates Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space by focusing on *interaction*, or the

social conditions of “school climate and culture, inside-the-school and outside-the-school” (p. 10) and “relationships formed with students, parents, community workers/agencies and other educators” (p. 10); *continuity*, or teachers’ past, present, and future narrated experiences of working with children and parents living in poverty; and *situation*, or a focus on the place of both the school as well as the community (p. 10).

There are implications from this study on a number of levels. Because standardized testing and benchmarks are not able to reveal the challenges of experiencing daily life in poverty, for example, a narrative inquiry approach offers research insights which emerge from studying the “narratives of experience of what it means to teach and live in challenging circumstances” while investigating “literacy practices that burrow beneath the surface” to better understand students’ and teachers’ sense-making of their lived experiences (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2017, p. 16). More significantly, perhaps, is the possibility for a collaborative narrative inquiry project like this one to challenge dominant narratives of standardized literacy which operate from a deficit-based mindset and leave little room for exploring the actual lived experiences of what it means for students living in poverty to navigate complex school environments. Framing the study in alignment with Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space allows Ciuffetelli Parker to drill down into the interconnectedness of *interaction*, or the relationships among students, teachers, parents, and others; *situation*, or the place of school and community; and *continuity*, or past, present, and future experiences working with children and parents in the context of poverty.

The notion of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is a powerful metaphor for framing a number of elements which are central to my own study with Parvana, including our relationship and collaboration as well as Parvana’s interactions and relationships with others

(*interaction*), Parvana’s interrelated storied experiences from her life and over time (*interaction and continuity*), and the contexts which are relevant both to the co-construction of the study itself (primarily via Skype and WhatsApp and across countries) as well as to Parvana’s experiences in the specific context of Afghanistan, including a diverse range of contexts, such as the provinces, the city of Kabul, the university, and others (*situation*).

This notion of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space also offers a unique framework for investigating how our stories and experiences are “shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives” (Bell, 2002, p. 208). In my study, I am interested in exploring how Parvana’s storied experiences are connected to and shaped by the changing narratives available to her. These might be narratives related to Afghan traditions and culture, Islam, the Afghan family system, the institution of education, the languages of Dari, Pashto, and English, and so on. Interestingly, the narratives available to Parvana have also included western-centric women’s empowerment programs, extensive collaboration with women from the United States and other countries, and four years of university study. Her available narratives have also shifted and changed over time. Because Parvana’s available narratives are often different from the narratives available to me as a white, non-religious, middle-aged, married woman living in the United States, it is critical that I develop a deeper understanding of her context to better understand her storied experiences.

Becoming a researcher of narrative

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) identify four main turns which researchers make when they shift their focus to narrative. These turns might vary depending on the discipline and do not necessarily happen in any particular order, but they signify an overall change in the way a researcher thinks about the research process. These moves include the following: a shift to a

more interactive, interpretive, and collaborative relationship between researcher and participant as opposed to a more detached objective stance; a shift to a focus on data which emphasizes words as opposed to numbers; a move to emphasizing the importance of the particular as opposed to accepting assumptions of replicability or generalizability; and, finally, a move towards “blurring knowing” (p. 25), or recognizing that multiple ways of knowing exist. This focus on a “narrative way of knowing” (Kim, 2016, p. xv) allows for the complexities, ambiguities, and uncertainties of the human condition to come to light and offers researchers rich pathways to understanding the intricacies of individual lived experiences.

As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) note, one of the four turns to narrative research is the change in the relationship between participants and researchers from an objective role on the part of the researcher to a perspective “focused on interpretations and the understanding of meaning” (p. 9). Narrative researchers also understand that researchers and participants are “in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter” (p. 9).

My own turn to narrative has led me to focus on collaborative relationships, words as data, the importance of the particular, and the recognition that multiple ways of knowing exist. The collaborative aspect in narrative inquiry is central to our project as it positions us for the deep explorations and discussions which are a featured trait of narrative research. A narrative worldview also allows me to explore key moments in Parvana’s stories, what they say about her creative multiple literacy practices, and the nuances, complications, and tensions of her everyday life in Afghanistan.

Other narrative inquirers have attested to the power of narrative inquiry for helping participants and researchers establish rapport and maintain a mutually respectful and trusting relationship throughout a research study; this involves not only collaborating during data

collection, but also discussing research questions and sharing analyses, writing, and any other evidence of the research process with participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12). In fact, there is even potential for consciousness-raising on the part of researchers and participants if they regularly work together on “sorting out the complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions in [their] experiences” (Bruce, 2008, p. 330). As Bruce (2008) asserts, this iterative process of collaboration may even lead to greater insight as participants notice alternative ways to understand their own lived experiences as well as larger issues with which the study is concerned (p. 330).

Contextualized experience

Although there is no single unified way to conceptualize narrative inquiry, narrative researchers are united in their interest in collecting and exploring stories of “lived and told experiences” (Kim, 2016, p. 68). A participant’s stories might emerge in conversation or be written down; they might be told to a researcher or represented visually; they might be co-constructed or performed (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68). While what ultimately counts as a story might vary, however, narrative researchers ultimately share a focus on “experiential starting points” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5) for research.

These “experiential starting points” are not isolated events, however, but contextualized experiences which people make sense of through the narratives that are available to them (Bell, 2002, p. 208). As the narratives available to us shift and change over time, our stories are also constructed and reconstructed as we continue to make sense of our lives. The resulting stories we tell are “shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives” (Bell, 2002, p. 208). Because of the contextualized nature of experience, researchers are also interested in exploring the “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals [*sic*]

experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68). In short, narrative researchers understand that individual stories do not stand alone but rather represent contextualized, complex, and embedded experiences; close attention to contextualized experience offers narrative inquirers unique opportunities to investigate deeper connections as they relate to individuals, groups, and the social setting. Through analysis and the subsequent reconstruction or re-storying of these experiences, researchers are then also able to explore these deeper connections in unique ways (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Deeper stories

Although stories are central to a narrative study, narrative inquiry is not just about telling, sharing, or listening to stories. It digs deeper, burrowing into underlying assumptions which are hidden within stories. Narrative researchers believe that the stories we create to make meaning of our experiences “rest on deeper stories of which people are often unaware” (Bell, 2002, p. 209); narrative inquiry starts with storied experience, the “experiential starting point” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5), and then moves beyond that to the “analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates” (Bell, 2002, p. 209). In effect, narrative inquiry offers researchers a powerful alternative for exploring the subtle nuances, connections, and experiences which might otherwise go unnoticed.

Kim (2016) notes that the four turns towards narrative that Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe stand in opposition to more traditional epistemological paradigms which focus on objectivity, distance, measurement, and replicability. Researchers who undergo these turns to narrative agree that narrative inquiry offers alternative ways to unpack complex issues that cannot be deeply investigated using surveys or statistics alone. For this reason, narrative inquiry is also often used to investigate assumptions which are generated from more dominant and

traditional research paradigms which rely heavily on numbers and statistics (Bacon, Byfield, Kaya, & Humaidan, 2019).

Furthermore, a narrative mode of inquiry can be used in education research to study the “learning that occurs in life” (Bruce, 2008, p. 334). By focusing on individual stories of experience, researchers can begin to interrogate dominant deficit-based narratives about education which have been constructed and then integrated into our common understandings of education through more traditional approaches to research.

One narrative study which provides a striking example of how narrative inquiry can challenge deficit-based narratives is a study which explores the literacy identities of two Latina women who left school in the 9th grade and finished their GEDs at a later date. In this study, Bacon, Byfield, Kaya, & Humaidan (2019) use a narrative approach to challenge interpretations from an educational research study which ties 3rd grade reading proficiency to high school graduation rates (Hernandez, 2011). Bacon et al. (2019) argue that Hernandez’s (2011) study frames “nondominant students as immutable problems” (Bacon et al., 2019, p.2) while also neglecting to examine the “realities of students’ socio-culturally constructed lives and literacies” (p. 2). In an effort to challenge a categorization of students “based on race, language, and deficit discourses” (p. 3), Bacon et al. explore the actual lived school experiences of two Latina women through an ethnographic narrative study which looks at how the women themselves construct their literacy identities. Findings reveal that the participants had suffered for years under systemic, complex, and institutionalized racism, including microaggressions, neglect, and years of abuse (p. 5). In essence, researchers conclude that the decision to leave school was not related to reading scores but rather to a hostile school environment. In the process of investigating the actual stories of women who left school, they also looked for and discovered moments of

resistance and transformation in the process. What they learned from the women's stories of lived educational experiences was that the women found ways to push back on institutionalized oppression by actively choosing to leave school, by returning later to complete their GEDs, and by eventually becoming literacy tutors themselves. This more nuanced version of educational experiences is made possible because the researchers went 'behind the numbers' and took the time to listen carefully to the women's stories of oppression, resistance, and transformation.

The Bacon et al. (2019) study offers useful guidance for my own project which seeks to challenge static stories of Afghan women by investigating the nuances, complications, and challenges of Parvana's every day lived experiences. As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, many western news reports about Afghan women are not developed from interviews and stories from actual Afghan women, but rather from a static narrative of Afghan women as silenced or invisible. Exploring Parvana's storied experiences through narrative inquiry and postcolonial feminist theory opens up space for a more nuanced and authentic understanding of one Afghan woman's life story as it is situated within the broader Afghan context.

3.3 Setting

Many books and articles have been written about Afghanistan's culturally, historically, geographically, and linguistically rich and complex country profile. An exhaustive description of the setting of Afghanistan goes well beyond the parameters of this section of my dissertation, but a brief overview of some of the key features of Afghanistan will hopefully set the stage for describing my study.

The Human Development Index is regularly published by the U.N. and is a means for assessing a country's progress over the long-term in three key areas: "a long and healthy life," which is measured by average life expectancy rates, "access to knowledge," which is assessed by "the average number of years of schooling received in a life-time by people aged 25 years and

older; and access to learning and knowledge by expected years of schooling for children of school-entry age, which is the total number of years of schooling a child of school-entry age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates stay the same throughout the child's life,” and “a decent standard of living,” which is measured through the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (Human Development Index, 2020). In the most recent HDI report from 2020, Afghanistan was ranked 169 out of 189 countries (Human Development Index, 2020).

According to the Gender Inequality Index on the Human Development Report from 2020, where rankings are calculated based on a “composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market,” Afghanistan ranks 169 (Human Development Report, 2020). Data sources include “maternal mortality rate ..., adolescent birth rate ..., share of parliamentary seats held by each sex ..., population with at least some secondary education ..., and labour force participation rate” (Human Development Report Technical Notes, 2020, p. 8).

Although the Human Development Index scores do not take into account the multiple literacies, storied experiences, creativity, tenacity, and resilience of individual Afghan citizens, it does reflect very real challenges in virtually every aspect of daily life in Afghanistan, including gaining reliable access to education, economic and job security, and high-quality health care.

Geography

Land-locked in the heart of the cross-section of Central and South Asia, Afghanistan shares borders with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China, Pakistan, and Iran. Due to its strategic location along trade routes which cross through South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, it has been a highly contested and frequently invaded nation for thousands of years (Dupree & Weinbaum, 2020). Due to its inhospitable geography of deserts and highly

mountainous terrain, it has been difficult for outside conquerors to take control, and Afghans have developed a fierce reputation for self-defense as a result (Afghanistan country profile, 2018).

Ethnicity, language, culture, and religion

Afghanistan is multiethnic, largely tribal, and linguistically diverse; it is made up primarily of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, with at least ten additional ethnic groups. The primary languages spoken are Dari (a linguistic relative to Farsi and Tajik) and Pashto, but many other languages are spoken throughout the country. Bi/multilingualism is common; many Afghans speak Dari and Pashto as well as Hindi, Urdu, and/or English. Parvana, the participant in this study, uses English as a tool for international communication and collaboration. Like many other Afghans, she also utilizes multiple languages in her daily life depending on the task at hand. In her case, this includes Dari, Pashto, English, Hindi, and Urdu, and she navigates her daily life using a combination of these languages for different purposes, including university, work, everyday life, and entertainment. The majority of Afghans are Muslim with around 80% Sunni Muslims and around 19% Ismaili Shiia Muslims; Sufis, Nuristanis, Hindus, and Sikhs make up most of the remaining religious groups (Dupree & Weinbaum, 2020).

Literacy

A March 2020 report from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) reports that literacy rates in Afghanistan currently stand at 43% overall with rates at 55% for males and 29.8% for females and with a rate of 68% in youth populations between 15-24 years old (UIL, 2020). These numbers are based on traditional definitions of reading and writing literacies and do not reflect the widespread multilingualism or the multiple literacies related to daily life, culture, and business in Afghanistan, but they are alarmingly low, nonetheless.

Family life

As a point of comparison, Afghanistan is approximately the size of France or Texas and has a population of around 32.9 million people. It is a highly tribal society with different areas of the country marked by diverse ethnic identities and different cultures. Families are often large, multigenerational, and central to Afghan life, and family issues are generally kept private within the family (Pier, n.d.). This can sometimes make it difficult for individual family members to share their personal problems not only with outsiders but even, or especially, with people inside their immediate families. Dynamics might vary among different ethnic groups, but Afghan families are predominantly marked by patriarchal hierarchies, and decisions are often made by the husband, the father, or the primary male in the family. In contrast, women frequently tend to the house, children, and household chores. Children are expected to show the utmost respect to their parents (Pier, n.d.).

Women's rights in Afghanistan

Various organizations, such as the women's rights and aid organizations Medica Mondial, Unicef, UN, and the Human Rights Watch have reported the following and many other sobering statistics about the current situation for women in Afghanistan:

- One in three girls will marry before the age of 18, and 59% of all marriages are forced (Afghani, J., n.d.)
- Under Covid-19, there has been an exacerbation of violence against women in their own homes (UN Women, 2020)
- 87% of all Afghan women have been the victim of at least one act of psychological, physical, or sexual violence (Safi, 2018).

Many other alarming statistics about Afghan women's every day realities have been reported. Although the primary purpose of this dissertation is not to document the many ways in which Afghan women are oppressed or disadvantaged, but also to explore the ways in which they push back, develop resilience, and challenge patriarchal restrictions they face on a daily basis, it is critical to understand how challenging everyday life is for Afghan women in the context of Afghanistan.

Some of the more well-known accomplishments and celebrations of Afghan women include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- The 2020 exhibition 'Abarzanan' in Kabul celebrating the lives and accomplishments of Afghan women over the ages (Abarzanan, n.d.). This exhibit was described in the New York Times as "The Superwomen exhibit, created by the photographer and artist Rada Akbar, [which] honors eight trailblazing women in Afghanistan and the region — among them an ancient queen and a 10th-century poet — at a fearful time for Afghan women (Zucchini, 2020)
- Shamsia Hassani, an Afghan graffiti artist, who pushes back through art as she rushes to cover bombed walls of deserted building with her murals as quickly as she can. As she explains, "her mission is to beautify the city with color amid the darkness of war and to expose people in Kabul to contemporary art, specifically graffiti as a form of social and political expression" (Afghan graffiti artist, 2016)
- Zohra, the first all female orchestra in Afghanistan, which has performed internationally (Afghanistan's first female orchestra, n.d.)
- The now famous Afghan all-female robotics team which not only competed internationally in a robotics competition but is now offering Afghan girls classes in

STEM; most recently, they have been working to develop a low-cost ventilator from car parts to equip Afghanistan with highly sought after medical supplies to fight Covid-19 (Hadid & Ghani, 2020)

These few examples are well-known and celebrated stories of individual Afghan women pushing back and finding ways to celebrate and showcase their unique gifts, but there are many more Afghan women who show their creativity and resilience in countless ways every day. As Parvana shared with me in a recent text discussion about our project, “[T]his is not just one parvana's (my) story but there are so many of those parvanas today in Afghanistan that succeed through all the challenges.”

While numbers-driven reports such as the Human Development Index or the Gender Inequality Index offer crucial data for understanding trends and statistics, in other words, they do not necessarily reveal the deeper and more complex realities of navigating daily life in Afghanistan as a woman. Investigating the deeper stories of daily life through narrative inquiry offers potential for insights into a more nuanced understanding of one Afghan woman’s lived experience in Afghanistan.

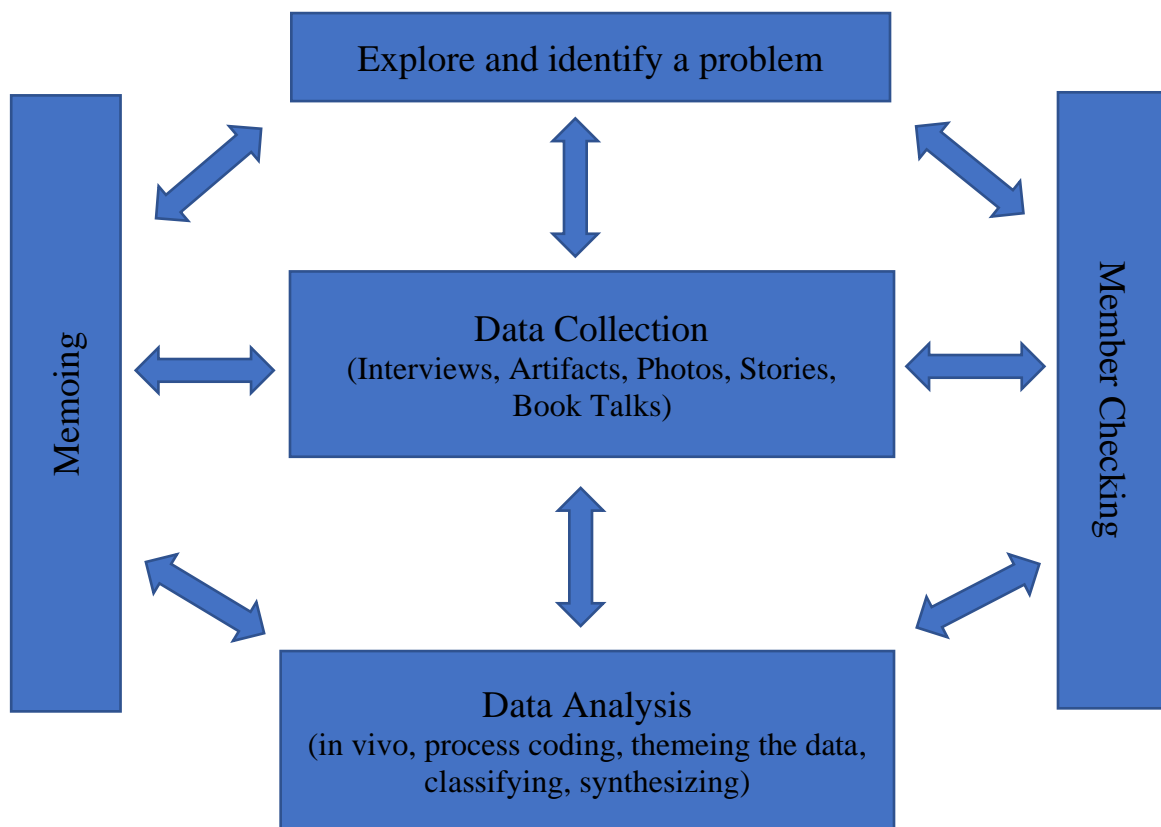
3.4 Research design

The overall design of this narrative inquiry study follows an iterative cycling pattern which is a modification of other similar research cycles, such as Hunter, Emerald, and Martin’s (2013) reflective cycle of plan, act, observe, reflect/understand (p. 63-66).

As seen in Figure 2 below, our research project follows an iterative and recursive pattern for exploring and identifying the problem, collecting data (e.g., interviews, artifacts, photos, stories, and book talks), reflecting on and analyzing the data through first and second cycle coding (e.g., in vivo coding, process coding, themeing the data, classifying and synthesizing the data), and regular member checking (through check-ins, reviews, input, and modifications from

Parvana). In addition to regular member checking, Parvana has been closely involved in input, reflection, feedback, and planning throughout the project. I have also engaged in ongoing self-reflective and analytic memoing through every phase of the project to track research processes, coding considerations, thematic categories, project challenges, and other project-related considerations. As Saldaña (2018) notes, “coding and analytic memo writing are concurrent qualitative data analytic activities” which work together to develop deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (p. 44).

Figure 2: Iterative and recursive research cycle



Because I have had more training and experience than Parvana in several key research areas, including data analysis and research writing, I have taken the lead on these areas for the project. Additionally, because I am completing this project as a requirement for my doctoral dissertation, I was required to do most of the research planning, analysis, and writing by myself.

By the same token, however, I frequently shared my analytic reflections, data analysis procedures, and results with Parvana throughout the project, so we could match our understanding of her storied experiences, and we could jointly make decisions about the final version of the written document. In this way, Parvana was able to participate fully in all research phases. During this process, I was also able to share analytic tools and skills from my educational training, so Parvana could conduct similar research projects on her own or with others in the future if she chooses to do so. Finally, to further emphasize the collaborative and participant-focused nature of this study, chapter four is written as a poetic re-storying in Parvana's own words. Parvana was closely involved in the writing and review of that chapter.

The decision to collaborate closely throughout the research project harkens back to Falcón's (2016) criteria for a transnational feminist methodology, where it is necessary to work towards the "conscious negotiation of imperial privilege" (p. 184) if we want to build strong international partnerships. Specific strategies in that model include "concrete acts of redistribution" (p. 182), or resource sharing from those who have social and cultural capital to those who do not. Just as I did previously with my Uzbek colleagues and students when I shared academic resources and materials that I had access to but they did not, I have also shared my academic research training skills with Parvana throughout this project.

3.5 Research participant selection and access to site (gaining access and entry, obtaining participant participation, exiting, etc)

Staeheli & Nagar (2002) pose the following question in their research study: "[H]ow do we as feminists talk productively across social and geographical boundaries in ways that allow us to maintain our commitments and responsibilities to more than one 'world'?" (p. 168). This challenging question is further developed when they discuss geographical and institutional distance and inequality: "[T]he question of material inequalities and institutional, geographical

and social constraints that prevent some voices from ‘traveling’ and talking across worlds remains unresolved” (p. 168).

Since 2002, the world has changed radically, particularly regarding technology, globalization, and communication. Today, individuals have access to information and worlds previously unknown to them. There are, of course, advantages and disadvantages to this development, but there is no doubt that online communication has made it easier to bridge geographical distances separating us. This collaborative transnational research project has been completely conducted online (through Skype, WhatsApp, and email) and has been driven by a mutual desire to share one Afghan woman’s life stories in an effort to challenge stereotyped images.

The decision to focus on a single participant in this study was related to trust building and authenticity. Parvana and I have worked together and known each other for over ten years; during that time, we have communicated regularly, and we have had the opportunity to develop a deep level of trust with each other as a result. Parvana has also demonstrated to me that she is comfortable disagreeing with me openly and offering alternative interpretations or opinions when she thinks I have missed something important or misinterpreted something. This level of trust and rapport building can take years to develop, especially with populations that have often experienced marginalization or discrimination. Parvana also confirmed for me that it could be challenging to find new participants who would feel comfortable participating at this juncture. Because of this, we jointly decided not to include additional participants who I do not have a prior relationship with or who might feel some sense of obligation to participate in the study even though they might not be comfortable sharing their authentic experiences in an open way. As a result, for the purposes of this dissertation, I have focused exclusively on Parvana’s storied

experiences; for future projects we will consider the possibility of recruiting new participants for a separate project if the opportunity should present itself.

As part of the process of obtaining participant participation, I invited Parvana to participate in this dissertation project in the summer of 2019. She eagerly accepted. Shortly thereafter, I set out to apply for IRB approval through Indiana University in Bloomington but was surprised to learn that IRB approval is not necessary in single subject studies. (See *Appendices: IRB Information* at the end of this document for more information).

Because I felt uncomfortable conducting a research project with Parvana without following IRB ethical guidelines, I followed standard protocols for working with human subjects. I explained to Parvana that she could leave the project at any time without being obligated to give me a reason and without repercussion if she decided to discontinue participating. We discussed a pseudonym and agreed on the name Parvana to protect her anonymity. Every few months, I reminded her that she could remove herself from the project at any time without any negative consequences. Throughout the project, we had several conversations about her anonymity and safety; once data collection was complete, we had a meeting to discuss what data and information to exclude from the project for safety reasons and how to honor her story without endangering her privacy. As a result of that conversation, I have not included the photos and pictures in the write-up of this dissertation; I have also anonymized Parvana's hometown and university.

Parvana and I have a long-standing and deep relationship; as a result, there will no typical exiting of the field in this case. We might eventually pursue an expanded version of this project through collaborative playwriting or fiction writing, or we might collaborate on other related projects, but our relationship will continue as always.

Because our research was conducted exclusively on Skype, WhatsApp, and other virtual formats, there was no need to obtain official permission to enter the site. As mentioned previously, I was unfortunately not able to spend a sustained period in Afghanistan due to Covid-19 but also due to worsening security issues in Afghanistan. This is a limitation of this study because living in a culture different from one's own for an extended period and learning a local language is the best way to develop deep cultural knowledge and understanding. I tried to offset this limitation as much as possible by asking Parvana for her assistance in continuing to educate me about Pashto, Dari, Afghan culture, and Afghanistan while also drawing upon and expanding my own cultural expertise of the South and Central Asian region.

3.6 Data collection procedures

The procedures for conducting a narrative inquiry project are not written in stone but rather follow a general set of fluid guidelines, and the stories that participants share make up the main data in narrative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection in narrative inquiry can take many forms, including interviews, observations, visual data, artifacts, or archival data, but the common goal is to “elicit narrative thinking to help us in excavating stories” (Kim, 2016, p. 180). As Kim (2016) states, the “most important thing to remember during the data collection period is to be an active listener, attentive observer, and empathic person with integrity” (p. 180). In other words, the goal in data collection is to prompt participants to share their stories while creating a safe and welcoming space for sharing.

The life story interview has become a key data collection strategy for an “in-depth study of an individual life as a whole” (Kim, 2016, p. 166). Because I was working with a single participant, Parvana, and was interested in exploring key moments from her life that have shaped who she is today, I started data collection for a pilot study with two open-ended life story interviews. The first open-ended interview was 47 minutes long and took place in the spring of

2019. The second interview took place in the summer of 2019; it was 68 minutes long and added supplemental details to stories from the first interview. Prior to conducting both interviews, I had explained to Parvana that both interviews were part of a research project; she could choose to participate or not to participate, and she could decide to discontinue participating at any time without any negative consequences. Following the first two life-story interviews in the spring and summer of 2019, Parvana and I had a mutual interview in the fall of 2019 where we discussed ideas for a larger research study, including our shared goals, research questions, research design, and roles. This mutual interview followed collaborative protocol principles outlined by Judyth Sachs (2000) in her article on activist professionalism which has “collective and collaborative action,” “effective communication of aims, expectations,” and “recognition of the expertise of all parties involved” (p. 87) at its very core.

During a subsequent conversation, Parvana and I discussed a range of visual, verbal, and textual strategies for her to share her storied experiences in ways that best resonated with her. The remaining data collection procedures in the project focused on “participant-generated” (Kim, 2016, p. 179) data to give Parvana more authority over how she wanted to share her story.

Some examples of her self-selected data included two personal narratives she had previously written for a creative writing class, five photos and drawings highlighting key moments in her daily life, a timeline mapping activity to highlight key positive and negative experiences throughout her life, and book chat conversations where we discussed two novels that had special meaning for her. We also had seven co-constructed interview conversations between 45 and 90 minutes each. All interviews and conversations were audio recorded and transcribed.

Because Parvana has deep personal and spiritual connections to writing, reading, art, and photography, these additional data sources created powerful compliments to the stories she had

previously shared in open-ended interviews while also offering opportunities for data triangulation. As other researchers have noted, these participant-initiated strategies can be particularly helpful when working with marginalized groups or sensitive topics, for navigating potential power imbalances between researchers/participants, and for giving participants more authority in the research process (see, e.g., Kolar, Ahmad, Chan, & Erickson, 2015; Guenette & Marshall, 2009; Marshall, 2016).

Corona Virus, Violent Attacks, and Family Trouble

From October until mid-December 2020, it became increasingly difficult to continue our WhatsApp conversations about the project. In addition to ongoing issues with Internet connectivity and power outages, Parvana's phone was stolen, her email account was hacked, and she briefly lost access to our main platform for communication, WhatsApp. Simultaneously, the entire country of Afghanistan was under siege; while the Corona virus raged across the country, there was also an extreme increase in violent attacks on Afghan civilians and educational institutions.

In October, along with her entire family, Parvana became very ill; she lost her sense of taste and smell, developed a fever and cough, and became extremely weak. Although she chose not to get a Covid test during that time, we both assumed that she had probably contracted the virus. During those weeks, Parvana suffered immensely; not knowing how best to help her, I turned to regularly sending her short poems, sayings, or pictures to try to keep up her spirits. Her extended family suffered as well during that time with the loss of a cousin's baby and the disappearance of another relative. The toll on Parvana and her family was profound, and she struggled with depression, anxiety, exhaustion, and stress.

At the same time, there was a sharp spike in violence in Afghanistan. Kabul University was attacked on November 2, 2020, and news agencies reported that at least 22 people were killed and between 30 and 50 were wounded. Just a few days prior to the attack on Kabul University, a suicide bombing took place on a different educational institution in Kabul (Aljazeera, November 14, 2020). On the day of the attack on Kabul University, Parvana messaged me to tell me that she and her family were heartbroken and struggling. A few hours later, she shared a story with me on WhatsApp that she had written about a violent attack she had experienced firsthand at her own educational institution. It was clear that the attack on Kabul University had opened an old wound for Parvana.

A little over two weeks after the brutal attack on Kabul University, ISIL fighters claimed responsibility for launching rockets across the city of Kabul; twenty-three rockets hit the city of Kabul, killing at least eight civilians in the process (Aljazeera, November 21, 2020). Parvana's family remained on high alert the entire day as the constant barrage of rockets filled the air with blasts and fear; during the attack, one of the rockets narrowly missed a school where Parvana's sister was staying in a dorm. As the situation worsened for Parvana, her family, and the entire country of Afghanistan, the cumulative strain on Parvana and her family continued taking its toll.

By mid-December 2020, I was incredibly relieved to learn that Parvana was beginning to feel stronger, and we had our first lengthy WhatsApp chat in many weeks. We spent a good part of that call getting caught up on each other's and our respective family's activities and health; during that time, I also reminded Parvana that, especially after everything she and her family had been through, I completely understood if she wanted to stop working on the project. After reassuring me that she was still eager to work on the project, Parvana suggested that we meet

twice per week until we finished the data collection. She suggested I call her in the evening my time, so she could go to work before her colleagues arrived, and we could speak more freely.

From December 14, 2020, until January 27, 2021, we met twice per week for book chats, interviews, conversations, and ongoing member checking. Between meetings, we also continued to chat regularly on WhatsApp. It was an incredibly intense period of reconnection, research, and reflection. During that time, we co-constructed seven interview conversations which each ranged between 45 and 90 minutes in length. We also decided to add two stories to the data set that Parvana had written, including her story about surviving an attack along with a second story about a harrowing bus trip she had taken as a young girl from the provinces to Kabul. Each story was approximately five pages long. Finally, we added a lengthy WhatsApp post to the data which documents Parvana's motivation to work on literacy efforts in Afghanistan.

I refer to these seven conversations as co-constructed interview conversations because the nature of those talks differed slightly from the original two life story interviews. Those seven conversations were more like intensely focused conversations between friends; the topics ebbed and flowed into each other, and new research ideas emerged holistically from the conversations.

Instead of focusing on big gulps, or Parvana's large and lengthy life stories, we focused instead on small sips, or a series of smaller topics which explored "the everyday, the ordinary, the quotidian stories that have frequently gone unnoticed" (Kim, 2016, p. 23). In one of our short WhatsApp chatbox conversations, for example, Parvana mentioned in passing that she had had a transformational experience reading the novel *Rumi's Daughter* (Maufroy, 2005), a novel about the life of Rumi's adopted daughter Kimya. I was very curious to learn more about her experience reading the book, so I asked Parvana if she might want to have a conversation about the book after I had had time to read it. For our subsequent WhatsApp talk on December 14,

2020, I had read and marked passages in the novel, so we could share notes and reactions to the book. During that book chat we discussed the novel in depth, but we also used the book as a springboard to talk about Parvana's story about surviving an attack, as well as her profound relationship to writing and reading.

The spontaneous decision to approach our meetings as interview conversations led to richly rewarding discussions peppered with a variety of topics ranging from our respective family lives to Parvana's writing, to photos from her daily life, to our shared and individual experiences reading the books *Rumi's Daughter* (Maufroy, 2005) and *The Forty Rules of Love* (Shafak, 2011). We also discovered unexpected revelations during this time, such as the deep connection Parvana has to her earbuds. The decision to approach the remaining data collection not as lengthy life story interviews but as co-constructed interview conversations also allowed us to weave in ongoing member checking with each conversation.

The chart below lists the data collected for this project between February 2019 and February 2021. I have included key words for the co-constructed interview conversations (interviews #3 through #9) to indicate a sampling of the range of topics discussed during those conversations. In addition to these data sets, we checked in with each other regularly on WhatsApp. Those conversations were not included in the data set. All research project data is located on IU Google for secure data storage purposes. Additionally, I created a dissertation data catalogue file on IU Google to track the status and location for research preparation (IRB, CITI, and COI completion dates) and ongoing research activity (data collection, data analysis, member checking, and memoing/reflections).

Figure 3: Data collection and timeline

Timeline	Pilot Project Data
Spring and Summer 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life story interview #1 (47 minutes) • Life story interview #2 (68 minutes)
	Dissertation Data
Spring and Summer 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life story interview #1 (47 minutes) • Life story interview #2 (68 minutes)
Fall 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes from 8-week peer coaching sessions (1 hour each) • Selected Skype/Whats App conversations • Email thread (six messages) • Mutual interview to discuss shared goals, research questions, research design, and research roles (50 minutes)
Fall and Winter 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P’s story about surviving an attack • Selected Skye/WhatsApp conversations • Email thread about project • Co-constructed interview conversation: December 14, 2020 (90 minutes) [Key words: research project planning, book talk about <i>Rumi’s Daughter</i>, P’s story about surviving an attack, earbuds, Parvana’s relationship to writing/reading] • Self-reflective and analytic memoing
January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P’s story about a harrowing bus trip • Co-constructed interview conversation: January 10, 2021 (50 minutes) [Key words: An Afghan wedding, Covid in Afghanistan, book talk about <i>The Forty Rules of Love</i>, P’s story about a harrowing bus trip, Afghan women, patience, significance of Parvana’s profile pictures] • Co-constructed interview conversation: January 11, 2021 (55 min) [Key words: Fulbright, an Afghan wedding, P’s story about a harrowing bus trip, Parvana’s relationship to her earbuds] • Co-constructed interview conversation: January 13, 2021 (55 min) [Key words: Parvana’s cousin, daily life photographs, fear, depression, literacy, clothing designs, Fulbright] • Co-constructed interview conversation: January 18, 2021 (40 min) [Key words: Timeline mapping—positive and negative key moments, family, profile pictures] • Five pictures and photos from everyday life: January 18, 2021 • Co-constructed interview conversation: January 20, 2021 (45 min) [Key words: Timeline mapping—positive and negative key moments, Pashto, toxic relationships, family, father, mother, Parvana’s cousin] • Co-constructed interview conversation: January 27, 2021 (50 min) [Key words: Pashto, book talks about <i>Rumi’s Daughter</i> and <i>The 40 Rules of Love</i>] • Self-reflective and analytic memoing

February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post on WhatsApp about P’s desire to work on literacy efforts in Afghanistan • Self-reflective and analytic memoing
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3.7 Data analysis procedures

As Riessman (2008) states, data analysis in narrative inquiry refers to “a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (p. 11). Although data analysis methods used in narrative inquiry can vary widely depending on the nature of the study, narrative researchers share the common idea that data in a narrative study are analyzed for “the story they have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies” (Kim, 2016, p. 198) as well as the involvement of participants in the recursive analysis and co-construction of meaning. In other words, narrative analysis does not seek to reproduce observations but to “provide a dynamic framework in which the disconnected data elements are made to cohere in an interesting and explanatory way” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 20).

Polkinghorne (1995) notes that the result of a narrative analysis is “the generation of a story” (p. 17) which needs to be set in a “bounded temporal period; that is, it needs a beginning, middle, and end” (p. 17). To generate a temporally bounded story, researchers might engage in “broadening, burrowing, and storying and restorying” (Kim, 2016, p. 207) during the analysis process. These practices refer to the processes of examining the broader context of the story (broadening), digging down into the more specific details or investigations of stories (burrowing), and finding ways to re-story the data, so the significance of the experience is emphasized (Kim, 2016, p. 207). As with every other phase of a narrative inquiry project, researchers often include participants in recursive member checking and co-construction of the analysis.

Data analysis

Figures 4 and 5 offer visual summaries of the research project. While Figure 4 aligns the research questions with the data generated and the data analysis for this project, Figure 5 presents a more complete timeline of research activities, including data collection, ongoing and robust member checking, and data analysis. As can be seen from the two figures below, each research question was explored through multiple data sources and an “array of qualitative data analysis” (Leech, N.L. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J., 2007) to triangulate the data and the data analysis. I also included analytic and self-reflective memoing throughout the entire project to deepen and further my understanding.

Figure 4: Research questions, data collected and data analysis

RQs	Data Collected	Data Analysis
<p>What key moments have shaped the life of a young Afghan woman?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life story interview #1 • Life story interview #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In vivo coding, process coding, thematic coding (Saldaña, J. (2016). <i>The coding manual for qualitative researchers</i>. Sage. • Constant comparison analysis/codebook (Leech, N.L. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation, <i>Psychology Quarterly</i>, 22(4), 557–58.) • Enthymematic Analysis (Knight, L.V. & Sweeney, K. (2007). Revealing implicit understanding through enthymemes: A rhetorical method for the analysis of talk. <i>Medical Education</i>, (41), 226-233.) • Restorying through poetic stanzas (Gee, J. P. (1991). A linguistic approach to narrative. <i>Journal of</i>

		<p><i>Narrative and Life History</i>, 1(1), 15-39.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetic Re-storying (Saldaña, J., & Omashta, M. (2018). <i>Qualitative research: Analyzing life</i>. Sage.) • Analytic and Self-Reflective Memoing
<p>What nuances, complications, and tensions do her storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan reveal?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P’s story about surviving an attack • P’s story about a harrowing bus trip • Co-constructed interview conversation (90 min) [Key words: research project planning, book talk (<i>Rumi’s Daughter</i>), P’s story about surviving an attack, earbuds, Parvana’s relationship to writing/reading] • Co-constructed interview conversation (50 min) [Key words: an Afghan wedding, Covid in Afghanistan, book talk (<i>The Forty Rules of Love</i>), P’s story about a harrowing bus trip, Afghan women, patience, profile pictures] • Co-constructed interview conversation (55 min) [Key words: Fulbright, an Afghan wedding, P’s story about a harrowing bus trip, Parvana’s relationship to her earbuds] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In vivo coding, process coding, thematic coding (Saldaña, J. (2016). <i>The coding manual for qualitative researchers</i>. Sage.) • Constant comparison analysis/codebook (Leech, N.L. & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation, <i>Psychology Quarterly</i>, 22(4), 557–58.) • Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space coding (situation, continuity, interaction) (Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). <i>Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research</i>. Jossey-Bass.) • Poetic Re-storying (Saldaña, J., & Omashta, M. (2018). <i>Qualitative research: Analyzing life</i>. Sage.) • Analytic and Self-Reflective Memoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-constructed interview conversation (55 min) [Key words: Parvana’s cousin, daily life photographs, fear, depression, literacy, clothing designs, Fulbright] • Co-constructed interview conversation (40 min) [Key words: Timeline mapping— positive and negative key moments, family, profile pictures] • Co-constructed interview conversation (45 min) [Key words: Timeline mapping— positive and negative key moments, Pashto, toxic relationships, family, father, mother, Parvana’s cousin] • Co-constructed interview conversation (50 min) [Key words: Pashto, book talks about <i>Rumi’s Daughter</i> and <i>The 40 Rules of Love</i>] • Notes on 8 peer coaching sessions (one hour each) • Analytic and Self-Reflective Memoing 	
<p>What do her stories reveal about her multiple literacy practices for navigating daily life?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P’s story about surviving an attack • P’s story about a harrowing bus trip • Co-constructed interview conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In vivo coding, process coding, thematic coding (Saldaña, J. (2016). <i>The coding manual for qualitative researchers</i>. Sage.)

	<p>(90 min) [Key words: research project planning, book talk (<i>Rumi's Daughter</i>), P's story about surviving an attack, earbuds, Parvana's relationship to writing/reading]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-constructed interview conversation (50 min) [Key words: an Afghan wedding, Covid in Afghanistan, book talk (<i>The Forty Rules of Love</i>), P's story about a harrowing bus trip, Afghan women, patience, profile pictures] • Co-constructed interview conversation (55 min) [Key words: Fulbright, an Afghan wedding, P's story about a harrowing bus trip, Parvana's relationship to her earbuds] • Co-constructed interview conversation (55 min) [Key words: Parvana's cousin, daily life photographs, fear, depression, literacy, clothing designs, Fulbright] • Co-constructed interview conversation (40 min) [Key words: Timeline mapping—positive and negative key moments, family, profile pictures] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artifactual analysis (Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). <i>Qualitative research: Analyzing life</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.) • Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space coding (situation, continuity, interaction) (Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). <i>Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research</i>. Jossey-Bass.) • Poetic Re-storying (Saldaña, J., & Omashta, M. (2018). <i>Qualitative research: Analyzing life</i>. Sage.) • 'Design' Coding (The New London Group (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i>, 66(1), 60-93. • Analytic and Self-Reflective Memoing
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-constructed interview conversation (45 min) [Key words: Timeline mapping—positive and negative key moments, Pashto, toxic relationships, family, father, mother, Parvana’s cousin] • Co-constructed interview conversation (50 min) [Key words: Pashto, book talks about <i>Rumi’s Daughter</i> and <i>The 40 Rules of Love</i>] • Post on WhatsApp about P’s desire to work on literacy efforts in Afghanistan • Five pictures and photos from everyday life • Selected Skype/WhatsApp conversations • Email thread (six messages) • Self-reflective and analytic memoing 	
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Figure 5: Timeline of research activities: [Data collection](#), [data analysis](#), and [member checking \(MC\)](#)

	January - June	July – December
2019	<p>Interview #1, Life story interview, MC of transcription Data analysis of Interview #1: enthymematic analysis Restorying through poetic stanzas MC of analysis and stanzas</p> <p>Interview #2, Life story interview, MC of transcription</p>	<p>Selected Skype/WhatsApp conversations, Email thread (6 messages), Mutual project interview, Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis MC of transcriptions and data analysis</p> <p>Notes from 8-week peer coaching sessions (1 hour each)</p>

	Multimodal storymap of Interview #2, MC of storymap	Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis MC of transcriptions and data analysis
2020	Data analysis triangulation of first two life story interviews, Codebook MC of data analysis triangulation of first two life story interviews MC of codebook	Written story #1: A story about surviving an attack Data analysis of story #1: First cycle coding: in vivo coding based on sensory images, process coding Second cycle coding: three-dimensional narrative inquiry space coding to track interaction, continuity, and situation MC of data analysis Interview #3: December 14, 2020 (90 minutes) Key words: research project planning, book talk about <i>Rumi's Daughter</i> , P's story about surviving an attack, earphones, writing/reading practices Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis Self-reflective and analytic memoing
2021	Written story #2: a story about a harrowing bus trip Data analysis of story #2: First cycle coding: in vivo coding based on sensory images, process coding Second cycle coding: three-dimensional narrative inquiry space coding to track interaction, continuity, and situation MC of data analysis Interview #4: January 10, 2021 (50 minutes): Afghan wedding, Covid in Afghanistan, book talk about <i>The Forty Rules of Love</i> ,	

	<p>P's story about a harrowing bus trip, Afghan women, patience, profile pictures Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis</p> <p>Interview #5: January 11, 2021 (55 minutes) Key words: Fulbright, Afghan wedding, P's story about a harrowing bus trip, importance of earbuds Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis</p> <p>Interview #6: January 13, 2021 (55 minutes) Key words: cousin, photographs, fear, depression, literacy, clothing designs, Fulbright Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis</p> <p>Interview #7: January 18, 2021 (40 minutes) Key words: Timeline mapping, profile pictures Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis</p> <p>Five pictures and photos from everyday life: January 18, 2021 (Discussions about pictures and photos were ongoing, but we decided not to include them in</p>	
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	<p>final write-up and analysis for privacy reasons.)</p> <p>Interview #8: January 20, 2021 (45 minutes) Key words: Timeline mapping, Pashto, toxic relationships, family, father, mother, cousin Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis</p> <p>Interview #9: January 27, 2021, (50 minutes) Data analysis: In vivo codes, process codes, analytic notes, thematic analysis, poetic re-storying MC of data analysis</p> <p>Additional data analysis of relevant data across all data: Artifactual analysis and design coding (based on NLG)</p> <p>Ongoing self-reflective and analytic memoing</p>	
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Life story pilot study: Enthymematic/syllogistic analysis

For the life story pilot study, I conducted two open-ended life story interviews in February and June 2019. I began the data analysis process in the pilot project by transcribing the two life story interviews and then analyzing the data set following the enthymematic/syllogistic approach proposed by Knight and Sweeney (2007). Like other narrative analysis procedures, this method of analysis uncovers and examines hidden meanings in stories and speech through major and minor premises and conclusions. When all three statements (major and minor premises and conclusion) are present in speech, for example, the result is considered to be a perfect syllogism.

On the other hand, when one of the statements is not explicitly stated but is implied, this is referred to as an enthymeme (p. 227).

To give a simple example of what this might look like, I will offer the following set of statements: All Ed.D. students are hard-working (major premise); Cathy is an Ed.D. student (minor premise); Therefore, Cathy is hard-working (conclusion). If the last statement is not expressed explicitly, it is considered an enthymeme. In other words, if I had omitted the final sentence in my example, you might still come to that conclusion on your own, but you would have had to use logic and deductive reasoning to do so.

To analyze the narrative interview data sets, I followed Knight and Sweeney's (2007) four-step deductive reasoning method. First, I identified and isolated individual stories from the interviews, rearranging passages where necessary to create bounded and complete stories. Each narrative received its own storyline that captured its essence. I then identified main oppositions in each narrative to conceptualize the push and pull features in each. Finally, I developed enthymemes and syllogisms for each individual narrative (p. 228-232). Once the initial analysis was done, I reviewed the individual parts—the titles, storylines, main oppositions, and syllogisms.

Figure 6 below demonstrates two excerpts from the first and second stages of the initial narrative analysis. The first stage of analysis was to assign each of the separate narratives a title. Because the first and the seventh narrative dealt with similar themes and events from Parvana's life, they were grouped together. I then assigned them each a title ("Working as an anchor for a children's TV program" and "Life as a girl: Identity").

Stage two involved creating a storyline for each narrative which summarized the main idea of each narrative. Narratives #1 and #7 are both connected by their reflective stance on

agency and identity. Narrative #1 is Parvana’s reflection on life as a ten-year-old girl in a very conservative area of Afghanistan, and what it meant for her to promise her ten-year-old self that she would return to her dreams when she was older and stronger. Narrative #7 is a reflection from Parvana’s perspective as a twenty-one-year-old woman who looks back on her life as a ten-year-old girl and recognizes that she has “achieved the strength, the courage, and the ability to fight back against negative stereotypes and behaviors towards girls and women even though there is great danger in doing so.”

Figure 6: Sample from first and second stages of narrative analysis: Titles and storylines

<p>Narrative #1: Title and Storyline: “Working as an anchor for a children’s TV program”</p>
<p>This is a narrative about realizing (and being shocked by) what it means to be a ten-year-old girl in Afghanistan. It is about societal expectations and judgments towards girls and women. It is also about the promise to the self not to give up but to take a step back until a future stronger self can fight.</p>
<p>Narrative #7: Title and Storyline: “Life as a girl: Identity”</p>
<p>This is a narrative about the challenges of life for girls in a conservative city in Afghanistan. The twenty-one-year-old narrator reflects on a key experience in her life when she was ten and how it drove home how powerless she was to fight back as a girl. The twenty-one-year-old narrator now believes she has achieved the strength, the courage, and the ability to fight back against negative stereotypes and behaviors towards girls and women even though there is great danger in doing so. This is a more in-depth narrative about Afghan society’s expectations and judgments about in/appropriate behavior for a girl. It is about the reality of every day and systematic harassment against women. It is about identity.</p>

Stage three in the analysis involved identifying and isolating oppositions in each narrative. This stage was a necessary next step towards identifying and constructing major and minor premises and conclusions during stage four of the analysis. Stage three helped to identify common themes but also to unveil hidden elements in each narrative. The oppositions identified in narratives #1 and #7 may be seen in the Figure 7 below:

Figure 7: Sample from Stage 3: Oppositions in each narrative

Narrative #1: Oppositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight-give up • Excitement-despair • Dreams-reality • Private-public • Being a girl-receiving negative social reaction • Educating others on TV-postponing dream to become a journalist
Narrative #7: Oppositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resignation-resistance • Deny-accept • Silenced-empowered • Public-private • Good-bad • Forbid-empower

- Give in-fight back

The next figure represents a sample from the final stage of the analysis which reviewed each narrative, title, storyline, and set of oppositions closely and then developed major and minor premises and conclusions. As part of this stage, it was necessary to look for hidden or unspoken elements. These unspoken elements are indicated with italics.

Figure 8: Sample from Stage 4: Enthymemes and syllogisms

Narrative #1: Enthymemes and Syllogisms
<p>Enthymeme 1:</p> <p><i>Afghan society has very restrictive expectations and rules for girls and women as well as consequences if girls and women do not conform.</i> (major premise) I forgot that I belonged to the category of girls. (minor premise) You are considered to be a ‘bad girl’ if you appear on television as a girl. I was shocked and crushed when I was treated badly by society because I appeared on television. (Conclusion)</p> <p>Enthymeme 2:</p> <p>When I was ten, I believed that I could use a children’s television program and entertainment as a forum to convince parents and children in Afghanistan that education is important. (major premise) I had a dream to become a journalist for social justice and appearing on television fulfilled my dream. (minor premise) You are considered to be a ‘bad girl’ if you appear on television as a girl. (minor premise) <i>I decided to postpone my dream to become a journalist for social justice because I was relentlessly treated badly when I appeared on television. I believed I would have more courage and be able to fight back as an adult.</i> (conclusion)</p>
Narrative #7: Enthymemes and Syllogisms

Enthymeme 1:

Life as a girl living in a conservative city in Afghanistan is difficult. (major premise) I am a girl.

(minor premise) Therefore, life is difficult for me in a conservative city in Afghanistan.

(conclusion)

Enthymeme 2:

People believe girls and women who speak or speak up publicly are infidels who must be degraded. (major premise) I forgot that I was a girl when I appeared on television at ten. (minor premise) *Because I appeared on television and was a girl, people viewed me as an infidel and harassed me in public. Because I was focused more on the educational piece and the excitement of appearing on television than on my identity as girl, I was shocked by the reaction.*

(conclusion)

Enthymeme 3:

Speaking up for yourself and caring for yourself as a woman is viewed as shameful. (major premise) I was followed and harassed. (minor premise) I couldn't speak up for or defend myself. (conclusion)

Enthymeme 4:

It is extremely dangerous for women to fight back when they are bullied or attacked. (major premise) Today it is more important for me to speak up than to worry about what others think. (minor premise) Today I have a voice and speak for myself and others. (conclusion)

Data analysis triangulation

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) argue for data analysis triangulation, or the “importance of utilizing more than one type of analysis ... in order to understand phenomenon more fully” (p.

557). After analyzing life story interview data using narrative analysis and rearranging the findings into poetic stanzas, I followed Leech and Onwuegbuzie’s steps for constant comparison analysis. I started by re-reading the entire data set a couple of times to refamiliarize myself with the details of the interviews. I then reviewed the data set another time before completing a constant comparison analysis, including initial in vivo coding, secondary coding, and the development of emerging themes. I then revisited the data again and grouped similarly coded chunks of data and rearranged data according to themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p.565). Then I created a codebook with themes, definitions, and examples. The time for data analysis triangulation through constant comparison analysis took approximately 40 hours for initial review of data, initial in vivo coding, secondary coding, development of emergent themes, and codebook writing.

There were seven final themes and twenty-two final code names, as seen in the figure below (where the word ‘women’ refers to Afghan women).

Figure 9: Final codebook themes and code names

Themes	Codes
Social expectations about women	Attitudes
	Actions
Women’s internalization of social expectations	Attitudes
	Actions
Women’s resistance of social expectations	Attitudes
	Actions
Personal epiphanies	Change takes time
	Realizations related to one’s own feelings

	Realizations related to including men in women's empowerment
	Realizations related to strategies for empowering women directly
	Realizations related to one's own potential
Coping strategies	Taking a break
	Music
	Writing, telling, hearing stories
Reflections of self over time	Past
	Present
	Future
Finding strength	Through others' examples
	Through own experiences
	Through stories
	Through resistance
	Through positive support from men

Data analysis triangulation results

The constant comparison analysis reinforced what had previously emerged from the initial narrative analysis. There was a complex interplay between external social expectations for women's behavior and dress and the internalization and/or resistance of that expected behavior. The corresponding codes emerged as *attitudes*, or what Parvana and others thought, felt, and/or understood as social expectations, or *actions*, or what Parvana said or did or noticed what others said or did in response to expectations. Additional emerging themes were related to personal

epiphanies, coping strategies, reflections of self over time (past, present, future), and finding strength. These themes were consistent with findings from the initial narrative analysis.

Codebook

As a final step in the constant comparison analysis, I completed a codebook from the data, following the model developed by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 192). The codebook includes the following categories: themes, code names, definitions, when to use/not to use, and examples from data. The chart below includes an excerpt from the codebook with supporting samples from the data set.

Figure 10: Codebook excerpt with supporting segments from data

Theme	Code name	Definition	When to use	When not to use	Example of a segment of text from study
Reflection of self over time	Past	Any evidence referring to self-reflections about past experiences, situations, or feelings.	Use for descriptions of self-reflection about identity, agency, or voice.	When referring to factual occurrences unrelated to self-reflection.	I, whatever I do, I mean in the past when I was thirteen, I wouldn't really think about, like, improving other lives, or having the idea of improving other women's lives. I mean I wanted it, but I really could not figure it out, like sometimes even forget to think about it, l. 450-455; I remember back when I was thirteen years old. I will share a very personal story. I mean harassment was there, I told you, and although I was thirteen, or even smaller, I was being harassed by the men in the streets, and even men who followed me to home and brought me letters—wrote me letters and slipped it inside my house's door. That time I was so scared, and I thought I did not have a voice to speak...and I thought it is a shame to talk about it. To really care for yourself. To really think about what you really want to be yourself, to have that freedom of walking in a street. I thought, I was fearing that, and I could not stand back. I could not talk to anyone about it.
Reflection of self over time	Present	Any evidence referring to self-reflections about present experiences, situations, or feelings.	Use for descriptions of self-reflection about identity, agency, or voice.	When referring to factual occurrences unrelated to self-reflection.	I am a different me. I can totally say this is a totally different person, l. 447-448; Today I think about more, l. 450; today who I am is I think how to improve, I think what changes to bring, which ways to choose, which differences to bring. I can totally see myself being very very very strong now, l. 455-458; today when I see something like that I fight back, I do not remain calm even if it gets to physical

					fight, I do that, and I have done that with men a lot in the bazaars. Uh, I, although there's like a huge threat to doing that because these men can do anything to you, but I do not really, like, back off or just let it suffer. I think I have a voice today, and I think I can speak for others also. so this is the different self that I think that I have changed a lot, yeah. A different strong me, l. 471-79.
Reflection of self over time	Future	Any evidence referring to self-reflections about future experiences, situations, or feelings.	Use for descriptions of self-reflection about identity, agency, or voice.	When referring to factual occurrences unrelated to self-reflection.	Right now, I am working on a private level, or like a local level, but I want to enter to the government, and I want to bring changes. I mean really, in the private sector now, we see that women are working and there are opportunities for them. Uh, but I really want to go to the government and bring fundamental changes in there. It is very difficult...but women cannot really speak. Women cannot really hold their place in these Ministries or the whatever they work in the government. I really want to be a minister in five years!! Yeah! To have my own business. Oh my God, really I badly badly want to have my own business. I want to bring changes, l. 486-498;

Codebook Excerpt Description

To demonstrate how the code book worked, I will describe a brief excerpt. In this excerpt, the theme *reflection of self over time* is coded for past, present, and future reflections about identity. The young ten-year-old Parvana (past) internalized society's expectations of women and did not feel that she had a voice or agency: *I was so scared, and I thought I did not have a voice to speak...and I thought it is a shame to talk about it. To really care for yourself. To really think about what you really want to be yourself, to have that freedom of walking in a street. I thought, I was fearing that, and I could not stand back. I could not talk to anyone about it, l. 460-471.*

As she gained experience, education, and courage, Parvana starts to push back on social expectations towards women, and when she is 21 years old (present), she feels she has a voice and can speak and fight for herself and others. I can almost imagine her speaking encouraging

words to her younger self in this passage: *Today when I see something like that I fight back, I do not remain calm even if it gets to physical fight, I do that, and I have done that with men a lot in the bazaars. Uh, I, although there's like a huge threat to doing that because these men can do anything to you, but I do not really, like, back off or just let it suffer. I think I have a voice today, and I think I can speak for others also.*

Finally, looking forward into her future, Parvana (future self) imagines herself stepping into a public role, where she can make policy changes in society by working in government and opening a business, so more women can have opportunities to showcase their talents: *It is very difficult...but women cannot really speak. Women cannot really hold their place in these Ministries or the whatever they work in the government. I really want to be a minister in five years!! Yeah! To have my own business. Oh my God, really I badly badly badly want to have my own business. I want to bring changes.*

As this example demonstrates, Parvana's reflections of self over time reveal her changing notions of identity and agency as well as an increased ability to imagine a future that she shapes for herself and where she occupies a leadership position. Seen from the perspective of postcolonial feminist theory, this image of changing notions of identity and agency stands in stark contrast to the reductionist stereotype of the passive Afghan woman in need of saving; although Parvana clearly experiences challenges in her everyday life and across time, she has developed and continues to develop her own active strategies for existing, resisting, and persisting.

Like many other narrative researchers, I struggled with how to write up the pilot project results. Once I completed my enthymeme/syllogism narrative analysis, I searched for appropriate ways to re-story and honor Parvana's stories authentically. Gee's (1991) linguistic approach to

narrative offered me inspiration for reconstructing my analysis into poetic stanzas using Parvana’s own words. I looked for patterns and themes, pulled out words and phrases, and moved things around until there was a logical, yet poetic, flow to each individual narrative. I rearranged snippets from various emerging themes in a series of stanzas, or poetry, always using Parvana’s own words—even for the titles of each stanza.

The findings were represented with Parvana’s own words on the page. The stanzas allowed me to organize poetry around the emerging themes. The result was a poetic re-presentation of Parvana’s life story in her own words—eight narratives reconstructed in poetic stanza format with Parvana’s own words speaking the findings.

Narratives #1 and #7 were given the same poetic title—*I am a different me*. This phrase emerged in narrative #7 and is a significant reflection on Parvana’s shifting identity. Parvana’s experiences with harassment, discrimination, and lack of agency when she was a television anchor for a children’s show at the age of ten made her realize how profoundly challenging life could be even for such a young girl. The reflective narrative of 21-year-old Parvana reveals a shifting identity—one marked by strength and agency. The emerging themes in both narrative #1 and #7 relate to agency, power, and identity. In the poetic stanza in Figure 11 below, Parvana reflects on shifting perceptions of her life and identity.

Figure 11: Sample from poetic stanzas

<p><u>I am a different me</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>When I was ten...</i></p> <p>I wouldn’t think about improving other lives, Or having the idea of improving other women’s lives. I mean I wanted it, but I really could not figure it out.</p> <p>Harassment was there. I told you. Although I was ten—even smaller—I was being harassed by the men in the streets, and even men who followed me to home and brought me letters. Wrote me letters and slipped it inside my house’s door.</p>
--

That time I was so scared,
And I thought I did not have a voice to speak.
I thought it is a shame to talk about it.
To really care for yourself.
To really think about what you really want to be yourself.
To have that freedom of walking in a street.
I could not talk to anyone about it.

Today...

I can say I am a different me—a totally different person.
Today who I am is I think how to improve.
I think what changes to bring, which ways to choose, which differences to bring.
Today when I see something I fight back.
I do not remain calm even if it gets to physical fight.

I have done that with men a lot in the bazaars
although there's a huge threat to doing that because these men can do anything to you.

But I do not back off.
I think I have a voice today,
And I think I can speak for others also.
I can totally see myself being very very very strong now.

So this is the different self that I think that I changed a lot.
A different *strong* me.

As this brief excerpt illustrates, poetic re-storying of the findings in the pilot project made it possible to re-present the findings in Parvana's own words. By linguistically dislodging myself as "authorial subject" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 21), I was attempting to push against tendencies in the western academy to marginalize majority world epistemologies. Intensive member checking of the poetic re-storying made it possible to check my interpretation and deepen my understanding further as we made modifications and adjustments where needed.

Dissertation data analysis

Once we had finished data collection for the dissertation project, I re-read all the storied data from the pilot study and the rest of the data collection to refamiliarize myself with the entire data collection. I then worked through each individual data set systematically through the lens of

my research questions, identifying, labelling, and sorting key selections which seemed connected to each research question.

As I worked through the data, I wrote marginalia using in vivo codes, process codes, and analytic notes (Saldaña, 2016; Saldaña, & Omashta, 2018). I then sorted passages which were relevant for each research question into similar groups on an excel file. Passages which fit into more than one group were copied and pasted into more than one group for further review. I then reviewed the individual groups again and labelled each group with thematic category descriptions. During this time, I also wrote analytic memos to reflect on, analyze, and synthesize the data, and I continued to meet with Parvana regularly for ongoing member checking. The data analysis process was not linear; it was messy, iterative, and recursive, leading me back and forth as I worked towards a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of Parvana’s storied experiences.

Once I had condensed and synthesized the data, I updated the pilot study codebook to reflect any new patterns and themes which had emerged from analyzing the entire data collection. I finally settled on the following six main themes: navigating social expectations for women; personal epiphanies; creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting; navigating family complexities; managing complex feelings; and reflections of self over time. Each main theme had corresponding sub-themes which explored different aspects of the themes. The final collection of main themes and sub-themes are organized in Figure 12 below:

Figure 12: Final codebook main themes and sub-themes

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Navigating social expectations for women	Social expectations for women
	Internalizing social expectations for women
	Resisting social expectations for women

	Complexities of working professionally with men (past and present negative experiences)
	Complexities of working professionally with men (past and present positive experiences)
	Complexities of working professionally with men (ideas about future possibilities)
Personal epiphanies	Attitudes about societal change
	Realizations about own feelings
	Realization about including men in gender equity efforts
	Realization about strategies for empowering women
	Realization about personal potential
Creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting	Coping by taking a break
	Coping through music
	Coping through stories
	Coping through nature
Creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting	Finding strength through others' examples
	Finding strength through own experiences
	Finding strength through helping others
	Finding strength from the support of others
	Finding strength through resistance
	Finding strength through challenges
	Finding strength through writing, telling, hearing stories
	Finding strength through leadership
	Finding strength from positive support from men
Creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting	Resisting the status quo for women
	Resisting by creating alternative pathways for women's clothing market
	Resisting to make a difference in society
Creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting	Persisting by being ready for challenges
	Persisting by drawing on experience
Navigating family complexities	Perceptions of mom
	Perceptions of dad
	Perceptions of traditional Afghan families
Managing complex feelings	Impatient
	Angry
	Distrusting
	Isolated
	Exposed
	Depressed, anxious
Reflections of self over time	Past

	Present
	Future

These emerging themes and sub-themes revealed a nuanced and complex picture of Parvana’s daily life across time, including, among other things, the complexities of internalizing and resisting social expectations for women and navigating a complicated path for working professionally with men. Figure 13 is a condensed snapshot from the updated codebook highlighting the thematic category *navigating social expectations for women*. This main theme had four sub-themes, including social expectations for women; internalizing social expectations; resisting social expectations; and complexities of working professionally with men. The sub-theme working professionally with men was further divided into three categories: past and present negative experiences; past and present positive experiences; and ideas for future possibilities.

Figure 13 illustrates my coding processes and examples from the three categories in the sub-theme *complexities working professionally with men* and are all related to Parvana’s plans to develop her own clothing brand for Afghan women. This business plan emerged from her own experiences as an Afghan woman who not only has firsthand experience with navigating a clothing market which is severely lacking in culturally appropriate clothing, but who also experiences persistent harassment from men because of how she is dressed. To improve the situation for herself, she has started to design her own clothes and is now planning on developing a clothing brand for women which is both stylish and appropriate for the Afghan context.

As the examples in Figure 13 illustrate, Parvana’s past and present experiences working professionally with men have been mixed. On the one hand, she has received support from a male friend who has experience in the clothing market and has offered to help her achieve her dream of developing her own clothing brand. On the other hand, she has had many negative

experiences working with men and has learned that she will need to work extremely hard if she wants to succeed as a woman in a man's market because men "will try to minimize you, they will try to smash you in any way they can, take your weak point." Because of these negative experiences, she has learned that it is imperative to "consider everything when you are in Afghanistan if you want to start a company in the market with all these men."

Finally, she dreams of a future where she has established her own clothing brand, and she imagines a place where men and women come together to "sit on the same table and talk about it [gender equality] and work it out." She envisions a society where men and women come together, talk about gender equality, and identify "where the gaps are and how they can fill them." She imagines men and women working together not only to "minimize harassment, but at the same time, like change people's mentalities about men and women working together." She has come to the realization that gender equality can only be achieved by bringing men and women together in the discussions. Her plan to create a new clothing brand not only fills a gap in the women's clothing market; it is also driven by a commitment to changing conditions for women in Afghanistan.

By focusing on the nuances, complications, and tensions of Parvana's every day storied experiences and by investigating the data collection through a range of analytic approaches, it became possible to identify Parvana's acts of resistance which are deeply embedded in her daily life. As Alexander and Mohanty (1997) assert, these strategies for navigating daily life are an "integral aspect of the epistemology of anticolonial feminist struggle" (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997, p. xxxviii).

Figure 13: Excerpt from final codebook: Navigating social expectations for women < Complexities of working professionally with men

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Code Name	Example of a segment of text from study
Navigating social expectations for women	Complexities of working professionally with men	Past and present negative experiences	I don't want to always rely on the tailors. Of course, the tailors will do it for me. They will proceed with all their tailoring stuff, but I should be able to at least do something. So that's why I feel like it's more necessary, and being at this job right now, this position, has given me this idea that I have to know something before I enter the market. Because people here in Afghanistan, especially if they are men, they will try to minimize you, they will try to smash you in any way they can, take your weak point, so you have to consider everything when you are in Afghanistan, if you want to start a company in the market with all these men
	Complexities of working professionally with men	Past and present positive experiences	Yeah, He said, "It's much better to have something of your own to work on." And then I shared this idea with him, and he said, "I would love to become your partner if you want to proceed with this." He already had experience importing the cloth from Iran and Pakistan. ... Yeah, he had experience previously. And then in the market, he knew what kind of stuff to bring. Then he told me, "Let's just to work on it." So it has been two months, and it's the initial phases, so we are thinking how to proceed with it now
	Complexities of working with men	Ideas about future possibilities	So, yeah! I mean if I want to start a business, I don't want, like I previously also mentioned, I don't want only women to be involved, but at the same time I want both these genders to come together and help each other because this idea should promote, like OK, it's not only one specific gender that brings equality, I mean at the end of the day both should sit on the same table and talk about it and work it out. They should experience it, so they can know what's really wrong, and they can identify where the gaps are and how they can fill them. ... Mmm hmmm. Not only minimize harassment, but at the same time, like change people's mentalities about men and women working together

Through the classification of codes and themes, it became possible to isolate individual categories related to Parvana's lived experiences and examine those more closely. Evidence related to personal epiphanies, reflections on self over time, and resistance of gendered expectations became clear. For example, the thematic code *personal epiphanies* revealed specific moments and realizations related to self-discovery, personal growth, and insights into women's empowerment. Similarly, coding the theme *reflections of self over time* isolated specific events and personal developments which then reinforced the narrative analysis of who Parvana was at ten and who she was at twenty-one. Looking at *women's resistance of social expectations* as a

separate category allowed for a deeper dive into specific strategies for pushing back against patriarchal and restrictive norms. Finally, coding the theme *creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting* shed light on specific strategies for navigating oppressive expectations for behavior, appearance, and dress while also revealing the ways in which Parvana has been able to strengthen herself through music, stories, other's experiences, and her own personal accomplishments.

Artifactual literacies

Because artifactual analysis focuses on stories and burrows beneath the surface to look for hidden or underlying meaning, it offers a useful analytic strategy for my narrative inquiry project with Parvana. Pahl and Rowsell (2010) define artifacts as objects or things that embody “people, stories, thoughts, communities, identities, and experiences” and are “valued or made by a meaning maker in a particular context” (p. 2). Artifactual literacy recognizes that “everyone has a story to tell, and they bring that story into their learning” (p. 3).

Saldaña and Omashta (2018) offer an approach for analyzing artifacts which acknowledges that artifacts are “not just things but are also stimuli for human action, reaction, and interaction” (p. 78). Identifying artifacts in this way makes it possible to distinguish between different types of process codes, including the “observable, manifest action” and the “latent actions” connected to artifacts (p. 79). For example, if a story is analyzed as an artifact, the corresponding observable, manifest action might be writing while the deeper latent action connected to a story might be memorializing, documenting, or surviving. In other words, coding begins with identifying what the artifact is by describing key observable features and then moves towards latent process coding to explore and reveal what the artifact is used for on a deeper level (p. 78).

The analysis of Parvana’s storied experiences of everyday life revealed that she utilizes a range of artifactual literacies for navigating daily life and for producing herself “in ways that are emancipatory and also committed to producing empowering discourses and knowledges” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 13). Her rich repertoire of artifactual literacies help her make meaning of her lived experiences while also creating opportunities for coping, resisting, and growing. These finely tuned artifactual literacies present a stark contrast to the dominant and static narrative in western news cycles which presents Afghan women as invisible, voiceless, and agentless (see, e.g., Chowdury, 2016; Cloud, 2004; Fowler, 2007; MacDonald, 2016; Rasul & McDowell, 2015; Terman, 2017).

During one of our co-constructed interview conversations, for example, Parvana and I explored a variety of data collection procedures for her to share her story, and I briefly described some visual, verbal, and writing strategies she might use. I also asked her to reflect on any alternative strategies she might want to try. Parvana listened quietly as I talked about some of the different ways to share her story, but she quickly became more animated when I mentioned the possibility of her writing or talking about an object or objects that were important to her. Without hesitation, she told me that her earbuds were her “best friend.” When I asked her to say more about that, she told me that “they have helped me at the most difficult times. They could help me listen to words of singers privately, nights inside dorm but also outside on the street. My earbuds taught me to ignore harassment. They taught me a new way of handling harassment—by ignoring it.”

Subsequent conversations with Parvana and analysis of the data deepened my understanding of Parvana’s close relationship with her earbuds. I learned that they teach her how to navigate daily harassment on the street, but they also help her avoid unwanted stares or

judgment, and befriend her by offering her companionship, solace, and comfort. Parvana’s earbuds, stories, books, and everyday clothing are some of the artifacts which she “uses for ... daily routines and rituals”, but they also signify a special “history, purpose, and meaning” for her (Saldaña & Omashta, 2018, p. 75).

Once I had sorted data related to Parvana’s meaningful artifacts, I adopted Saldaña and Omashta’s (2018) approach to analyzing artifacts, labelling relevant samples from the data with manifest and latent action process codes to identify the observable action associated with each artifact as well as the latent action which signifies a deeper connection or meaning for Parvana. For example, the manifest, or observable, action associated with her earbuds is listening—to music, podcasts, conversations, and messages, but the latent actions associated with her earbuds reveal a much more complex relationship of protecting, helping, teaching/learning, befriending, and depending on. As she stated during one interview, her earbuds were her “best and oldest friend.” A sample from the artifactual analysis of Parvana’s earbuds may be found in the table below.

Figure 14: Sample from artifactual analysis

Artifact	Manifest action process coding	Latent action process coding	Data Excerpts
Earbuds	Listening	Protecting	They make me feel protected. I can listen to my music anytime. I can listen to messages privately. I always have them with me.
		Helping	They have helped me at the most difficult times. They could help me listen to words of singers privately. They help me nights inside dorm but also outside on the street.
		Teaching/Learning	My headphones taught me to ignore harassment. They taught me a new way of handling harassment—by ignoring it.
		Befriending	I started using earphones when I was twelve years old. I had this little device. It was called MP3, so it was a kind of USB, and I would connect it to the laptop and then copy and paste songs in it, and then, that’s how I started it. So I couldn’t sleep without my earphones. That was it. I couldn’t sleep. Then my mom or dad, when I would fall asleep, they would come and take it out of

			<p>my ears. It would be so loud. They were even surprised. I could never sleep without my earphones. It started back then. I used it for a couple of years after I got a phone. That's how it started. Our friendship is back years old.</p> <p>For 4 and a half years at the university, I had no friends, no close friends. All I had was music in my ears with headphones. Headphones are my best friend.</p>
--	--	--	--

In addition to her earbuds, Parvana has a rich repertoire of other artifactual literacies which help her navigate daily challenges in her social world while also giving her a platform for creative expression, persistence, growth, and self-love, including her own writing (e.g., two stories she wrote for a creative writing class), books she has read (e.g., *Rumi's Daughter*, *The Forty Rules of Love*, and others), and everyday clothing for Afghan women.

Stories (writing) and books (reading) are two examples of meaningful artifacts that help Parvana navigate daily life. When Parvana was going through a particularly challenging time, for example, she turned to books for solace and decided to read *Rumi's Daughter*. The novel *Rumi's Daughter* (Maufroy, 2011) is a story about Kimya, a young girl with deep ties to mysticism who is sent from her village to be taught and adopted by Rumi, the great Sufi mystic and poet. During one of our book conversations, she told me that reading *Rumi's Daughter* had transformed her and convinced her to start praying again. As she said, "you have to put your trust in it. Before reading this book, prayer was just words. Now I feel it, it is calming. I put my trust in it."

During our book chat, we shared passages from the book which had made a deep impression on us or which we found particularly noteworthy. I shared a passage about writing which had made a strong impression on me, and Parvana was reminded of an experience she had had that day with booksellers in Kabul. The passage I quoted describes Kimya's early experiences learning how to write when she begins to understand the power of writing:

C: Here is a quote I really love from the book: “This time Aishel, too, bent over the strange signs Ahmed was drawing on the ground. So that was what writing did! It allowed someone to talk to you, even after he had died!”

Parvana responded that she had spent the day visiting several bookshops in Kabul with a journalist who was investigating literacy patterns in Afghanistan. She said that the passage I had selected reminded her of a conversation she had had that day with booksellers and writers.

P: Afghanistan lost three big writers recently. When I went around the city with a journalist and asked the bookshops if the literary culture was dying with the death of the writers, they said, “No. Even if they die, their words are always there. Writers are always remembered after they die.”

In another chat with me at a later date, Parvana returned to her powerful conversation with booksellers and writers in Kabul about the death of several prominent Afghan writers in 2020.

And they were saying, “It doesn't matter if they [Afghan writers] die. Their pieces are there that will live hundreds or thousands of years from now,” and that's actually very true. Like, no matter whatever time passes by, but what is left on the book and the literature, it's always there. Even if they die, their words are always there. Writers are always remembered after they die.

As Figure 15 illustrates, the observable manifest action process codes for Parvana's artifactual literacies of story writing are *writing* or *sharing*, but the latent action process codes of *memorializing*, *remembering*, *bearing witness*, *inspiring*, and *calming* reveal a deeper connection to self, others, and society. Daily life in Afghanistan can be incredibly unpredictable, precarious, and dangerous: Writing stories, reading books, and listening to others' stories afford Parvana

stable and comforting opportunities to bear witness to personal experiences, calm herself in challenging times, find inspiration to persevere, and remember key moment from her own life.

Figure 15: Artifactual analysis sample: Stories

Artifact	Manifest action process coding	Latent action process coding	Data Excerpts
Stories (Writing)	Writing, Telling, Sharing	Memorializing	I went with this journalist—yeah, I told you—to these bookstores, like traditional bookstores that are in Kabul from 20 or 30 years ago, and I was sitting with the shopkeepers and some writers. Afghanistan lost some many famous writers this year--the previous 2020 year, and we asked them a question, like, so many writers are dying, and do you think the writing culture is dying with it. And they were saying, “It doesn't matter if they die. Their pieces are there that will live hundreds or thousands of years from now, and that's actually very true. Like, no matter whatever time passes by, but what is left on the book and the literature, it's always there. Even if they die, their words are always there. Writers are always remembered after they die.”
		Remembering	Um, it is, like, writing, when I wrote, took this creative writing skills class, I never knew before that I could write. I never knew. What actually it means for me, like, this class especially when I was writing, it took me to the past. Like each and every memory that I always thought I forgot, I realize it is back there. It just needs time. You have to think about it, and then it comes back upon the paper from your head.
		Bearing Witness	The roads were damaged and horrible, the bus would jerk and every time Wazhma tried to sleep, a pothole would wake her up. Some cried, some looked grim, and the children were held close by their parents with all the strength left in their bodies. The high speed of the bus on the damaged black tarmac blown by the Taliban was the second biggest fear of passengers concerning them whether they will reach to their destination alive or not because just a few weeks ago a bus accident had killed 20 passengers on the same highway. It was the third accident in the past two months because of the carelessness of the drivers. Wazhma recalled how her school friend’s brother, wife along with their small daughter was killed in a terrible bus accident on the same highway. She feared traveling in a plane too. What if Taliban

			shoot down the plane with something? She had heard her father telling the stories when the Soviet Unions were in Afghanistan. Mujahidin had shot down many soviet planes with stingers. But she could also recall her father's words that those stingers no longer existed. The "what if(s)" questions always won over her. (Excerpt from a story about a harrowing bus ride)
		Inspiring	Tell stories, tell the stories, I mean, just like you say, everybody has a story, and that's what we were aiming to show...the story of every young kid that has --whether it's male or whether it's a female. We were just trying to show that, but I really could not give up on it, and I was, I had this commitment that one day when I grow up, I will be able to fight, I will be able to have the courage, I will be standing on my feet. The stories of these girls that made me very strong, that inspired me a lot, and I wanted those stories to be heard also.
		Calming	So, I find it very relieving actually. It's just the words, like I enjoy when I write and I read it back. Try to relate different events, different people. There so much calmness when you write. ... But I find writing and reading both, there is a very special kind of calmness in it.

Analysis of Parvana's writing: in-vivo, process, three-dimensional narrative inquiry space

The written stories Parvana shared for this project are artifacts which are “shaped by context, power, and history” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 3). They embody her experiences as an Afghan woman negotiating precarious situations and surviving by employing creative strategies for self-protection. They also serve as documents of her experience and survival and showcase her linguistic talents. In her story about surviving an attack, for example, Parvana describes a violent and sudden attack which ended in life or death for many people around her. During the attack, she had to quickly develop strategies to survive under the direst of conditions. In her second story about a harrowing bus trip, she describes a dangerous bus trip she took with her mother and sister when she was a twelve-year-old girl. Both stories are expertly written and

highlight Parvana’s linguistic and creative skill as well as her desire to document and bear witness to key moments in her life.

To begin analyzing the stories, I read Parvana’s stories multiple times and noted the vivid sensory imagery (e.g., sound, taste, smell, touch, sight) and how it connects to the viscerality of the attack in the first story and to the setting and tension in the story of the harrowing bus trip. Throughout both stories, Parvana embodies her experiences with powerful sensory references that emphasize the physicality of her experiences. In the example below, she uses the sense of smell to show her discomfort:

Figure 16: Thematic analysis sample: Sensory imagery

Sensory Imagery	A story about a harrowing bus trip
Smell	The slight odors of the diesel and old rubber. The stinky smell of people on the bus. Every summer she would whisper under her lips why these people do not wear a freaking deodorant, take a shower or lose some weight so they do not sweat a river while being on the bus for eight hours. It was hot and stuffy. She had nauseous, chilly and fearful feeling.

Parvana’s stories also incorporate sophisticated literary devices such as synaesthesia, similes, metaphors, and anthropomorphism to add drama and intensity to her stories. In the examples below, she incorporates the following elements: anthropomorphism, by attributing the bus with human characteristics to highlight the stress of the bus trip (“Its engine let out a deep sigh, as though it reminded itself...”), and similes and metaphors to emphasize the dramatic intensity of the moment (“the clouds were blushing like a ripe mango”).

Figure 17: Thematic analysis sample: Anthropomorphism and Similes/Metaphors

Literary device	A story about a harrowing bus trip
Anthropomorphism	The breaks squeaked and the bus stopped. Its <u>engine let out a deep sigh, as though it reminded itself of the heavy weight it had carried for the past two hours since departure.</u>
Similes/Metaphors	It was 5:00AM. The sky had softened to a blue and <u>the clouds were blushing</u> like a ripe mango. As Aziza pulled the dirty curtain of the window, warm rays of the sun distracted her eyes. She widened her eyes, all she could see was <u>sun peeking</u> over mountains, and some greenery on them.

In addition to analyzing each story for sensory imagery and literary devices, I also did a three-dimensional narrative space coding to map out “the personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present, and future (continuity) along a second dimension; and place (situation) along a third dimension” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47). As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, while the inclusion of the concept *situation* allows researchers to consider deeply the contextual aspect which is essential for a narrative study (p. 72), a focus on *interaction* emphasizes that people are always living and acting in relationship to others, and *continuity* acknowledges that experiences are not isolated events but rather exist on a continuum, “an experiential continuum” (Dewey, 1938, p. 33).

The three-dimensional narrative space analysis revealed strong similarities between the two stories across the categories of situation, interaction, and continuity. For example, both stories physically take place in a bounded area: The story about surviving an attack primarily takes place in the bounded location where the attack took place with flashbacks to previous attacks in the provinces; the story about the harrowing bus trip takes place primarily within the confines of a bus traveling from the provinces to Kabul.

The interaction which occurs in both stories is closely related to self-protection, survival strategies, and interaction with family. Finally, the analysis of continuity revealed that both stories were framed in the past with flashbacks to previous experiences and musings about the future. Both stories also center around dramatic and potentially dangerous moments in Parvana’s life, and both have clear turning points. In the story about surviving an attack, the turning point occurs when Parvana hides from the attackers in another place—a decision which ultimately saves her; in the story about a harrowing bus trip, the turning point occurs when the Taliban stop the bus and enter it, and the passengers manage to escape from harm.

The table below includes samples from the three-dimensional narrative space coding and the turning points:

Figure 18: Sample from three-dimensional narrative space coding: Situation, interaction, continuity

Narrative Coding	Parvana’s story about a harrowing bus ride
Situation	<p><u>Setting:</u> Bus trip from the provinces to Kabul (car, bus station, bus interior, arrival in Kabul) and university (flashbacks)</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> Aziza, her mother and sister wore their black hijab with Niqabs covered from head to toe. Aziza’s uncle drove them to the bus station. He left to take the tickets for bus while they were waiting in the car. It looked like the bus station never slept in the midnight. All the shops were open, the lights were on, the restaurants had customers as they would during daytime, kids were crying as they were awoken from sleep and people were rushing toward the busses. While looking at everyone, Aziza wondered if these people would ever reach to their destinations safely and alive. They entered the bus while the conductor was calling for Kabul passengers. Her mother passed the ticket and asked about their seat number after a struggle of staring at the tickets so carefully with her two eyes narrowed visible from her black Niqab. She could not read it. She never went to school.</p>
Interaction	<p><u>Interaction:</u> self-protecting (face towards wall, earbuds, no walking to avoid stares), strategizing to survive (covering hands, hiding face), interacting with mother and sister</p> <p><u>Examples:</u> <u>Self-protection:</u> Parvana could hear her mother with her eyes closed struggling to sleep in the bumpy and damaged road. She shook her head no. She did not want to get distracted from her thoughts.</p> <p>Walk was good idea, but Aziza was always bothered with the people staring at women even if a single part of their body was not visible in the hijab. She remembered how last summer, her mom slapped a man in the bus while he was jabbing her mom on her shoulder from the back seat. The bus continued its journey again and so did Aziza with the journey of her thoughts.</p> <p>Women were seen always in the corners sitting with their face toward to walls to get some space. Everyone, including the passengers in the bus and outside in the station were staring at her as if they were waiting the whole way to see how the real face under the Niqab looks like.</p> <p><u>Survival strategies:</u> Knock on the bus door. One of the talibs entered inside with the name of Allah. Aziza covered her hands with her huge black scarf. They were the only parts visible in her body. Aziza and her sister had their heads down. Everyone in the bus did except for the driver.</p> <p>“It is Taliban, everyone be alert, it is Taliban” the driver shouted in a panic as the bus stopped. Aziza jumped from her sleep and covered her little red mp3 and earphones under her hijab. It is Ghazni, just two and half hours away from Kabul. The bus environment had turned into fearful noises. The men in the bus were throwing their smartphones to women knowing that Taliban would not bother them if they stepped inside the bus. Everyone knew Taliban had someone as a target.</p>

	<p><u>Family interaction:</u> They entered the bus while the conductor was calling for Kabul passengers. Her mother passed the ticket and asked about their seat number after a struggle of staring at the tickets so carefully with her two eyes narrowed visible from her black Niqab. She could not read it. She never went to school.</p>
Continuity (Time)	<p><u>Past</u> Aziza’s family was already fully equipped and prepared with all the materials from groceries to all the required stuff for a travel because they had to do this every summer.</p> <p><u>Flashbacks</u> She remembered how last summer, her mom slapped a man in the bus while he was jabbing her mom on her shoulder from the back seat. The bus continued its journey again and so did Aziza with the journey of her thoughts. Her mother was a good example. Aziza’s family had always taught her to defend back.</p> <p>One day, a man, a stranger was sitting a few meters away from her school. He had his phone in hand, taking pictures of the school girls. All the girls ignored him, covering their faces or walked pass him fast. As Aziza, her sister and four friends arrived, she could not digest it. They approached to the boy and asked to show him his phone. He denied. They surrounded him in a circle. Aziza slapped the boy on the back of his newly shaved head. The intensity of the slap left her hand numb. A friend snatched his phone and hit it from the ground. Stepped on it to break it. It was their luck that police car was passing by. The police officer hit the boy murmuring in anger “you are chasing girls” and took him in the car. The memories of it always brought a smile on her face.</p> <p><u>Future</u> Women with no adult Muharram were given the seats behind the driver seat, Aziza noticed while waiting for the bus to be filled with all the passengers. It was her dream to study Gender Studies after a year when she graduates from school. The thoughts of women being treated as aliens always bothered her.</p>
Turning Point	<p><u>Sample:</u> Knock on the bus door. One of the talibs entered inside with the name of Allah. Aziza covered her hands with her huge black scarf. They were the only parts visible in her body. Aziza and her sister had their heads down. Everyone in the bus did except for the driver.</p> <p>“It is the wrong bus, maybe it is the one behind this. They are not here.” one of the Talibans screamed to the rest while talking on the phone to someone, maybe the commander. The talib got off the bus. He knocked the bus with his kalashinkov and asked the driver to leave. It was a relief for all the passengers, everyone remained calm as the bus moved back.</p>

Multiple literacies: Design coding

As previously mentioned, Parvana’s artifactual literacies include nuanced strategies for meaning making, navigating daily life, and creating openings to resist unwanted stares and daily harassment (with earbuds), to memorialize or document her lived experiences (in writing), to calm and inspire herself during difficult times (with reading and writing), and to find new ways

to make Afghan women's lives easier economically and psychologically (by revolutionizing the Afghan clothing market for women).

A design analysis (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) of the data revealed that some of Parvana's artifactual literacies are also directly connected to strategies for actively designing her social futures. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe multiliteracies through the concepts of available designs, designing, and the redesigned. *Available designs* refers to the existing culture and context for meaning making; *designing* refers to taking the available design and adapting or changing it to fit one's needs; and *the redesigned* refers to the transformation which occurs through the process of designing.

One example from the design analysis may be found in Parvana's meaning making strategies related to casual clothing for Afghan women. As Parvana explained to me many times, the *available designs* in the current casual clothing market for Afghan women are extremely challenging and limited. Although Afghan women are expected to dress modestly and cover themselves fully, for example, the casual wear market offers virtually no casual clothing with sufficient coverage. This is because most casual wear for women is imported from external markets which do not create the clothes based on the Afghan context. In addition, Afghan clothing sellers are motivated not by the needs of Afghan women but by their own financial necessity and desire, so the market is overrun by clothing which is too revealing or otherwise inappropriate, thereby making it virtually impossible for Afghan women to purchase clothing that is appropriate for the Afghan context. This situation is materially, socially, and psychologically frustrating, and Afghan women are often harassed because of their clothing. As Parvana explained, Afghan women are constantly worried about what to wear because of "the everyday comments, the everyday catcalls." During one of our chats, Parvana described a friend

who gets into a “verbal fight” with men on the street about harassment but ends up being the one to feel bad at the end of the day. As Parvana said, “Men do not care. I mean, they will probably just forget in those few seconds, but she is affected at the end of the day.”

In this example, the *available designs* do not match the cultural context of Afghanistan. In other words, the social expectations require her and other Afghan women to dress modestly and cover their bare skin, but the market offerings do not match the social expectations. As a result, Parvana’s friend wears clothing with insufficient coverage and is harassed on the street. She pushes back and argues, but, at the end of the day, she is the one left feeling frustrated.

Given the frustrating situation with the *available designs* on the clothing market, Parvana performs work on the available designs through *designing*. Instead of depending on a limited market for her clothes, for example, she actively engages in manipulating the available designs by looking for alternative clothing designs which she can adapt to the Afghan market. As she describes it, “I mean I watch all these countries. I watch it through the Pinterest I always use and for my designs for my clothing, I usually use Pakistan, like their clothing designs, but then I’m trying to put it into an Afghan type—give it an Afghan touch. I guess this clothing, they are like the same. The culture, they share the same. So yeah! That’s how I get it.”

Once she has identified and adapted a design for the Afghan context, she takes it to a tailor to be made. She described her process to me:

What I have to do is always buy cloth and give it to a tailor who can make them for me. I mean I always get the designs, and they make them for me. This is a good thing since I am making all my clothes myself—I mean designing, giving it to a tailor to make them for me. The people inside the university—I have heard a lot from them that they like them. What I—what my dress looks like—the design—they like it.

As more and more Afghan women have commented and complimented Parvana on her designs, she has decided to work towards developing her own fashion brand in Afghanistan. As she said, “It’s what I feel like, so people want something like this. This gives me an idea of people’s needs, so that’s why I came up with this idea.”

Parvana’s vision for her future clothing brand is a transformation of the current situation. Her *redesigned* vision includes making locally made clothing with Afghan resources and labor. As she argued, “Rather than importing clothes from another brand from a country, why not have something of our own? Our people are talented, they have the skills. We have got the labor, we have got the machines, we have got the --all the capabilities. They why not just do it?”

Parvana’s enthusiasm for starting her own business is based not only on frustrating social and economic realities but also on a deep desire to include men in gender equality discussions. She believes that by excluding men from the conversations and activities promoting gender equality, a deeper divide will be forged between men and women.

Parvana’s commitment to improving clothing market conditions for women is linked to personal needs, but it is also deeply connected to underlying injustices in Afghan society which she believes she and others are responsible for fighting against.

Yeah, I mean seeing them every day, like it drives you to bring this social justice in society because at the end of the day being as a citizen of Afghanistan, I feel like I am responsible to bring this. And I see my other friend is also responsible for it. I mean, all of us are responsible for it. I mean if we don’t, then who brings them?

As this example illustrates, Parvana actively performs work on an available design (restrictive options for Afghan women in the casual clothing market); by actively engaging in designing efforts, she is then able to transform the restrictive clothing options for herself and for

other Afghan women. A design analysis of this example reveals Parvana’s desire to change a challenging situation for Afghan women, her agency in finding productive solutions, and her personal transformation when she creates new fashion designs for herself and others. Moving away from traditional notions of literacy and applying a design analysis of Parvana’s multiple literacy strategies allows us to discover moments of agency, resistance, creativity, and transformation.

A sample of Parvana’s *designs of meaning* related to casual clothing for Afghan women is illustrated in the chart below.

Figure 19: Excerpt from Design analysis: Everyday clothing

Designs of meaning		
Artifact: Everyday clothing		
Available designs	Found resources for meaning-making: culture and context	<p>Excerpt: I mean, like other countries are not making them [casual clothes for women] based on Afghanistan. They don’t really care. They just want to do their business. And also these our Afghan business men or these shopkeepers—whoever are importing these clothes, they do not really care about really how it should be. First, they cannot find them. But so they have to buy what is available in the market. I mean if there are clothes for weddings or such occasions or engagement parties, even if they are sleeveless or they are short, it is fine. But casual wear? the trend in Afghanistan, fashion in Afghanistan? Industry in Afghanistan? No, the market is not good at all.</p> <p>Like being involved with these ladies who complain about this thing—not finding the right kind of needs that they want. I mean, it’s tough. I can feel through our conversation what their needs are really. Even though they are going to the market always, I always, I mean I see it from one year from the previous year, if they have something, it’s not a trend. They bring the same kind of thing again the next year, but people are getting updated. People are watching the world. They want to be updated too. OK, whatever it is. It’s Afghanistan. Whether it’s a war-torn country or however people see it, but this country’s people they also care about trend and fashion because this is the world of technology. They see other people, other countries. They see they also want to wear stuff that are trendy. These conversations with people, I have been watching the market myself, all these years, and also not being able to find my clothes in the market.</p>
Designing	The act of meaning: performing work on available designs	<p>I mean I watch all these countries. I watch it through the Pinterest I always use and for my designs for my clothing, I usually use Pakistan, like their clothing designs, but then I’m trying to put it into an Afghan type—give it an Afghan touch. I guess this clothing, they are like the same. The culture, they share the same. So yeah! That’s how I get it.</p> <p>It’s always a struggle for me. What I have to do is always buy cloth and give it to a tailor who can make them for me. I mean I always get the designs, and they make them for me. This is a good thing since I am making all my clothes myself—I mean designing, giving it to a tailor to make them for me. The</p>

		<p>people inside the university—I have heard a lot from them that they like them. What I—what my dress looks like—the design—they like it. It’s what I feel like, so people want something like this. This gives me an idea of people’s needs, so that’s why I came up with this idea.</p>
The redesigned	The world and/or meaning designer transformed	<p>Rather than importing clothes from another brand from a country, why not have something of our own? Our people are talented, they have the skills. We have got the labor, we have got the machines, we have got the --all the capabilities. They why not just do it?</p> <p>So, yeah! I mean if I want to start a business, I don’t want, like I previously also mentioned, I don’t want only women to be involved, but at the same time I want both these genders to come together and help each other because this idea should promote, like OK, it’s not only one specific gender that brings equality, I mean at the end of the day both should sit on the same table and talk about it and work it out. They should experience it, so they can know what’s really wrong, and they can identify where the gaps are and how they can fill them.</p> <p>So what I’m thinking also is that, I mean, at the same time, if I want to initiate something of my own, I know drawing, but I feel like the first thing I should do is I should take some classes of tailoring, so I can learn it myself too. Just get a little bit known to this idea how do people put it into sketches and stuff like that. So it’s just, Inshallah– I know it will take time because I’m not in a rush, it will take time until I’m really ready to go for it. But yeah. I’m thinking about it.</p> <p>Yeah. There are tailors, but, I don’t know, I mean, I myself feel like, being the CEO of an IT company right now, sometimes I feel like, although the President tells me I don’t have to know everything about IT, but then I always feel like, NO, I should know because it’s like at the end of the day people see you as if you were the CEO of the company or if you are establishing the company, people want to see the potential in you also. I don’t want to always rely on the tailors. Of course, the tailors will do it for me. They will proceed with all their tailoring stuff, but I should be able to at least do something. So that’s why I feel like it’s more necessary, and being at this job right now, this position, has given me this idea that I have to know something before I enter the market. Because people here in Afghanistan, especially if they are men, they will try to minimize you, they will try to smash you in any way they can, take your weak point, so you have to consider everything when you are in Afghanistan, if you want to start a company in the market with all these men.</p> <p>Yeah, I mean seeing them every day, like it drives you to bring this social justice in society because at the end of the day being as a citizen of Afghanistan, I feel like I am responsible to bring this. And I see my other friend is also responsible for it. I mean, all of us are responsible for it. I mean if we don’t, then who brings them?</p>

Creswell and Poth (2018) visualize data analysis as a spiral of activity which starts with data collection and ends with an account of the findings. The many stages of data management and analysis in between are interrelated and overlapping; in the spiral model, researchers move

“in analytic circles” (p. 185) of organizing, sorting, labelling, reflecting, coding, visualizing, and representing the data.

This image is reflective of the iterative analytical approach in this study. The narrative analysis of the pilot project, for example, led to further questions about data analysis; data analysis triangulation through recursive and iterative coding served to expand and enrich our understanding of the data; the decision to include participant-generated data reflected a desire to acknowledge Parvana’s epistemic authority by inviting her to choose and generate additional data sources such as stories and artifacts.

Finally, including a variety of analytical approaches served to generate polyphonic perspectives for understanding Parvana’s creative multiliteracy practices and strategies for meaning-making throughout her life. Thematic coding, artifactual literacies analysis, three-dimensional narrative analysis, and design analysis worked in complimentary fashion to amplify Parvana’s diverse strategies for navigating daily life. Through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory, it became possible to acknowledge and document how Parvana actively imagines and then creates a different social future for herself and others as she pushes against social strictures presented to her. Selecting, viewing, and analyzing data through the lenses of narrative inquiry further sharpened the focus for exploring Parvana’s storied experiences deeply while also opening space for identifying counternarratives to the dominant and static narrative about Afghan women.

3.8 Strategies for validating findings

Traditional methods for evaluating research projects include notions of reliability, validity, and generalizability which often depend on measurable and objective criteria. Because narrative inquiry is concerned more with interpretation and analysis rather than with proving that a story replicates the *truth* or is generalizable to a broader context, narrative researchers often

move away from more traditional criteria for evaluating research, relying instead on criteria which are more relevant for evaluating narrative research projects (see, e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertova & Webster, 2020; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

For example, narrative inquiry does not seek out “rules and generalities across stories” but focuses instead on the “level of the specific episode” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). Because narrative research focuses on the particularity of subjectively lived and storied experiences, interpretive analysis, and reconstructed presentation of those stories in realistic and believable ways, narrative studies seek to establish verisimilitude “by creating good stories that are lifelike” (Kim, 2016, p. 10). As Polkinghorne (1995) states, “The final guideline for judging the adequacy of a narrative analysis is whether it makes the generation of the researched occurrence plausible and understandable” (p. 18). This involves a process of linking diverse story elements together in a “plotted whole story” (p. 18) which results in a “dynamic framework in which the range of disconnected data elements are made to cohere in an interesting and explanatory way” (p. 20). Finally, sharing the final write-up with participants in a discursive and recursive process is a necessary part of the process.

In my pilot project with Parvana, the initial write-up involved rearranging emerging themes into poetic stanzas, using excerpts from the original interviews. Sharing the stanzas with Parvana allowed us to work collaboratively and discuss the rationale and the result of the poetic rendering of her story. Her positive response to the stanzas reaffirmed the importance of collaboration for creating a sense of verisimilitude.

Narrative researchers also agree that because evaluative criteria of reliability and validity rely on certain types of evidence, such as statistics or numbers, they are not useful for evaluating narrative projects because relying on numbers alone does not allow participants to explain their

answers or choices (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 20). In narrative, a measure of reliability is not related to the stability of the instrument, but rather to the trustworthiness of the researcher's notes and transcriptions. Because narrative research is also more interested in interpretation and understanding (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 30) than in replication of findings, narrative researchers often rely on the criteria of "meaningful analysis" (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 91) or the notion of trustworthiness for validating findings. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "a collaborative form in data collection is emphasized in studies adopting a transformative perspective and trustworthiness is emphasized in place of what we have been calling validation" (p. 59).

There are several strategies for gaining trustworthiness in a narrative research project, including transparency, honesty, collaboration, and access (Mertova & Webster, 2020). For example, researchers can gain trustworthiness "by making their research purpose transparent" throughout the research process (Leavy, 2015, p. 51). Other strategies include making notes and transcriptions available for review and checking in frequently with participants to review the data and results to see if the researcher's interpretations are consistent with participants' experiences (Mertova & Webster, 2020, p. 91). By including participants in all stages of the process, researchers confirm that participants' opinions and understandings are valued and affirmed (Bruce, 2008, pp. 326-327). As Mertova and Webster (2020) state, "access to reliable and trustworthy records of the stories as told by individuals is the cornerstone of validity and reliability" (p. 91).

Because this project is a transnational research study between two researchers who have worked together for around ten years and who have developed a deep and meaningful relationship which transcends national borders, we emphasized trustworthiness as a strategy for

validating our findings. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “a collaborative form in data collection is emphasized in studies adopting a transformative perspective and trustworthiness is emphasized in place of what we have been calling validation” (p. 59).

In my project, I have emphasized trustworthiness by collaborating with Parvana on the following:

- discussing and agreeing on the broad vision and individual steps in the research process;
- checking in frequently with Parvana to review transcriptions, analyses, and interpretations;
- inviting Parvana to offer suggestions to ensure that the project reflects her understandings of her experiences;
- incorporating changes to more closely reflect Parvana’s understandings;
- inviting Parvana to help in the selection of data to be collected;
- reviewing the poetic re-storying together and incorporating modifications, additions, and deletions where needed.

3.9 Member checking and audit trail

Ongoing member checking between Parvana and myself started in February 2019. Over the course of the project, I have sought out Parvana’s feedback and input for each step of the project, including at least 17 instances of member checking during data collection and analysis, including review of transcriptions, data analysis, and poetic re-storying. Additionally, Parvana read and gave extensive feedback on the final data analysis report. For audit trail purposes, our methods of data collection and analysis will be made transparent and available for peer researchers in the academic community of the LCLE program at Indiana University. All research project data is located on IU Google for secure data storage purposes. Additionally, I created a dissertation data catalogue file on IU Google to track the status and location for research

preparation (IRB, CITI, and COI completion dates) and ongoing research activity (data collection, data analysis, member checking, and memoing/reflections).

3.10 Ethical challenges

Over the course of this project, Parvana and I have spoken frequently about possible ethical challenges. For example, I understand that publicly sharing certain stories and moments from her life might be risky for her, so I have assured Parvana that I have done everything I could to protect her privacy by changing her name, her hometown, and other potential identifying features. In addition, I have explained to Parvana that her participation in the project is voluntary and that she could opt out of the project at any time with no repercussions.

Parvana explained that her desire to pursue the project was embedded in a life-long dream to show the world another picture of Afghanistan and Afghan women, and I felt reassured that Parvana was aware of the risks involved and did not feel pressured or compelled to participate in our project.

3.11 Limitations and Challenges

Educational researchers who pursue narrative inquiry must understand and navigate a number of complex challenges. Some critics of narrative inquiry, for example, have argued that because the world we live and work in tends to value positivist approaches to research more highly, narrative inquiry can be a “risky business” (Kim, 2016, p. 20) for researchers who are new to the field, searching for jobs, or concerned about finding funding for their projects. Bacon and Kaya (2018) have argued that, although funders tend to “support numbers-based initiatives, i.e. numbers served, hours of participation, and test scores” (p. 89) while “literacy and language theory, research, and practice take a ‘back seat’ role” (p. 89), education researchers who use a narrative approach have the potential to contribute to efforts to explore and understand individual educational experiences more deeply, especially those experiences which have traditionally been

ignored or marginalized (p. 89). Through the creative, subjective, and imaginative approaches afforded by narrative inquiry, in other words, LCLE researchers can investigate and better understand the complexity and subtlety of students', teachers', and researchers' educational experiences and thereby contribute to the development of educational policies which are rooted in the contextualized experiences of teaching and learning.

Another potential challenge in narrative research is the focus on developing a close relationship with participants and understanding a participant's context deeply (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 73). Some critics argue that because relationship development takes a great deal of time and energy, it is difficult, if not impossible, to work with large groups of individuals; in contrast, narrative researchers understand that co-constructing the research relationship is fundamental to getting at the heart of a narrative inquiry project. In essence, researchers must understand "the importance of the mutual construction of the research relationship, a relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). As Bruce (2008) asserts, approaching the research relationship with care and empathy can help researchers maintain an open stance which can bring researchers and participants closer together (p. 327).

Narrative researchers must also remain cognizant of complicated power issues that might arise when focusing on participants' stories. Complex questions about authority, ownership, and power are tied to the ethics of representation, including who has the right to tell the stories of others, who a story belongs to, or even whose version of a story is the right one (see, e.g., Clandinin, 2006; Fox, 2008; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

My research project encountered limitations related to internet connectivity, time zones, and availability. For example, Parvana and I depended on internet access, connectivity, and

functioning audio/visual/chat features to conduct all of our work, and there were often unexpected delays, outages, or hindrances to access. Parvana's access to the internet was limited to certain locations in Afghanistan that have internet connectivity, and, when she was a student at the university, she was regularly required to leave her dormitory during semester breaks, holidays, and during times when security was a concern. Additionally, because we conducted the project across large time zone differences, scheduling interviews and collecting other 'face-to-face' data was challenging at times. By bringing patience, creativity, and tenacity to all steps of the research process, including data collection and member checking, we were able to finish the project successfully.

Craig (2020) speaks eloquently about the challenges of conducting a narrative study with vulnerable populations. She speaks of her "fear" and her awareness of needing to "be awake" to the stories she tells and to be careful about the stories she is told (p. 4). Additionally, she notes that she is not interested in telling exploitative stories that "grab readers' attention" (p. 4). These issues of representation and power have been an ongoing and central concern for me in my own project with Parvana as well, and I continue to collaborate with Parvana to explore creative ways to foreground her voice, experiences, and stories wherever possible. I am extremely fortunate to have a long-standing and close relationship with Parvana, and this makes it easier for us to discuss challenging questions which arise around representation, storying, and interpretation, but I try never to assume that all potential power dynamics have been conclusively resolved as a result.

Finally, the intersection of Parvana's close family living situation, the emergence of Covid-19, and an increase in violence in Afghanistan made open and regular conversations with Parvana more difficult. Like many other families worldwide, for example, Parvana's individual

family members decided to live together under one roof until the public health situation improves. As a result, Parvana and her family members have been living in a small house with very little privacy for many months; this lack of privacy made it challenging for Parvana to speak freely at times. Additionally, although Parvana and her individual family members were not tested for the Corona virus, several conversations with Parvana in the fall and winter of 2020 led me to believe that Parvana and her family had all become ill with the disease. In the end, it was Parvana's ingenuity, resilience, and creativity which made it possible for us to complete data collection; to afford herself more privacy, she suggested we hold our conversations before her work started, so we could speak more openly.

Researchers use narrative for many reasons, but they “tend to have a common desire to breathe humanity into their work, tell stories (their own and those of others) in more truthful, engaged, and resonant ways” (Leavy, 2015, p. 41). This desire to infuse research with humanity is often also connected to the wish “to do work that has the potential to increase connectivity and reflection” (p. 41). This motivation to be engaged, connected, and reflective requires narrative researchers to recognize that relationship building is central to research. In short, researchers turn to narrative inquiry because of its focus on storied experiences, subjectivity, collaboration, and creativity, but, perhaps most importantly, because it breathes humanity into our work.

3.12 Writing up the findings

Writing up a narrative inquiry report is not a simple matter of writing “a third-person ‘objective’ representation or mirrored reflection” (Polkinghorne, 1995, 19) of a participant's life story, but rather “dialogic productions” (p. 19) which emerge from interactions between researchers and participants. As Polkinghorne (1995) states, the final “storied analysis is an attempt to understand individual persons, including their spontaneity and responsibility, as they have acted in the concrete social world” (p. 19).

With its central focus on stories, narrative reports often involve “telling stories using a variety of ways involving re-storying, theorizing, and narrative segments” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 106). For example, a narrative researcher might re-story a field text in a way which reorders events chronologically, even though the story might not have been told sequentially to allow readers to “vicariously experience the reality of the text” (Kim, 2016, p. 109). Saldaña (2016) says the following about the narrative research report: “The write-up requires rich descriptive detail and a three-dimensional rendering of the participant’s life, with emphasis on how participant transformation progresses through time. The ultimate goal is to create a standalone story as research representation” (p. 157).

Narrative researchers often employ creative writing strategies for conveying a sense of verisimilitude. Creative writing serves to make research findings accessible for academic and non-academic audiences alike; this speaks to one of our shared goals of offering an authentic and accessible counternarrative to the predominant narrative of Afghan women which is largely based on stereotypes rather than actual interviews with Afghan women.

Faulkner (2018) argues that the turn to poetry is fitting for feminist research projects because it highlights “a means of doing, showing, and teaching embodiment and reflexivity, a way to refuse the mind-body dialectic, a form of feminist ethnography, and a catalyst for social agitation and change” (p. 1). The decision to represent the findings in this study through a poetic re-storying is intricately linked to the postcolonial feminist and decolonizing underpinnings of this study, which seek to recognize and honor epistemic authority and majority world knowledge and literacy practices.

As Cutts and Waters (2019) note, “While all research is the interpretation of one voice through yet another voice, poetic inquiry offers the opportunity for participants to truly speak for

themselves” (p. 145). Creating a poetic re-storying which strategically incorporates carefully selected research data excerpts in Parvana’s own words pushes against “Western knowledge and privileged ways of knowing” which serve to marginalize majority world epistemologies (Mutua & Swadener, 2004, p. 9). Poetry offers a non-traditional approach to knowledge production and is “concerned with producing situated and partial knowledge, accessing subjugated voices, decentering authority, and paying attention to the discursive practices that shape experience and our articulation of the human experience” (Leavy, 2015, p. 79).

Byrne (2017) argues that some researchers employ poetic re-storying techniques to represent research findings “as a means to evoke the participants' experience whilst making the author's influence explicit; here, it is argued that poetry can be utilized to provide a fuller representation of the research, placing the voice of the participants, the researcher and the literature on an equal level within the whole story of the research project” (p. 36). In other words, by carefully selecting key passages and excerpts from the original research data and linking them to research questions, data analysis, and findings, I am aiming to highlight and honor Parvana’s authentic experiences in her own words through the creative and accessible interpretive form of poetry.

Leavy (2015) recognizes the potential in poetry for dislodging more conventional renderings of research findings:

Poems, surrounded by space and weighted by silence, break through the noise to present an essence. Sensory scenes created with skillfully placed words and purposeful pauses, poems push feelings to the forefront, capturing heightened moments of social reality as if under a magnifying glass (p. 77).

As Leavy (2015) notes in the preceding passage, poetic rendering of the findings has the potential to “break through the noise” while honoring participants’ epistemic authority through careful attention to noteworthy speech patterns, pauses, lexical choices, or thematic elements that emerge during data analysis. The intentional use of space and punctuation, such as line breaks, strategic spacing, or italics, further allows researchers and participants to draw attention to particular moments in participants’ lived experiences, epiphanies, or changing notions of self.

In addition to honoring Parvana’s lived experiences in her own words, a poetic re-storying also offered a possibility to “provoke emotional engagement and human connection between the author; the person being represented, and the audience” (Leavy, 2015, p. 92). As Saldaña and Omashta (2018) note, “The elegant, carefully selected content and form of poetry can generate emotional and aesthetic response from readers and listeners. In a way, poetry achieves the same goal of phenomenology—to capture the essence and essentials of the meanings of lived experiences” (p. 300).

Finally, incorporating poetic re-storying into data analysis allowed us to engage in “aesthetic play” or “flirtation” with the data, which invited us to explore the data with an open and curious mind as we worked towards deeper understanding (Kim, 2016, p. 187).

For the poetic re-storying in this project, I selected original text from across all data sources to highlight Parvana’s stories and data analysis results. I then iteratively worked towards creating a poetic rendering by linking carefully selected words, phrases, and passages from the data in aesthetic and meaningful ways. The resulting standalone poetic story is divided into three main sections to capture key moments which have shaped who Parvana is today. Interwoven throughout those larger life stories are smaller snapshots from her daily life which highlight the nuances, complications, and tensions from her life, as well as the multiple literacy practices she

utilizes to navigate daily life. The table below illustrates the conceptual organization of the poetic re-storying:

Figure 20: Conceptual organization of poetic re-storying

Research Questions	#1 What key moments have shaped the life of a young Afghan woman?	#2 What nuances, complications, and tensions do her storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan reveal?	#3 What do her stories reveal about her multiple literacy practices for navigating daily life?
Findings	#1 Key moments in the life of a young girl in a conservative city in Afghanistan. #2: Complexities of life at the university in Kabul. #3 Navigating work life during and after university in Kabul	Navigating social expectations for women; personal epiphanies; creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting; navigating family complexities; managing complex feelings; and reflections of self over time.	Nuanced multiple literacy strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting in the face of precarity; for finding peace and calm; for memorializing her experiences; for documenting her life; and for bearing witness.

To lead readers from the more academic tone and register of the first few chapters of this dissertation into the more aesthetic presentation of the following chapter, I offer a sample from the poetic re-storying which demonstrates the power of poetic re-storying for representing Parvana’s lived experience in her own words. This particular section illustrates stories of Parvana’s artifactual literacies in relationship to her earbuds. To craft this section, I reviewed and selected key excerpts from the data sources which highlighted Parvana’s relationship to her earbuds. I then met with Parvana to talk about what I had noticed and if my observations matched how she felt about her earbuds. After discussing and rearranging key excerpts collaboratively, we settled on the following poetic re-storying which reveals how Parvana’s earbuds have taught her strategies for protecting herself and for navigating the challenges of daily life; additionally, they have been her friend, companion, and a source of comfort

throughout her life. The poetic representation highlights Parvana's own words while also allowing readers to explore Parvana's story creatively.

Our friendship is years old...

I was twelve years old...
when I started using earphones.

This little device—MP3
I would connect it to the laptop
copy and paste songs in it.

I would ask my mom a lot,
encourage her,
beg her to buy me one.
We didn't have that much money.

I couldn't sleep without my earphones.
I could never sleep without my earphones.
That was it. I couldn't sleep.

Then my mom or dad,
when I would fall asleep,
they would come and take it out of my ears.

That's how it started...

Later, at the university...
I had no friends—no close friends.
All I had was music in my ears.

At the most difficult times, they have helped me...
listen to words of singers privately.
They help me nights inside the dorm
...but also outside on the street.

They make me feel protected.
I can listen to my music
...anytime.
I can listen to messages
...privately.

They taught me...
To ignore harassment
a new way of handling harassment
...by ignoring it.

I always have them with me.
Our friendship is years old.
Earphones are my best friend...

The rest of the poetic re-storying chapter followed a similar process. Once I completed a draft of the entire poetic re-storying chapter, Parvana reviewed everything on her own a few times and made some notes. Then we reviewed everything together, carefully making changes, deletions, and additions wherever necessary. Parvana offered many insightful suggestions at this time about formatting, titles, and content. During our chat, she also commented on the powerful potential of poetic re-storying for capturing the authenticity lived experience:

P: I mean the other great thing about this is its authenticity and how true each and everything about this piece is. I think that makes it even more powerful because there is nothing that is made up or is just said out of nowhere.

When we were finishing the review, I was curious to know what Parvana thought about poetic re-storying as an approach to representing the findings and how she had felt while reading and reflecting on the poetic re-storying. Her response reaffirmed my conviction that a poetic representation of the findings was the most fitting and powerful way to honor and share Parvana's story.

P: I think it wouldn't have been explained this well if you had chosen another form other than poetry. I think it is the best fit for the story. ... It takes you to the different times back and forth, like the character, and personally for me. It really shows how much a person has transformed. I mean always. It represents a lot, a lot, a lot about a person. ... It's the story of so many Afghan women—what they go through, but they are usually not represented in such an ordered and great way. ... I love it. I scrolled over it a lot since you have sent it. I'm scrolling over it and reading it. It's quite powerful.

To sum up, in this chapter I have followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) procedures guiding a research study, including "qualitative research approach used, ... data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, strategies for validating findings, proposed narrative structure of the study, and anticipated ethical issues" (p. 59). I discussed my rationale for choosing a single subject study, my procedures for obtaining participant participation, and additional relevant background information about Afghanistan and the current situation facing Afghan women.

Chapter 4 offers a poetic re-storying which presents Parvana's story in Parvana's own words through carefully selected and strategically arranged excerpts from the research data. The resulting "standalone story as research representation" shows "how participant transformation progresses through time" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 157). In addition to offering us a way to honor Parvana's lived experiences authentically by using her own words to present the findings, the poetic re-storying also offered a possibility to "provoke emotional engagement and human connection between the author; the person being represented, and the audience" (Leavy, 2015, p. 92). This allows us to create a sense of verisimilitude "by creating good stories that are lifelike" (Kim, 2016, p. 10).

Chapter 4: A Poetic Re-Storying

4.1 Poetic Reflections

“I love Rumi!!!
His poems remind me so much
of everything happens in my life.
They give me hope!” ~Parvana

“I love this from Rumi!
As it delivers the message to dream big!
and not limit ourselves.” ~Parvana

“Stop acting so small.
You are the entire universe in ecstatic motion.”
~ Rumi

”دیگر خیلی کوچک عمل نکنید. شما در حرکت وجدانی جهان هستید” – رومی



“Most of us, especially the women
have been set a standard by society
that tells them they cannot do certain things
and it reminds me of my journey.
I was influenced by that as jumping into a company with IT!” ~Parvana

Part I. Afghan family and childhood

My dad

My mom

My relatives

I had forgotten I was a girl

Our friendship is years old

A good example

A typical Afghan thing

That's what you are told when you are a child

It's very rare to find

Part II. There are many reasons you should live

University

After the attack

You can do it

I started selling books!

Their pieces will live

A reader's happiness and excitement

Part III. I exist, and I have an idea...

I want to start a business in Afghanistan...

If I want to start a business...

I am a different me.

Part I. Afghan family and childhood

My dad

My dad has gone through a lot of struggles in his life.

All our parents in Afghanistan have gone through a lot,
but they're still not as open as my dad.

When his father passed away, he left to Pakistan.

I guess maybe it's the impact of that experience.

Over there, he was exposed to this environment.

He was very young when he left.

So maybe it's that?

My dad came from very, very difficult background.

They were very poor.

They are still poor.

My uncles.

My dad's family.

My mom's family.

Both of them are very, very poor.

They cannot even have education.

He did not have these opportunities when he was a kid.

He sometimes tells the stories of himself back in the village.

He always had this interest to get educated, to learn English.

He would walk barefeet to his English course.

For two hours

in the sun

while having no shoes.

He didn't have enough money to pay for transportation.

He says,

“I would live with the sheeps in their place
and then study to the light of the moon.”

He took some diplomas in English

but never had a degree from the university.

He was so busy investing in us, earning for us.

He didn't want what *he* went through to repeat for us as well.

My mom

My mom never went to school,

but I always found her a very strong character.

She was always being so brave.

Outside or inside the home.

In the Afghan context,

women always stay at home,

especially when they are not educated.

Just to

cook,

wash,

clean.

These are the defined choices for them.

But she has always gone outside and brought whatever the needs of our homes were.

Home chores was considered as her main job,

She was doing that,

but also those things that were on the outside.

If something was not working in the home, for example,

she would call the electrician herself.

She would be there *until it was fixed*.

Usually in the Afghan families, probably there's

an elder brother, and he takes care of everything,

but it was always the other way for us.

Me and my sister.

My relatives

They're no different from typical Afghans.

They want their women to be covered.

Their women do not go to schools.

My relatives do not have a female graduate yet.

A school graduate.

Me and my sister was the only school graduates in our entire family.

They don't allow them to be the decision makers of the family or to take care of everything.

They take all that power.

But in our family, it was always the other way.

My mom had all the power to make the decisions.

My father was always earning money away from home,

so my mom had to go to the bazaar herself,

to bring all the groceries,

to shop for us,

to take care of me and my siblings.

My mom had a huge role.

Although she was uneducated,

She took great care of us.

She made sure

that we received everything,

that we studied,

that we are taken good care of.

Your dad's away,

you do not have big brother at home,

but she always handled it very well.

That is very powerful.

Being uneducated

but taking care of the family,

it's not easy thing.

That is not the usual look of women in Afghanistan.

I think the greatest of all things is patience and how kind she is.

When they...

eat,

leave their leftovers on the floor,

go up,

ignore it,

let mom pick it up for them.

That's not me.

I don't have patience with my brothers.

I would...

get into fight,

shout,

scream,

even cry.

It has been 22 years that I have been growing.

She has been there picking up after us.

But she never tells anything to my brothers.

Like *anything*.

They could ruin a whole room,

and she would go and pick up after them.

Which shows me a lot of patience,
and something unique about her,
that I don't think I would ever have.

Patience for me is staying calm.

I can't really stay calm.

I had forgotten I was a girl...

When I was 10 years old...

Because we were the eldest,
my dad *forced* me and my sister
to work in the television at children's club
where we would
visit schools,
interview children,
play games with them,
hear about their future goals.

We were talking to students about their dreams,
so that we could show it to other kids and
entertain them at the same time.
Show them the commitment—
the *importance* of education to other parents or students
who were watching us through the TV.

Although I was ten,
I had to face the camera.
But it wasn't only the camera that I had to face.

I had to face so many people who were watching me.

In one of the most conservative parts of Afghanistan.

I did not think that I would get so much reaction while being *ten*,

I could not realize this bitter truth for a year.

But slowly I could feel the reaction from people—

the talks behind my back.

I had forgotten that I was a *girl*.

Showing up as a girl on TV was just not acceptable for them.

Living in a conservative city,

whatever age you are,

even if you are six years old or seven years old,

it is very difficult.

When you go outside,

without a scarf,

without covering your face that time,

you were labelled as an infidel.

As a bad girl who's up to doing some very bad things.

I had forgotten I was a girl.

I never knew that it would affect me this much.

Every day the harassment cases and these things were there,

People will be against me as a girl doing something.

I was going every day to the school,

but I was harassed.

I was thinking, OK, this is a *habit* of people.

When I came, and showed up on television,

I realized one thing.

These people cannot see a girl...
to talk for rights,
to just inspire other people,
to be independent,
to be so *strong*.

They really cannot see it.

They will do everything...
to degrade you,
to defame you,
Every possible way they can.

I had forgotten really that I was girl.
I was excited.
I wanted to learn something.
I wanted to learn about people,

I really was mistaken that people would really
listen to me,
love me.

They did not really want that.
Most people—even the women—
did not like another girl or me to appear on TV
because it looks like defamation to them.
It looks very negative to them.

Every Thursday when we were going to these schools,
and we would request to talk to the

ten,
eleven,
twelve years old girls...

They weren't ready to come in front of the camera,
they were hiding their faces.
It was very difficult.

I never knew that it would affect me this much.

I remember one evening.
I was sitting with my dad.
I was crying.
I said,

"I don't want to go anymore there. I don't want to work on TV and show up.
People are really bad here. They really don't want me to do that."

He tried to encourage me,
but I really could not accept it
because of the society and every day's reaction that I would get.
People saying they were thinking me as
very bad while working in a TV.

Although it was an *educational* program,
they thought it very bad
because there were other girls appearing on TV.
Usually, this concept of the girl
coming in front of a camera
is just very negative in people's mind.
They label you as a 'bad girl' if you show up...

Slowly it made me to give up what I was doing...
I took all of those things for one and a half years,
but then I had to back up because I could not really do that.

But one thing that it *taught* me was...

I will give it a break.

I wasn't *really* losing it

because this was *my dream* to become a journalist one day...

Tell the stories. *Everybody* has a story.

That's what we were aiming to show...

the story of every young kid

--whether it's male or whether it's a female.

We were just trying to show that.

I really could not give up on it.

I had this commitment that one day when I grow up,

I will be able to fight.

I will be able to have the courage.

I will be standing on my feet.

.... and I will fight back to get to where I started.

Our friendship is years old...

I was twelve years old...

when I started using earphones.

This little device—MP3

I would connect it to the laptop

copy and paste songs in it.

I would ask my mom a lot,
encourage her,
beg her to buy me one.
We didn't have that much money.

I couldn't sleep without my earphones.
I could never sleep without my earphones.
That was it. I couldn't sleep.

Then my mom or dad,
when I would fall asleep,
they would come and take it out of my ears.

That's how it started...

Later, at the university...

I had no friends—no close friends.
All I had was music in my ears.

At the most difficult times, they have helped me...
listen to words of singers privately.
They help me nights inside the dorm
...but also outside on the street.

They make me feel protected.
I can listen to my music
...anytime.
I can listen to messages
...privately.

They taught me...
To ignore harassment
a new way of handling harassment
...by ignoring it.

I always have them with me.
Our friendship is years old.
Earphones are my best friend...

A good example...

My mother was a good example.
I remember how my mom slapped a man in the bus
while he was jabbing her on her shoulder from the back seat.

My family had always taught me to defend back.
One day, a man, a *stranger* was sitting
a few meters away from my school.

He had his phone in hand,
taking pictures of the school girls.
All the girls ignored him,
covering their faces or walked pass him fast.

As I, my sister and four friends arrived,
I could not digest it.

We approached to the boy.
Asked to show him his phone.
He denied.
We surrounded him in a circle.

I slapped the boy on the back of his newly shaved head.
The intensity of the slap left my hand numb.

A friend snatched his phone
and hit it from the ground.
Stepped on it to break it.

It was our luck that police car was passing by.
The police officer hit the boy murmuring in anger
“you are chasing girls”
and took him in the car.

The memories of it always brought a smile on my face.

A typical Afghan thing

Until the age 13,

I spent my whole childhood, from the age I was born until 13
studying English because I was always around it by
my dad’s institute and students and the classes,
but it was very difficult for me to learn English.

I really couldn’t do it until the age of 13.
I had a lot of difficulties.
I was told so by family—
I was the child who was *lazy* in the studies.
I kind of struggled a lot with that.
It was quite a toxic environment, to be honest.

It comes from family that we have to...
look for opportunity,
grab them,

become one step ahead.

I have grown up in a family
where there is a lot of competition between us siblings.
That's what we were trained as kids.
My dad would force us a lot.

I can speak both Dari and Pashto.
There are so many people who cannot do that,
My dad would...
 encourage us,
 tell us,
 make us write essays in Dari and Pashto.

He would always do this continuous test. *Always*.

When we would have guests at our home,
my dad would call us to the guest room,
and then ask the guests to take an exam from us.

He would test our knowledge by tests!
And this is all from childhood and family influence.
It was very stressful!

So there was a comparison actually between me and my sister.
We were the eldest, and my parents would always do a comparison,

She was way better than me.

 She could get it.
 She could talk.
 She could learn.

She was *better* at school.

It felt difficult because you were constantly compared.

I wouldn't be hard on myself if I wasn't put in that situation.

This is a typical Afghan thing that happens in most families.

A lot of Afghan dads doesn't notice that.

This competition that they create unintentionally is very destructing for a child.

I have friends who are in depression because of this competition.

It's not only in studies but in everything else.

They say,

“Oh, your cousin got married, you're still sitting unmarried.”

Or they watched someone successful on TV.

“Oh, look at them, they have reached what you are doing.”

Probably he doesn't notice that.

Now if he says something,

we don't allow him because we are grown now.

Or we tell him that you shouldn't be doing this.

Because now we have a power over him.

We all worked so hard all these years during our university times,

and you don't have the right to tell us or compare us with someone else.

Or even each one of us has our own ways now.

People wouldn't understand the power of education

until you are put into different situations.

They wouldn't understand the power of being financially good

until you are put in this situation.

They always have these arguments.
My dad always tells my mom
that you are trying to create a bad or negative image
in my children's minds,
so they have these little arguments among themselves.
Mom tells us to not listen to him.
She always encourages us.

That's what you are told when you are a child

Until I was 14 years old

I wanted to be a doctor until I was 14 years old
because that's what you are told when you are a child.
That's what most children in Afghanistan want to do.
They want to become a teacher, or they want to become a doctor.

Especially the female.

Teacher because they think it's an appropriate profession
for a woman, a girl, a female.

When I say teacher,
it's you being a teacher in a girls' school
where they are no boys allowed,
like after age 7, they are not allowed.

That's what is imprinted in your mind.

It's very rare to find

I was sixteen years old...

My dad always *encouraged* us to help him in his works.

Being fifteen or sixteen,
being in a conservative city,
having a dad who asks you to help him in his work...

It's rare to find. It's very, very rare to find.

Dads, the men, the big brothers...
they will never ask the women in the family
to help them in their business or in their work.

That's not how they see women—
just learn read and write,
sit in the corner of the home,
accept everything.

But in *my* family,
my dad forced us
to work with him from an early age,
to be exposed to emails,
to how he works,
to learn from him.

Part II. There are many reasons you should live...

University

When I got the scholarship—a *full* scholarship,
it changed a lot for me.

I could continue my studies.

It was a key moment—a very positive moment.

I don't know what would God's plan be at that time,
but I can say that it would have been a *huge* difference.

If I had graduated and not received the scholarship,
I wouldn't be in Kabul.

I would probably stay in the provinces.

Start with a private university.

Those are very limited.

They do not give you the opportunity
to expand yourself,
to think what's ahead.

When I was in the provinces,

I was just

going to school,
memorizing books.

At the end of the day,

I had forgotten everything
I had memorized for an exam.
I did not have new challenges to welcome.

If you study in a government school in provinces,
The teachers are not very good.

You only learn how to read and write
until even the twelfth grade.

You are not aware of sciences.

All you do is...

history,

geography,

memorize stuff.

But when I came to Kabul,

I saw people of my age—I saw girls of my age,

I felt like they were a lot more grown than me.

They knew a lot more than me.

At the same time, I was thankful

because I grew up in my dad's institute

and an English environment and always exposed to...

computer technology and English language.

That was a good thing for me, but it wasn't enough.

I was quite young,

and then I had to move away from my family.

And then...

having the scholarship,

living by yourself,

thinking of not only

studying and

living far away from family,

but also supporting yourself.

I started thinking, ok, what can I do?

That's how it started
with the teacher assistantships at the university
which wasn't a lot of money,
but it was a huge thing for me
because I could pay for my stuff.

My university journey made me to dig.
There are opportunities.
It made me dig and dig.

Grab things!

One
by
one.

I realized when I came to Kabul,
living alone here by myself and settling.
Have courage towards yourself.
Take a step and embrace them.

An unexpected rupture.
An attack that ended in life or death for so many.
Somehow, I survived.

No words can describe the cruelty of that night.

After the attack...

We were on break
for almost eight months or around seven months,
and after the attack happened—
I was living all alone in Kabul.
I did not want to go back to the provinces...

I wanted to *do* something.
I could see no future while staying in the provinces.
I could see that there are many barriers.
There are no opportunities for me to go there and work
compared to the opportunities that I could get here in Kabul.

I wanted...
to work on myself and
build myself and then when I build myself,

I can in the future...
bring that to the provinces and
build other people.

After the attack...

I applied for a journalism training program...

It has been my dream since I was 13.
I submitted my applications to them.
I have worked, and I told them that I want to work.
I want to tell more stories.

Although I was going under a lot of pressure after the attack,

I did not want it to stop me from what my goal is
because I thought even if I stayed at home for seven months and do nothing,
it will affect me more...

It's better to
go out,
talk to people,
present more stories,
speak on behalf of other women,
tell people that...

Living matters in Afghanistan for a woman.

I joined the journalism training program,
and I received the training,
and I decided to write.

We published the stories.
I was thinking about *each and every woman*
that lives in the provinces
who has dreams,
who wants to achieve them,
but they don't have opportunities
or they're not allowed...

Whenever I was doing it in Kabul,
I could not forget the provinces.

Sometimes you may lose it.
Sometimes there may be barriers in it.

You have to fight them—fight to get those opportunities.

There are so many reasons in this world
that you should live.

I thought life—you should *live*.

After the attack...

I was so pressured.

I also wanted to have some peace.

I decided to go to a music class
because this was the only thing
that could distract my mind for a while.

I attended music classes.

I started learning guitar
at the National Institute of Music.

I was going every morning.

I was going there every day.

There were people playing the drums,
playing all the other instruments,
the violin—
so many instruments!
and this *whole building*,
there was some kind of beautiful noise.

Peace was coming from each room.

I started drawing.

This art that I started were the things that I wanted to distract my mind.

This is basically the life of an Afghan girl.
Many Afghan girls are wishing for this,
and there are already many Afghan girls that are living it.
So after all these things,
 besides learning music,
 getting that peace,
 there was something else
 that really made me very strong.

The stories of the girls
who were coming to the Institute of Music—
that inspired me also in a way,
made me very strong.

I wanted those stories to be heard also.

These girls who were attending this Institute
were runaways from home,
or their families did not want them,
and they were many of them were living in orphanages.

While studying music there,
I was also working as a freelance journalist or translator
with foreigner journalists
who were visiting Afghanistan
who wanted to do stories on woman empowerment—

A journalist told me that she wanted to do a story,
and I told her, "This is the story that you can work on."

We spent two weeks with these girls in their orphanage

and followed them every day
to the school that they were going to.

We were basically like family members with them
sitting and seeing all the problems that they were going through,
and that really made me realize
that there is a lot to work for in this country.

There's a lot of fight still remaining.
It's never ending, and it takes time.
This is one thing I realize.
It takes time.

You can do it

When I was back at the university...

I was sitting in the class,
and I received a message
from the president of a consulting firm.

He told me,

"I want you to work with me."

He approached me.

It wasn't that *I* was approaching,
that *I* was applying.
It wasn't that case.

He approached *me*.

He told me,

"I want you to work with me as a business development officer, do you agree?"

"You have time to think about it!"

He told me,

"You can do it."

And still I told him,

"I have worked as a journalist,
I have worked with my dad
training and teaching other girls,
mentoring other girls,
but what you are asking me for is *a lot!*"

"It is proposal writing,
it is meeting with the clients,
it is *talking to people!*
To the owners of companies
and encouraging them to be clients with you!"

And he told me,

"You can do it."

I wanted to give it a try.

I told him,

"I will come and join,
and I will evaluate myself in the first three months,

and I want to see if I really have the potential to do it."

I myself did not realize that I have that potential...

One thing that I learn now
is that you have to give it a try
to understand you have the potential or not.

When I started working with the IT company,
I realized that I have potential.

Although my field is business, I joined IT.
I wanted to tell the people that every person –
each and every person—
has to see the potential that they have.

That they can switch—that it is not only one major
that they can be the expert in.
That there is a lot of learning required in other fields, too.
That they can have the potential,
but it needs
hard work,
full commitment,
time.

You have to give it a try.

If you fail,
you will learn.

If you do not fail,
then you succeed!

So I started working with him, and
slowly,

slowly,

I got it.

After four months, he told me,

"I want to give you a promotion."

And I was like,

"What kind of promotion?"

And he told me,

"I want you to be the Chief Executive Officer of the company.

I saw the commitment,

I saw you can do it.

I saw you trying,

I saw you managing everything very well."

You worked with me closely day and night,

and I really saw the potential in you.

You did not only work on proposal writing,

but you managed everything else.

You attended meetings with me,

and all the other things."

I wasn't ready for it.

First, I said...

“I have to think about it.”

Then I thought about it...
for just a few hours...

I don't know what's inside me... I don't know.

I'm this kind of person...
When an opportunity is thrown at me...
I take it!

That's what happened with me being titled as CEO.

I was, like,

“OK! I am ready for it!

And then I accepted it!
So now I am working as the
Chief Executive Officer at an IT company,
and I have learned so much about IT.

Every day I am meeting the owners or presidents of other companies,
big wig companies in Afghanistan
and doing this thing that I was afraid of before,
encouraging them to be clients with us and
seeing them being inspired of having

a girl

as the Chief Executive Officer of the company
is like blowing their mind!

It's very rare in Afghanistan!

And then when they know about your story and background,
they're like *WHOA*.

Because I was CEO...

I was forced in a *positive* way...

to go to meetings,

to meet new people,

to learn a lot of things,

to take a step further,

to know the business community,

to talk to the business people,

to think of my own business.

It built my network!

While it was building me,

it was giving me ideas...

I started selling books!

Being exposed to hundreds of books—

different genres on daily basis—

is being exposed to a garden filled with different kinds of fruits!

Although I haven't traveled a lot,

when I read it takes me to a lot of places.

It introduces me to a lot of characters.

With so many books that I read,

I try to relate myself.

I always find so much similarities with the characters in it.
The books I have read,
especially the novels,
I relate at least in one place of the page.

I was reading this book,
and I kind of felt like my story,
my *life* is rewritten.

My life has passed,
but it's rewritten in the same words,
through things I have gone through.

Rumi's Daughter transformed me.
It did really transform me.
Before reading this book,
prayer was just words.

Now I feel it.
It is calming.
I put my trust in it.

You have to put your trust in it.

Their pieces will live

Afghanistan lost some many famous writers the previous 2020 year

I went to these traditional bookstores
that are in Kabul from 20 or 30 years ago.

I was sitting with the shopkeepers and some writers,

and asked them a question:

“So many writers are dying...
Do you think the writing culture is dying with it?”

And they were saying,

“It doesn't matter if they die.
No matter whatever time passes by.
Their pieces will live hundreds
or thousands of years from now.
What is left on the book and the literature, it's always there.”

A reader's happiness and excitement

What is satisfying is reader's happiness and excitement
for the books they have always wished for.

Although there is a responsible person
to stay in touch with customers on social media platforms,
I myself always sneak in
because it feels good to communicate even one good word
with a person that become a reason for their smile.

While it can also be extremely hectic
satisfying every customer,
it itself is a great lesson of maintaining patience being criticized.

Part III. I exist, and I have this idea...

I want to start a business in Afghanistan...

I want to establish my own business.

My long-term goals are definitely
having my own clothing brand.

I want to start in Afghanistan,
but I don't want to limit only to Afghanistan.
Also outside Afghanistan,
like deliveries or whatever,
to create a brand that is famous.

All around the world.

Here in Afghanistan
casual wear is imported from other countries.
They are not made based on Afghan culture...
on what this society really is.

Our Afghan businessmen or these shopkeepers,
whoever are importing these clothes,
they have to buy what is available in the market.
They just want to do their business.
They do not really care
about how it *should* be.

Even buying a shirt that will not have sleeves...
You want to show how that shirt really looks,
but women cannot wear sleeveless.
You have to wear something

that covers the real look of the shirt you are buying.
It will be hidden.

At the same time, you will buy something else
that is long enough that it can cover your body,
but then even if the second cover that you buy will not fully cover you,
then people will again criticize you for what you are doing.

Like my friend, if she's wearing a little bit short,
and I'm wearing a little bit long,
then people's eyes will catch her more than me.
Whenever I go with her and sometimes people comment,
although it's none of their business.

She is like,

“Why is your Islam so weak?

Why are you so weak that you get distracted by my clothing?”

She initially gets into this verbal fight with them.
At the end of the day, she is the one who is feeling bad again.
Because she cannot take the
everyday comments,
everyday catcalls that you have to face
every day.

Men do not care.
They will probably
just forget in those few seconds, but
she is affected at the end of the day.

It's our everyday thought.

When you buy stuff in the market,
either they are too short for me to wear,
so I have to buy another thing to wear with it.
I buy two things, and it becomes costly.

If I could buy one...

That would be half the cost.

That would be appropriate.

These are the problems that exist always
when you buy stuff in the market.

Casual wear?

Trend in Afghanistan?

Fashion in Afghanistan?

Industry in Afghanistan?

No. The market is not good at all.

Being involved with these ladies who complain
about this thing—
not finding the right kind of needs that they want.
I can feel through our conversation
what their needs are really.

I mean, it's tough.

It drives you to bring social justice in society.

Being as a citizen of Afghanistan,

I feel like *I* am responsible to bring this.

And I see my other friend is *also* responsible for it.

All of us are responsible for it.

If we don't, then *who* brings them?

It's Afghanistan.

Whether it's a war-torn country or however people see it,
but this country's people also care about trend and fashion.

This is the world of technology.

They see other people, other countries.

They also want to wear stuff that are trendy.

People are getting updated.

People are watching the world.

They want to be updated, too.

I watch all these countries.

I watch it through the Pinterest for my designs for my clothing,

I usually use Pakistan, like their clothing designs,

This clothing, the culture—

they are like the same.

But then I'm trying to put it into an Afghan type

—give it an *Afghan* touch.

What I have to do is always buy cloth.

I am designing all my clothes myself
and giving it to a tailor to make them for me.

The people inside the university

—I have heard a lot from them that they like them.

What I, what my dress, looks like,

—the design—they like it.

People want something like this.
This gives me an idea of people's needs,
so that's why I came up with this idea.

Rather than importing clothes from another brand from a country,
why not have something of our own?

I am thinking of having my own clothing brand.
Because being myself as the customer
and going to the market always,
I feel like there is still a greater need.
That a lot of things should change.
The clothes these people give.
They import it from other countries,
and they spend a lot of money.

Our people are talented.

They have the skills.

We have got the labor.

We have got the machines.

We have got all the capabilities.

Then why not just do it?

I talked about it with a male friend of mine one day.
He already had experience importing the cloth
from Iran and Pakistan.
I shared this idea with him.

He was like,

“It’s much better to have something of your own to work on.

I would love to become your partner
if you want to proceed with this.”

I was also thinking to find some contacts
in the embassy and the Chemonics and USAID,
so that I can take this idea into their brain first.

They support women who have business ideas, and they

financially

support

them

with grants.

I *exist* and I have this *idea*
and can share it with them and
see what their thoughts are.

If I want to start a business...

Being the CEO of an IT company right now
has given me this idea
that I have to know something
before I enter the market.

I don’t want to always rely on the tailors.

Of course, the tailors will proceed with all their tailoring stuff,

but I should be able to at least do something.

Because people here in Afghanistan,
especially if they are men,
they will try to
minimize you,
smash you in any way they can,
take your weak point.

You have to consider *everything* when you are in Afghanistan
if you want to start a company in the market with all these men.

Living in a conservative city,
seeing the women going through the struggles,
I always wanted to do something in the gender studies as well.
Even when I started writing for international journals,
my main focus was tackling the issues that women face.

It's not only one specific gender that brings equality.
I don't want only women to be involved,
I want both these genders to come together and help each other.
This idea should not only minimize harassment,
but at the same time change people's mentalities
about men and women working together.

At the end of the day, both should...
sit on the same table,
talk about it,
work it out,
face one another,
work together,
appreciate one another.

They should not judge one another.

While both have the same talent,
how different they are seen and treated is not totally fair.
They should experience it,
so they can know what's really wrong,
and they can identify where the gaps are and how they can fill them.

Things that every day teach me...

Every day when I go to office,
even inside the university every day,
I do hear a lot of things...

I'm catcalled,
they are bullying,
they are harassing.
They will do anything to break you down.

This is an everyday fight that every girl is fighting *every day*.
Everything that you can expect as a girl
when you go out into this community
and stand as a strong person.

Sometimes when I see these stories,
and I see that if these girls with no opportunities,
I mean, first looking at the provinces
and girls were coming in burqas or hijabs
to attend the institute
and seeing their commitment to learn something...

These are all things that inspire me.

I mean they fight every day,
so why shouldn't I fight, too?

I'm not fighting only for myself,
but I really want to make a difference and bring a difference.

So these things in life...

They all taught me...

to recognize to find myself,

to be strong,

to share stories,

to listen to the stories,

to inspire others,

to work closely with people,

to love each other,

to peacefully live with one another.

I am a different me

When I was ten...

I wouldn't think about improving other lives,
Or having the idea of improving other women's lives.
I mean I wanted it, but I really could not figure it out.

Most of the time I would forget even thinking about myself,
so how would I think about other women?

Harassment was there. I told you.

Although I was ten—even smaller—

I was being harassed by the men in the streets,

and even men who followed me to home and brought me letters.

Wrote me letters and slipped it inside my house's door.

That time I was so scared,

And I thought I did not have a voice to speak.

I thought it is a shame to talk about it.

To really care for yourself.

To really think about what you really want to be yourself.

To have that freedom of walking in a street.

I could not talk to anyone about it.

Society influences you in a way that you forget who you really are.

You don't get that feeling from nowhere.

People do not tell you, you should have a purpose in life.

They will try to take that purpose from you even if you have it,

but they would never encourage you to have it.

Today...

I can say I am a different me—a totally different person.

Today who I am is I think how to improve.

I think what changes to bring, which ways to choose, which differences to bring.

Today when I see something, I fight back.

I do not remain calm even if it gets to physical fight.

I have done that with men a lot in the bazaars

although there's a huge threat to doing that because these men can do anything to you.

But I do not back off.

I mean, what's the purpose in your life, your goal as a woman, as a human being?

I think I have a voice today,

And I think I can speak for others also.

I can totally see myself being very very very strong now.

So this is the different self that I think that I changed a lot.

A different *strong* me.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, reflections, and implications

5.1 Conclusion, reflections and implications

This dissertation project explored the unique life experiences and creative multiliteracy practices of Parvana, an Afghan research collaborator. In this final chapter, I will briefly review the three overarching research questions as they relate to the findings; offer final reflections on the project; and discuss potential implications for the field. Finally, I will close with some final reflections from Parvana.

The chart below summarizes the three overarching research questions as they relate to the findings:

Research Questions	#1 What key moments have shaped the life of a young Afghan woman?	#2 What nuances, complications, and tensions do her storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan reveal?	#3 What do her stories reveal about her multiple literacy practices for navigating daily life?
Findings	<p>#1 Key moments in the life of a young girl in a conservative city in Afghanistan.</p> <p>#2: Complexities of life at the university in Kabul.</p> <p>#3 Navigating work life during and after university in Kabul</p>	<p>Navigating social expectations for women; personal epiphanies; creating strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting; navigating family complexities; managing complex feelings; and reflections of self over time.</p>	<p>Nuanced multiple literacy strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting in the face of precarity; for finding peace and calm; for memorializing her experiences; for documenting her life; and for bearing witness.</p>

Research question #1 explores key moments which have shaped Parvana’s life. Analysis of the data and subsequent member checking revealed that key moments were loosely organized around three main ‘chapters’ in Parvana’s life, including events from her life as a young girl in a conservative city in Afghanistan; from her experiences at university in Kabul; and from her transition to professional life as a business leader in the broader Afghan community.

Within each of these three main chapters of her life, Parvana experienced key moments which reaffirmed or challenged her in startling ways and which have shaped and continue to shape her changing notions of self and agency. As a young girl in the provinces, for example, she faced jarring rejection and harassment when she joyfully reached out to Afghan children and families about the importance of education. At that time, she learned what it meant to be a girl in Afghanistan and felt she had no recourse and could not push back. Later, when she is a university student in Kabul, she develops courage and strategies for fighting and reflects on her changing self.

As Parvana orally narrated the story of her childhood, she recalled and reflected on what it felt like to be a ten-year-old girl with no sense of agency in Afghanistan. As she then compared her earlier self with her 21-year-old self, she told me she realized that she has changed dramatically; she is now a “different me,” a “different strong me,” “very very very strong” with “a voice today.” This small snippet from one conversation illustrates how individual storied understandings of life are constructed and reconstructed through changing experiences and the changing narratives available to us.

Research question #2 explored the nuances, complications, and tensions of Parvana’s storied experiences of everyday life as an Afghan woman living in Afghanistan. Some of the findings include how Parvana has developed and continues to develop creative strategies for navigating and resisting social expectations for women while maintaining a commitment to shaping a new future for herself and others. The findings also reveal how she reflects on complex family realities which have shown her both how her own family life can be fraught with challenges but also how uniquely supportive her family is compared to other Afghan families. Her stories also reveal how she struggles with complex emotions of frustration, anger,

depression, and anxiety, and how she continues to develop strategies for navigating complex feelings by turning to reading, writing, and prayer.

Research question #3 explored what Parvana's stories reveal about her multiliteracy practices for navigating daily life. Some of the findings include Parvana's range of multiliteracies, including the artifactual literacies that she utilizes in her daily life. Her artifactual literacies include nuanced uses for her earbuds, literature, writing, and casual clothing for women in Afghanistan. These artifactual literacies often embody nuanced strategies for coping, finding strength, resisting, and persisting in the face of precarity. Although she faces daily struggles as an Afghan woman, such as catcalls, harassment, and discrimination, for example, she relies on her earbuds to push back on unwelcome harassment but also to carve out private space for herself at the university, at work, and at home. She turns to literature, poetry, and writing to find peace and calm but also to memorialize her experiences, document her life, and bear witness to violence and survival strategies.

Kamler (2001) talks about the metaphor of "story, where the individual story (autobiography) is located/shaped by the cultural storylines that frame it" (p. 4). Parvana's stories, both the autobiographical ones that she skillfully writes as well as the stories that she shared in our interviews and conversations, are similarly shaped by the context of Afghanistan, Islam, and her everyday lived experiences as a woman in Afghanistan.

Her written stories are both an act of bearing witness and a testimony of life and death, where lived experience is embodied and visceral and reflected in rich sensory descriptions, metaphors, and synaesthesia of the senses. For example, she writes about ambulances and the darkness of night "witnessing violence," a bus engine breathing and letting out "a deep sigh, as

though it reminded itself of the heavy weight it had carried,” and clouds “blushing like a ripe mango.”

She writes stories that are spatially bounded while she deftly incorporates flashbacks to weave in memories that connect past and present experiences. She writes herself as “an embodied self—in moving across a terrain of landscapes, geographical relocations and scholarly terrains” (Kamler, 2001, p. 5).

This project revealed how individual storied understandings of life are constructed and reconstructed through changing experiences and the changing narratives available to us. A closer analysis of Parvana’s stories through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory while using a narrative inquiry approach and considering Parvana’s multiliteracy practices afforded us additional opportunities to explore the deeper meaning as well as the agency behind Parvana’s experiences. Scratching past the surface meaning of Parvana’s relationship to her earbuds, to reading and writing, and to clothing for Afghan women, for example, unearthed deeper realizations about Parvana’s struggles, agency, and desire to forge a better future for herself and others.

Reflections on the project

The decision to conduct this project with Parvana emerged from over seventeen years of collaborative work and relationship building with colleagues and friends in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The more I experienced and learned about the nuances and complexities of Central Asian cultures and Islam over the years, for example, the more troubled I became by persistent dissonance between what I was learning from my Central Asian colleagues and friends about their daily lived experiences and the monolithic and static reports I was reading in western news reports, such as the radicalized Muslim terrorist or the passive and oppressed

Afghan woman in need of saving (see, e.g., Chowdury, 2016; Cloud, 2004; Fowler, 2007; MacDonald, 2016; Rasul & McDowell, 2015; Terman, 2017).

In response to these monolithic and static reports and inspired by the creativity, persistence, and talents of my colleagues and friends in Central Asia, I yearned to find a way to challenge or dislodge common misperceptions in favor of more authentic accounts of lived experience. Parvana and I have spoken about this at length over the years, and our shared desire to offer a more realistic account of one Afghan woman's lived experiences was one of the most powerful driving forces behind this dissertation project.

This dissertation project is built upon strategies for cultivating transnational feminist collaborations which seek to decolonize the research process through shared knowledge production, cultural humility, and relationship building (Falcón, 2016). These strategies live in the very heart of our project, but our project offers a unique approach in that it focuses on the cultivation of a research collaboration which took shape, grew, and thrived entirely online. As we developed our project, we chose to view the online format not as a hindrance or disadvantage but as a powerful asset for our work. We acknowledged and welcomed the flexibility of the online format as an asset for cultivating an un-bordered collaboration where we worked together closely, shared experiences, and focused on our shared goals and solidarity. Viewing the online format as an opportunity and invitation to engage deeply and meaningfully opened windows for us to go beyond previous studies while also highlighting and honoring the deep connections between us.

In this project, we also moved beyond previous contributions to the field which focus either on Afghan women's writings published online or Afghan women's stories from diaspora populations (see, e.g., Rostami-Povi, 2007; Naghib, 2018). By exploring the storied experiences

of Parvana, one Afghan woman who has spent her entire life in Afghanistan, we were able to offer insights into Parvana's agency, persistence, and resistance for navigating daily life in Afghanistan. These insights reflect Parvana's authentic lived experiences and offer a powerful counter-story to the static image of Afghan women as without agency.

As is frequently the case with research, there were many unexpected challenges which emerged during this project, including those related to the ruptures and ravages inflicted by Covid-19 and caused by increased violence in Afghanistan; unpredictable power outages which sometimes made it impossible for us to connect online; and some personal and family difficulties which Parvana struggled with. These challenges created a shifting and destabilizing research landscape which required us both to sharpen our focus on patience, flexibility, and creativity. Being flexible and open to modifying elements of the project brought unexpected developments, including two stories which Parvana had written for a class and volunteered to share as well as a modified approach to interviews which focused on co-constructed conversations which led us to explore experiences which are "anchored in the daily lives of women" (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, p. xxxviii).

As we encountered unexpected challenges to our research plans, I found myself more intensively inhabiting and navigating "a space of un-knowing" (Perry, 2018, p. 9), or a space which allowed for "the unknown, unrepresented, and unpredicted into our spaces of collaboration and creation" (p. 9). By being flexible with the research process and accepting unknown and unexpected paths towards discovery, I was able to learn more about Parvana's multiliteracies and her close connections to her earbuds, to writing, and to poetry. By engaging in co-constructed conversation interviews, where conversations shifted and morphed spontaneously, I learned how Parvana turned to the novels *Rumi's Daughter* (Maufroy, 2005)

and *The Forty Rules of Love* (Shafak, 2011) to help her navigate difficult times in her life. Those conversations inspired me to read those novels for myself; after reading them, we engaged in lively book chats that taught me how the transformational power of reading led Parvana to a new relationship with prayer. Inhabiting a space of not knowing made it possible for me to meet Parvana in the middle with a more open heart and mind.

Throughout the project, Parvana and I engaged in “literacies of globality” (Perry, 2018, p. 1); we actively shared our different perspectives, contexts, and interpretations with each other throughout the research process and worked towards a “new collective space” (Perry, 2018, p. 6) for understanding each other’s perspectives more deeply.

As I reflected on ways to shift the focus from narratives *about* Afghan women to narratives *by* Afghan women, I made the unconventional decision to present the findings from the project in Parvana’s own words through poetic re-storying. This decision emerged from a desire to invite readers to “listen and learn rather than evaluate or rescue” (Mannon, 2018, p. 345) instead of relying on “previous knowledge of Afghan women and girls ... filtered through Western media narratives” (Mannon, 2018, p. 358).

The decision to turn to poetic re-storying was also informed by the postcolonial feminist and decolonizing underpinnings of this study which seek to recognize and honor epistemic authority and majority world knowledge and literacy practices; by casting the findings in poetry, for example, we were able to draw attention to Parvana’s strategies for constructing “detailed and deliberate images of [her] worlds” (Mannon, 2018, p. 346). This shift towards poetic re-storying focuses on Parvana’s epistemic authority and her full-fledged collaboration in the research project. With this shift, Parvana’s stories “remain unresolved and unsettling to the reader” (p. 348) and challenge readers to read closely and carefully in order to “see the world

that she [Parvana] actively, purposefully narratives” (p. 348). In other words, the findings are intended to activate the imagination and encourage the readers to see the world which Parvana inhabits and chooses to portray.

By framing the project with affordances offered by postcolonial feminism, narrative inquiry, and multiliteracies, this dissertation project revealed counter-narratives to monochromatic portrayals of Afghan women as silent and in need of saving. Findings offered unique insights into how Parvana identifies, navigates, and challenges gender-based oppression within the broader Afghan context. Her expertise about her own life experiences as well as the complexity and creativity of her multiliteracy practices in the face of precarity were highlighted and honored through a poetic re-storying of the findings in Parvana’s own words.

Potential implications for the field

The conceptual framework and findings in this study offer potentially useful strategies and insights for organizations which are interested in understanding and supporting Afghan women; invested in cultivating online transnational collaborative relationships; and committed to feminist projects which have the mutually shared goal of acknowledging and honoring authentic lived experiences.

By carefully recording and tracking the details of our transnational collaboration, we hope to offer guidance for future transnational research projects which recognize that cultural humility, curiosity, trust, and mutual respect are at the heart of meaningful collaboration. Despite recurring challenges with technology, access, availability, and even the unexpected and daunting prospect of continuing work during a pandemic, for example, we were able to continue our ongoing collaboration because of our deep commitment to working together across cultural and geographical boundaries. As we engaged in discussions about Parvana’s diverse lived

experiences, I consciously worked towards adopting a stance of cultural humility which equipped me with a “willingness to learn about another’s world through her self-representation rather than my prior frame of references and available narratives” (Mannon, 2018, p. 351). This stance helped me to imagine Parvana’s authentic world rather than a world that fit a preconceived notion of Afghan women and Afghanistan.

Additionally, this study offers a potentially valuable contribution for countering static monolithic images of Afghan women as silent and in need of saving. Based on this study and my own experience and interactions with Parvana and other Afghan women, I know that Parvana’s story and the stories of other Afghan women are much more nuanced than the dangerous “single story” (Adichie, 2009) about Afghan women so often seen in the news cycles. This project offers a possible model for other individuals or groups interested in exploring research approaches which aim to explore more nuanced versions of women’s lived experiences.

Over the course of this study, Parvana and I reviewed her life story interviews, the data analyses, and the poetic re-storying several times. We had several conversations about the trajectory of her life from a young girl who felt she had no voice to speak for herself or others to a young woman who is running a company, utilizing creative multiliteracy practices for navigating daily life, and developing a business plan to revolutionize the clothing market for women in Afghanistan. We have talked about milestones along the way and how Parvana has struggled, resisted, and persisted.

Data analysis revealed that Parvana’s context-specific narratives within Afghan society but also within the realities of working and collaborating internationally have contributed to her ability to develop “literacies of globality” (Perry, 2018, p. 1), or the “practices of sense making in fluid and inter-relational global contexts through the multiple texts of culture, language, place,

and materials that we navigate from our various positions on the globe” (p. 1). Within our own collaboration on this project, these “literacies of globality” have also allowed us to imagine each other’s contexts while engaging across our differences and exploring strategies for disrupting the monolithic stereotype of Afghan women as universally oppressed and without agency. In this project, we navigated towards a “new collective space” (Perry, 2018, p. 6) where we came together and exchanged stories over Skype or WhatsApp as we imagined and sought to understand each other’s contexts and experiences in “relevant, equitable, and globally responsible ways” (p. 6).

Since completing our collaborative work on this dissertation, Parvana and I have seamlessly moved into a new phase. We have continued our private book club and have been regularly reading and discussing works by Paolo Coelho, Khaled Hosseini, and others. As was the case during our earlier book chats, these new conversations have been leading us down many new paths paved with fresh discoveries about life, the world, each other, our families, and our ongoing friendship. As I complete this final chapter of my dissertation project, my thoughts, as always, return to my dear friend Parvana and our unlikely and amazing relationship across space and time. In closing, I would like to return to excerpts from the poetic re-storying in Chapter 4 which presents key moments from Parvana’s life stories as a woman in Afghanistan; her ability to find inspiration and strength through her own and others’ experiences and stories; and her commitment to making a difference while shaping a new future for herself and others:

An everyday fight

Every day I hear a lot of things. I’m catcalled. Even inside the university, they are bullying, they are harassing, there is everything that you can expect as a girl when you go

out into this community and stand as a strong person. They will do anything to break you down. This is an everyday fight that every girl is fighting every day.

Life! You should live!

There are so many reasons in this world that you should live. Sometimes you may lose it, sometimes there may be barriers in it, but you have to fight them.

Share stories

Sometimes when I see stories, and I see that if these girls with no opportunities, I mean, first looking at the provinces and girls were coming in burqas or hijabs to attend the institute and seeing their commitment to learn something, these are all things that inspire me. I mean they fight every day, so why shouldn't I fight, too? I'm not fighting only for myself, but I really want to make a difference and bring a difference.

These things in life—they all taught me to recognize to find myself, to be strong, to share stories, to listen to the stories, to inspire others, to work closely with people, to love each other, to peacefully live with one another. These are all things that they every day teach me.

I want both these genders to come together.

It's not only one specific gender that brings equality. I don't want only women to be involved; I want both these genders to come together and help each other. This idea should not only minimize harassment, but at the same time change people's mentalities about men and women working together. At the end of the day, both should sit on the same table, talk about it, work it out, face one another, work together, appreciate one another.

All of us are responsible

There is a lot to work to do in this country. It isn't something that can quickly come. It will gradually, but it will take a huge amount of time to bring these changes to convince people. We will tell the world. It needs hard work. It needs full commitment. To show Afghanistan to these people. It drives you to bring this social justice in society because at the end of the day, being as a citizen of Afghanistan, I feel I am responsible to bring this. I mean, all of us are responsible for it. I mean if we don't, then who?

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Appendices

IRB Information

I received an email response from the IRB on 11/4/2020 which stated that my project did not require an IRB review because it was considered 'Not Human Subject Research'. The email and screenshot below are the result of the review of my KC protocol.

Email:

The IRB protocol number [2010422094](#), Principal Investigator Hines, Mary Beth has had the action "Review Not Required" performed on it.

The action was executed by Mills, Adam Michael. Additional information and further actions can be accessed through the Quali Coeus system.

Screenshot:

The screenshot displays a web browser window with the URL `apps.iu.edu/kc-prd/protocolProtocol.do?command=displayDocSearchView&dclid=88015098&methodToCall=docHandler&casticket=ST-1675684-oxpZa43qXvHki...`. The page title is "KC Protocol". A summary table at the top shows:

Document Id:	88015098	Status:	Administratively Reviewed	Submission Status:	IRB review not required
Protocol #:	2010422094	Initiator/Last Updated:	caraymon : 02:17 PM 11/03/2020	Expiration Date:	
Principal Investigator:	Hines, Mary Beth				

Below the summary table are tabs for "Protocol", "Personnel", "Permissions", "Questionnaire", "Notes & Attachments", "Protocol Actions", "Custom Data", and "Medusa". The "Notes & Attachments" tab is active, showing a "Required Fields for Saving Document" section with the following details:

Protocol Type:	Not Human Subject Research		Principal Investigator:	Hines, Mary Beth	
Title:	"I forgot how strong I have been": A narrative inquiry of one Afghan woman's storied experiences		Lead Unit:	EDUCATION - BL-EDUC EDUCATION	

Below this are sections for "Determinations", "Additional Information", and "Organizations". The "Organizations" section contains a table:

	* Organization Id	* Organization Type	Human Sub Assurance
1	900002 Indiana University (UA)	Performing Organization	FWA00003544

At the bottom, there is a "Funding Sources" section with a table header:

* Funding Type	* Funding Number	Sponsor Name	Sponsor Type	Prime Sponsor Name	Prime Sponsor Type	Actions
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The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as 4:05 PM on 12/15/2020.

In preparation for IRB approval for my study, I sent an email to Indiana University, Bloomington on May 28, 2019, to inquire about IRB procedures for my study. I briefly outlined the scope of my study and inquired about next steps for obtaining IRB approval. The message below is the first message I sent to inquire about IRB approval for a single subject study with Parvana. I also had questions about a second study I was working on at the time; I have deleted that portion of

the email message and only included the portion of the message which is relevant for this particular study:

From: Raymond, Cathy <caraymon@iu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 2:42 PM
To: Neel, Andrew Preston <apneel@iu.edu>
Subject: Re: Protocol 1904625750 Cathy Raymond
Hi, Andrew,
[...]

The second project emerged from a Narrative Inquiry course I took last semester with Barbara Dennis. The project was a narrative interview with a young Afghan woman who is a close friend. I transcribed and analyzed the data from that interview for a project in the course, and it turned out to be quite interesting. I am currently taking a Feminist Inquiry course--also with Barbara Dennis, and we are about to interview someone for the course project. I would like to interview my Afghan friend again, but I don't want to conduct the interview until I've submitted an IRB proposal. I think that I could use data from the current course if I get IRB approval (correct me if I'm wrong there) prior to the interview, but I would also like to use the data from the fall semester course if at all possible because it provides excellent 'first phase' data.

Let me know if you need more info.
Thanks so much!!

In response to my initial email about my project, IRB services confirmed on May 29, 2019, that I would not need IRB approval for a single-subject study. This was very surprising to me, as I had understood that every study with human subjects needed to go through the IRB process. Here I am only including IRB services' response about my study with Parvana and have deleted the responses about a separate study with teachers in Uzbekistan:

From: Neel, Andrew Preston
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 7:38 PM
To: Raymond, Cathy
Subject: RE: Protocol 1904625750 Cathy Raymond
Hi Cathy,
Thanks for the clarification.
[...]
In regards to the second question:

Am I reading this correctly that we're discussing interviews of *a single subject*? If that is the case this is fairly easy – studies that involve only a single subject do not require IRB approval. (They don't meet the full technical definition of human subjects research as defined in the regulations). If I misunderstood this last piece, please let me know.

Hope that helps!

Andrew

Andrew Neel, CIP

Research Compliance Consultant

IU Human Subjects Office

Indiana University

Office Number 812-856-2487

Fax Number 812-856-1535

apneel@iu.edu

For the latest updates on research compliance at IU, check out the [April edition](#) of the Office of Research Compliance newsletter.

After receiving Andrew's email response, I still felt like I was missing something, so I sent the following message for further clarification:

From: Raymond, Cathy <caraymon@iu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 3:16 PM
To: Neel, Andrew Preston <apneel@iu.edu>
Subject: Re: Protocol 1904625750 Cathy Raymond

Andrew,
I love how thorough you are. Many thanks.

[...]

Regarding the second question, you are indeed reading correctly. This is a single subject. Are you saying that I don't even need to submit an IRB protocol? I can just move forward with my project? That is very surprising to me!

Thanks,
Cathy

Andrew sent the following response confirming that I did not need to go through the IRB process for my study with Parvana. Once again, I am not including his response to my questions about the Uzbek study:

Neel, **Andrew** Preston
Thu 5/30/2019 7:47 PM
Inbox
To:
Raymond, Cathy;

You replied on 5/30/2019 8:39 PM.

Hi Cathy,

[...]

And for the other one – yes, this surprises many folks. But studies involving a single subject like this aren't considered human subjects research (according to the technical regulatory definition) and thus approval isn't needed. Even more simple than the other study!

Best,

Andrew

Andrew Neel, CIP

Research Compliance Consultant

IU Human Subjects Office

Indiana University

Office Number 812-856-2487

Fax Number 812-856-1535

After discussing the IRB situation with my advising committee during my qualifying exams one year later, I decided to send the following message to Barbara Dennis, a professor in the Inquiry Department at Indiana University who is also my minor advisor, to double-check that I did not need to go through the IRB process for my single-subject study with Parvana:

From: Raymond, Cathy

Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2020 7:54 AM

To: Dennis, Barbara

Subject: IRB related question for single subject study

Hi, Barbara,

I hope your summer, classes, and writing are all going well!

I took and passed my quals exams yesterday, so I am feeling a great sense of relief.

One question I had for my committee at the end of the exam is related to single subject studies. Mary Beth and Mitzi suggested I reach out to the inquiry folks to get an answer, so I'm turning to you. I hope that's ok.

You may remember that I took your narrative inquiry course in the spring semester last year and the feminist inquiry course in the summer. For both courses, I did interviews with my Afghan friend. Because I intuited (correctly, it turns out) that I might want to turn that project into my dissertation topic, I reached out to the IRB team to ask about the protocol for single subject studies. I was told that an IRB would not be necessary. That all seemed a little strange to me, so I followed up again and was reassured that single subject studies do not require an IRB.

Because I still felt unsettled by this, I brought this question up again during my quals exam, and both Mitzi and MB agreed that it sounded a little unusual. I have highlighted the relevant sections from my email exchange with the IRB in red. If you start at the bottom of this copied message, you will see my

initial question; if you scroll up, you will then see the response. (The portions in blue refer to a different project.)

I would appreciate your thoughts on this. I am now shifting gears to write my dissertation proposal, and I want to be sure that I am proceeding in an ethical fashion as I move forward with this project.

Thanks in advance for your help with this!
Cathy

Barbara Dennis assured me that I did not need to go through the IRB process in the following message:

Re: IRB related question for single subject study
From: Dennis, Barbara
Tue 6/30/2020 8:22 PM
To:
Raymond, Cathy;

Hi Cathy, its true. For example, the IRB does not approve biographical studies at all. They just don't even go through as exempt. I also thought this was strange, but it is in fact the policy. My Feminist Research Collective is doing narrative stories with women (the Women WeLove project) and the IRB told us the same thing.

Barbara Dennis (she/her/hers)

Timeline

Timeline	9. 2020	10. 2020	11. 2020	12. 2020	01. 2021	02. 2021	03. 2021	04. 2021	05. 2021
Finish any revisions from dissertation proposal defense	x	x							
Complete any additional data collection	x	x	x	x	x				
Complete transcriptions and analyses	x	x	x	x	x	x			

Draft dissertation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Ongoing member checking	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Committee feedback of chapters			x	x	x	x	x	x	
Complete dissertation revisions				x	x	x	x	x	
Defend dissertation									x

C.V.

CATHY RAYMOND

ACADEMIC DEGREES

Ed.D. in Literacy, Culture, and Language Education Indiana University, Bloomington	June 2021
M.A. Applied Linguistics (TESOL) Indiana University, Bloomington	August 1996
ABD, Germanic Studies Indiana University, Bloomington	May 1993
M.A Germanic Studies Indiana University, Bloomington	August 1990
B.A. Piano Performance and German University of Wisconsin, Madison	August 1986

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty, Narrative Health Maryland University of Integrative Health	January 2021-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Courses in this program focus on personal narrative explorations that emphasize empathic listening, mindfulness, and appreciative inquiry; exceptional communication skills in writing, listening, and speaking are required.	
Assistant Director, English Language Programs (ELP) Washington University, St Louis	July 2014-July 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managed and monitored English language support programs and services for the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, Olin Business School, Brown School for Social Work, Public Health & Public Policy, and the School of Medicine at Washington University in St Louis;• Conducted cross-cultural sensitivity workshops for the university community at large and taught English for Specific Purposes and General English fluency courses;• Handled administrative responsibilities, including interviewing, hiring, supervising, and overseeing professional development for ELP instructors for the programs listed above;• Conducted ongoing placement testing for new international graduate students;• Drafted, managed, and monitored budgets for summer language programs at the Olin Business School;• Prepared and presented reports on English programs, supervising of teachers, testing, and placement, and recommended plans of action;	

- Engaged in development of new programs and communications with intra-departmental agencies and organizations to support international populations at Washington University;
- Managed intra-departmental communications with a wide range of program stakeholders.

Executive Director

Jan 2017-Sept 2017

Alliance for International Women's Rights

- Maintained and expanded high-quality programming at non-profit organization AIWR which targets exchanges between international mentors and women leaders and future women leaders in Afghanistan and Nepal;
- Supervised a team of international mentors and teachers in exchange partnerships with Afghanistan and Nepal, where girls and women developed their professional capabilities and learned English with trained English teachers through Skype-based lessons;
- Drafted and submitted reports on programming at non-profit AIWR and exchanges with Afghanistan and Nepal.

English Language Program Director

May 2010-Jan 2017

Alliance for International Women's Rights

- Recruited new participants for international exchange program;
- Oversaw all operations related to English language programming at AIWR, including interviewing and onboarding teachers, cross-cultural sensitivity training, and training in distance teaching via Skype, evaluating and monitoring international exchange programs;
- Initiated, developed, administered, and evaluated new partnerships in Nepal and with Consultants-E, an organization which offers international consultations in education;
- Regularly presented updates and status reports on programming;
- Presented international exchange program developments and updates at international conferences.

ESL Instructor

2014

The Fulton School at St Albans

- Ran the ESL program at the Fulton School at St Albans, a pre-K-12 Montessori based school;
- Worked with the international exchange students in a multi-grade setting, offering English language support for students and teachers;
- Regularly monitored, wrote, and presented updates on programs with international exchange students.

ESL Academic Writing Instructor

Aug 2010-Aug 2014

Maryville University, St Louis

- Developed and taught English for Academic Purposes, including academic writing, reading, and research courses for international exchange students in need of English language support.

Editorial Consultant
iUniverse Publishing

Sept 2008-May 2010

- Provided regular editorial and writing consultations for authors;
- Analyzed and discussed manuscript evaluations;
- Managed a large database of writing projects;
- Served as liaison for authors/evaluators/editors while successfully communicating across departments and stakeholders;
- Resolved issues and negotiated on behalf of authors.

TESOL Coordinator/Visiting Faculty

July 2006-May 2008

Afghan Higher Education Project (HEP), Indiana University-Bloomington

- Travelled to Afghanistan to interview and recruit Afghan educators for participation in master's degree programs at the School of Education at Indiana University;
- Collaborated on program planning for Higher Education Project in Afghanistan;
- Developed eTandem international exchange project between Indiana University and Afghanistan;
- Presented at regional and international conferences on topics related to Afghan HEP;
- Prepared and conducted Professional Development Workshops (e.g., Classroom Management; Materials Development; Communicative Language Teaching);
- Designed and taught undergraduate and graduate level coursework for Afghan exchange students in Department of Language Education, Indiana University (Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing, and Teacher Training/Field Placement);
- Designed and developed teacher training workshops for English language teachers in Afghanistan;
- Wrote English language proficiency tests for Afghanistan;
- Identified and evaluated materials, including software, websites, books, and articles for Professional Development Centers in Afghanistan;
- Identified electronic language learning resources for online learning center for Afghan English teachers;
- Performed administrative tasks, including budgeting, interviewing, report writing, data processing;
- Collaborated on developing appropriate scope and sequence for graduate degree program for visiting Afghan scholars;
- Developed culturally appropriate English language learning materials for Afghan faculty in Afghanistan;
- Prepared and presented reports on program status;
- Regularly communicated with a variety of stakeholders nationally and internationally.

English Tutor
Bloomington, Indiana

2001-2004

- Offered after-school English language support for international children in the local community, including creative approaches to language learning (songs and games) and tutoring in reading, writing, speaking, and critical analysis.

English as a Second Language Instructor 1994-1997; 2000-2004; 2005-2006
Intensive English Program (IEP), Indiana University-Bloomington

- Taught all levels (7) and skills of English as a Second Language;
- Developed and implemented content-based courses in ESL (e.g. Creative Writing, Academic Writing, American Culture courses, Critical Thinking, Academic Skills, Critical Reading);
- Administered and evaluated placement and exit examinations and registered students;
- Organized and hosted social events for the Intensive English Program.

ESL and TESOL Methodology Specialist March-June 2005
Fulbright Educational Exchange, Indiana University and KEU-Afghanistan

- Established scope and sequence and designed and implemented four-month long ESL program for visiting Afghan scholars at Indiana University;
- Designed and prepared materials for intensive four-day long workshop for English teachers in Afghanistan;
- Taught a team of visiting Afghan scholars in TESOL methodology, ESL, and content area courses;
- Conducted Professional Development Workshops for team of visiting Afghan scholars;
- Prepared and presented reports and briefings on program status;
- Communicated with multiple stakeholders nationally and internationally;
- Prepared and presented at international conferences on international exchange program.

Director and Primary Editor of Materials Development Sept 2004-Sept 2005
Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CELCAR)
Indiana University-Bloomington

- Supervised and collaborated with a team of language materials developers, video, audio, and visual artists on four Central Asian language projects, including Pashto, Uighur, Uzbek, Tajik;
- Developed scope and sequence for language materials projects;
- Presented at regional, national, and international conferences on topics of materials development and curriculum development;
- Designed and conducted Professional Development Workshops in Materials Development and Communicative Teaching Practices;
- Traveled to national language conferences in Washington, D.C. to discuss CELCAR materials and future plans for language projects;
- Acted as primary editor for all language projects.

English and American Culture Instructor 1997-2000
Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Germany

- Designed and conducted Professional Development Workshops for all English lecturers;
- Developed and conducted Teacher Training workshops throughout Bavaria;
- Developed new series of courses in American Culture, Creative Writing, Academic Writing;
- Taught English courses at undergraduate and graduate level;

- Composed, administered, and evaluated placement and exit examinations;
- Conducted oral examinations for entrance into graduate level English program;
- Served as university wide representative for English language lecturers and met regularly with representatives from Munich University;
- Worked in curriculum development and program design through the development of new courses and course sequencing.

German and English Instructor 1993-1994
American Language Academy and Buchholtz Bildungszentrum, Berlin, Germany

German Instructor 1989-1993
Indiana University-Bloomington

English Instructor 1988-1989
Neue Schule, Berlin, Germany

GRANTS

Fulbright Research Grant 2021-2022
Uzbekistan

- Collaborative exploration with English faculty in Uzbekistan of English language teaching and educational research as a multicultural multilingual process

Educational Research Grant April 2021
U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan

- Virtual academic writing workshop (via Telegram) with English faculty at Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

FLAS Fellowship for Pashto Summer 2021
Indiana University, Bloomington

Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), Russian Summer 2021
(Award declined in favor of FLAS fellowship)

Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), Russian Summer 2019
U.S. Department of State
Semi-Finalist

Educational Research Grant 2019
U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan

- Creative-academic writing workshop with English Teachers at Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

Fulbright Scholar Award, Tajikistan Jan-July 2018
University of Central Asia, Tajikistan

- Taught humanities-based academic writing courses at the Aga Khan Humanities Project at the University of Central Asia in Tajikistan;

- Trained students in field research methods;
- Conducted a teacher training workshop for trainers across Central Asia on how to teach field research skills;
- Managed communications across a wide range of stakeholders;
- Prepared and presented reports at international conferences and for Fulbright.

English Language Specialist, Nepal Nov/Dec 2014
U.S. Department of State

- Created a stand-alone, user-friendly manual of ideas, activities, and other materials to assist American Corner staff in Nepal to develop a wide range of English language programs in their eight American Corners and the mobile Book Bus. The manual was intended for the more rural regions of Nepal to gain opportunities for English language learning which were previously limited to the urban area of the Kathmandu Valley. I conducted a training session for American Corners staff on how to use the manual at the end of the program in Bhairahawa, Nepal.

Free University of Berlin 1987-1989; 1993-1995
DAAD German Academic Exchange Service Awards

- Conducted research in Berlin for master's thesis and dissertation in Germanic Studies.

Fulbright Student Research Award, Germany 1987
Semi-Finalist Candidate

Max Kade Fellowship 1986-1987
Indiana University, Bloomington

- Engaged in exploring cross-cutting themes and research related to German unity, politics, and culture.

CERTIFICATIONS

Virtual Instructor Certification Summer 2020
Ivy Tech Community College, Bloomington, Indiana

Site Reviewer Spring 2013
Commission for English Language Program Accreditation (CEA)

TESOL Leadership Development Certificate April 2008

TESOL Certificate: Principles and Practices April-November 2007
of Online Teaching

Digital Desktop Design: Desktop Publishing Certificate May 2005
Indiana University-Continuing Studies

Web Development Certificate May 2003
Indiana University-Continuing Studies

RESEARCH

English teaching and research as a multilingual multicultural process Sept 2021-July 2022
Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

Creative-Academic Writing: A Translingual Approach May 2019; April 2021
Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

This ongoing research project workshop is funded by grants from the U.S. embassy in Uzbekistan. The purpose of the research workshops is to explore new pathways for teaching academic writing through creativity and translingual approaches which draw upon the rich multilingual multicultural setting of Uzbekistan.

Ed.D. dissertation research Completed June 2021
A narrative inquiry of one Afghan woman's storied experiences
Indiana University, Bloomington

This narrative inquiry project explores one Afghan woman's (Parvana's) life story and multiple literacy practices through a postcolonial feminist framing. The purpose of this dissertation is to offer one contribution towards disrupting persistent stereotypes of Afghan women through an exploration of Parvana's actual lived experiences and the literacy practices she engages in as she navigates the broader Afghan context.

*Recursive Wanderings and Wonderings:
An Autoethnographic Exploration of a Semester in Tajikistan* December 2018
Indiana University, Bloomington

This project is an autoethnographic exploration of my time in Tajikistan as a Fulbright Scholar. In the project I explore the significance of my setting, positionality, and Fulbright project in terms of transnationalism, ethics, access, trust, expectations, world affairs, higher education, and literacy/writing.

Germanic Studies dissertation research 1993-1995
Paragraph 218: The representation of abortion in theater of the Weimar Republic
Indiana University, Bloomington

This research study examines the sociological, political, and historical backdrop to the contested debate around abortion during the Weimar Republic through the lens of culture and theater plays.

Germanic Studies Master's thesis 1987-1989
Beethoven and the workers' music movement
Indiana University, Bloomington

This thesis explores the significance of Beethoven and his music for the ongoing struggles of the workers' movement in the Weimar Republic.

SCHOLARLY PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Feminist Inquiry Panel Presenter: "My earphones protect me": Exploring one Afghan woman's creative multiliteracies. International Congress for Qualitative Inquiry, May 2021

Postcolonial feminist theory meets narrative inquiry: Reconstructing stories, promoting empathy, and dislodging stereotypes about Afghan women. Narrative Matters Conference: Narrative, Social, and Personal Transformation, Atlanta, GA, 2021 (Conference cancelled due to COVID)

Guest lecturer: Narrative inquiry and theory, Indiana University, Bloomington, School of Education, September 2020

Exploring counter-narratives about Afghan women: An arts-based narrative research project. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, 2020 (Conference cancelled due to COVID)

Roof of the World: Tajikistan. Outpost Travel Magazine (Print Version), Toronto, Canada, Spring 2020. <https://outpostmagazine.com/>

Cross-Cultural collaboration: The power of team teaching in Tajikistan, Central Asian Fulbright Scholar Conference, Kazakhstan, April 2018

TESOL and the Alliance for International Women's Rights: Making a difference in troubling times, SRIS Newsletter, June 7, 2017.

<http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolsris/issues/2017-06-07/6.html>

Distance mentoring programs for women in Afghanistan and Nepal. NAFSA Conference, Los Angeles, May 2017

Distance language training and professional mentoring for women in Afghanistan and Nepal. TESOL International Conference, Seattle, March 2017

Understanding and addressing the needs of international students: Perspectives from teaching, learning, and administration. Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Creating a More Inclusive Learning Community: Awareness, Action, Inquiry. Maryville University, St Louis, October 9 and 10, 2015

TESOL Electronic Journal HEIS News "English language training and English language materials development in Afghanistan", Volume 27, Nr. 2, 2008. Published at http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/docs/11400/11367.html?nid=2746

A model course for international students transitioning to U.S. university study: Critical thinking, reading, and writing, TESOL Conference, NY, April 2008

Developing interactive WebQuests for contextualized online language learning, TESOL Conference, NY, "WebQuest: International Women's Hall of Fame", published at <http://www.zunal.com>, April 2008

Materials development for English language learning in Afghanistan, TESOL Conference, April 2008

The current state of affairs for English language teaching and learning in Afghanistan, TESOL Conference, April 2008

Preparing international students for successful academic study at U.S. Universities, INTESOL Conference, November 3, 2007

“Virtually endless possibilities: Designing eLearning projects”, TESOL Conference, March 2007.

eTandem learning using SKYPE and email: A cultural awareness project between Indiana University and the American University of Afghanistan, INTESOL Conference, November 11, 2006

Challenges and opportunities for EFL/ESL e-Teachers, TESOL Conference, Tampa, FL, 2006

Incorporating video in task-based activities in an introductory Uzbek textbook, Conference on Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching, Brussels, 2005

Partnership for change: ESL/EFL methodology, teacher training, and workshop preparation for Kabul Education University, Afghanistan, INTESOL Conference, October 21, 2005

TEACHING: COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

SELECTED COURSES

Fergana State University, Uzbekistan Sept 2021-July 2022

- Introduction to Research Methods in Education
- Survey of U.S. Literature

Washington University in St Louis July 2014-July 2019

- General English Language courses and English Language for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in Architecture, Social Work/Public Health/Public Policy, Engineering, Business
- Critical Reading and Writing
- Casual and Professional Conversations
- Presentation Skills
- Book Club (with postdocs and researchers on medical campus)

University of Central Asia, Tajikistan Spring 2018

Humanities-based academic writing courses (team taught), including:

- The Individual and Society
- Tradition and Change (including training in field research skills)
- Introduction to the Humanities

Afghan Higher Education Project, Indiana University, Bloomington 2006-2008

Key courses include

- Critical reading, writing, and thinking: Preparation course for graduate study in the USA
- Teacher Training/Field Placement

Indiana University, Bloomington, Intensive English Program (1994-1997; 2000-2004; 2005-2006); University of Missouri, St Louis (2014); Maryville University (2010-2014)

Key ESL courses include:

- All skills courses in seven-level program (IEP, Indiana University)
- Academic writing and research
- Creative Writing
- Short Stories (critical reading and writing)
- Living in the U.S.: American Values and Culture Shock

Munich University (LMU), Germany

1997-2000

- Creative Writing
- Academic Writing
- Translation Studies
- Immigration to the United States
- Religion in the United States
- The First Amendment

WORKSHOPS (Developed and conducted)

Train the Trainers Workshop (TOT): Teaching Field Research Skills, Central Asian Regional Training (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), Tajikistan, June 6-8, 2018

In this intensive three-day workshop, educators, and students from across Central Asia explored new strategies for teaching and learning field research.

Academic Writing Workshop Series, University of Central Asia, Aga Khan Humanities Project, Tajikistan, 2018

In this workshop series, I worked closely with English teachers at the University of Central Asia on sharing strategies for teaching academic writing.

TESOL Pre-Conference Workshop: From Bystander to Active Participant: Interaction Strategies for Effective Communication. TESOL International Conference, Seattle, March 2017

This interactive TESOL PCI focused on a wide range of hands-on activities for increasing student interaction and participation in the classroom.

TESOL Pre-Conference Workshop: Taking and Holding the Floor: Increasing Student Participation in the Classroom, April 2016

This interactive TESOL PCI focused on teaching strategies for introducing and practicing language for interaction, including active discussions, interrupting, taking and holding the floor, and supporting arguments.

Trainer at the Annual American Corner Meeting in Bhairahawa, Nepal, December 2014

In this hands-on workshop, I introduced participants to a new handbook for the American Corner locations that I had written as English Language Specialist; this included hands-on practice and opportunities for field testing written instructions and activities.

Materials Development for English Teacher Training Workshops in Afghanistan: Three-day workshop series on teaching listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and materials development, 2006

This workshop series with English teachers in Kabul, Afghanistan, explored new strategies for teaching English and materials development.

Teacher Training Workshop: TOEFL Test-Taking Strategies, Higher Education Project, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2006

This workshop with Kabul English teachers focused on effective approaches to teaching TOEFL test-taking strategies.

TESOL Methodology Training and Workshop Preparation for Afghanistan, TESOL Conference, Tampa, FL, 2006

ESL/EFL Teacher Training, Fulbright Educational Exchange between Indiana University and Kabul Education University-Afghanistan, March – June 2005

This educational exchange focused on English language training, teacher training, and materials development.

Language Materials Development: Guidelines and Principles (Three Part Workshop), Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region, Indiana University, July 2005

This workshop with Central Asian language materials developers explored guidelines and principles for creating engaging learner-centered language and culture materials.

Teaching Pragmatics in Central Asian Languages, Pragmatics Workshop, Indiana University, 2005

This workshop on teaching pragmatics in Central Asian Languages focused on strategies for illuminating unique pragmatic cues reflected in Central Asian languages and cultures.

ESL/EFL Teacher Training and Professional Development Workshops in Germany:

This workshop series was designed for English language teachers at Munich University and in Bavaria.

- Teaching German/English Translation, CALL in the ESL Classroom, Problem Areas in University Level Language Teaching, Munich University, 1997-2000
- Teaching American Culture, Dillingen Teacher Training Center, Germany, 2000
- Teaching American History, America House, Germany, 1999

SERVICE

Fulbright Specialist, Education
United States Department of State

June 2018-June 2022

Virtual Fulbright Pre-Departure Orientation for South and Central Asia October 2020
Tajikistan Country Session, Lecturing Abroad Alumni Panel, Crisis Scenarios

I was invited to participate as Fulbright alum in this PDO for outgoing Fulbright students, scholars, and ETAs to South and Central Asia.

Fulbright Pre-Departure Orientation for South and Central Asia August 2019
Tajikistan Country Session, U.S. Scholar Panel on Best Practices for Ensuring a Successful Fulbright Grant, Personal Safety Abroad, Your Post-Fulbright Career, Arizona State University
I was invited to participate as Fulbright alum in this PDO for outgoing Fulbright students, scholars, and ETAs to South and Central Asia.

Fulbright Faculty Interview Committee 2015-2018
Washington University, St Louis
As part of the Fulbright interview committee, I reviewed applications, conducted interviews, and advised undergraduate students on areas for improvement in their Fulbright applications, including their personal statements and statement of grant purpose.

Responsible Conduct of Research Workshop April 2017
Cross-cultural communication in the lab, Washington University Medical School
This workshop brought together international and U.S. researchers and PIs for a cross-cultural communication training session using a case study approach.

Talking about Politics in the USA October 2016
Office for International Students and Scholars, Washington University
In this workshop just a few days prior to the 2016 election, I conducted a workshop for international students and scholars on navigating challenging political discussions in the USA.

Cross-Cultural Communication Workshop Series March 2016
Cross-Cultural Understanding in Research Settings, Washington University Medical School
This cultural sensitivity workshop explored negotiating and resolving misunderstandings in medical research settings.

IEP/Higher Education Representative, INTESOL November 2006-2008

- Participated in regular meetings to discuss affairs of Indiana State chapter of TESOL
- Collaborated on organizing yearly INTESOL conference
- Acted as publicity representative for INTESOL
- Acted as representative for Higher Education and Intensive English Programs throughout the state of Indiana
- Developed and conducted panel presentations as Higher Education representative for yearly INTESOL conference

LANGUAGES

English (native), German (near-native), Russian (advanced), French (low-intermediate), Tajik (beginner)