

What's Left Unsaid:  
Rewriting and *Restorying*  
in a South African Teacher Education Classroom

by  
Kristian D. Stewart

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Christopher Burke, Chair  
Associate Professor Stein Brunvand  
Professor Emerita Gloria House  
Professor Joe Lunn

South African Site Supervisor:

Associate Professor Eunice Ivala, Cape Peninsula University of Technology

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## Dedication

“We are one, but we’re not the same.

We have to carry each other”

“One” by U2.

“i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)”

E.E. Cummings.

I dedicate this work to the 2014 DST facilitators’ cohort. Many thanks are due to these phenomenal students who allowed me to enter their classroom-and their lives-as I completed this study. Without their kindness, knowledge, and just overall unselfish willingness to help, I would have never gained the insight required to write this dissertation. Graeme, in particular, not only got me hooked on rugby, but he assisted me in this endeavor from the very first moment I stepped on campus through the duration of this project. I cannot stress how grateful I am for the working relationship--and now friendship after the fact--that Graeme and I have established. This sentiment of friendship and gratitude also extends to Mia and Tayla and Pieter and Luniko, to Andre, Sisipha, and Felix. You are all such amazing human beings, such incredible teachers, and my life is definitely better because I now share it with all of you. I carry your stories; I hold them in my heart.

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“I have hated words and I have loved them,  
and I hope I have made them right”

(Zusak, 2009, p.528).

“It all seems impossible until it’s done”

(Nelson Mandela).

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### **List of Abbreviations**

ANC	African National Congress
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CDS	Center for Digital Storytelling/StoryCenter
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DA	Democratic Alliance
DALN	Digital Archives of Literacy Narratives
HESA	Higher Education South Africa

## Abstract

This dissertation questioned the role of digital storytelling in a South African teacher education classroom. Foregrounding this study was an examination of the link between student subjectivities and the places they inhabit, with emphasis on how student-driven stories might connect the old South Africa with the new. Further, digital storytelling as a pedagogical endeavor that alters both classroom spaces and student perceptions of “self” and “other” was investigated. Theory underpinning the spatial, cultural, and pedagogical implications of this research stemmed from the scholarship of Henry Giroux (1988, 1992, 1996), Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991), Edward Soja (1971, 1976), and Pierre Bourdieu (1983/1986, 1989). Digital storytelling as both a mode of personal writing and a multimodal genre was framed by contributions from the disciplines of composition and rhetoric and digital storytelling (Benmayor, 2008; Elbow, 2002; Hull & Katz, 2006; Lambert, 2012; Selfe, 2010). Findings from this study point to the importance of orality in the writing process and how transitioning classroom habitus can lead to transforming student perspectives regarding how they feel about themselves, each other, and the work they produce. Data also emerged that highlighted student attitudes towards the public consumption of digital stories. Specifically, students expressed frustration associated with the course requirement mandating that students screen their private stories in a public venue. Lastly, the digital storytelling process inspired students to become active listeners and it heightened their aptitude to empathize with other people, vital characteristics for those who enter the teaching profession.

*Keywords:* digital storytelling, personal writing, teacher educators, South Africa, higher education, spatial theory, border pedagogy.

## Chapter I

### The Case of South Africa

“The tragedy is not that things are broken.

The tragedy is that things are not mended again”

Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948).

In the case of South Africa, a nation that had been historically, culturally, and socially defined specifically along the lines of race since the arrival of the Dutch to the Cape in 1652, the narrative of South Africa had always been told by those who held power. From the Dutch, to the British and then through the Nationalist Government, South Africa's story was one that centered on race, discrimination, and inequity, which South African law eventually supported during the apartheid years. However, power shifted in South Africa with the election of Nelson Mandela in the nation's first democratic election in 1994. Along with this historic first, Desmond Tutu, according to Laing (2010), established the narrative of “Rainbow Nation” to coincide with Mandela's election and South Africa's new direction, one that would celebrate its cultural, linguistic, and diverse ethnic populace.

Despite the efforts of both Mandela and Tutu, and many others who assisted in transitioning South Africa, it can be argued that racism, and along with that feelings of disenfranchisement and disunion, endures in South Africa. Cape Town residents, in particular, are seemingly polarized from one another. They live in homogenous areas defined by color and “apartheid mentality” continues to outline many public spaces. This division was recognized by a journalist from *Time* magazine who stated class in the city of Cape Town is “demarcated by



altitude: the farther you are from the mountain, the lower, poorer and blacker you are” (Perry, 2013, para. 9). To this I bring current race-related rhetoric from Cape Town alone (see Davis, 2013; de Vos, 2009; Fikeni, 2014; Maditla, 2013; Polgreen, 2012), situating racism as an issue that continues to divide the Rainbow Nation. Thus, I am left to wonder if the writing of new stories represents the resilience or resistance of a people, or might these narratives simply add to a delimited South African story that has been in place for centuries? Specifically, what do student-authored stories, digital writings or call them narratives if you may, in a post-apartheid South Africa look like? The changing political landscape in South Africa calls for additional narratives, what novelist Chinua Achebe has referred to as a “balance of stories” (qtd. in Bacon, 2000, para. 2) that not only give voice to people who have been historically marginalized, but also provide a whole picture of a transforming story.

The election of Nelson Mandela and the dismantling of the Nationalist Government in the 90s dramatically altered the direction of South Africa. A new constitution was formed that became the centerpiece for all political and social reform. In fact, transformation characterized the story of higher education as well, as recognized by the Higher Education Act 101 (1997a) that established a Council on Higher Education (CHE). The Council on Higher Education (1997b) noted higher education’s role in transitioning society within their published and generative document titled “Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education,” which outlined the directed efforts to address racial inequalities, promote human dignity, and contribute to a collective pursuit of knowledge, naming only a few of the issues presented in this wide-reaching document. In a successive work, “South African Higher Education at the Beginning of the New Millennium: Realities, Problems and Challenges,” the Council on Higher Education (1999) presented a follow up to its predecessor, communicating an

extended need to address the challenges facing South African higher education. Building on this work, in 2000, The Council on Higher Education established a Size and Shape Task Team charged with examining higher education and putting forth key proposals for its transition. In 2007, a research paper presented to the Council on Higher Education by Ian Scott, Nan Yeld, and Jane Hendry titled “Higher Education Monitor No. 6: A Case for Improving Teaching and Learning in South African Higher Education” assessed the scope and quality of higher education in South Africa. In fact, education and higher education more broadly, since the onset of democracy, has literally exploded in terms of scholarly contribution, reorganization, and curricular revision, which is all part of a continuing South African story.

What I find interesting about South Africa is the juxtaposition of clashing politics, cultural economies, and diverse populations that are revealed through the stories people tell. I wonder, however, how narratives change-or do not change-as the authority shifts? Secondly, how are stories representative of the binary between the old South Africa and the new as they meet in and through students in a classroom scenario? There are stories left largely untold in South Africa, and this study has provided a platform where they can begin to emerge.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In 1975, Roland Barthes claimed that narratives are “like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural” (p.237) and this is exactly part of the problem. When framed in this way, narrative as a mode of writing or as discursive practice, like Barthes noted, is present in all times, places, and societies. In academia, narrative forms can be found in virtually every discipline or field of study. In addition to that, many different types of personal writing exist. Consider counter stories, resistance stories, dominant, grand, or master stories, all which fall under the narrative (as a genre) umbrella. And, of course, the previous labels subsume the

oral tradition of telling stories or writing stories on paper, whereas writing within digital or multimedia formats now exists as an additional genre. This is problematic for those who work with student writing, as how do we classify student-authored texts that cannot be singularity defined by the term narrative alone?

Further, noting the dynamics of power that are constantly in motion within classroom spaces, it is imperative to establish a common term which articulates unique texts that are composed in settings where diverse cultures collide and multiple stories intersect. However, characterizing the stories students bring with them to the classroom offers another conundrum, one that is entirely arranged by power. It is important to note the labeling or privileging of one story over another is determined by the people or person who stands in an authorial position. In terms of classroom instruction, the branding of a student's story can be a dangerous endeavor as it brings with it emotional, political, and cultural connotations. Consider marking one student's story a dominant or primary narrative. This act automatically defaults another's story into a secondary role. Thus, classroom environments can also recycle stereotypes and reify notions of story privileging through both explicit and tacit actions and inactions.

The stories students bring with them to the classroom are identifying markers, symbolic of both history and culture, but also unique in that they provide a personal and cultural critique based on lived experiences. Examining stories in South Africa offers a double complexity as the classroom is already a contested place, and this space is located where cultures collide and racial separation was the national rhetoric. Nevertheless, the telling and sharing of stories can create an avenue for a balance of power, a place where the testimony of lived experiences can take center stage. All stories, whether they are considered "narratives" or "stock" or "counter," have the potential of becoming tangible, material acts of both student agency and resistance. Therefore,

investigating the role stories play in a classroom setting can offer tremendous insight into how instructors treat and utilize personal experience in the production of knowledge. Researching stories in places that are highly contested is important simply because if a story can reach across the lines of difference and impact story listeners and classroom dynamics, then storytelling has the potential of becoming a valid act of both writing and learning, worthy of greater curricular inclusion.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The treatment of personal writing in a classroom has great implications for how students view themselves, others, and the world at large. Brian Boyd (2010) has written about the transmuting nature of a story, distinctively equating a story to a site of metamorphosis. When stories are provided for consumption in a classroom, a natural line of questioning should center on examining if the stories work to progress the learning outcomes, offer theoretical insight, and to investigate where students obtain the stories that they share. This has led me to question how stories can impact classroom spaces; and, as students tell and write stories, what are those stories *doing*? With this in mind, the purpose of this study investigated how digital stories are composed, integrated, and experienced by students in a South African higher education classroom.

Additionally, along this vein, I have examined to what extent stories represent the subjectivities of the students who author them specifically against the contested backdrop of a South African landscape. When composing in spaces that are built around the politics of social and ethnic exclusion, how can students negotiate writing in and against demarcated spaces? Researching student-produced South African stories amongst the lines of historical, systematic,

and purposeful segregation will offer insight into how personal and digital writing can take shape in conflicting places.

This research has implications for borderland writing, global perspectives on education, and how to design curriculum in classroom spaces where diverse cultures meet and collide, what Mary Louise Pratt (1991) has identified as a contact zone. Analysis generated from this work will also inform curricular studies by providing awareness about the material and cultural conditions represented in student-produced texts. Finally, this work adds a scholarly contribution to notions of classroom habitus, spatial theory, and digital storytelling as both pedagogy and a genre.

## Chapter II

### History and Current Policies of the South African Education System

“Education is the most powerful weapon  
which you can use to change the world”

(Nelson Mandela).

In chapter one, South Africa was presented as a site of study due to its transforming political and educational climate. An introduction was provided situating education's role as a site of social conversion, along with questioning the narrative of a “new” South Africa in its post-apartheid state. Chapter two will establish these issues as they pertain within larger institutional and theoretical frameworks of history, education, and pedagogy.

#### **Education in the Western Cape, 1652-1922.**

E.G. Malherbe's (1925) book, *Education in South Africa 1652-1922*, is considered to be a seminal text and the first of its kind to situate a history of education in South Africa. Malherbe traced education from the appearance of the Dutch East India Company and starting with Jan van Riebeeck's arrival to the Cape in 1652. Although indigenous people lived in the region and the Portuguese explorer Bartholomew Dias was the first to reach the Cape long before van Riebeeck, van Riebeeck is widely credited as the founder of Cape Town due to his role in establishing a staging post for the Dutch East India Company.

The arrival of the Dutch to the Cape brought with them a Dutch Reformed religious education transferred from the Netherlands. The church played a vital role in both the national character of the Cape and was a dominant feature in education, particularly as it was viewed as

an instrument for nurturing the reformed faith between church and school (Malherbe, 1925). The church before 1795 was a public institution under government control; however, when the church was separated from the state in 1795, schools became institutions of the state, reflecting both the social and political theories of the governing classes (Malherbe, 1925).

The first school was formed in the Cape in 1658 and was intended as a school for slaves to learn the Dutch language and elements of the Christian religion. Malherbe (1925) referred to the slaves brought from West Africa as “semi-barbarous heathens” (p. 28), and he also noted slaves had “the reprehensible habit of running away” (p. 28). Because of this, the school was eventually closed. Interestingly, due to the education slaves received, Malherbe was also adamant during this time that color prejudice was non-existent. However, what Malherbe’s sentiment illuminates is that prejudice, segregation, and separated school spaces have existed in the Cape since the arrival of the Europeans and colonialism.

Late 17<sup>th</sup> century education brought the first school for White children (1663), a school room described as a “fair sized loft” (Malherbe, 1925, p. 30). A school for Coloured children was established in Cape Town in 1676. The year 1676 also marked when the colony Church Council established a separate schooling system based on class and race, hence establishing segregated schooling in South Africa (Hlatshwayo, 2000). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, education made its way into the colonies largely due to the zeal of the church. During this period there was little instruction outside of religion in the schools as the Cape was considered a commercial venture where the lives of the colonists were of little concern (Malherbe, 1925). Two kinds of teachers existed during this time: the spiritual and the less respected vagabonds with knowledge (Malherbe, 1925). Overall, during this time period, education was meant to subjugate the Native population and to legitimize a White cultural ethos.

**The British influence in the Cape.** In 1795, the British seized the Cape in response to the French conquest of the Netherlands. At the time, each race was segregated under Dutch law in order to prohibit trade amongst the Cape residents. Trevor Webster (2013) cited the arrival of the British as strategic maneuvering and claimed by conquering the Dutch, the British effectively placed the world's greatest military and economic power in the Cape. In part, the British had a different ideology that contrasted the racialized Dutch sentiment at the time. The British integrated the races and thought that a "degree of civilization rather than race" (Behr, 1988, p.13) should structure relationships. To that end, the British stopped the slave trade in 1807 and later started emancipating the Africans in the Cape Colony in 1835.

The British outlawed the use of the Dutch language and created both a national system of education and strict guidelines for how teachers were to be trained. According to Malherbe (1925), for the first time a central board of education was established and religious control of the (White) schools was eliminated. Language wise, the Language Proclamation of 1822 stated all legal documents and court proceeding were to be only in English, and English and Latin were to be the only languages taught in schools. English additionally became the official language of the colony. The importance of this act was that it entrenched English and Dutch (by 1910) as official languages, neglecting the language of the indigenous and original people of the area (Fredericks, 2001).

The British, through Lord Somerset, shaped education by the appointment of the Superintendent General of Education of 1839. Education bloomed during the British rule of the Cape. Greswell (1902) deemed the turn from Dutch education to British a "triumph" (p. 240). In an article Greswell published in 1902, he advocated for all instruction to be in English alone and for English to become the only national language of a new South African Empire. South Africa



turned away from British rule in 1909 after Britain declared South Africa to be a Union, and the establishment of the South Africa Act of 1909 declared English and Dutch as equal languages under the law (Vander Merwe, du Pleiss, de Waal, Zimmerman, & Farlam, 2012).

**The establishment of the university.** In 1829, the South African College (later renamed the University of Cape Town in 1918) was the first college established in South Africa. At its inception, only men were allowed to attend and usually these were men of wealth. By 1873, the University of the Cape of the Good Hope, modelled after the University of London, was established as an examining institution versus a teaching college (Metrowich, 1929). The University of the Cape of the Good Hope was renamed the University of South Africa in 1916. According to Metrowich (1929), the University of the Cape of the Good Hope set the standards for higher education in South Africa. And, by 1877, university curriculum, public funding, and a charter were established for the University of the Cape of Good Hope (Greswell, 1902).

**Teacher training and education for White student populations.** Sir James Rose-Innes was appointed to lead the Cape's first department of education in 1839. Partly, Innes was responsible for selecting teachers and imparting a department-approved curriculum. The Stellenbosch Proposal of 1857 created a Central Board of Education that examined teachers and regulated education throughout the colony. This board of examiners morphed into the Joint Matriculation Board and was described as the "most potent controlling trend on education in South Africa" (Malherbe, 1925, p. 135). Greswell (1902) noted how the board also laid the groundwork for the establishment of a university. As of 1874, teachers were required to apprentice for three years (a reduction from five), and they received extra grant money when they passed a final examination (Malherbe, 1925). In 1878, Donald Ross outlined a model course for teacher training that introduced different types of certificates (middle and third class) of

training required for students wishing to become teachers. In 1905, educating White children became a priority. The Cape School Board's Act proclaimed all White children were to receive free and compulsory education until the age of 14. However, this Act was not extended to other ethnic populations.

As for the training of teachers, in 1909, the Education Department established different requirements for teacher training courses and the schooling systems that prepared students. The requirements for training White, Coloured, and Black teachers were delineated along the lines of race. The Education Department changed the outcome requirements for students in both White schools and within missionary school systems. For students who attended White schools, their course content and level of examination (for matriculation) was elevated, while the requirements for students in the missionary school system remained the same (Adhikari, 1994). This meant students of color who wished to gain admission into White teacher training colleges could be effectively denied.

This is not to say that all White students were educated. Rural Whites, particularly those in poverty, were impacted by inaccessibility to education. Adhikari (1994) has argued that the Education Department of the Cape in 1839 effectively made education outside of the grasp of both Blacks and poor Whites by means of an economic barrier. This changed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as there was a new impetus to educate all White children in order to maintain White control. Mainly, there was public ideology and a rhetoric that educating people of color would take away opportunities for poor Whites. Therefore, educating all White students became a priority.

**Non-White education and teacher training.** Until missionary stations were established in South Africa, Black children were educated from within the home by community elders and

parents. Storytelling, by means of sharing history through oral and participatory performances, was a way the group promoted cultural values to its young and taught them skills necessary for tribal life (Scheub, 2010). However, church organized missionary stations, apart from the home, became the primary spaces where Black youth were educated.

Mission schools were noted for both their instruction in the English language and for providing a Christian education. However, an overarching purpose of the mission school was literacy instruction so a student could either spread the gospel, obtain a position within the community, or go to work for a White master as a useful servant (Hlatshwayo, 2000). Simphiwe Hlatshwayo (2000) conveyed in *Education in South Africa 1658-1948* that the fundamental purpose of educating the Native population was meant to “prepare them for work using religion as a rationale” (p. 32).

The missionary station in Genadendal established the first school among the Khoikhoi people in the Western Cape Province. It was also the first to open a training college for teachers in 1838. Missionary schools had teacher training programs long before White schools introduced the same kind of programs for training teachers (Wolhuter, 2006). In fact, Nelson Mandela renamed his presidential residence in Cape Town “Genadendal” in homage to the beautiful terrain of the area and in recognition of the training college established at Genadendal (*The Cape Country Meander*, 2015).

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionary stations set up both schools for educating youths and training centers for teachers. Trevor Webster’s (2013) book, *Under the Eagle’s Wings: The Legacy of an African Mission School*, outlined the history of the Healdtown Methodist Institution and pointed out how Methodist missionary schools provided an education on par with White schools. Webster’s text makes clear the importance of missionary education

within the full spectrum of South African education. Webster also authored a valid point that centered on how the Healdtown Methodist Institution was a space where diversity existed and Black and White people lived together in harmony. Although mission schools may have promoted harmonious living conditions, classrooms and eating spaces continued to promote the segregated mentality that comprised South Africa at the time.

Mission schools played a vital role in educating Black students, specifically as an institution that provided an education that otherwise these students would have been denied. However, these schools also played a part in furthering the ethos of colonialism. Friedman (2013) alleged the dual and contested nature of the missionary school systems in his article, "Mission Schools Opened World to Africans, but Left Ambiguous Legacy." Friedman, in part, claimed mission schools as paradoxical in character because they were formed out of colonialism, yet instructed students who opposed it. And, Friedman made clear, mission schools believed in people of color acquiring religious equality, but not necessarily obtaining political or social equality. Whatever function the schools played, they opened a door to knowledge and inspired the lives of children. Some of these children later became prominent South African leaders and revolutionized the country. As examples, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, and Oliver Tambo were all products of the missionary school system. Note this previous list includes two past presidents of South Africa. Ergo, the benefit of a schooling system for Black students that rivaled schools for Whites far outweighs any negative connotation attached to the missionary education system.

***The Coloured population.*** The term "Coloured" is an ethnic label used to describe the population of South Africa who are descendants of Malay slaves and or products of interracial

unions between Europeans and Khoisan women. Malay slaves were brought to the Cape when indigenous South Africans refused to work for the Dutch inhabitants.

British rule in the Cape established basic civil rights for the Coloured population that, in part, extended to education. Coloured children also attended mission schools, which have been described as inadequate, ineffective, and lacking in both basic and material resources (Adhikari, 1994). Coloured missionary schools were also strictly controlled by White clergymen. In 1908, Lord Selborne crafted a memo to the minister of education articulating an argument that Coloured people should be perceived as a race and be educated. Selborne's letter, titled, "Note on the Suggested Policy Towards Coloured People and the Natives" stated, in part, that Coloured people should be taught to "give their loyal support to the White population" (Hlatshwayo, 2000, p. 34). An unintended consequence of Selborne's note, however, was that it officially separated Coloureds from indigenous Africans. The memo averred many Coloureds were "white on the inside" and basically should not be in the same category as the Native population. It also stated the Coloured population should receive schooling along the lines of a European and not to the same standard the Native's received. In addressing the Selborne note, Adhikari (1994) claimed the emergence of the Coloureds as a race (content the note highlighted) moved South Africa from a two-tiered racial society to a three-tiered racial society. By 1910, Adhikari (1994) further reported there were few training facilities for Coloured teachers and many teachers had no training whatsoever.

*Asian and Indians.* Indian people first arrived in South Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as laborers to work in the sugar industry. Indian children, like the Coloured and Black students, mainly attended schools established by Christian missionaries. However, Kuppusami (1966) articulated in "A Short History of Indian Education" that Indian children who conformed to the

standards of White dress and attire were allowed to attend White schools (this practice was discontinued in 1905). Although an effort was made to increase Indian schools at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the appointment of a school board that later became the Natal Education Department, Kuppusami stated Indian education was “still hampered by lack of competent and reliable teachers” (p. 7). This changed in 1904 as the first training college for Indian teachers was established at the Saint Aidents’ Mission in Natal.

**The emergence of technikons.** The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley (1867) and gold in Witwatersrand (1886) brought with it both a new economic development and industrialization to South Africa. Changes in the economic structure made clear a need for a technical education designed to complement the establishment of railways and gold mines (Pittendrigh, 1988). This rapid expansion called for skilled laborers who could meet new capitalist demands and institutions that could provide training in specific trades. Since their inception, technikons were meant to deliver vocational and career training. Like all of South African schools, technikons were divided by race. As examples, there were technikons for Whites, versus technikons for people of color, and so forth.

Part-time classes were started in Cape Town during the late 1800’s to train apprentices for the government railways. Technical education, however, in many respects, was believed to be for the less intellectually endowed and was far removed from tertiary education (Behr, 1988). This perception was largely in part because technical colleges provided training for industry and commerce, in direct opposition of the university, which led to their stigmatization. Additionally, technikons were a move away from classical and liberal education, and they were restricted to the upper and middle classes (Pittendrigh, 1988).

Next, a couple of different legislative endeavors impacted the emergence and establishment of the technikon. First, The Financial Relations Act of 1922 declared education provided in technical institutions should be deemed as higher education, and the Higher Education Act of 1923 stated all technical and vocational education was to be taken over by the Union Education Department. The Devilliers Commission on Technical and Vocational Education of 1948 was established to report on the conditions of technical education up to this point. According to Behr (1988), the Devilliers Commission found the technical education system for Blacks and Coloureds lacking, and they noted that Black students did not have the necessary skill set to actually apply any received technical education.

### **Education in South Africa, 1923- 1975**

Malherbe's (1977) second volume of *Education in South Africa* spanned the years of 1923-1975 and is also considered a seminal text in the canon of South African education literature. However, the second volume is a departure from the first. The first looked at South Africa in disparate parts, whereas this secondary narrative examined South Africa as a national entity, "in terms of the needs of its whole population, embracing Coloureds, Indians, and Africans, as well as Whites" (vii). An important concept from Malherbe's second book is the assertion that nationalism, language, and education have always been linked. Additionally, Malherbe made clear how language rights for Afrikaans speakers were carried out without exception during this time period, and language was used to separate and to create a communal and national White identity.

One struggle that characterized this time period was in part the contestation between the right of language, specifically for Afrikaans, to be maintained in British schools. In 1914, Afrikaans was the medium of instruction in schools and colleges, which "contributed a great deal

to the development of a political consciousness” (Malherbe, 1977, p. 11). When Afrikaans was finally ratified by Parliament as an official language (in 1925), the upturn of the language gave rise to an Afrikaner nationalism that coincided with a racist political agenda. Afrikaner nationalism historically tied to a collective national identity has been discussed and examined by contemporary scholars (see Jansen, 2009; Louw 2004; Morse & Nel, 2008). What is interesting in terms of language ideology was that Coloured people were just as much the creators of Afrikaans, according to Malherbe (1977), as the White population.

**Native South African education and the Department of Native Affairs.** In 1935, the Report for the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education revealed the majority of schools for the Black South African population were state-funded or mission schools. At this time, according to Behr (1988), 30% of teachers were without qualifications and 56% were males. Behr (1988) also reported that 70% of the Black students who wished to go to school could not due to poor facilities, and the Black pupil was not only behind a White student at the same level, but the life of Black student in school lasted only three years.

In 1948, the National Party won the general election on the policy of “separateness” or apartheid. Up until this point, segregation and separation had always been a South African way of life. Now, with the National Party victory, apartheid became legally adopted. Turning to education, the National Party appointed The Eiselen Commission (1949) to investigate the education of Black students. The committee found that Blacks should be educated as a race to support their own cultural values and needs (Wolhuter, 2006). The Eiselen report led the way for The Bantu Education Act of 1953, a dehumanizing act of racism that limited education for Black Africans. Further, this Act shifted the authority of educating Black students from the church (mission schools) to the state. The government also decided the dollar amount to be spent on



each child in South Africa. Mark Hunter (2014) articulated how the state “funded a White child’s education at 14 times the rate of resources devoted to educating an African child” (p. 468).

Reporting on education during the Nationalist Government would not be complete without a mention of Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of the Department of Native Affairs (later Bantu Affairs) from 1950-1958 and later Prime Minister of South Africa. A fundamental feature of Dr. Verwoerd’s character was that he believed the political rights of the South African Black population should be based on tribal authority within their own ethnic groups. Hence, Verwoerd advocated for a separate system of education to coincide with Black South Africans living in their own tribal areas or “bantustans.” Verwoerd has been described as both an architect of apartheid and an “enemy of human dignity” (Mboya, 1993, p.16), and he was instrumental in making the education of the African child inferior to the education of White South African children.

Verwoerd’s racist ideology was partly shaped by the time he spent living in Germany. There, he drew inspiration from the Nazi Party that he brought back with him to South Africa. Verwoerd’s direct words clearly stated how little he valued educating Black South Africans. As Verwoerd expressed (reported by Mboya, 1993), “When I have control of Native Education, I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them” (p. 2). In a YouTube video uploaded in 2010 by Iconic, Verwoerd additionally commented that apartheid was “misunderstood” and it should rather be thought of as “good neighborliness.”

Dr. Verwoerd nurtured an educational rhetoric that institutionalized the elimination of indigenous knowledge in South African schools. This is a point Mboya (1993) has articulated, noting how education during this time was a special type of dehumanization as it took away the

intellectual capacity of Black people. Verwoerd had a vision for South African society that served to structure how schools were organized and delineated. Verwoerd's words (as quoted by Peter Kallaway, 1984) within a speech to Parliament:

There is no space for him [the "Native"] in the European Community above certain forms of labor. For this reason, it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim in the absorption of the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European Society where he is not allowed to graze. (p. 92)

Verwoerd's reach did not limit itself to education. He was also a deciding factor in not allowing non-Whites to play South African sports at the national level, a move that blatantly oppressed and mitigated people of color in South African society. Verwoerd's stance was reflective of the racist and White ideology at the time. In fact, this was a position that had not evolved since the onset of slave schools and the arrival of the Dutch to the Cape.

Overall, the Nationalist Government considered educating Black South Africans was only as necessary as their homelands required, as homelands were to be treated as distinct economies (Malherbe, 1977). Therefore, education for Black students, including the training of teachers, was excised and moved to the Bantustans. Each Bantustan had its own system of schooling and a separate university. In fact, Nelson Mandela was a product of the historically Black South African Native College at Fort Hare (later the University of Fort Hare). This was partly due to the Extension of the University Education Act (45) of 1959 that prohibited Black students from attending many South African universities. Black students could only attend White colleges if they had government approval and their own institutions were full.

**The National Education Policy Act of 1967.** In 1967, Parliament passed the National Education Policy Act described by Malherbe (1977) as the magna carta of all education in South Africa. Fundamentally, the National Education Policy Act stipulated all state sponsored schools should have both a Christian and National character and that instruction should be conducted in the student's mother tongue. This Act also made English and Afrikaans compulsory in schools, and it was an obvious attempt at institutionalizing White nationalism. An appropriate name for the act, as Malherbe claimed, should have been the "White Persons' Education Act" as the document stated it would have a robust national character, but that character was limited to only serving White people. The Act additionally divided people into different nations or homelands, thereby establishing a culture where both a national and inclusive South African identity became obsolete. Schools became the arena for promoting the cultural survival of the Afrikaner speaking section of the population. In school, children of Afrikaner heritage could easily be indoctrinated by nationalistic propaganda (Malherbe, 1977).

This Act was established after the Union of South Africa became The Republic of South Africa in 1961, after Eiselen and Verwoerd altered education, and races were separated through the Group Areas Act of 1950, as a form of urban apartheid. Lastly, the Act also firmly established a national system for the training of teachers. Before this time, universities and education authorities gave out teaching certificates as they saw fit. However, Act 73 of 1969, which was an act solely based on teacher training, stated that only universities could train teachers.

### **Education 1975 to Democracy**

To make clear the fundamental ideological differences between a White expectation of education in South Africa during the last twenty-five years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the duration of the Nationalist Government (1948), The Human Sciences Research Council (1975), writing in an updated version of the same document from 1970, created a descriptive practice of the education of Whites aptly titled, “The Education of Whites in The Republic of South Africa.” This document had a normative perspective of Afrikaner domination and seemingly justified racial inequity to be carried out in both educational and social practices. As a point of interest, the Human Sciences Resource Council was established in 1962 to set the standards of education, which solved issues such as book distribution and uniforms. The Council, however, readily stood by its position of a racial co-existence stating,

South Africa’s official policy for the peaceful and prosperous co-existence of these populations is “separate development,” a policy which has been palpably misunderstood and often grossly misrepresented in many quarters. (p. 4)

The Human Sciences Research Council’s (1975) argument was in alignment with the White nationalist movement and propaganda students in schools were subjected to. The council also wrote in the same document that when the Europeans settled in South Africa it was “peaceful” and by no means was South Africa a land meant only for Blacks.

Propaganda from the national movement aside, the reality of educating people of color continued as a non-priority in South Africa. There was a disjuncture between the promotion of Afrikaans (as both culture and language) against the harsh realities and oppression that non-Whites faced socially, politically, and educationally in South Africa. This, of course, led to resistance as the policies of the Nationalist Government gave rise to an anti-apartheid campaign

and sentiment. One example of resistance was the African National Congress (ANC). Although the African National Congress had been a group since the early 1900's, its military or armed unit, Umkhonto we Sizwe, meaning Spear of the Nation, was not formed until the apartheid years. Another group, the Black Consciousness Movement, led by notable activists Steve Biko and Robert Sobukwe, inspired the creation of the South African Student Movement. Knowledge of the South African Student Movement is instrumental to understanding the mass shooting of school children that took place in Soweto, 1976.

To further establish an Afrikaans (and therefore White) domination and ideology, the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974 was enacted and stated all instruction in schools was to be through the medium of the Afrikaans language, save for religious classes. Afrikaans was already viewed as the language of the oppressor, and this decree making legal the Afrikaans language in Black schools simply increased the polarization between students of color and the government.

On June 16, 1976, in response to the decree, the South African Student Movement organized thousands of "on strike" high school students in what was to be a peaceful protest in response to the decree. What started out as a march of students through the outlying Johannesburg township area of Soweto became known as the "Soweto Youth Uprising." Photos of the uprising were showcased internationally, which consisted of the police firing live rounds of ammunition at the students. After the initial 176 deaths in Soweto, protests spread across the country and 574 people were killed in total.

As for the reality of Black students in schools, Behr (1988) reported half of the Black students enrolled in schools had not reached Standard II and only 15% were attending secondary schools by 1978. As for Coloured students, only 16% attended secondary schools as compared to Whites who had a 30% attendance rate in secondary schools. By this time, half of the Native

African population lived in Bantustans or homelands and nine of these homeland states became self-governing with their own Department of Education and Training. This department was responsible for educating Blacks within these borders.

As for a seminal text, Peter Kallaway's (2002) edited collection, *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened* is an overarching volume offering a closer look at separate movements and issues that impacted education during apartheid. Kallaway outlined the history of education in his introduction, attending specifically to issues that led to the state of education during the apartheid years.

### **Higher Education in South Africa, 1994- Present**

Transformation finally came to South Africa in 1990. This marked the year Nelson Mandela was released from prison after serving 27 years for having been found guilty of treason at the Rivonia Trial. The year 1990 also was the start of a series of talks between Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk, talks that began as a precursor to rewriting the Constitution. During this time, between Mandela's release and his presidency, South Africa was in a constant state of public and political unrest and on the brink of a civil war.

As the government transitioned into democracy, South Africa participated in its first ever multi-racial election (in 1994), which voted into office the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela as president. Transformation, redress, and reconciliation became the rhetoric of a new South African landscape. For the role he played in South Africa's evolution, Mandela was dubbed the "father of the nation" and called "Tata" (father) or "Madiba." The term Madiba referenced and played homage to Mandela's Xhosa clan name.

In comparison to centuries of racial discriminatory practices and the establishment of education institutions that supported racialized policy, transformation in South Africa happened

rather quickly. South Africa became “The Rainbow Nation,” complete with a new flag and national anthem. And, the term “ubuntu,” a Bantu word meaning “I am who I am because of who we all are,” became mainstream verbiage. In response to an inclusive identity as a Rainbow Nation, the 1996 Constitution decreed equitable education as a right of citizenship for all South Africans and sanctioned the official use of all of South Africa’s indigenous languages. The South African Constitution has additionally been recognized as one of the most progressive and democratic constitutions in the world (Cohen, 2014).

The South African Constitution was, in part, based on the Freedom Charter authored by the African National Congress in 1955. Both the Freedom Charter and Constitution provide a point of departure for a discussion of South African higher education (and education more broadly) after the advent of democracy. Historically, education for all South Africans was determined by race, making demarcation and inequality education’s most defining characteristic. Therefore, dismantling unequal and historically inscribed education systems became the focal point for transforming all South African education. As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, transformation and reconciliation were also two key elements that characterized higher education in South Africa after 1994. This is a point that has also been expressed by C.C. Wolhuter (2006). In an article discussing the training of teachers, Wolhuter underscored the transitioning role of education after 1994, stating:

In the post-1994 societal reconstruction project, education is regarded as pivotal.

Education is looked upon as an instrument for realising objectives such as economic growth, national development, the moulding of national unity, the nurturing of interracial tolerance and the creation of a democratic culture. (p. 130)

Turning to public education, in 1994 public education became both compulsory and universal. A national curriculum was also established in 1998, which was a version of an outcome-based education system named “Curriculum 2005.” In 2005, “Curriculum 2005” was reviewed and renamed the “National Curriculum Statement.” The National Curriculum did not last long. It, too, was updated and replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) in 2009. According to the Department of Education (2001), all schools were to be governed by the ten guiding principles as mentioned in the 1996 Constitution. These guiding principles included social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), the rule of law, respect, and reconciliation.

Teacher preparatory programs also received a complete overhaul and distinct measures of restructuring. The “Norms and Standards of Educators” (2000) noted seven parameters under which teachers should be trained emphasizing democratic values, integration, and nurturing equality. However, The Norms and Standards were replaced by the “Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications” in 2010, authored by the Department of Higher Education and Training. In part, the “Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications” deemed the quality of teacher education “questionable” after review of the nation’s teacher programs. The Department of Higher Education and Training recognized that many teacher preparatory programs lacked minimum curriculum standards, did not prepare students appropriately, and did not believe that all university programs understood the depth and breadth of challenges facing education in South Africa.

As for institutions of higher education, they, too, underwent tremendous adjustment after 1994. As part of restructuring of the higher education sector, segregated universities and



technikons in the same area providing overlapping course offerings were merged. The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 regulated higher education and established a Council on Higher Education (CHE). The Council on Higher Education has been responsible for publishing content on the state of higher education, both past and present. In “Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education,” the Council (1997b) outlined a program for the transformation of higher education that would forward a democratic vision based on redressing past inequities and responding to a new social order. The CHE’s (2000) successive report, “Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” provided a framework to reconfigure higher education as it moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Lastly, in 2005, Higher Education South Africa (HESA) was formed to act as a unified body of leadership for public higher education. HESA is a non-profit organization with representation from South Africa’s 23 public universities.

This is not to say that all of this “change” has actually altered the state of education, both in regard to public and higher education institutional frameworks. The legacies of apartheid created unjust schooling systems that continued to be difficult to dismantle. Crain Soudien (2007) is just one of the scholars, who in the first decade after the demise of apartheid, criticized the government's promise of equity and quality education. In “The “A” Factor: Coming to Terms With the Question of Legacy in South African Education,” Soudien (2007) commented on the quality of education ten years after democracy’s transition. Soudien further questioned why improving education had not yet reached a state of public mobilization in the same way that apartheid inspired boycotts and civic unrest.

Soudien's critique does not stand alone. Literally, higher education and education scholarship in general has exploded with the opening and integration of schools since 1994. Researched themes and published papers cover every avenue, from teacher preparation to policy, curriculum design, and educating communities of color equitably, to reform, as examples. In looking at issues of teacher training, Jennifer Morrow (2007) questioned the role of the teacher and challenged continuing apartheid traditions that had not yet embraced transformation. Morrow then cited incompetent teachers and stated that "quality schooling for, perhaps, 80% of our population might have actually deteriorated over the past decade" (p. 94). Considering education as a human right, Pam Christie (2010) joined the conversation by expressing how post-apartheid discourse centered on redressing past inequities rather than placing value on basic education as a human right. Christie's argument highlighted the market-driven approach to schooling in a post-apartheid South Africa that privileged some, did not honor the constitution, nor offer the same education for all. Rather, Christie suggested South African children participate in "an existing and enduring system of stratification" (p. 9). Meanwhile, Mboya (1993) has argued how the Black community was never consulted as to what kind of teacher representation would be best for them and how sending Black children to White schools only reinforced the idea of inferior Black communities. Jonathan Jansen (2009, 2010, 2012) has also advocated for curriculum development as vital both in regard to social reform and for transforming higher education in his body of published work.

Issues of equity and access as they relate to receiving a higher education continued to be a topic of great concern, as Ian Scott, Nan Yeld, and Jane Hendry (2007) theorized in "A Case for Improving Teaching and Learning in a South African Higher Education." Scott, Yeld, and Hendry analyzed student throughput rates (success rates) in order to more fully understand the

alarmingly low graduation rates of students who enter the higher education system. In part, their findings opened the door to a few important points of discussion. First, although access for entrance into institutions of higher education became more accessible, the education students received was severely lacking in quality. Additionally, data revealed Black students were performing at a much lower rate than White students, overall.

*The Economist* (2010b) echoed a few of Scott, Yeld, and Hendry's (2007) concerns in their feature article, "Last in Class: Education Needs to Take a Giant Leap." This article reported how South Africa's crisis in education resulted in the nation being ranked at the bottom in global assessments within the areas of science, math, and literacy. *The Economist* attributed this to Nationalist Party education policies and cited the functional literacy rates of the Black population at 13% (as a whole), while the same rate for Whites was much lower at 0.4%. Adding to this crisis was the compensation for apartheid schooling policies that culminated in lowering the admission requirements for students of color into institutions of higher education. *The Economist* identified the University of Cape Town as one university that participated in weighted admissions. However, rumors abound that this remains a common practice in many South African universities. Inadequate curriculum and poor government schools have created students who enter the university system additionally disadvantaged and ill-prepared. As *The Economist* stated, "it seems a miracle that black pupils make it to university at all" (para.7). Interestingly, math curriculum in public schools has not made a giant leap since the publication of this article in 2010. Recently, the Minister of Basic Education reported that one in four public schools do not offer math classes in grades 10-12. Schools that do not offer math classes blame the problem on current teacher shortages and low student enrollment (Phakathi, 2015).

Public school data has been brought into this chapter for consideration as the challenges that face government schools directly impact the students who enter the higher education system. Higher Education South Africa (HESA) is just one committed body that continues to research and publish scholarship relating to creating successful institutions of higher education. In March 2014, HESA, in a document authored by Dr. Saleem Badat, presented findings on higher education trends in a presentation titled “Higher Education Challenges.” HESA reported student enrollment has doubled since 1994 and that students are represented demographically at institutions of higher education. An interesting statistic from HESA, in 2011, noted that Black students comprised 81% of the total higher education student body although their graduation rates were very low, which echoed the argument of Scott, Yeld, and Hendry (2007) as a sustained problem. HESA additionally found a correlation between Black students’ difficulty balancing higher education while facing ongoing social and political dilemmas to be major factors contributing to low throughput rates (Badat, 2014). HESA also highlighted social inclusion beyond issues of access and opportunity as a continued difficulty at the university level.

Lastly, in an attempt to get my finger on the pulse of education as it stands during the moment of this writing, I conducted a dual Facebook and WhatsApp survey questioning my South African colleagues on the current state of education in their nation. All of the responses were from educators; a few responses are from the students/ teachers who took part in this study. Selected answers are as follows:

“Education in SA is in a state of anger. It’s messy and I don’t feel that the government is dealing with inequities appropriately. Educating the Rainbow Nation is not taken as

seriously as it should be...and lowering standards to pass just makes our learners lazy as well as teachers.”

“South African education is poor and deteriorating whilst made to look like it is better.”

“Standards and pass rates keep lowering.”

“Good education=costs money. Still highly unequal; class more than race. It is still all about economic privilege. Ex Model C schools (former public White schools) have fees that only well-off families can afford, while township schools don't charge fees but then the quality of education is affected.”

“I believe it is a result of the Group Areas Act that wealth distribution still affects the resourcing of schools. It is not a direct result but more of a legacy thereof.”

“In SA the policy of schools just accepting kids based on residential location is apartheid based and is being challenged and schools are beginning to accept students who come from other locations. For me, that opens access to good schools for the township students if they can afford it. Some actually can because there is a middle class in the townships, as people with money don't want to live in the suburbs.”

### **Summation of Chapter Two**

Chapter two presented the literature surrounding education practices in the Western Cape since the arrival of the Dutch to the Cape in 1652. The arrival of the Dutch effectively brought colonialism to the South Africa and set in motion racial ideology that impacted South Africa through the arrival of the British, the Nationalist Government, and the onset of a democratic South Africa. Hegemonic and racial discourses also forged education, creating segregated schooling systems and inferior education policies for people of color. The onset of democracy brought new policies to South Africa and a turn towards diversity, social justice, and equality

became integral components of education practices, in both public and higher education systems. However, dismantling apartheid mentalities that have created stratified schooling systems continued to plague education after the start of democracy, as contemporary scholars have addressed.

### Chapter III

#### Intersection of Spatial Theory and Pedagogy

“Class in Cape Town is demarcated by altitude:  
the farther you are from the mountain,  
the lower, poorer and blacker you are”

(Perry, 2013, para. 9).

#### Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja: Carving a Space for a Story

An understanding of the dynamics of how space can be delineated is foregrounded in the work of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre. In *The Production of Space* (1974/1991), Lefebvre posited space is not a “thing,” but a series of relationships among “things.” Lefebvre theorized there is a phenomena and science about space that it is both object and subject, and an inherited philosophy about the status of space is that it is broken into ensembles or sets that are accompanied by their own logic. Lefebvre constructed this premise around the notion that the natural world is organic and not staged. It simply exists. However, the organic nature of space changes when man enters a space, as Lefebvre has written, when a space has been “laboured on” (p. 76). Hence, space is not determined solely by geography, but what social and material conditions arise from man interacting with and in space. Lefebvre conveyed how a complex relationship exists between modalities of occupied space, thereby establishing the notion that space is a social product that produces and reproduces itself. How a person views the world is inherently bound to location, and location can be used as a tool to analyze society at large (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Space, outlined here, will be expressed as a “location,” a state, or place

of being, where life is enacted and inscribed. Narratives of place are shaped by attitudes and perceptions, in addition to historical and cultural underpinnings. In short, stories are marked by places of inhabitancy; therefore, places of inhabitancy underscore the context of all stories.

People are inherently connected to their varied environment sets, tying them to a specific topography. Edward Soja (1971) joined Lefebvre in making a spatial argument in his work, "The Political Organization of Space." Soja explained this connection links man to Earth and functions as a framework for all spatial interaction. This relationship tells a story that not only speaks to the material conditions produced in an environment, but it also defines social relationships, politics, and cultural stereotypes that exist as a result of spatial placement (location, defined borders, etc.). Thus, ideologies forged from inside this area inform the multiplicities of dialogues that people produce. In addition, ideology works to engender characteristics that are embodied and inscribed to a people by their location. Lefebvre (1974/1991) deemed this as "domains of representation" or "forces of production" (p. 77). Overall, Lefebvre claimed factors such as group action and knowledge within ideology fashion to produce and reproduce social spaces.

Although a personal association to a place is logical, it does authorize borders which characterize both "insider" versus "outsider," "here" and "over there." In fact, Soja (1971) insisted viewing a satellite photo of Earth from outer space would show how the world is organized by boundaries. These boundaries, Soja asserted, both seen and unseen to the human eye, are both created and maintained by man and serve to influence human behavior. Soja contended that such geographic order structures human interaction. Consequently, how a person perceives him or herself in a place directly affects that person's behavior.

An additional idea Soja (1971) mentioned in "The Political Organization of Space" is the



concept of territory and how it relates to spatial dimensions. Soja commented on the biases of American and European attitudes towards the organization of space. Meaning, a conventional Western paradigm identifies space as defined by property or as a commodity that can be bought or sold. The Western world, according to Soja, stakes claim to land and to places, borders are clearly marked and defined, then protected and defended. This, Soja denoted, is vastly different from places like Africa where social interactions define the space, not the territory or space determining how society is defined. Soja further mentioned that both researchers and scholars should keep in mind that perceptions of both material and cultural value produces what equates to as a commodity in different cultures. In short, different folks treat geographic locations differently. As Soja claimed, such a paradigm should not be derived from a Western experience.

To navigate how people move through, interpret, and claim space, Lefebvre (1974/1991) created a “conceptual triad” that serves as a framework for how space is embodied in terms of production and reproduction. This triad consists of “lived” space, equating to the social, physical places as “perceived,” and representational or mental areas as “conceived” spaces. Lefebvre believed the triad explains how people move through the world. In Soja’s (1996) book, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Soja established the notion of Thirdspace in relation to Lefebvre’s triad. In Thirdspace, Soja repurposes Lefebvre’s notion of “life words” or “l’espace vécu,” which informed his understanding of Thirdspace. Soja explained Thirdspace as “the space where all places are capable from being seen by every angle” and a place where “everything comes together” (p. 56). Thirdspace embraces an ebb and flow between each triad where borders are not so clearly demarcated by where one triad ends and another begins. As Soja asserted, Thirdspace is a place that is open to otherness and where relationships can be renegotiated.

To situate a spatial frame in context, space must be first acknowledged as influenced by man and reproductive in nature. Furthermore, according to Soja (1971), space is not neutral or devoid of politics or ideology. What the work of Lefebvre and Soja signifies is the notion of space as an essential element in creating identities of the self. Therefore, space plays a vital role in knowledge production and reproduction. Connection between place and person influences everything from ideology, to perceptions of the world, and to even social class standing.

### **Bourdieu: Cultural Capital and Habitus**

In “The Forms of Capital,” Pierre Bourdieu (1983/1986) demonstrated how the relationship between the environment and its agents acts as a form of capital. Bourdieu described capital as both a force and a principle that underlies the social world, a place of “accumulated history” (para. 1). Bourdieu described capital as presenting itself in three fundamental guises: the social, the economic, and the cultural. The three function differently and can transform their conditions into convertible economic (monetary) forms. Bourdieu (1983/1986) noted that capital accumulates and reproduces itself and it is a “force” inscribed in the “objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible” (para. 1). Meaning, according to Bourdieu, a person’s success is not based on luck or coincidence, but on the capital a person has acquired through interacting in the social world.

Bourdieu (1983/1986) further asserted the structure and functioning of the social world is impossible without the reintroduction of the three forms of capital. Within the guise of cultural capital there are three states: the embodied state (reflecting mind and body), the objectified (relates to cultural goods), and the institutionalized, defined as the objectification of educational qualifications by Bourdieu. It was Bourdieu’s position that capital could be converted under certain conditions into economic profit or educational gain.

One of the issues that Bourdieu (1983/1986) argued for is the importance of transmitting culture capital through family interaction. Bourdieu called this “socially the most determinant educational investment” (para. 6). Mainly, Bourdieu ascertained the transmission of cultural capital could provide a different type of profit, one that could reside outside of the commercial world. Bourdieu also stated a scholastic yield that ignores that familial investment in education is directly correlated to the amount of “cultural backup” the child has inherited. A person’s human capital, explained Bourdieu, depends on the previous cultural investment from the family. Bourdieu further stated the forms of capital could explain how children from different social classes achieve academically at different rates, as they may not have had access to transferrable capital.

Bourdieu (1983/1986) stipulated there are different profits a child can gain that can be used in the economic market. Bourdieu argued all capital has to transfer into economic goods, as he felt the world was disinterested in other non-economic exchanges. The embodied state, according to Bourdieu, relies on a personal investment and it cannot be achieved second-hand. This investment promotes mobility outside of the economic arena. Further, Bourdieu maintained social mobility as embodied capital can be mistaken for competence, rather than a capital depending on appropriating available resources. This can be mediated by a specific agent and his or her relationships to people with capital competing for the same goods.

Bourdieu (1983/1986) equated capital to power and argued for the transmission of capital through transferable relationships. To this end, Bourdieu made two vital points in his essay related to changing the social structure through an investment in other forms of capital. Mainly, Bourdieu acknowledged the importance of the domestic transmission of cultural capital, and he

believed that one could change the social structure by “sanctioning the heredity of the transmission of cultural capital” (para. 6).

Additionally, Bourdieu (1983/1986) viewed power as culturally and symbolically created and constantly re-legitimized through the interplay of both agency and structure. The main way this happens is through what he called “habitus” or socialized norms or tendencies that guide behavior and thinking. Bourdieu (1977/2013a) asserted that structures within environments create habitus. Habitus, as described by Bourdieu, in short, is a way of being in a space. Habitus is a system of material class existence, both a product of past history and determined by material conditions characteristic of a condition of class (Bourdieu, 1977/2013a).

To illustrate, the way of the space is determined long before the students walk into the classroom. Classroom doors, walls, where desks are placed—all work in concert to give life and symbolic meaning to an area. Moreover, the hall leading up to the classroom and the building where the classroom is placed communicates a meaning for how the space is intended to be utilized. Lefebvre’s (1974/ 1991) theory of spatiality is closely aligned with Bourdieu’s (1977/2013a) notion of habitus. Lefebvre concluded that buildings and monuments subsume power relations. Hence, it is important to discern what messages space is silently producing, in addition to acknowledging how that message is consumed. This is especially vital as spatial constructions not only structure a person’s representation of the world, but these factors function to structure the group itself; the group then orientates itself according to that representation (Bourdieu, 1977/2013b).

### **Henry Giroux: Crossing Borders through Pedagogy**

In 1988, Henry Giroux authored a series of articles critiquing the postmodern movement. Giroux articulated postmodernism as a form of cultural criticism meant to challenge the modernist claim that privileged Western patriarchal cultural norms while repressing voices that have been deemed subordinate. Giroux claimed postmodernist ideology should reject the “European tradition as the exclusive referent for judging what constitutes historical, cultural, and political truth” (p. 163). Giroux’s answer was to conceptualize a border pedagogy. Giroux proposed combining the best aspects of both postmodernism and modernism as a means to deepen critical pedagogy, while simultaneously providing a framework for a reimagined approach to educating students in changing educational climates. Giroux referred to this reimagined pedagogy as a “border pedagogy of postmodern resistance” (p. 165). Border pedagogy defined in Giroux’s words:

It is a pedagogy that is attentive to developing a democratic public philosophy that respects the notion of difference as part of a common struggle to extend the quality of public life. In short, the notion of border pedagogy presupposes not merely an acknowledgment of shifting borders that both undermine and deterritorialize different configurations of power and knowledge; it also links the notion of pedagogy to a more substantive struggle for a democratic society. It is a pedagogy that attempts to link an emancipatory notion of modernism with a postmodernism of resistance. (p. 165)

Throughout the 90s, Henry Giroux continued to articulate a need for the adoption of a postmodern pedagogy that could address the shifting attitudes of a new generation of students and a world that, at the time, was becoming increasingly more globalized. Giroux (1991) called for a pedagogy to not only “decenter as it remaps” (p. 71), but to establish a discourse that

examined how the concepts of race, class, and gender could be understood in the context of how they are inscribed by power, cultural, and historical relationships. Giroux additionally promoted continued dialogue that explored, questioned, and renegotiated the idea of multiculturalism in education.

Mainly, Giroux took this pedagogical position in response to a conservative attack on cultural democracy and liberal education in general, which Giroux believed produced a curriculum that reduced multiculturalism to a standardized “common culture.” Giroux’s (1992) stance was the creation of a common culture supported a master narrative of White domination and a pedagogy that is not “responsive to the imperatives of a critical democracy” (p. 13). Further, Giroux (1992) explained how power works to secure the domination of one group over another, which in turn silences and marginalizes subordinate groups. Pedagogy, according to Giroux, must address how the self “recognizes others as subjects rather than objects of history” and it must be conscious of how “power is written on, within, and between groups as part of a broader effort to reimagine schools as democratic public spheres” (Giroux, 1996b, p. 75). Giroux’s (1988, 1991, 1992, 1996a, 1996b) border pedagogy makes visible class and racial differences that have been long ignored in schools and steeped within asymmetrical relations of power. Without transformation, according to Giroux, education would continue to privilege a Western cultural legacy that favors White middle class students (Giroux, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1996a, 1996b).

### **Summation of Chapter Three**

This chapter provided an overview of education in South Africa from 1652 to the present, before moving into a discussion of spatial theory, Bourdieu’s scholarship in cultural capital and classroom habitus, and border pedagogy. In part, the scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu served as a

platform for understanding how a story is connected to both a person's culture and influenced by the social conditions of a place. To Bourdieu, the scholarly contributions of Henri Lefebvre further explained conditions of relationships, or "modes," in the production of space.

Complimenting both Bourdieu and Lefebvre, instructing changing educational climates and students who reside in border spaces was introduced by the work of Henry Giroux and Edward Soja.

## Chapter IV

### **The Digital Storytelling Genre and Persistent Questions Concerning the Use of Personal Narrative in Academic Work**

“From my experience, when I am with my friends,  
we don’t have time to share our painful stories.

We always focus to the good.

No one wants to tell his Black story.

They are too common, and we are too ashamed.

So we go out and look for a nice story...

but I’ve been telling them”

(Luniko).

This work now takes a turn at discussing scholarship in personal writing, digital storytelling, and digital scholarship more broadly. Personal writing was selected as an important feature for this dissertation because at the heart of a digital story is a narrative of the self. As Sondra Perl (2010) has expressed, any form of digital writing must start with words. Therefore, it seems appropriate to draw from the composition and rhetoric discipline in order to locate “the personal” in regard to its limitations and benefits for student writers, whether students are writing “traditionally” or in new media modalities.

#### **Personal Writing? Narrative? Story? What’s in a Name?**

The act of sharing a personal account has a multitude of definitions and names that span all disciplines. Scholars such as Barthes (1974) and Fisher (1985) have both commented on the



transient nature of narrative texts that can be found in multiple arenas and not tied to any one discipline. As Fisher claimed, “there is no genre, including technical communication, that is not an episode in the story of a life” (p. 1). Ochs and Capps (1996) have situated the narrative as fundamental and consisting of a range of genres like story, novel, testimony, eulogy and gossip, to satire and medical history (p. 19). Ochs and Capps use the term “narrative” and have stated the narrative genre is a way to make meaning and to shape experiences, while Stan Wortham (2000) claimed the narrative construct as a way to transform the self. Ingeborg Hoesterey (1991) first defined the shift of narrative writing as that of moving towards a cultural critique and “closer to the priorities of critical theory” (p. 213). Hence, appropriating the term narrative alone can present challenges for those who work with student writing.

Composition scholars such as Anne Ruggles Gere (2001), Jane Hindman (2001), and Jonathon Mauk (2006) labeled the writing students produce of a personal nature or viewpoint as “autobiographical writing,” “personal writing,” or “personal narrative.” In Candace Spigelman’s (2001) article, “Argument and Evidence in the Case of the Personal,” Spigelman presented narrative writing in terms of synonyms, also adopting the phrases “personal writing” and “personal narrative” interchangeably. Jane Hindman has added to this conversation by claiming what is named “the personal” has evolved from diverse and multiple contexts. Peter Elbow (Bartholomae, 1995), known widely for his advocacy of personal writing, called the expressivist writing students compose simply as “writing.” Contributing in 2004, Robert Nash argued for scholarly personal narrative, his term for personal writing that is used as a way to bridge personal experience to the intellectual work found in the academy.

Critical race theorists and those working out of this paradigm such as Aveling (2001), Delgado (1989), Delgado and Stefancic (2001), Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) and

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) have discussed “narratives” in terms of “stories” or “critical stories.” Mainly, scholars in this school of thought assert stories told by people considered on the margins of society—the poor, people of color, the linguistically marginalized—are critical tools in challenging the dominant stories told by people in power. As Aveling (2006) has pointed out, counter-stories become important spaces in which to relate with others. Delgado has exercised “counter storytelling” and “storytelling” interchangeably. His definition of both terms combine current stories with elements of current reality, thus constructing a new world of cultural and communal understanding. Williams (2004) argued by experiencing a counter story, those in the dominant culture can “participate in creating a new narrative that is visible to all and, perhaps, alter perceptions in their community and in the larger culture” (p. 166). Counter-stories pave the way for resistance, and Miller (1998) has asserted that resistance is encoded through both remembering and writing down stories. This brings to light another type of story and that is the resistance story. Lastly, Fisher (1985) has written about balance stories, his idea based on balance theory, where a person might rationalize an event by restoring balance in order to create a justification story.

Next, there is the act of writing and sharing the personal that takes place in multimodal contexts, or as Page and Thomas (2011) have acknowledged, the “narrative revolution in the height of hyper-text” (p. 1). A digital story or a multimodal video production that can be made by ordinary people combining text, image, video, and music, can be found in this realm. Joe Lambert’s (2012) vision of digital storytelling works mainly within the realm of the personal or the autobiographical, but digital storytelling can extend itself to any subject. Jean Burgess (2006) has suggested that digital stories are “marked by their sincerity, warmth, and humanity” (p. 8). Sondra Perl (2010) titled the digital stories her freshman composition students have

crafted as “prose poems in a digital format” (para. 9). As a progression from digital storytelling, Vasudevan (2006) has called for “counter stories” to intersect with multimodal composing in order to create new spaces for telling stories.

### **Sharing the Personal: Value**

There is a long tradition within the composition and rhetoric discipline regarding the academic merit and value of personal writing (or expressivist writing) in classroom spaces. Although writing assignments that highlight the personal continue to be a topic of debate, such assignments are commonly found within the syllabi of composition classes as a gateway task or as an introductory activity to warm students up before the “serious” scholarly work of the academy begins. However, as this text will soon show, prominent scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric have espoused the value of personal writing, particularly as it relates to academic writing. Candace Spigelman (2001) has reminded us that personal writing takes place in multiple contexts and forms. Spigelman has further deemed the personal narrative in the classroom as a “product of expressivist writing instruction” (p. 65)<sup>1</sup> and usually takes shape in the guise of free writing, writing of the self, or writing to construct meaning (Spigelman, 2001). Narrative writing, therefore, has been linked to underscoring personal experience and voice, expression, engaged authorship, and first-person point of view; it lies in direct opposition to formulaic and impersonal writing (such as the five paragraph essay).

Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae’s (1995) ongoing conversation in the late 80’s and 90s characterized the pros and cons of personal writing in the college writing classroom. Elbow argued in order for students to see themselves as writers, freshman composition should primarily focus on reading and publishing the original work of its students. In other words, students’

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<sup>1</sup> James Berlin’s (1988) “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class” provides an excellent historical discussion and description of expressionist pedagogy and rhetoric.

personal and reflective work should take center stage in the curriculum. Elbow (2002) continued to make a strong case for the use of the personal in classroom settings by reminding teachers that students write in multiple venues and that most of their writing will happen outside of the academy. In his essay, "Exploring Problems With "Personal Writing" and "Expressivism," Elbow examined the ambiguous nature tied to personal writing by describing four dimensions of the personal (how students think, respond, relate, interpret) that can be present in any combination in various types of writing. Therefore, any type of writing assignment has the potential to become a personal response. The four dimensions, according to Elbow, blur the line between personal and non-personal writing. As Elbow alleged, even if instructors believe they are assigning a non-personal topic, "good writers in the world bring to bear personal language and personal thinking on non-personal topics" (p.13).

Elbow is not the only proponent of personal writing. Linda Brodkey (1994) has written about the power of being "your own informant" (p. 527) in her article, "Writing on the Bias." Candace Spigelman (2001) outlined the value of composing the personal essay emphatically stating, "the telling of stories can actually serve the *same* purpose as academic writing and that narratives of personal experience can accomplish serious scholarly work" (p. 64). Anne Ruggles Gere (2001) has also credited personal writing, explaining the value of this genre revolves around the directed attention given to the experiences and personal feelings of the author. And, Thomas Newkirk (1997) has defended the narrative genre as a valid form of human experience. Newkirk has called for writing instructors to read personal narratives outside of shallow genre expectations. Although, Newkirk believes any student experience (shallow or not) could offer a valuable springboard for writing.

Personal writing assignments attend to promoting student access, specifically to how students might use personal experiences as a framework for conducting a larger social critique. Personal responses based on lived-experiences is an idea Jonathan Mauk (2006) has advocated, encouraging writing instructors to think about the world as a site for text production. Adding to this, Dan Morgan (1998) has reminded instructors that student lives are complicated; hence, complications are what they write about. Responding to the world is a personal act and such a response emerges in the stories students tend to write. Valuing student writing relies upon giving student experiences credit as tools that can facilitate knowledge production, even if the stories are personal or as Morgan states, complicated. Cynthia Selfe (2010) has also promoted the narrative form and she has suggested instructors “turn to personal narratives as an effective way of exploring the social, cultural, political, ideological, and historical formations that have shaped the literacy practices and values of people and groups” (para. 8). And, Lynn Bloom (2000) has articulated all writing is personal if a writer has a stake in the work. Bloom (2000) further situated how closely the personal and academic writing intersect in her essay, “That Way Be Monsters: Myths and Bugaboos About Teaching Personal Writing.”

More importantly, the stories people tell play a critical role in the formation of personal identity. Alessandro Duranti (2003) has echoed this sentiment, claiming that acts of narrative are derived from a paradigm of language that has associated itself with identity formation. Further, it is important to note how material and cultural conditions are represented in stories, both which directly relate to how students view themselves and the world around them. Thomas Newkirk (1997) has also linked personal writing and its connection to identity by pointing out how personal writing is an act of self-preservation. Hence, value, self, identity, and writing are enmeshed. This point is also made by Linda Brodkey (1994) in her aforementioned essay.

Lastly, Rymes and Wortham (2011) have established narrative (and storytelling) as a powerful means when relating to and understanding others. And, Stan Wortham (2000) has connected narrative's performative role in identity formation by claiming how repeatedly telling a story gives the author an opportunity to become the "self" represented in the story.

### **Sharing the Personal: Risk**

Critics of personal writing do not believe this genre adequately prepares students with the necessary critical thinking and academic skills required for writing in the academy. This is a point David Bartholomae (1995) articulated in his conversation with Peter Elbow. In fact, Bartholomae explicitly stated that academic writing (he mentions no other genres) "is the real work of the academy" (p. 63). Bartholomae, standing in complete opposition to personal writing, stipulated the "stories we tell when we tell the stories of our lives--they belong to TV, to book, to culture, to history" (p. 64). Bartholomae additionally argued that writing outside of the academic genre does not adequately prepare students to deal with power structures of discursive practices, and classrooms that advocate free writing and free thinking are utopian in nature and serve to promote a master trope free from institutional pressures and demands. Lastly, Bartholomae suggested teaching students outside of this paradigm does not empower them. Overall, Bartholomae does make one valid point in this essay. He critiqued personal writing as a set of formulaic responses, master narratives of loss, death, and abuse, as examples. He then questioned if instructors can teach students to write outside of these conditioned tropes.

Secondly, in the literature, there are additional types of risk associated with stories (written or spoken) specifically relating to classroom instruction. First, crafting stories in places that are built around the politics of social and ethnic exclusion can leave students unfamiliar with producing text(s) in demarcated spaces. Such spaces create borders, and the act of border

crossing is one that can be both real and imagined (Reynolds, 2007). Meaning, crossing borders can be about students crossing space and time, literally travelling to and through places (going into unfamiliar neighborhoods, driving back and forth to school etc.), or border crossing can represent writing about events students have put borders around to protect themselves.

Additionally, Reynolds (2007) has written in her book, *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, that border crossing can signify “imagined” boundaries as exemplified by having students write in genres they are unfamiliar with or in genres students feel that they are not allowed to access (e.g., writing in the academy). Reynolds has claimed acts of literacy requiring students to travel into unfamiliar terrains or cross over borders may present a risk to students if they are requested to travel into perilous ground for a grade as a type of cultural safari.

Next, sharing personal stories in a classroom setting becomes a high stakes endeavor when intersected with grades and power hierarchies that exist in all classroom spaces. Further, it is possible that students may feel that they must “out” themselves in the classroom for a grade. Anne Ruggles Gere (2001) has illuminated this point in her scholarship regarding teaching with the personal and added that if certain narratives are offered higher prestige than others, students will not feel like they have had the right lives to produce writing valued by teachers. Jane Hindman (2001) has also commented on the murky standards for grading personal writing, and Tom Romano (2004) has argued that there is much at stake for students, personally and academically, when writing in the genre of narrative. Even though the writing and sharing of stories can offer unique entry points for students to experience a new way of life or culture, this, too, according to Gere (2001), can put students at risk due to the failure of instructors to notice how classroom politics shape the construction of meaning in student writing.

The ethics attached to personal writing have long been a sticking point to those opposed to this genre of writing in the classroom. Cheryl Alton (1993) has questioned if it is responsible on the part of the teacher to play the role of a psychiatrist when students write about grief, trauma, and pain. Alton further stated instructors are not qualified to cross this line. Lucia Perillo (1997) has mirrored Alton's concern regarding the role of the teacher in her text, "When the Classroom Becomes the Confessional." Perillo averred that society's obsession with acts of confession nurtures confusing classroom spaces where critique of writing is not valued as much as sharing a moment with the author.

Swartzlander, Pace, and Stamler (1993) have challenged the impact of "shockingly unprofessional" writing assignments that require students to engage in "inappropriate self-revelation" (para. 1) in college classrooms in their essay, "The Ethics of Requiring Students to Write About Their Personal Lives." Swartzlander, Pace, and Stamler also questioned if grading should be attached to personal revelation, and they bring attention to how students with diverse backgrounds, who may already feel out of place in a White dominated world, may be additionally marginalized by this genre of writing. Chimamanda Adichie (2009) has made this point about marginalization as well. Adichie offered commentary on the nature of definitive and single stories that work in concert to perpetuate a person or place as the abject other in her TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*. Hence, sharing personal artifacts in the form of student-produced texts could serve to further ostracize students in classroom spaces.

### **Sharing the Personal: Trauma**

At this juncture, it is necessary to consider how personal writing can produce trauma both in the collective body of the classroom space or in the student who bares all when sharing a personal story. Daphne Read's (1998) scholarship has explored the deep reluctance in the



academy to deal with trauma as students experience it. Read further claimed such a philosophy is hypocritical in that “trauma” may belong in the texts students study, but not in the writing students produce. However, Read’s argument centers on teaching in borderland spaces, a space where multiple and diverse people meet that must emphasize the “critical importance of communal sharing and witnessing” (p. 113). Julie Rak (2006) has also reminded those of us who work with students to consider the ethical challenges when bearing witness to trauma in classroom settings. Lisa Tyler (1999-2000), in a response to critics of personal writing, pointed out in her essay, “Narratives of Pain: Trauma and the Healing Power of Writing” that writing about trauma does not cause students more trauma; conversely, writing has the power to heal. Tyler based her opinion on the work of psychologists whom she cited in her essay, and therefore posited that writing instructors should not shy away from student writing prompts that may result in traumatic results. According to Tyler, the benefits of writing the personal:

It is an act of courage and responsibility, a way of trying to understand and come to terms with one's past. Writing about pain literally has the power to heal, and we should not discourage our students from engaging in such writing projects. (p. 21)

In support, Jeffrey Berman’s (2001) book *Risky Writing: Self-Disclosure and Self-Transformation in the Classroom* contextualized both the risks and rewards of writing in the personal genre. Berman characterized risky writing as an exercise of self-disclosure and encourages instructors to teach students how to write safely in classroom settings. He then stated that all types of writing may be risky, but it is his belief that students who write about traumatic events may reap educational and therapeutic breakthroughs. Further, Berman claimed the inability to talk and or write about trauma events such as victimization may perpetuate further victimization. He does note the challenges in grading works of self-disclosure and cautions

teachers to avoid playing roles for which they are not trained. A last important point is that Berman has conceded that personal writing is not often thought of very highly in the academy, even though the narrative genre has the hallmarks of an intellectual enterprise. To back up his point, Berman stated personal writing is an “intellectually rigorous genre, demanding self-discipline and self-criticism” (p. 27), and “the writing teacher’s task is to help students express themselves on a wide range of topics, some of which may be risky” (p. 34).

### **Defining the Digital Story**

A digital story is an interactive multimedia production that combines images, music, text, animation, video clips, or spoken voice to create a personalized movie. Authors have total control over the elements and can make a digital story as long or as short as they like. A number of software options are available through computer downloads or smartphone applications (see Microsoft’s Photo Story 3 and Apple’s iMovie). Therefore, digital story authorship has become accessible and can be used with ease by “everyday” authors and composers. The digital story format can be utilized to tell any genre of story, pose questions, or to present ideas. In short: A digital story can be as imaginative, creative, or interactive as its author.

The Center for Digital Storytelling/StoryCenter is widely credited for the digital storytelling movement due to their commitment in using stories for change. Founded in 1994 by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert, and Nina Mullen, the Digital Media Center in San Francisco, California, was formed after recognizing how stories could be produced by using media technologies emerging from the 90s in order to give people a voice. The work of Lambert and Atchley, in particular, challenged the notion that art should be reserved for the gifted. They believed that lay practitioners could make creative contributions, thereby making art accessible for all (storycenter.org, n.d.). In a video on The Center for Digital Storytelling/StoryCenter

website (n.d.), Lambert recalled the origin of the digital storytelling movement and how he and Atchley were always interested in voice, and particularly how different stories could be told.

In 1998, the Digital Media Center moved to Berkeley, California, and became The Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS). In 2015, the Center for Digital Storytelling became StoryCenter, a name that encompasses all the work of story residing outside of a digital medium. Since the 90's, the Center has led international and community workshops in their storytelling method. This method includes a seven step process for crafting an autobiographical digital story, taking the author from thinking about elements of storytelling like hook and point of view, to media concerns like soundtrack selection and pacing. A central component of the CDS/StoryCenter process is the story circle, a workshop style environment where students of digital storytelling share stories and receive feedback from peers within the circle. Digital stories derived from the CDS/StoryCenter model usually are 3-5 minutes in length and around 250-400 spoken words.

From the CDS/StoryCenter website (n.d), the Center states its mission is to “create spaces for transforming lives and communities through the acts of listening to and sharing stories” (“about StoryCenter”). The Center also lists several publications including Joe Lambert’s books, *Seven Stages: Storytelling and the Human Experience* (2013) and *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (4th ed., 2012). A third book is available for purchase via PDF, authored by Joe Lambert (2010) and titled *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*. In addition, several articles have been published in conjunction with the Center by on-site and collaborating authors (see the storycenter.org site for a complete list). In the late 90s, the CDS teamed up with the University of California at Berkeley (where they are currently located) in order to examine how digital storytelling could be utilized in both K-12 education and higher education institutions. The Center has also led international workshops in social-based issues through its Silence Speaks

platform. One project of note from Silence Speaks is the Men as Partners Project (2006), which addressed HIV /AIDS in South Africa. The philosophy that guides The Center for Digital Storytelling/ StoryCenter (n.d.) is very clear. Listed under “Core Principles” and a subtitle called “Stories Can Lead to Positive Change,” the Center’s guiding philosophy regarding personal writing states:

Personal narratives can touch viewers deeply, moving them to reflect on their own experiences, modify their behavior, treat others with greater compassion, speak out about injustice, and become involved in civic and political life. Whether online, in social media or local communities, or at the institutional/policy level, the *sharing* of stories has the power to make a real difference. (p. 2)

Digital storytelling, according to Lambert (2012), is an exercise that allows participants to use story as a means for relating and remapping primary experiences. Lambert has called such work a “teaching tool for survival” (p. 7). As for the digital storytelling movement, Lambert asserted that, in part, it is dedicated to decentering authority. Rina Benmayor (2008) has assessed digital storytelling as a “social pedagogy” that “constructs a safe and empowering space for cross-cultural collaboration and learning” (p.188). The Digital Storytelling Multimedia Archive (2012) at Georgetown University has labeled digital stories as “multimedia projects combining text, images, audio and video files into short film clips” (para. 1). Jean Burgess (2006) articulated the digital story movement as a means to “amplify the ordinary voice,” as she deemed that digital stories should not only be known as a media form but as a “field of cultural practice” (p. 6). And, lastly, Leslie Rue (2009) tied digital storytelling to ancient and historic storytelling by defining the digital story in this way:

Digital storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Digital stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid color to characters, situations, experiences, and insights. (para. 1)

### **Composition's Turn to the Digital**

The emergence of accessible technology has created a platform for personal writing to reinsert itself into the composition discipline in a meaningful way. Teaching writing in digital domains intercepts millennial students on the Internet (where they spend their time), and opens the door for instructors to consider new possibilities for remixing traditional forms of writing into hybrid and digital compositions. Two publications stemming from the composition and rhetoric discipline signal this trend. In 1983, the first issue of *Computers and Composition* appeared, ironically in paper format. The *Computers and Composition* website (n.d.) states that some of its first published pieces were narrative texts that described teaching with technology. And *Kairos*, an online journal publishing refereed articles that intersect digital and multimodal compositions, rhetoric, and pedagogy, debuted in 1996.

This turn from “traditional” and or “paper-based” compositions to embracing writing in technological domains was echoed by Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004) in her address at the Conference of College Composition and Communication and then later in a print version (2005) of “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key.” In part, Yancey claimed literacy was in a state of “tectonic change” (p. 298), and she asserted what students know about writing and where they do writing is far different from many writing assignments. Yancey then advocated for the discipline to not only consider where students are writing (and doing it without writing instructors), but to respond to the technological shift by altering its curriculum and approach to

the instruction of student writing. Stanford University answered Yancey's call for change by establishing a composition class focused on the mode of delivery, one of the five canons of rhetoric (Lunsford, 2006). Providing evidence of composition's movement into technological domain instruction, Andrea Lunsford (2006) outlined Stanford's new course in her essay, "Writing, Technologies, and the Fifth Canon." In this paper, Lunsford detailed the oral, rhetorical, and visual elements students grappled with as they learned to analyze and engage with multimodal texts in class. Lastly, as for combining the work of visual storytelling with the art of written composition, John Udell (2005) advocated for the skill set that video production requires *to become* the new freshman composition course. An additional representational point of the departure to the digital is The Ohio State University's Digital Archives of Literacy Narratives (DALN, n.d.), which represents an online historical record that documents literacy practices. What these changes signify is the growth of the discipline in response to the advent of a technological world that has forged a new domain for writing.

To further illustrate composition's move into the digital, Cynthia Selfe and Sondra Perl's (2010) feature presentation at the Conference on College, Composition, and Communication situated the art and act of writing in digital formats. Perl's (2010) presentation, "The Aesthetics of Digital Storytelling" related ways in which new media can "usher in a paradigm shift" (para. 4) in regard to how students produce writing. Perl's use of digital storytelling coincided with her belief in the importance of voice in writing, which in her opinion digital stories illuminate. To illustrate, Perl stated, "The grain and timbre of the voice, in fact, become central elements of the composition" (para. 6). To belie critics, Perl insisted moving into the digital is not an attempt to ignore the written. As Perl articulated, it is the "words that matter" (para. 7) and the words are established before other visual and aesthetic elements are positioned, serving to complement the

visual text. In Cynthia Selfe's (2010) presentation, "Stories That Speak to Us: Multimodal Literacy Narratives," Selfe located her work in what she called the third-wave of narrative studies that has moved across disciplines like education and anthropology. As Selfe articulated:

This new landscape of narrative studies shifts our focus from what used to be a fascination with the structure and the analysis of personal stories to a focus on how such accounts are tied in fundamental ways to culture, meaning, knowledge, identity formation and transformation in all human beings. (para. 5)

Moreover, Selfe claimed the work of story is a form of political action, of doing, and positions the speaker relationally between the story and the audience.

This point of disciplinary growth is also one that Adam Banks (2015) narrated in the Chair's address at the Conference of College Composition and Communication (4C). In his address, Banks unequivocally called for the retirement of the traditional essay and for it to be promoted to the rank of dominant genre emeritus, as he challenged the composition discipline to respond to the "rise of activities around with writing and communication can be organized" in order to find "new intellectual spaces" in respect to crafting multimedia and multimodal compositions. Banks effectively joined the ranks of other composition scholars who have long considered the changing climate of writing.

### **Digital Storytelling as 21st Century Pedagogy**

Digital storytelling as both a pedagogical method and a genre has become prevalent since collaborations with public storytellers like The Center for Digital Storytelling and the University of California at Berkeley, in addition to the increased interest of academics now working in digital modalities. A primary characteristic of digital storytelling is that it initiates a space that is focuses on personal voice and experience, as students actively use these features to produce

knowledge through the creation of each story. The emphasis when composing a digital story centers on the role of the individual in knowledge production, a key attribute that inspires student agency. As Vasudevan (2006) has articulated, digital productions allow students to story themselves, versus being storied by others.

A benefit of digital storytelling rests in the particular affordances it promotes in regard to student authorship and participatory access in public arenas. Inherently this leads students to new knowledge production and the ability to engage in Internet spaces, as content producers versus media consumers. This is a point made by Jean Burgess (2006), who has highlighted vernacular creativity in her paper titled, "Hearing Ordinary Voices: Cultural Studies, Vernacular Creativity and Digital Storytelling." Burgess argued that the amateur person has the availability and power to participate in media culture, which amplifies voice and "balances the ethics of democratic access" (p.6). Hull and Katz (2006) continued along this vein in their seminal article, "Crafting an Agentive Self: Case Studies of Digital Storytelling." The Hull and Katz text situated how digital storytelling could be used to aid students in finding their agentive self by negotiating both visual media and authorship through digital storytelling. Hull and Katz presented research regarding the empowering nature of such an act for participant Randy who was able to author a social world despite his material limitations. Hull and Katz claimed the act of digital storytelling positioned Randy as a social agent.

In higher education, Rina Benmayor (2008) contextualized digital storytelling as a social pedagogy, adopting this mode of authorship in both a personal and academic context to enable her students' connection with their past as they theorized Latino/a positionality. Benmayor further equated digital storytelling as an intellectual enterprise as students are offered a space to both challenge and to talk back to themes (from literature and beyond) that have served to define



them. Matthias Oppermann (2008), building on Benmayer's work, claimed that digital storytelling is a practice that connects emotional learning to critical and analytical (textual) engagement. Oppermann also made a case for writing in this genre (as opposed to traditional paper based writing) as a way to make "composition strategies visible in new ways" (p. 179). Raimist and Jacobs's (2010) text, "The Pedagogy of Digital Storytelling in the College Classroom" examined how undergraduate students appropriated digital storytelling to engage with the media in a collaborative class they instructed. Patricia McGee's (2015) book, *The Instructional Value of Digital Storytelling: Higher Education*, provides a complete overview starting with the culture and tradition of oral stories, to how the instructional uses of digital story frameworks can shape particular classroom practices. The scholarship of Rolón-Dow (2011) has examined digital storytelling as a form of critical theory for engaging students in diverse classrooms.

Internationally, Gail Benick's (2012) scholarship cited the rise of diversity within Canadian universities and has argued for digital storytelling among diasporic communities as an "alternative medium of knowledge production recognizing diverse voices and mother tongues previously undervalued in the academy" (p. 150). In a South African context, the vast body of work from the research team of Gachago, Condy, Chigona, and Ivala (2013, 2014) has situated an understanding of how digital storytelling can operate in nuanced and contested environments. As a research team, Gachago et al. (2012) has examined digital storytelling through the frameworks of teacher identity, social justice, digital literacies, communities of practice, student engagement, and counter storytelling. Chloe Brushwood-Rose (2009) established a case for digital storytelling as a practice that "subverts the rules of narrative" (p. 214), which then creates an opening for self-discovery and meaning-making.

Digital storytelling projects with teacher educators that have investigated the use of story in classroom applications is not uncommon. Issues under study have ranged from technology integration and efficacy, communities of practice, teacher attitudes, and critical reflection (see Chigona, 2013; Daniels, 2013; Gakhar, 2007; Heo, 2009; Kobayashi, 2012). Lastly, in a global context, Yuksel, Robin, and McNeil (2011) investigated the educational uses of digital storytelling globally, noting the challenges and successes faced by those working within a digital storytelling paradigm around the globe.

As for a pedagogical approach outside of higher education, Jason Ohler's (2008) *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning, and Creativity*, stands as a highlight of the genre. Ohler's book illustrates the multiple uses for digital storytelling in the writing and language arts classroom. In an additional text, Jason Ohler (2005/2006) has made the case that digital storytelling can be used to strengthen students' media and critical literacy skills. Sara Kajder's (2004) work with digital modalities in public institutions does the same, illustrating the uses of digital storytelling as a tool for literacy exploration. Lalitha Vasudevan (2006) documented the benefit of digital storytelling in remaking identities and in allowing an author to be known in his or her own terms. Vasudevan purported this is especially important for people in society that are storied by others. In scholarship with second and or foreign language learners, the work of Yu Feng Yang (2012) and Yang and Wu (2012), investigated the process of crafting digital stories (Yang, 2012), while Yang and Wu (2012) conducted an exploratory year- long study examining the academic achievement of EFL high school students.

**Summation of Chapter Four**

Chapter four investigated the historical context of personal writing before contextualizing digital storytelling as a genre of personal and narrative composition. In chapter four, a theoretical discussion stemming from the literature provided the groundwork for the benefits of digital story work as a valid pedagogical tool and as an important act of student authorship. At the intersection of place, identity, and self as it pertains to both the act of authorship and genres of narrative and personal writing, sits the scholarship of Roland Barthes, Jerome Bruner, Anne Ruggles Gere, Thomas Newkirk, and Peter Elbow, among others, who have explained how personal writing takes shape both inside and outside of theoretical frameworks. Lastly, two threads of technology and writing scholarship were investigated. One track of literature pertained to the integration of computers and composition. Insights from Cythia Selfe and Sondra Perl were discussed. In digital storytelling scholarship, the work of Hull and Katz, Joe Lambert, and Rina Benmayor added to an understanding of what comprises an effective digital storytelling pedagogy. Chapter five will provide a research methodology and rationale. Chapter five will additionally locate the subject population in both a historical and local context before explaining the merits of this study in full detail.

## CHAPTER V

### Methodology

“Stories are just data with a soul”

(Brenè Brown, 2010).

In chapter five, a discussion of the qualitative research paradigm and case study methodology will authenticate how qualitative research benefited the questions identified for this project. Examples will be provided of published and peer reviewed papers located in the genre of digital storytelling that applied case study and or qualitative methodology. Along with this information, site and subject population, access, and how ethical clearance was obtained, in addition to how data was managed, stored, and analyzed will be presented in detail.

#### Research Questions

Central Question: What is the role of digital storytelling in the experiences of pre-service teacher educators in South Africa?

The following sub-questions assisted in understanding and addressing the central question:

1. What stories are students telling about both people and place(s)? How do these stories link students to both people and place, and how might these stories represent student subjectivities?
2. What is the composing process of digital storytellers?
3. How might digital storytelling alter classroom spaces?
4. Does digital storytelling contribute to transforming students' perceptions of the people and places that surround them?

5. Have students integrated digital storytelling into their classrooms or curriculum as first-year teachers? How are students appropriating the digital storytelling process after the completion of the course?

### **Qualitative Research Design and Case Study Methodology**

For this research, I selected a combination of case study (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Stake, 1995) methodology and ethnographic inquiry (Clifford, 1980; Van Maanen, 2011, Willis & Trondman, 2000), which are both derived from the qualitative research paradigm. The qualitative research paradigm, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), is a situated activity consisting of material and interpretive practices that make the world visible to the observer. Mainly, Denzin and Lincoln claimed that qualitative researchers conduct studies in natural settings and attempt to make sense of the meanings people bring to a phenomenon. Marshall and Rossman (2011) added that qualitative research values the environment, context, and face to face interactions of the subjects under study. Answering each question for this study required exploratory research in a natural setting (in this case a classroom). Research in a natural setting is a feature Marshall and Rossman (2011) have distinguished as fundamental in qualitative research. Qualitative research methodology was selected for this project as it could best provide a platform to answer the research questions identified at this study's onset.

Further, qualitative methodology provided a framework for an investigation into the meaning each subject associated to story production on site where the context of the story is lived, produced, and consumed. Inquiry through investigation of story-driven narratives as valid and meaningful is also an idea that Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have expressed in their collaborative piece, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." Mainly, Connelly and Clandinin claimed that researchers can understand the world by studying narratives. Meaning,

researching stories in the places where they originate is vital to understanding the worldview of the storyteller. Overall, qualitative research seeks to understand the story behind the data. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) have articulated, qualitative research provides a personal frame of reference that privileges lived experiences. Stake (1995) has contributed to this understanding by promoting particularization over generalization, which speaks to the rationale for collecting this specific data on site rather than generalizing what the data could mean from afar.

A case study was selected as a research method in order to study the phenomenon of storytelling in the lives of pre-service teacher educators at a university of technology in South Africa. Case studies are valuable tool when the researcher wants to understand the culture of a place or of a people (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Creswell (2009) described the case study as inquiry where the researcher explores events, programs, activities, or one or more individuals, while Stake (1995) has argued the “case” is a “specific, complex, functioning thing” (p.2) and should be used to understand only the particular case or phenomenon under study. Further, the focal point of this study concerned investigating a phenomenon (storytelling) within a real life scenario, and this study depended on answering both how and why questions as written about by Yin (2008).

The tool of participant observation residing within the qualitative paradigm was implemented as part of this study in order to better understand the role stories play in the experiences of the students. Participant observation is a data-gathering approach that requires first-hand involvement in the world where the study will take place (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Employing participant observation afforded a better understanding the world in which student-authored stories are produced and consumed. Additionally, the method of participant observation was selected in order to share in the lived experience of the population under study.

Through participant observation, I was able to garner a complex and rich awareness of the classroom situation under study (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative methodology as a research paradigm has been featured in digital story work. Lalitha Vasudevan, Katherine Schultz, and Jennifer Bateman's (2010) study, "Rethinking Composing in a Digital Age: Authoring Literate Identities Through Multimodal Storytelling" investigated the multimodal composing process of fifth grade students as an example of qualitative methodology in story research. In South Africa specifically, qualitative research has been used to examine digital storytelling with college age students in a variety of milieu and published by the research team of Gachago, Condy, Ivala, and Chigona (2012, 2013, 2014, & 2015). Reitmaier, Bidwell, and Marsden (2011) have also completed digital story research in an African context, locating their study within rural communities in both Kenya and South Africa. In an American setting, Sara Kajder (2004) shared how she constructed a digital storytelling unit with urban high school students by walking the reader through the decisions she made (the "face" behind the data) as she provided insight into the literacy practices of her students. Hull and Katz's (2006) "Creating and Agentive Self: Case Studies on Digital Storytelling," provided insight into exercising digital storytelling as a means to foster personal agency through their research at DUSTY, a community-based technology center. Rita Benmayor (2008), as well, has published examples of student-driven scholarship as she theorized her own use of digital storytelling in the college classroom and the benefits it brought to her students' cultural lives. And, lastly, Canadian scholars Fletcher and Cambre (2009) have reported on their use of digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool with college students, establishing a link between crafting stories and creating an awareness of students as social actors, towards what they have defined as

an “implicated scholarship” (p. 111). Overall, qualitative research is a natural complement to many forms of digital storytelling research.

Although a case study was selected for this study because it offered the best approach to answering each of the research questions, case study as a mode of understanding the subject under study does have its limitations. It is well known that case studies are not generalizable and speak only to a particular phenomenon under study at a specific moment in time. However, this is only a weakness of case study methodology if valuable transferable knowledge-knowledge that can be gleaned from a specific case study and applied to another-is not produced. The findings gleaned from this research will have specific implications for issues surrounding borderland writing, in addition to, an enhanced understanding of global perspectives on digital literacy and inclusionary education. Data collected by this study will also inform curricular decisions by providing awareness about the material and cultural conditions represented in student-produced texts.

Lastly, case studies depend upon the nature and integrity of the researcher’s world view, specifically in how that researcher interprets the actions of both the people and places under study. Noting biases and recognizing how both personal and professional delimitations factor into the material production of case study research is vital in terms of study validity, as the researcher is the primary data collector (Merriam, 2009). The principal investigator of a case study, additionally, carries the burden of reliability in addition to the onus of crafting an ethical and valid study. A way to circumvent this concern is by adhering to ethical standards of research and by also maintaining a strict protocol for data collection and interpretation.



### **Ethnographic Methodology**

In addition to case study methodology, ethnographic inquiry as a research method and means to study culture and place played a key role in this research. Willis and Trondman (2000) have described ethnography as a “family of methods involving direct or sustained social involvement with agents” (p. 5). Willis and Trondman further denoted the ethnographic enterprise as a means to present, explain, and analyze culture in order to locate experience. Following the thread of locating experience, the scholarship and work of Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) shaped the foundation of how this research was conducted. Malinowski has written how the final goal of ethnographic research is to “grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world” (p. 25). Malinowski's assertion of understanding the subjects' vision of the world from their point of view was a vital component of this dissertation project. The spirit of Malinowski's vision of ethnography guided this study and set a premise that equated the act of writing about culture with presenting a distinct cultural representation. However, it is equally important that ethnographers start with the recognition that this type of work plays a role in offering a larger societal critique derived from a situated writing event located within complex systems of meaning, which the ethnographer codes and decodes as texts are constructed (Clifford, 1980; Van Maanen, 2011).

An additional component of ethnography is the data collection method of taking field notes through means of participant observation. Taking field notes offered an opportunity to capture the behavior and the actions of each subject, within their environment, during the place and time of this study. Field notes effectively become an account, the result of participant observation, which marked the work of this ethnography (Marcus & Cushman, 1982). Van Maanen's work (2011) appropriated the terms “participant observation” and “field notes”

interchangeably and promoted an understanding of how both acts work in concert to create meaning. In fact, the collection of field notes on site effectively marries the writer to the environment. This unique relationship between place and writer breeds enormous responsibility as ethnographers are tasked with converting lived experiences into writing (Behar, 2003). To further establish a link between the place and the pen, Geertz's (1973) idea of thin and thick descriptive measures-notes that triangulate observable behavior with content and meaning-were instrumental in constructing accurate depictions and spatial representations.

Conducting research through participant observation generated an avenue for what James Spradley (1979) has termed the "ethnographic interview." This is a speech event that takes shape over time with multiple possibilities for dialogue and relationship building. Integration in this specific classroom community over a semester provided an opportunity to develop rapport and to participate in both casual and informal conversations. Assimilating within the circle of my subjects provided a unique insight into their world view. In fact, one student commented both that I became "one of them" and was more South African than they were (due to newfound and unwavering allegiance to both Western Province rugby and Bafana Bafana, the national soccer team). This type of integration and cultural immersion allowed for a deep understanding of the student subjectivities under study. In this way, a quality and meaningful relationship was built and the interviewing process was conducted within the context of an established relationship (Fielding, 2006). Speaking with students became a strategy of inquiry that assisted this research endeavor by means of collecting a first-hand account of student experiences during this particular moment in time as the study took place.

Ethnography as an intellectual activity and methodology relies on the dual acts of immersion and bearing witness to people, places, and events. This type of integration breeds a

particular knowledge, as ethnographers become knowers of others (Marcus & Cushman, 1982). Viewed this way, as someone who carries the knowledge of others, it would be impossible to separate ethnography from a human connection, or even ethnography from an embodied act of writing. The text resulting from any ethnographic act becomes an important representation of a human experience. Thus, it can be argued that ethnographers are not only writers, but also listeners of stories, especially for those whose stories go unheard (Behar, 2003). With this in mind, ethnography is a perfect fit for research that is interested in lived experiences, as all lived experiences represent a story. In fact, storytelling as a genre of ethnography has a long history in scholarship from within the academy (Bruner, 1987; McNamara, 2009; Van Maanen, 2006; Webster, 1983).

If we can agree with Van Maanen (2006) that ethnography centers on living *with* and *like* the people and place under study and emphasizes everyday life experiences, then it would be remiss to deny the inherent subjectivity in such an act of representation. By its very nature, ethnography is a hermeneutical endeavor. Ethnographers observe and interpret the behavior of both people and place(s) and become the producers of cultural knowledge about other forms of life (Marcus & Cushman, 1982). Hence, representation of these lived experiences and the material production of the stories that go unheard (as Behar purported, 2003) is the critical juncture where all ethnography exists, between pen and people, the public, the personal, and the authentic.

### **Timeframe of Study**

This study took place in a classroom of a university of technology in Cape Town (Western Province), South Africa, from August 18<sup>th</sup> through November 28, 2014. Follow up trips to Cape Town, in order to collect interview data, took place for three weeks in May of 2015 and

for ten days in August of 2015. From November to April, while back in the United States, contact was maintained with the core subject group (the facilitators) through the smartphone application of WhatsApp.

### **Location of Study**

To maintain anonymity in this project, the university will be referred to as CT. According to CT's website (n.d.), CT has 30,000 students and 70 programs of study housed over eight campuses in and around the city of Cape Town. The University is the result of a national movement to transform higher education in 2001 set forth by then Minister of Education Kader Asmal. Asmal's plan facilitated the merger of several colleges across South Africa. Before 2001, and the plan to transform higher education, this university was represented by two distinct technical colleges. One of the colleges only served a White student population. However, in 1987, this college petitioned the government to have its ban lifted on the quota for admitting Black students. The other institution, a technikon, existed in order to teach "Coloured apprentices a variety of trades" (CT website, para. 8). This trade school, too, changed its admission policies in 1987. Shortly after, this school added academic programs of study. After the 2001 movement, it took four years to merge the two colleges. CT opened in 2005 and elected its first chancellor in 2008.

### **My Introduction to the Professional Studies Course**

I heard about the professional studies course while presenting research at a conference in Cape Town during June of 2013. At the conference, I attended a panel on digital storytelling as a method of counter storytelling presented by Daniela Gachago. The focus of this presentation centered on how digital storytelling was being implemented as both a way to engage with

difference and as a form of social justice education with pre-service teachers at a local university of technology.

As a lecturer of composition who had spent a lot of time working in the personal writing and narrative genre with my own students, I was curious to attend a panel that presented an interesting take on blending personal writing with a multimedia application. My own students were composing what I loosely titled “video mashups” -mixing text, sound, image, and story to craft YouTube-esque productions-in order to create digital essays in my introductory writing classes. However, I was not calling these compositions digital stories. I learned of this pedagogy and genre of multimedia composing from this conference presentation.

After the presentation, I initiated a conversation with Daniela about digital storytelling. Through our talk, it was clear that Daniela and I had a lot of common and that we wanted the same goals for our students and our work. I knew after talking with her that I could enhance my own practice by studying digital storytelling in Cape Town. I then contacted Daniela’s supervisor (Dr. Eunice Ivala), and she and I started the formal approval process so that I could conduct research at CT. Once I had approval from my own institution, in addition to a research proposal approved by my university doctoral committee, I was able to secure permission to conduct research at CT.

When I arrived in Cape Town during August of 2014, I met the professional studies course professor. The professor was actually on sabbatical this term and editing a book on digital storytelling. Therefore, a lecturer was scheduled to teach the class with oversight from the professor. Since the lecturer had never taught the course before, the professor asked me if I would like to help teach the course. I agreed. I did not teach any of the actual mini-lessons or formally grade assignments, but I did lead the students in class discussions, clarify and add

additional information from the lecture topics, and I assisted the students in any way they required. Often, I edited drafts or talked to students individually about the TED Talks and readings. I did sit with the professor and observe her while she graded the digital stories.

### **Professional Studies Class Overview**

The 2014 professional studies class was an eight-week course offered during the South African spring semester and located at the end of the South African academic year. Students enrolled in this course were completing their last class before graduating with a degree in teaching (BEd General Education and Training or BEd Intermediate and Senior Phases). In fact, once the semester ended in November, students immediately started interviewing for teaching positions that start in January. For the entire eight weeks, students completed a digital storytelling project as a focal point of the curriculum. A course syllabus and project outline is provided in Appendix A. The digital storytelling curriculum was introduced to the professional studies class in 2010 as a replacement for a final teaching portfolio. Since 2010, this class has been the site of numerous published papers by the research team of Gachago, Condy, Chigona, and Ivala (2012, 2013, 2014, & 2015).

As a project overview, before the start of class, students were asked to volunteer in order to become a course facilitator for the professional studies course. Ten students volunteered to become facilitators. They were trained in a pre-class workshop by a community digital storytelling expert, and paid a small stipend for their time. During the term, students enrolled in the class were placed into groups led by the trained facilitators in order to complete the digital storytelling project. On the first day of the course, students were randomly placed into groups (by counting off 1-10). The facilitators then lead the students within their groups through ice-breaking getting-to-know-you activities. As examples, students learned each other's names by

participating in an improvisation activity titled “Crazy Rio.” Crazy Rio requested students to make noises like animals from the rainforest while they said their names aloud in a circle. The student on the right had to mimic the noise and repeat the name of the student on the left, and so forth. A second ice-breaking activity had students acting out scenarios where they felt a loss of power in a school setting.

After introductory activities like these, the facilitators directed students through a drafting exercise called “The River of Life.” To complete the River of Life, students were given large butcher style paper and asked to draw their journey (using a river metaphor) to becoming a teacher. Next, students were placed in a story circle where they shared their River of Life with the members of their group. In the story circle, each student was allotted 20 minutes of uninterrupted speaking time. Once the student finished speaking, only positive words could be said to the student. If, while a talk was happening, someone wanted to interject or even just voice a shared understanding, one could make a “jazz hands” signal—a hand waving motion—to show agreement rather than to interrupt. In fact, students were handed a talking stick and anyone who had the icon was not allowed to be interrupted.

Another highlight of the story circle was that students were given Joe Lambert’s (2012) “Digital Storyteller’s Bill of Rights” in order to set the tone and terms for both dialogue and participation within the story circle (p. 197). During the facilitators’ workshop, the following phrase came up and was constantly repeated: “What happens in the story circle, stays in the story circle.” I heard this same phrase mentioned in the class as well. After the story circle, students initiated the drafting and script writing process with the story they shared in the circle. The goal of the drafting process was to construct a final script consisting of 300-400 words. Once the scripts were completed, students organized their texts on storyboards before putting together a

digital story utilizing Photo Story 3 software. Students had access both to computers and the software on campus.

Over the course of the project, students would start and end the class in a large group (entire class) before breaking up into their facilitator-led groups. In the large group, students were given mini-lessons on issues ranging from capturing the right photo to accessing online content legally, to recording their voice clearly using the provided recording equipment. To aid the process, students were shown a few digital story examples from past classes. Students also watched Chimamanda Adichie's (2009) TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story* along with Brenè Brown's (2010) TED Talk, *The Power of Vulnerability*. Course readings included "This Is Water" by David Foster Wallace (2005) and an excerpt from "Tell Me More: On the Fine Art of Listening" by Brenda Ueland (1993). Both student groups (the facilitators in the workshop and the class at large) had access to a recommended reading list, but it is unclear if any student actually read any of these texts. Lastly, once finished, students from the professional studies course were required to screen their digital stories publicly, on a Saturday, as a component of their overall grade. Families and friends of any student were both welcome and encouraged to attend the screening.

### **Description of Subjects**

Two different student groups were selected as part of this study. First, I selected a group labeled "facilitators," which refers to students who volunteered to be student group leaders for the professional studies class before the start of the term. The facilitators attended a week-long training program before the start of the term. During the term, the facilitators assisted the lecturer by leading a group of 7-8 students (randomly assigned) through the digital storytelling process. The facilitators are called by pseudonyms (Andre, Mia, Sisipha, Luniko, Graeme, Rob, Pieter,



Felix, and Tayla) throughout this dissertation, and they were the primary informants throughout this project. There were 10 facilitators, but only 9 agreed to be part of this study. The tool of participant observation was implemented with this group during the pre-course workshop and throughout the duration of the term.

Ethnic, gender, and language categorization of the facilitator group was as follows: Of the six men, three are White, one is Black, and two are Coloured. As for the females, one is Black and two are Coloured. In regard to languages spoken, six speak English as a first language, one speaks Afrikaans as a first language, and the other two speak isiXhosa as a first language. All students reported speaking at least two languages. For the White and Coloured students, Afrikaans and English are those languages. For the Black students, they reported speaking three languages fluently: The Black male speaks Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa and the Black female speaks isiXhosa, Sotho, and English, respectively, in that order. The second sample set consisted of students who wished to be interviewed, a group of students from the larger class ("Rob's group"), a focus group of students who volunteered to be interviewed for the professor at the conclusion of the course, and the professional studies course at large.

**Rob's group.** A group led by facilitator Rob was selected from the class at large. Rob's group was chosen solely by means of my professional judgment, as it had both female and male participants and three of the four ethnic groups (Black, White, and Coloured) were represented. Students from Rob's group referenced by name in this dissertation (Rob, Erin, Jake, Mandla) were also given a pseudonym. The tool of participant observation was applied in all interactions with Rob's group. Rob's group additionally took part in a final interview that was conducted near the end of the term.

**Student volunteers.** This group consisted entirely of three Black students who requested to be interviewed privately as part of this project. These individuals were not facilitators, nor were they members (save Mandla) of the second group, but rather part of the larger class. The students simply wanted their voices to be heard. These students are referenced by pseudonyms (Mandla, Thabisa, and Cebo). Mandla is an exception in this group because he was also a member of Rob's group. Even though Mandla took part in the group interview, he requested that I additionally interview him personally.

**Focus group.** A focus group interview was conducted with students from the professional studies class who volunteered to be interviewed on the last day of class. This group consisted of ten students representing a few of the facilitators plus students from the larger class. This interview was meant to garner data for the research team of Gachago, Condy, Ivala, and Chigona, although questions pertaining to this study were allowed to be posed to the students. To recruit students from the course, a sign-up sheet was placed in a hall within the education wing. As for an ethnicity and gender breakdown: There were three men and seven women. Four of the students were Black, two White, and four Coloured. These students are referred to as "focus group participants" throughout this study.

**Professional studies class demographics.** The size of the student population enrolled in the course was 71 students; however, only 56 of the students were present continuously after the first day and agreed to allow the collection of data regarding their age, ethnicity, and place of birth through a questionnaire distributed during week two of the semester (consisting of both closed and open-ended questions, Appendix B). All 56 participants signed a participant consent form on the first day, which allowed for data to be collected by means of participant observation (Appendix C). The 15 students who did not fill out the questionnaire were simply absent or

extremely late to class. As examples, one student only attended on the first and last day. Another student had a baby during the term, and so forth. It would be accurate to note that attendance is an identifiable problem in this class, which is only compounded by issues of access to transportation for specific groups of students both to and from the campus. Plus, students who had access to technology were allowed to not attend class after the 3<sup>rd</sup> class meeting. This meant that many White students did not regularly attend.

According to the 56 students surveyed during the first two weeks of the course, students are more female than male and all ethnic categories (Black, White, Indian, and Coloured) were represented. The age range of the students was 21- 41 years old, with a median age of 23. Although English is the language of instruction at this campus, only 33 students (59%) denoted English as a first language. Afrikaans was the language listed by 9 students (16%), 13 students (23%) claimed isiXhosa as a first language, one student noted Zulu as a first language and another student (one) noted Sotho as a first language. An interesting finding relates to the number of students who proclaimed speaking isiXhosa as a first or second language. No students, other than the Black students, spoke this language fluently. For all of the Black students, English was not a first language.

Students identified their places of residence by providing an address. The individual addresses were plotted onto an interactive Google My Map (Appendix E) that revealed where students lived geographically was comprised of homogenous areas defined by race. These areas directly related to the Group Areas Act (1950-1991), a discriminatory law designating where people could live based on race. There were only three “outlier” students who resided on campus, although their home addresses followed the aforementioned pattern. Students from the professional studies class at large are identified by numbers throughout this dissertation text. One

last comment about the professional studies course: It is important to note that students in this program travelled through university as a cohort. Hence, the students have been together as a group since their first day of class, four years before the start of this class. Students from the professional studies class (at large) have been given numbers throughout this dissertation as identifying markers.

### **Situating the Student Population**

As a point of demographic reference, Cape Town is the second largest city in South Africa with a population of 3.7 million people (capetown.gov.za). The 2011 Census (capetown.gov.za) reported the predominant population of Cape Town is Coloured (42.4%), with the Black population at 38.9%, the White population at 15.7%, and the Asian population at 1.4%. Therefore, this data suggested the study population in regard to race, at this moment in time, was aligned with the city at large.

As a comparison, and in stark contrast, lies the demographic data for South Africa at large as reported by the 2011 Census (statssa.gov.za). The census reported a population of 51.8 million, with Black Africans taking up 79.2% of the population, followed by Coloured (8.9%), White (8.9%), and Asian/ Indian (2.5%). As an additional monthly earning comparison, statssa.gov mentioned the disparity among racial groups, noting that “Black Africans earned 22% of what the White population earned; 36.1% of what Indians/Asians earned; and 81.7% of what the Coloured population earned” (p. viii) per month in 2010. Another notable finding from the 2011 Census stated that 47% of the Black residents of Cape Town reported a monthly income of R3 200 or less, which roughly equates to a US dollar amount of 320 per month.

The campus of CT sits at a crossroads in South Africa at a time when the country is coming to terms with the death of Nelson Mandela and figuring out a national identity without its

beloved figurehead. The state of the country during the years 2014 and 2015 would find the “Born Frees” or “Mandela's Generation,” that is children born just before or right after the first democratic election in 1994 and who did not grow up with the struggles of apartheid, account for 40% of the population (BBC.com, 2014). The students in this course, in particular, experienced both Mandela's illness and subsequent death as they moved as a cohort through their university classes. Interestingly, despite the legacy of Nelson Mandela that the “Born Free” generation is the beneficiaries of, this group of young people has been critiqued as being both apolitical and apathetic (Mabry, 2013).

Politically speaking, the governing party of the Western Cape Province (where Cape Town is located) is the Democratic Alliance (DA). This is the only province in the country that is not governed by the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC is the ruling party of the national legislature and ruling party of 8 of 9 of the provinces save for the Western Cape. The ANC still remains popular due to its legacy as Nelson Mandela's party. Unfortunately, this does not hold true in the Western Province. In fact, the Democratic Alliance and the African National Congress sit in opposition to one another. A recent example of this tension includes the DA locking the ANC out of a city council meeting so that the ANC would be unable to vote against a stretch of Cape Town highway proposed to be renamed in order to honor F.W. de Klerk, the last president under the Nationalist Government (*The Guardian*, 2015). This example only belies the abundant racism still evident in Cape Town, a theme that has been widely reported by local and international media venues (reference Davis, 2013; de Vos, 2009; Fikeni, 2014; Maditla, 2013; Polgreen, 2012).

Additionally, it can be argued that the integration of social and racial classes in Cape Town has not yet been fully realized. Demarcated spaces still mar Cape Town landscapes, and it

was not uncommon for many to consider some spaces as marked by race and therefore a “no go” area. To illustrate, I was questioned if my research was taking place at “that Black school,” before this same person claimed the university “had gone Black” (personal interview). Now that CT has been integrated, academic merit, for some, is still associated with skin color.

The professional studies course, specifically, was selected as a site of this research in order to further examine the digital stories students were already producing as part of a final teaching project. Students, therefore, were not asked to compose a story specifically to further the aims of this research. This move mitigated any ethical concerns stemming from a Western research paradigm when investigating indigenous populations (reference Chilisa, 2012). Further, CT enrolls a large student population who rely on a bursary (financial aid) in order to attend. These students attend classes alongside students who have more financial means. This, coupled with seemingly affordable tuition rates, meant that students with assistance and without would be represented in the subject pool. In addition, because CT is newly integrated, examining how students negotiated contested terrains would offer insight into how students compose stories in classroom spaces that are bordered by linguistic, ethnic, and cultural variables.

### **Access to Students**

Extreme care and consideration was practiced when handling, examining, and listening to the student-driven stories. Researching personal and lived experiences is an enormous responsibility; and, justifiably, such a role places the researcher in a position of authority. To counter this, a solid research protocol was established for the treatment and safety of each subject under study. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) have established parameters for ethical research in their book *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. In part, DeWalt and DeWalt additionally suggested knowledge of ethics is paramount in scholarly research and includes

components such as interview protocols, competency, the ability to conduct research, and obtaining proper consent. Hence, ethical clearance in the form of Institutional Review Board documentation was generated and approved by my supporting institution. In addition, ethical clearance was requested, went through full faculty review, and was approved from the university where this study took place. Also, consent (Appendix C) was requested and granted from all the students who wished to take part in this study.

### **Data Management**

Data gathered throughout this research followed the ethical practice and IRB guidelines set forth at the inception of this project. Data that was collected by means of field notes, audio interviews, digital story reflective texts, and digital stories were stored and kept on a password protected laptop. Data was also de-identified of all student markers and both pseudonyms and numbers were generated to rename each student. A master list of student names, numbers (for the class at large), and pseudonyms (for the group of facilitators and Rob's group) were kept in a separate document on the same password protected laptop.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **The interview.**

*Facilitators.* Of the ten facilitators, nine (Mia, Tayla, Andre, Graeme, Pieter, Felix, Luniko, Sisipha, and Rob) agreed to be interviewed during this project. The first round of interviews took place on campus and lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to almost two hours. Students were recorded and signed consent waivers agreeing to each recording. Questions posed to the students were structured to only last a thirty-minute window. However, some students wished to talk and to elaborate further.

Another data component from within the interview directly related to a Google My Map crafted utilizing the addresses of the students who took part in this study (Appendix E). The map provided a starting point for questioning students about where they lived in relation to campus. Specifically, it was used to query students about issues of transportation and to generally get an idea about how spatial orientation factored both into student subjectivities and how student-driven stories were connected to places in and around the city.

The post course interview consisted of an optional school visit and talk with eight (Mia, Tayla, Andre, Graeme, Pieter, Felix, Luniko, and Rob) of the facilitators. Three of the facilitators (Mia, Felix, and Andre) invited me into their classrooms. The interview portion took place at a site the student selected and lasted anywhere between 1-2 hours. The post-course interview was designed so an assessment could be made regarding any lasting impact the storytelling process may have had on the student participants, particularly in regard to digital stories as a pedagogical tool. The questions prepared for both interviews are located in Appendix C.

***Rob's group.*** A group interview took place towards the end of the semester with the students in Rob's group and lasted an hour. Students were asked the same questions as the facilitators. Students signed both an interview and recording consent waiver before the interview took place (Appendix C). Rob's group was not interviewed a second time.

***Focus group.*** This interview took place in a campus office and lasted one hour. Questions were provided by the research team of Gachago, Condy, Ivala, and Chigona. However, some questions from the "facilitators' list" were added as supplemental questions to this interview. Students signed a consent waiver to be both interviewed and recorded. A separate consent form was generated by the research team of Gachago et. al and my questions were part of that consent. All students who participated signed this waiver.



***Student volunteers.*** Each student participated in an individual interview on campus ranging from thirty minutes to an hour. Students were asked the same questions as the facilitator group. These students were only interviewed once during the term. Students signed consent forms to be recorded and a recording was made of each interview. The student volunteers also were asked questions corresponding to the Google My Map (Appendix E).

**Digital story reflections.** To complete the digital story reflection assignment, students were asked to reflect on their experiences throughout the digital storytelling process. This reflection included student commenting on the aspects of producing the digital story, how students grew as potential educators, and what they learned about their colleagues throughout the duration of the project. Responses ranged from 1-2 double spaced pages. Of the 71 registered students, 69 students granted access for their reflective texts to be made available for this study.

**Field notes.** Overall, over sixty pages of field notes and analytic memos were collected during the actual class term. An additional twenty pages were collected during the week-long workshop and fifteen miscellaneous pages were collected from notes taken on trains, scraps of text inscribed on restaurant napkins, to audio files recorded and then transcribed after some of the interviews. These informal notes represented connections to literature and other ideas relating to the scope of this project.

**Digital stories.** Digital stories were the final product of this course. Each story was 3-5 minutes in length and no more than 400 words in length. The digital story assignment was largely framed within Joe Lambert's (2012) process of digital storytelling derived from the Center of Digital Storytelling. For this class, students were asked to create a digital story using Photo Story 3 software that reflected their journey to becoming a teacher. For this section of

research, access and permission was granted to use 67 of the 71 digital stories produced during the duration of this term.

### **Data Analysis**

All data was coded, analyzed, and triangulated utilizing Johnny Saldaña's (2012) method of coding qualitative research. First cycle coding, both holistic and in vivo, was applied to all data threads. Next, secondary coding was implemented with the goal of triangulating the data (through axial coding) in order to conceptualize emergent themes. The purpose of the coding process was to search for textual, visual, and anecdotal evidence in order to answer the research questions previously identified.

Data was then transferred to a visual map and self-created organizational system located on the wall of my campus office in Michigan. The wall system provided a color-coded and categorized space that allowed me to view how the data was interrelated and to view any connection to larger themes via axial coding (Saldaña, 2012). Placing in vivo quotes directly under the questions the subjects answered permitted a visual orientation of how coding categories not only overlapped, but how they also answered the overarching questions in this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

While conducting this study, it was necessary to consider how writing and sharing stories could cause a group or even an individual to feel either targeted or marginalized. Meaning, rather than stories providing a balance of experiences and providing an integral piece of a collective story, stories could represent, symbolically or metaphorically, the storyteller as the abject other (Adichie, 2009). In this way, a story has the potential to solidify a previously held stereotype of a certain person or even a population in the eyes of other students within the class. Therefore, it

was vital to validate all stories by creating a safe and ethical relationship between the researcher and subjects.

Constructing the classroom safe zone fell to the course instructor who provided students with Joe Lambert's (2012) "Digital Storyteller's Bill of Rights" (p. 197). The Digital Storyteller's Bill of Rights served as a framework for alerting students on their rights as both listeners and sharers of stories throughout the storytelling process. The Bill of Rights also served as a framework for student participation within the smaller groups called story circles. Although Daphne Read (1998) has rightly pointed out that no spaces are safe, particularly classrooms, there was a protocol in place regarding student communication and participation within the story circle.

Additionally, the issue of trauma as it relates to sharing stories or even encouraging students to share personal life events in classroom spaces must be given specific attention to. It is imperative to remember that emotional harm could be done to a student or student population if a researcher (or even teacher or other students) privileges certain stories over others. Secondly, any time a student is faced with sharing the personal, both short term and long term emotional damage is a real possibility worthy of consideration. To diminish this concern, students were made aware that any time during or after the research they could terminate their participation. During both one-on-one and group interviews, students were advised they did not have to answer any question they did not want to answer. And, as previously mentioned, students were already crafting stories as part of the learning objectives for the course. Therefore, students were not asked to "out" themselves in any manner, personal or otherwise, in order to complete this research. Lastly, this study presented minimal risk to all students who participated.

### **Verification Measures**

In order to ensure the validity of this study, multiple sources of evidence were gathered that resulted in a clear triangulation of data. Additionally, an integral component of this study's design revolved around it being carried out in South Africa. This meant relocating to South Africa in order to garner a true understanding and insider's look at the subjects in their environment. This sustained inquiry led to a deeper understanding of the issues under study, one that could not be gleaned from reading a text alone. In fact, there is a research team on campus at CT that has conducted various studies on digital storytelling and this course specifically. Instead of relying on their findings to shape my own understanding, I decided to frame this study on-site and to immerse myself into the students' culture as much as possible for the time that I remained in South Africa. I ate lunch with my students, attended rugby matches with another, tutored a third before class, and simply tried to understand the world from the students' point of view. In the months between visits, close contact was maintained with several of the facilitators over the WhatsApp chat application. Also, my desire to immerse myself firsthand in the lives of my participants was evidenced by my return trips to collect data personally rather than to collect it by email or WhatsApp alone. Lastly, as a demonstration of my commitment to the faculty, staff, and program at CT, I was asked to co-teach this particular class as I conducted my research within it.

In regard to the academic work that I have produced, I established relationships with a few faculty members at CT who worked with me closely during my time in Cape Town and helped me to frame my thinking within a South African context. A few of the facilitators, Graeme specifically, member-checked my findings and offered suggestions on a few places where clarification measures of my data were required. Lastly, my CT supervisor has been with

me since the beginning of this project. She has encouraged me, worked alongside of me, welcomed me, and reviewed each and every word that I have produced from this project's inception to its publication. This is in addition to my chair and doctoral committee at my supporting US institution who have guided me throughout this entire process.

### **Summation of Chapter Five**

Chapter five presented a research outline and methodological approach, explaining its relevance to issues under investigation within this study. An explanation of the site and participants of this study was provided and then situated within a historical and local context. Examples of case studies that featured digital story research were additionally presented, along with an analysis of their relevance to the work this study promotes. The data collection methods and method of analysis was explained in detail; and lastly, ethical considerations and verification measures were presented along with the rationale for their intended use.

## Chapter VI

### Storytelling: Themes, Agency, and Safe Spaces

“You will never know somebody until you’ve heard their story.

This is something we should all remember throughout our lives,

no matter where we may be in the world” (#28).

In chapter five, a research methodology was provided as a framework to explain how this study was conceptualized and conducted. Chapter five also detailed the student population, the sampling method, and placed the participants who took part in this study both within a historical and local context. In chapter six, an analysis of the data collected from the digital stories, field notes, interviews, and final digital story reflection papers was presented in order to answer the research questions central to this dissertation project. As mentioned in chapter five, data was subject to first and second cycle coding exercising Johnny Saldaña’s (2012) method of coding qualitative data. Axial coding, during the secondary-cycle phase, connected the data to patterns and concepts as they related to this project’s overarching theme. The data was then triangulated in order to better understand the emergent themes as they exist in the data.

#### Stories of Space and Place

**Question one: What stories are students telling about both people and place(s)?**

**How do these stories link students to both people and place, and how might these stories represent student subjectivities?** It is hard to imagine a city more strikingly beautiful than Cape Town. Located at the heart of Table Bay and anchored by the vastness of Table Mountain, Cape Town boasts not only a moderate and warm climate, but it is also one of the most diverse cities,

linguistically and culturally, in the world. From the beaches of the prosperous Atlantic Seaboard to its west, to the beaches that flank the city to the north, there is no city location where one cannot view either water or mountain. At the base of Table Mountain rests Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage site and also acclaimed as "the most beautiful garden in Africa" (SANBI.org, 2015). The splendor of Kirstenbosch is not to be overshadowed by Groot Constantia, the oldest wine estate in South Africa. Groot Constantia is the ballast of the Constantia Valley, sits in a suburb of the city center, and it is one of six wine producing areas in the region known as the Western Cape Winelands. Cape Town's topography is ripe with natural and material resources, flora and fauna, a working harbor, and prosperity as some of the richest South Africans live in gated enclaves at the harbor or in million Rand homes lining Cape Town beaches.

One could actually visit Cape Town and never understand, nor experience Cape Town's other story, the one that runs in parallel to its tourist narrative and speaks of separation, closed public spaces, and political resistance. Take District Six, an area residing in the city center of Cape Town, home to one of CT's campuses. Outside of university, District Six still sits vacant from being declared a "White's only" residential area in 1966. This was a decree that forced the removal of all people of color and tore apart the homestead, building by building, leaving only a few streets leading to nowhere and empty, grassy fields. Or, consider Robben Island, which sits in Cape Town waters. It was a prison to many political prisoners and convicted criminals; however, its most famous inmate was Nelson Mandela who spent 18 of his 27 years of imprisonment on the island. Cape Town City Hall, also a prominent downtown feature, marks where Mr. Mandela gave his first speech after his release from prison in 1991. There is a plaque denoting the occasion on the wall below the terrace where Mr. Mandela stood, but one could

easily walk by it if you did not know it was there. Or, take Cape Town today. To an outsider like myself, I observed public terrains that still bear the imprint of an apartheid past, a story that consists of fenced residential spaces and neighborhoods demarcated and isolated along racial lines. It is this tension between public and private space that breeds collective ideologies, a distinct binary between silence and democracy, which led me to Cape Town 20 years after the fall of apartheid and a few months after the death of Nelson Mandela to investigate both the new and old South Africa through student-driven stories.

*Investigating place through Google mapping.* To assess how students perceived the geographic regions in and around Cape Town, and to answer my first question, I created a Google Map (Appendix E). A Google Map is at its very core an interactive mapping system that allows users to create a personalized map of any place, area, region, or city in the world. Users can dictate map features, add topography, place pins, and even use Google Earth software to insert a street view of satellite images into a map.

To create a map of student residential patterns, I placed one pin to mark where each student in the class noted as their city of residence on the questionnaire featured in chapter five. Pins were placed this way in order to see where students resided across the city and to see how stories connected students to physical places. Each pin was labeled by a different color that equated to each student's race. When students viewed the map, they were looking at clusters of pins pronouncing certain areas. As an example, in Mitchell's Plain, a suburb existing outside of the city center, students saw only yellow pins indicating the Coloured students who resided there. Whereas, in Khayelitsha, a township outside of Cape Town, there were only purple pins that symbolized the Indigenous Black student population who lived in that area. Students were not told what the colored pins meant, but they were asked to think about why the pins were plotted in



certain areas as a group and what the patterns could represent. Once students established where they lived on the map, by association they were able to connect meaning to the map. In part, students were requested to share what it was like in the purple areas (as an example) and what stories and symbols were derived from that space. In conversations, students readily identified symbols associated to varied spatial domains.

As an overview, during the interview with the facilitators and the student volunteers, the White, Coloured, and Black students pointed out that the red pins epitomized the residential areas of White students, places like Constantia and Durbanville, wealthy resource-filled suburbs replete with “stories of happiness and success” (Andre). The Black students expressed areas where they lived, regions called townships or informal settlements, as places with few resources and a lack of job opportunities. Coloured and White students, rather, noted Black townships as places filled with drugs, crime, and gangsterism. In fact, students across the board linked White areas to wealth and resources. Students also pointed out neighborhoods where Black people historically have resided, as Felix noted, were places filled with stories of “extreme poverty, broken down relationships, rape, theft, robbery, and drugs.” Historically Black township areas were places White and Coloured students did not want to visit. As an example, Mia stated that she would not feel safe in a (Black) township. In fact, Coloured and White students indicated that they had really never visited township areas. White students had visited Coloured areas to complete teaching practices, but they had never completed teaching practices in Black township areas, like Langa and Gugulethu. However, Black students had traveled to and through both White and Coloured areas. In many cases, they had even completed teaching practices in what they reported as all-White schools.

*Issues of transportation.* Mapping also revealed how students thought about transportation, as through the map students were able to specify travel routes to and from campus. For Black students, travelling by train was a way of life. Coloured and White students rarely took the train; and if they did, they only rode in first class and still feared for their safety. While in Cape Town, I mainly travelled by train and I typically rode in third class. When in third class, I was the only White person I ever saw in that section of the train. When I told my White and Coloured students that I commuted this way, they laughed, told me I was crazy, and with wide, serious eyes claimed that I would be robbed or attacked. They even went as far as telling me what to take on the train and how to carry it. Pieter, one of the facilitators, told me that I only had to be faster than one other person if I found myself in a running away situation. One of my White colleagues on campus also expressed shock over my travel choice and left a note on my campus desk that said, “DON'T TAKE THE TRAIN! TAKE GOLDEN ARROW,” Golden Arrow being a bus line that could also get me to campus. In fact, the only time I ever saw crime on the train was when I was riding in first class with Graeme. Graeme offered to take me to a rugby game and purchased our train tickets in advance. During this trip, a man sitting across the aisle from me had his backpack stolen. Hence, in my experience, first class was far more dangerous than third. All in all, riding the train was central to my Cape Town experience. I would like to add as a last point that I was only ever treated with dignity and respect on the train, and I was never harmed or mistreated.

My choice of transportation remained a point of conversation and debate my entire stay in Cape Town, and it was commented on by everyone (of every ethnicity) that I came in contact with. This was a debate I ignored as many of my Black students rode the train to and from campus. Riding the train at the same time as the students created an organic and neutral meeting

point where I was able to participate in impromptu conversations while we were in transit together.

Travelling in third class also allowed me to experience a limited part of Black life. If I had not ridden in third class, I would have missed out on the soulful music I heard from locals who walked up and down the aisles singing for money. I would have missed the impassioned ministers, who rode the trains pleading with folks to accept Jesus, or the candy and drink sellers, Black citizens who were just trying to make a rand by selling goods to travelers. I never saw this story playing itself out the times I did find myself in first class. Riding the train also provided insight into what I will call the movement patterns of Black residents. As an example, when I would leave my apartment before 7:00 AM and walk towards the train station, I was able to see the Black labor force, en masse, arriving into the city for work. When I reversed my pattern and left the campus in the afternoon and headed back towards the city, I could see Black people leaving the city and catching the trains for home. This told me that Black people did not live in downtown Cape Town.

Issues surrounding public transportation also led to student tardiness and absenteeism. Student attendance (and lack thereof) is well documented in my field notes. At the end of the third day of class, facilitator Felix raised his hand and made a comment about students coming late to class. He said it was disrespectful to be tardy and questioned how students could get to their required teaching practices (at outside schools) on time, but show up so late to this class. One student (a Coloured girl) was shaking with rage (as recorded in my field notes) as she responded to Felix, stating, "Our environment does not provide transportation. I don't live nearby. I take a bus for 1.5 hours. It's not close. When we teach, we are put into schools closer to where we live." While she was speaking, the Black students nodded in affirmation and waved

their hands in agreement, making a hand movement the class referred to as “jazz hands” in order to show silent support and affirmation.

What this student said in class echoed what I heard in the interviews from the Black students. Sisipha, one of the facilitators, resides in the township of Khayelitsha, the farthest township away from campus. Sisipha's journey to school each way consisted of a minibus or taxi ride to a train ride, then a short walk to campus. In total, this took about an hour and a half from start to finish, that is if the taxi, train, and bus drivers were not on strike and remained on schedule. Under the strike scenario attending school was nearly impossible for her. Thabisa also operated under the same hour and a half, multiple train ride journey to school. Cebo, one of the male Black students who asked to be interviewed, said that sometimes bus and taxi drivers would not even go into the townships if they are on strike.

*Student reactions to Coloured areas.* When students turned their attention to Coloured residential areas on the map, they noted that Coloured spaces just existed; they were neither good nor bad, but they were lacking in the same kinds of material resources that White areas had access to. Andre and Tayla, two students that represent this ethnicity, both mentioned the lack of libraries and health clinics in their respective residential areas and the challenges they faced when they had to leave home and find services elsewhere. Tayla told a story that she overheard while standing in the bus line one day about a woman from her area being accused of trying to “act White” simply because she went in search of services outside of her own neighborhood. Some Coloured areas were considered dangerous due to problems with drugs, but only Coloured people mentioned this during the interview.

*Black students’ perceptions of Black township areas.* One of my more memorable interviews took place with a young man named Mandla. Mandla’s interview encapsulated a wide

range of both experience and emotion, and it served to aid in my understanding of the other student interviews that I took part in. Mandla is one of “Mandela's Generation” or labeled as a “Born Free.” This means that Mandla was born in or around the start of democracy in 1994. When Mandla requested that I interview him as part of my project, he did so in fluent English despite Zulu being his first language. Mandla, one of the Black students in the course and like a majority of the Black students who attend CT, was born in a rural area in the Eastern Cape and relocated to Cape Town to attend university. Mandla lives in student housing located in an adjacent city next to the campus. Besides Mandla, I can only think of two other students who lived in “res” or residence halls.

When I asked Mandla to talk me through the different points on the map, he first described his life in the Eastern Cape before arriving in Cape Town. He shared with me the lack of indoor water, the inconsistent access to electricity, and he recalled that a symbol of his space would be that the floors in his house were comprised of dry mud. I found it interesting that Mandla did not refer to where he is from as a home, city, or town, but as an “informal settlement.” To illustrate the lack of infrastructure and perhaps the informal nature of his home space, when I asked Mandla if he had indoor plumbing in his house he replied, “There are no toilets so we just go to an open space and sit there and help ourselves.”

Luniko, one of the facilitators and like Mandla from the Eastern Cape, also described his home as rural and without material resources. In fact, Luniko shared with me that he had never even visited a library until his last year of high school when he was studying for his matric (high school graduation) exam. Hence, becoming a teacher and establishing a library back at home became a driving force in Luniko's life. Although not from the same settlement in the Eastern Cape as Luniko, when I asked Mandla about school resources back at home he stated that there

are no computers and the internet does not exist in any classroom, nor are there libraries to promote access to literature. Cebo described his home in the Cape Town township of Langa as a “shack” without resources. Two other Black women, Thabisa and Sisipha, both women in their 40s and mothers, provided insight into their lives both in the Eastern Cape (Thabisa) and in Cape Town (Sisipha). Like Mandla and Luniko, Thabisa moved from the Eastern Cape to Cape Town for school. She now resides in a township area. Sisipha shared the same commentary as Thabisa in regard to the lack of education and opportunity leading to unemployment and crime as a way of life in township areas. Thabisa, who arrived from the Johannesburg area, said that students back home mostly reach high school and dropout and never get a chance to go to university. Mainly, she added, people just go and find work and then just live to get by. Luniko also commented during his interview on the inequities of education and lack of opportunities for Black people. Whereas Luniko, dare I say, sat in a position of acceptance about the realities of his home and was driven to make change through quiet action, Mandla was angry. Mandla wanted White people to live in townships and experience life without water, as an example. He felt only by White people going without material resources would a larger, societal change take place. In fact, Mandla, not knowing that I had already visited several township areas, challenged me to go into the townships of Cape Town so I could “see what is really happening.” He described the townships of Cape Town (where he lived while saving money for school) like this, “Some people they don't have food and its havoc. Most people are sitting outside watching the sun go by. They don't have jobs.” Education, for these students became a necessity; and as Mandla stated, there was no option for them but to push. Interestingly, Graeme, one of my White subjects, stated that White people had a lax attitude towards education and took it for granted, whereas Blacks saw education as a tool.

*White students' perception of White areas.* When I asked Graeme, Pieter, and Rob about the areas where they lived, they defined spaces that were prosperous and filled with opportunities by means of access to material resources, thereby affirming a spatial hierarchy in Cape Town. Rob described his area as middle class, and he noted availability to clean, running water and that trains, busses, and shopping centers were easily available. Graeme described a major symbol of his neighborhood is the church. He said the several churches in his neighborhood that set the moral code for the area. Rob mentioned a train line as a defining feature that divided his space and mentioned no Black or Coloured people living on his street. One story Rob shared was about a teaching practice he completed during his second year as a university student. The school he was placed at was outside of his neighborhood, but only two blocks away from the all-White primary school he attended. Rob explained his experience in this way,

They've got no fields [at that school]; they've got no balls. They've got nothing and it was just a shock to me to see that two blocks away there is a school that has three fields, a swimming pool, a big hall, tennis courts, everything.

Rob then symbolized his space versus this school's space as "wealth versus poverty."

During Pieter's interview, Pieter noted how space was divided "color by color in similar areas" and how these plots were isolated spaces bordered by major road and train lines. Pieter stated that his neighborhood was filled with houses that were valued at around two million rand. His own home, Peter described, had seven bedrooms and a pool. Pieter, like Rob and Graeme, went to an all-White primary school. However, Pieter's school was integrated with one Black student when he was in second grade. Coincidentally, this student was in Pieter's class and actually sat next to Pieter. Pieter said that he felt honored that he was able to sit next to the new kid.

Pieter also shared anecdotes of how a major road now divided his town. He shared this with me in order to define how his area was now sitting in opposition to adjacent spaces currently being overrun with foreigners opening businesses like convenience shops. However, Pieter did not necessarily believe this to be a bad thing. He shared this to illustrate how times have changed, slowing the gap between the rich and the poor, and how opportunities were now being created that were not present during his parents' time. His parents, however, were surprised by this change and their position in a new South Africa.

*White students' commentary on township and Coloured areas.* When discussing the map, Graeme said it was common to refer to a Black populated area in his town as "The Dark Lands," a place "on the other side of the tracks." This area served in contrast to his street and neighborhood where you could find many churches, manicured lawns, and, like Rob and Pieter, schools with fancy sporting facilities. Graeme also told a story about feeling unsafe walking from a train station to a Coloured area where he was to complete a teaching assignment as part of a course requirement. Graeme said he heard from his mother (who heard from a colleague at work) that he would be attacked walking from the train station to the school. Graeme agreed with this statement because, in his words, "They won't accept a White person in that area."

*A note on White students' subjectivities.* I would like to reveal some specific data about the White men who took part in this study. This data, in turn, will lend itself to interesting evidence regarding the White students enrolled in the course at large, information that was derived through the mapping exercise, interviews, and participant observation. I add this data to this section (answering question one) as it highlights particular traits and characteristics of the White students enrolled in this course. First, the men who took part in this study, in my opinion, were vastly different in character than the other White students from the class at large. From the



workshop, through the duration of the course, to spending hours outside of class with both Graeme and Pieter, to maintaining contact with all three men via the phone application of WhatsApp between my visits to Cape Town, I have observed their critical awareness and thoughtful consideration regarding the art of teaching, issues of diversity, and insight into pedagogical issues ranging from required curricula to nurturing an inclusive, equitable classroom. Also, Pieter, Rob, and Graeme volunteered to be facilitators for this project, effectively making them stakeholders. Actually, I think “stakeholder” is an excellent way to describe these men. I mention their role as stakeholders because with exception of one White student outside of these men, I did not see the White students in the class at large as invested in the project, the process, or the class.

I witnessed several instances of what I perceived as lack of White investment through my observations and varied conversations. What I found was that White students, even though they had cars and were not reliant on train or bus schedules, rarely came to class. And, if they did come to class, they were either late or left early. As an example, on story circle day, before one White student heard the story of her Black group member, she suddenly received a text stating that her friend’s dog was sick and so she had to leave class early. She left without listening to any stories or even sharing her own. This is also the same girl who told me early on in the semester that students would not come to class because we were not “doing anything.” I thought this was odd since this project had been in place for a few years, and many students were familiar with their last assignment in the teacher preparation program. Another example with this same student: The lecturer decided that all of the students who missed the story circle had to make it up with the other absentee students during the next class period. It turned out that there were 9 or 10 students who missed the story circle and could now form a distinct group. When the

lecturer announced that all the absent students were to move to the next room in order to experience the story circle, I watched this student specifically to see what she would do. She did not move. She had to be told, personally, by her group facilitator and the lecturer to join the group in the other room. When I mentioned this situation in its entirety to a colleague who had taught this class (and this project) before, she called the behavior this student exhibited “White denial” and told me that the role of the teacher in this class is to convince the White students to become stakeholders.

I also asked one of the facilitators (Tayla) about why the White students did not attend class and seemed so disinterested overall. Tayla told me, “When you have always had it easy, you expect it to be easy.” Tayla also shared a story with me about how as a cohort they tried to move one of the early morning classes to late afternoon because it would be easier for the students reliant on public transportation to attend. Tayla said that even though the White students had cars and could come anytime with ease, they refused to move the class time. Hence, the class time was not moved.

I should also note that it was a standard rule in this class that students who had access to technology and who could work on their digital stories at home were allowed to stop attending after the third week of class. I was told this by two of my faculty informants. This, of course, left only the facilitators and students without access to material resources (such as computers) attending the course. I observed full class periods where Black and some Coloured students were the only students who came to class, further isolating students by race, access, and materiality.

Another observation along this vein revolves around the public viewing day of the students’ stories. The viewing of the digital stories took place on a Saturday. Students were expected to sign up for a time slot and appear when their stories would be shown to a larger

audience that included any friends and family members the student wished to bring along. Due to the large class size, this was an all-day process. White students signed up in a time block all together and only came for that period and left (save for the facilitators). However, Black and Afrikaans speaking Coloured students arrived before the showing and were the last to leave. They were also the only students who aided in helping the facilitators set up the food and drinks that the lecturer and I provided for the event. And, Black students were also the only students that stayed after the event to help clean up.

However, outside of the facilitators, there was one “White exception” by the name of Jake who happened to be in Rob’s group. To be fair, Jake was not always the exception. Before Jake was integrated into his group, I observed his lateness to class, his seemingly disinterest due to turning his back to the lecturer and not putting his phone down in class, and his overall aloofness to those around him. However, I was lucky enough to sit in on Rob’s group when Jake shared his story, and I also observed him as he listened to his colleagues’ stories. I can report Jake’s shift in attitude, which has also been documented in this chapter.

*Putting it in a box: Interview with Sam.* The most interesting data that came out of the mapping exercise was a conversation with a young man named Sam. Sam was not originally on my interview list as he was neither a facilitator nor was he in the group I selected from the class. And, he did not request to be interviewed. However, during my interview with Graeme, Graeme pointed out that I made a mistake on my map. He felt this way because I had a cluster of yellow pins in one area. However, in that expanse of yellow pins resided one, solitary red pin. The red pin was placed to signify a White student who claimed living in that region on the questionnaire. Graeme let me know that my pin was placed in error because he knew the student who lived in that space and he was not White. I mentioned to Graeme that this student identified as White;

hence, I pinned him on the map as White. Graeme was silent for a moment and then said that he knew who that student was. A few days later he brought Sam into my campus office.

When Sam walked in, he said that he wanted to explain to me why he identified himself as White. I shut my office door and asked him to sit down. Sam had this to say about being Coloured in South Africa, "I could never be White enough or Black enough. And, if you aren't either, where do you stand?" Sam also expressed how he felt White and did not identify with the culture of Coloured people. His lack of identity with the Coloured race, he claimed, was due to a German grandfather and a British grandmother; therefore, he did not feel that he even looked Coloured. This led him to believe that he did not share the same cultural values as the Coloured population. Sam went on to say that his status as a Coloured person came from a distant relative (three generations ago) that he did not know. He finished our conversation by telling me that he did not like people telling him "who he is or what he had to be." My conversation with Sam reminded me that it was not the first time that I heard a person of color mention that he wanted to be White. When I toured the township of Gugulethu, my wonderful local guide mentioned that as a little boy the only thing he wanted to be when he grew up was a White person.

These events led me to recall a chat I had with Pieter. At the beginning of the term when I asked the students from the course to identify their race on my initial questionnaire, Pieter wrote in the space provided, "It is not up to me to decide my race." Because Pieter was also one of the facilitators, as I stated previously, he and I spent a lot of time together over the course of my time in Cape Town. When Pieter and I talked about his response, he noted the binary between the political and the personal constructions of race in South Africa, and he also stated that South Africa was too "race dominated."

This feeling of being “boxed in” to pre-determined racial categories was the same sentiment I heard from Sam. I also found this term in my field notes when one of the lecturers of the course mentioned all children born in South Africa before 1994 were placed in a box. Meaning, once born, where that person lived, where they could attend school, and even who they could marry was already established. Also, while teaching the course, this same lecturer said that if teachers fail to see the potential of students, teachers “put them in a box.” I also heard this statement during the end of the term focus interview. In that interview, when I questioned students on how they would teach history in regard to apartheid, one student mentioned wanting to “put it in a box,” rather than to teach about the history of racial inequality in South Africa (unless, of course, she was teaching about Mandela, but that would be as far as she would take it).

Lastly, during the interview with Rob’s group, one young lady, Erin, also a “Born Free,” shared a story of feeling isolated within her racial designation. Erin said she felt “withdrawn from her own cultural background” as a Coloured because she lived in a wealthier Coloured area and had friends who were White as a result. Erin claimed she was called a “coconut,” a derogatory term for someone who is Coloured but speaks and acts White. She also claimed that she felt pressure from her own mother to be more like her own. In Erin's words,

My mom actually told me the other day...she couldn't get to the word coconut so she called me a poor White. Like even with my own family, uhm I never fit in the Coloured box, you know... your poor Coloureds here. Uhm, I was always associated with the wannabe White girl. That's how they classified me. So, uhm... with other cultures I blend in perfectly, but not with my own.

Hence, the data communicated the students in this study felt “boxed in” to the definitions that had historically been inscribed upon them. Data also proved how students lived and conducted their daily lives mirrored this sentiment. Secondly, through conversations and observations, the data suggested hierarchies that existed in the past still impacted the mindsets of people today and that negative connotations are still associated with people of color, at least in Cape Town. These hierarchies dominate not only spatial domains, but they facilitate student feelings of isolation from each other and also nurture continued segregation.

*Separation and segregated spaces.* When I asked Mandla to describe to me the people who lived in his area he stated, “You will never find a White person there and a Coloured person there.” Thabisa made the same connection when I asked her who lived in her area adding, “You will never find the White people, White folk in Soweto.” Luniko shared the same sentiment as he looked at the Google map commenting,

There’s lot of segregation like, yes, there’s a lot of segregation like they are so separated. Like people still according to their race and that....so few places where they are mixed. There’s lot of segregation according to racism. So, I think, *ja*...South Africans are still struggling with mixing up. *Ja*. It’s a lot of separation in this map.

This idea of regions and districts still separated by color was also mentioned by Tayla during her interview. Tayla mentioned that Coloured people would not be found in Black living spaces. Mia shared the story of her mother, who courageously moved out of their Coloured area immediately in the early 90's after the demise of the Group Areas Act and into a White residential space. The family lasted in this new neighborhood for many years, but they eventually moved back to a Coloured area because there they felt more comfortable and accepted.

Felix was the only person who said there were mixed population sets in his area. To be fair, his neighborhood was part of a new and trendy space that Graeme referred to as a "hipster" region. Felix's neighborhood is located one train stop away from the campus and was comprised mostly of college-age students and younger residents. Student residential living spaces are also located in this area. An interesting fact about Felix is that his father was one of the displaced persons who originally lived in District Six and was forced to move out under the "White's only" legislation. Even though Felix had only ever lived in his current space, he told me that his father, a pastor, was a member of the District Six Committee and in the process of getting a house back in District Six.

*A common story.* During the interview and before the end of the course, I asked all of the students if they felt that they shared the same kinds of stories as their classmates or even held common values. I believed that asking the students this question would illuminate if they felt connected to each other. Mandla perhaps had the strongest reaction to this question and stated,

Like they [White people] don't have the problems that we have. I don't have food. There is no-one to pay my [school] fees. They don't face those challenges because their parents, they've got good jobs and they have things like water, *ja*, and computers and all things; they are living a better life.

Mandla added that he felt he shared a common value (like education) with his classmates, but not a common story. When I asked Thabisa this question, she answered it by sharing a story. She explained how all students in the teaching program were required to practice teaching at crossover schools. Meaning, students who resided in Black township areas were expected to complete training at White or Coloured schools. Thabisa was very frustrated by the fact that she did her part by going into an all-White school, yet she stated the White students refused to go to

Black schools. I also heard this same story from the faculty member at CT who places students into teaching practices. He told me White students always have tried to get out of going to crossover schools, and historically they had been allowed to do so. However, Mandla said it best,

You see, they are not willing to go and teach and change, er---to go to our schools and teach there because they never went there even in teaching practice. But we went to their schools and taught there. So we are willing to work with them, but they are not willing to work with us. We are not united. Even though we can say that we have freedom, but we don't have freedom. We are still separated. There is no spirit of ubuntu.

Tayla equated her lack of connection to her peers based on English speaking students who, in her opinion, thought they were better than Afrikaans speakers. Sisipha and Luniko both did not believe that they shared the same stories as classmates who came from Coloured or White areas, and Rob believed that he shared similar stories and values with (White) people who had a common background as he did.

This idea of not sharing a common story with people different than you also extended itself to me. Even though I had spent a lot of time with Thabisa helping her to edit and craft her digital story, and I saw her as a person like me due to the similarities I perceived we shared, Thabisa said that she felt inferior sitting next to me during our interview. When I asked her to explain she said, "Let me put it this way. I feel a little inferior sitting here next to you...because you are White." From here she added,

My grandmother, the one who raised me, was a domestic worker. So we knew our place. These are White people and they are better than us. So we are lesser than them. So there is still that in our----at the back of----even though we try to fight it, but that still stays



there at the back of our minds. And, as a result, our kids are raised in such a way that all Whites are more privileged. (Thabisa)

Conversations derived from this mapping exercise revealed the distance and disconnect not only between students in the class, but it also revealed how race continued to play a role in how students perceived the areas and people that surrounded them. Tayla had this to say about our time looking at the map, “Race in South Africa is-it's very isolated. Certain people fall into certain classes and it's very visible if you are looking at the road map that you have made.” When Sisipha talked about the map she said it “made race visible;” and Mia, when I showed her a street view of what it is like in the township of Langa, said out loud during our interview, “Now I know what it is like on the other side of the border.” When I asked Mandla to share his thoughts about the map, he said, “It tells that we are separated.”

This mapping data also provided insight that the students, even though they had been in classes together for four years and traveled through university as a cohort, did not feel like they had a common story or even shared common values with their peers, outside of the fact that they were all going to be teachers and valued education. Mapping the students within Cape Town spaces demonstrated that students felt a lack of connection to areas outside of their comfort zones and also to the people who resided in such places. Tayla summed it up this way,

I think we get comfortable with where we are. I think that if I look at the map, that's the story that I see that people become comfortable in their comfort zones and they struggle to move outside of their comfort zones.

***Culture of fear and crossover schools.*** During the interview, students revealed that it was compulsory to go to a school outside of their racial category, labeled a crossover school, for a total of two months as part of required teaching practicums. Students did not do this teaching

all at one time, but over the course of the academic year. Here is how students were placed:

White South African students had to select crossing over to Black or Coloured schools. Black students must choose White or Coloured schools, and Coloured students had to select White or Black schools. What the data revealed after talking to the students was that none of the Coloured or White students picked Black township schools.

When I questioned Rob as to why he would not go into a Black township school he responded, "I was scared. The area had a reputation for being dangerous." Tayla said this about teaching at a historically Black crossover school, "I am not going to go to Khayelitsha. There is no chance. Once again, the fear." Mia, interestingly enough, again, said that she would "never" go into a historically Black area or teach in a township school, yet she now holds a teaching position in Manenberg, arguably one of the more dangerous places in Cape Town. When I mentioned to Graeme that the data showed the Black students were a bit resentful that the White students did not go to Black township schools, he replied, "They may have been uncomfortable, but they were safe. We fear for our lives going there." Overall, students reported that safety and length of travel time were the two main reasons that stopped White and Coloured students from venturing into Black township schools.

Graeme also offered insight into crossover schools. Graeme said that White students are not required to go to Black township schools due to their distance from the city center. He shared a story that related to why there is fear regarding going into a Black township school. Graeme said one time when he was teaching in a Coloured township school that he overheard some of the Black students, who were bussed in from their home townships, talk about his money in isiXhosa. He associated this experience with why he (as a White person) could not go

into historically Black township schools. He then stated, “When they see Whites, they see rich... and they are desperate enough that they will attack you.”

*Culture of fear and redressing the past.* Investigating narratives linked to both people and place illuminated a culture of fear that encapsulated the students. This was noted from the students not wanting to be grouped across lines of race and language on the first day of the project, to questioning my use of the train, and to not selecting crossover schools in historically Black living areas. When I asked Tayla about fear in South Africa in our post-course interview, she maintained the position that she spoke about previously regarding how people get into comfort zones and refuse to go outside of them. Once again, she illustrated her point with a story. Tayla said that she got an offer from a Model C (White) school, but that she did not take it because she was scared to be out of her comfort zone. Instead, Tayla accepted an offer at a Coloured school in Belhar. On her decision to work in Belhar, Tayla said, “That is my comfort zone. That’s where I belong.”

Rob also expressed a fear of being out of place and uncomfortable in group scenarios, especially when placed with people of mixed races. He equated this fear, and his classmates’ unwillingness to be placed into mixed-race groups, to South Africa’s apartheid past. Rob stated, “We have been brought up to feel ashamed. So the White people don’t want to open up to the Black people because maybe they are going to get blamed for something. Apartheid is still a very sore topic here in South Africa.”

When I asked Mia why South Africans were so fearful, she said that fear was “historically instilled.” Rob said that fear stems from apartheid and likened this fear to the xenophobia happening now in parts of South Africa. Both Tayla and Mia said that fear was passed down through the stories they heard from their parents. Mia called it a “vicious cycle.”

Tayla understood that this fear was part of the ethos of the South African people and questioned, “How many mindsets can you change?” Tayla mentioned that one of her students announced in class that he was a member of the ANC (African National Congress). When Tayla questioned him on this, the student replied that his mother said “he must be ANC.” Tayla used this anecdote as an example of how both stories and identity are passed down from parents to children, across generations. “It is instilled in them,” Tayla said, “You are who your parents are.”

Graeme, like Tayla, also mentioned how stories can be passed down through generations exposing particular stereotypes that can become a single story that you either accept or reject. Graeme also mentioned that these stories can lead to feelings of fear, especially when going into a new place with unfamiliar people. Graeme stated, “It’s scary to go to someplace new... you don’t have control and you don’t know where the other person is coming from.” When I asked him if this fear was at all tied to race, he answered in the affirmative. Graeme added, “It’s the uncomfortableness of crossing cultures. In South Africa we don’t even know our own culture. We have a lack of culture.”

Pieter also agreed that people do not want to be outside of their comfort zones. He noted that people are resistant to change and that some do have lingering racial issues. When talking about his former classmates in the professional studies course during the post-course interview, Pieter stated, “I know with personal knowledge that some of the learners don’t like mixing race.” However, Pieter said unwillingness to mix is due predominantly to a barrier or language, not race. Interestingly, the data revealed that Black students believe segregation (“unwillingness to mix”) happened by race; Coloured and White students believe segregation happened by language.

When I queried Luniko about fear in South Africa and specifically why students did not want to be placed into mixed groups, he also noted the fear associated with race. Luniko voiced his own fear of integration due to “White people being racist.” In our interview, Luniko stated, “We are not used to each other. And I think if I see a White person they will never like me.” I asked him if he thought this automatically before he even met this person. His response was yes. Luniko also shared, “We are so separated between Coloureds and Whites and Indians that we actually don’t feel safe. It is because of our past. We are still carrying it, and we just don’t like to let it go.”

Luniko also believed spatiality played a role in South Africa’s culture of fear. When illustrating his point, Luniko stated fear existed “because we are so divided.” Luniko went on to talk about spaces just for Blacks and spaces just for Whites and continued using these examples, “Langa is for Blacks; Mitchell’s Plain is for Coloureds.” Felix’s thoughts on this matter of post-apartheid South African spaces were aligned with Luniko’s. Felix added, “There is still a lot of anger and hatred. A lot of it. And you can see it. You saw it in the division of the classes when you were here.”

When I asked Luniko if telling stories in the classroom helped him to deal with the past he responded,

Personally, yes, for me as individual it helped me. It was healing. I never voiced out my story. It was very good to have people actually listen to my story. And, generally, for our people, there is not a lot in South African history about our stories. It was good to represent it. It was the best thing for me.

During my interview with Pieter, Pieter talked about past factors that have created current day barriers between people. Pieter stated,

Stereotypes have been underlined over the years. There hasn't been white and poor, or rich black people...affluence that has been shared. Yet, discrimination during the apartheid regime created that barrier. Now in the last 20 years there has been a lot of transformation. Of course not enough. Not where it should be. In the apartheid regime everything was legalized to make it that way. To make something in the law is so disrespectful, so in your face.

Crime is another large problem in South Africa that served to generate fear. Many of the students noted that they have been victims of crime. Pieter stated that he has had his home broken into four times; Graeme also detailed how intruders have entered his house as well. When I asked Pieter about fear being tied to race in South Africa, Pieter said his fear was linked to the fear of not being a victim, not to race or language of a person. When students (like Tayla, Mia, and Graeme) talked about not wanting to go into crossover schools, it was because they feared being physically harmed. Tayla had this to say about crime in South Africa, "They will steal the paint off of your car." Rob equated the culture of fear of crime to how he was raised, stating, "We are raised to be fearful. We hear horror stories of people being murdered in their houses. So you grow up with that fear...and you need to be prepared. You avoid. You put up your guard."

An interesting follow up conversation once again took place with Sam on one of my return trips to Cape Town. Sam met up with Graeme, Felix, and me after we attended a rugby game. I mentioned to Sam that the conversation we had in my office helped me to understand the positionality of many Coloured people in South Africa. Sam explained that he was currently now a high school art teacher in a Coloured area with a homogenous (Coloured) student population. On the first day of class, Sam shared that the engine was stolen out of his car. Having his engine stolen led Sam to tell his students that he is Coloured for his own safety, as Sam feared students

would not listen or tolerate a White person teaching them. Recall that Sam was the student who labeled himself White and believed he had nothing in common with the Coloured community. When Graeme and I talked about this, Graeme said that Sam would be a target if he identified as White in that area.

Lastly, I will end this section of fear by illustrating a visit to Mia's classroom in Manenberg, arguably the most dangerous and drug/gang related area in all of Cape Town. This addition is meant to substantiate the culture of fear in Cape Town and to add validity to the facilitators' statements.

First, I believe that it is important to note that two days before my arrival a 12-year-old girl was killed in gang crossfire. Mia told me the ambulances could not even arrive to get the girl until they were escorted into the community by police vehicles. This was necessary, explained Mia, because the last time ambulances entered Manenberg they were robbed. I bring this incident into this chapter simply because it was the topic the students were talking about and also a topic Mia took time away from the standardized curriculum to address with her students. Observing the dialogue between Mia and her students offered insight into the narrative of the area and what part the students-and Mia-played in that story.

Halfway through the class, Mia asked the students to share news about life in Manenberg with me. All the students started speaking at once, and I had a hard time deciphering their chatter. So, Mia stopped the class and simply asked them if they could play outside. They shouted and shook their heads and said, "NOOOOO." Mia asked them why and I heard one student respond, "because of the gangsterism, the shooting." Mia had this to say about her approach to teaching in this environment, "I listen to their stories. Manenberg is high crime.

There is shooting. The kids are always talking about the shootings in the area. They shoot almost every day in Manenberg.”

The fear the students felt due to local crime and violence was present and embodied. I witnessed as one student raised her hand to tell Mia that she did not want to go home because of the shooting outside. I observed as Mia led the class in a discussion about what they should do if someone tried to sell them drugs or use them as drug mules. Mia also shared that she felt compelled to add this impromptu conversation into her classroom due to the intimate knowledge the kids already had about drugs and crime simply from living in the area. Mia then said that she felt it was important to try to allow a space for her students to “let their stories out.” It was interesting Mia used the phrase “let that story out” as these were the words she used six months earlier regarding how she felt about her own story.

### **The Composing Process of Digital Storytellers**

**Question two: What is the composing process of digital storytellers?** For question two, I turn my attention towards examining the data relating to the composing process of the digital storytellers in this classroom context. The composing process this class followed was largely based on Joe Lambert’s (2012) and the Center for Digital Storytelling/StoryCenter model of digital storytelling as outlined in chapter five. From evaluating the data, a few standout moments were illuminated by the students that spoke specifically to the writing and composing process. When the data was coded and examined, the following themes emerged: the importance of both “telling” and “listening” as vital components of the writing and editing process, the binary of silences, and the students’ need to voice *their* story, which superseded both the prompt and the potential grade the students might have received. Lastly, I will share what has emerged from the data regarding the story as a performance site.



*The listening and the telling.* Overall, students described feelings of both relief and healing as they shared their digital stories. What the data uncovered was the importance of the story circle in the writing process as a place that proved to be instrumental to students as an environment that supported writing. Students, both in the interview and in the reflective texts, expressed sentiment on how sharing stories-both the active hearing part and the actual talking part-improved their abilities as writers.

The data showcased how both the telling and listening to stories played a pivotal role in the composing process. Andre reported, “Although it was easy to jot down these moments in silence, I have to admit that I never knew vocalizing it all would reveal so much more.” Student (#11) reported sharing his story “helped me to develop my listening skills. I always listen, but I never really hear.” This, in turn, created a feeling of trust Andre took into the writing process. Student (#24) claimed telling her story allowed her to learn how to tell a story at “her own pace.” Sisipha noted in the interview that telling her story aloud provided her a space to move beyond traditional writing and gave her the freedom to “express myself not only in words, but using my voice.” Felix had this to say about telling his story aloud, “It allowed me to reflect on the relationship I had with myself, with my colleagues, and with my pen.” Pieter, in an interview, mentioned how telling his story helped him to distinguish the defining moments in his story, moments that resonated with the group that he was later able to specifically focus on in both his draft and later in his video. On the “telling,” student (# 22) said, “The most valuable part of writing the story was telling it first. It helped me before writing things down.” Student (#4) said this about listening to stories, “What amazed me was the empathy visible on the listeners’ faces” when he shared his story. Again, non-verbal reactions helped this student identify important moments in his narrative, moments he could focus on when writing his story.

For many students listening to stories caused a reflective process, not only in regard to their personal lives, but as they worked through examining and critically considering their own writing practices. I bring this evidence of “the listening” into this section of my dissertation project because the data suggested a connection between listening and telling stories as a valuable practice for process-based writing. Students reported the act of sitting in a story circle and not having the chance to interrupt other people while they told stories made them hyper-aware of silence. Students noted silence as an aesthetic that enhanced both telling and the writing of stories, but that silence could also reveal what has been left unsaid. This gap, perhaps, was an avenue for an additional story to come to light. A member of Rob’s group had this to say about how silence worked in authoring stories, “When composing, it can mean a chance to breath... to pause for a moment of reflection and understanding.” Another student in Rob’s group said when he heard stories from his group, that “silence allows something that stirs” and to sit in silence while telling and listening to stories means that “you are connecting yourself to yourself.”

Other members of Rob’s group said that telling and listening to stories allowed a “space for your story to breathe.” Erin, from Rob’s group, said, “When you share everything that is when you have that silence. You think about everything that went through in life, your story.” Student (#33) had this to say in his reflective text, “To narrate one’s story was difficult. When one heard the story in words, spoken by one self, it was then that we realized how much of an impact these experiences have had on us.” Talking through stories encouraged students to carve a silent space where they could metacognitively work out their writing before it hit paper.

The silences or “gaps” of the story-listening process also provided an avenue of support for the person who was speaking. As previously mentioned, students were taught to use jazz hands as a sign of “silent support” (as Sisipha stated) as each student took a turn speaking. One

student (#17) defined the jazz hands as used to “imply that they [other students] know and have experienced something similar or that they simply just understand why this story is the one you chose to tell.” The jazz hands or spirit fingers also cued the author in on the parts of a story that resonated with an audience. As one student (#20) stated, “Spirit fingers gave me clarification that my group felt my emotions and the respect factor was evident for us all to see.”

*Editing and economy.* An interesting by-product of the story circle was that it took place one step before the students drafted their stories as scripts. Students were able to orate their entire narratives before actually sitting down and writing it out on paper. As documented in my field notes, talking through stories from beginning to end aided students in addressing issues that concern writers such as evaluating rhetorical approaches when communicating in varied situations. Also, since the story was heard by all of the other members in the story circle, when it came to editing each draft, it could be “member checked” by peers who had heard the entire content of each story. In this way, students could ask questions as invested audience members and make inquiries as to why certain thoughts and ideas were expressed in the story circle, but were perhaps left out of the draft. In fact, Mandla had this to say, “It was easy to write my story because I said it out loud.” Student (#36) said sharing and crafting stories aloud aided her in developing her personal critical thinking skills and that she acquired knowledge on editing skills. Student (#49) said that the process made her “practice one’s editing skills... using less words to get your point across.” When I asked Tayla about the talking through her story first, she said that as a result the “editing part was easier.”

*Stories as performance sites.* I was curious on two issues relating to storytelling that are particular issues found in the literature of composition and rhetoric studies. First, I wanted to investigate the social construction of stories and specifically examine if the stories students

shared in the story circle were influenced by one student hearing the story of another and thereby crafting a story along the same theme. Secondly, I wanted to understand how the students grappled with the requirements and reality of the course (assigned a specific prompt then graded on it) when sharing a personal story. Ultimately, the data highlighted that students composed personal and traumatic stories that I believe were outside of what they were tasked to do by their instructor. Hence, I was interested as to how students felt being graded (“marked”) on the personal stories that they shared. It is important to note that the data illuminated a distinction between sharing stories in the story circle versus sharing stories in a public venue. At this point, I will share the findings of the story circle alone.

Pieter was the first person to share his narrative with the story circle during the facilitators’ workshop. Pieter told an emotional story detailing how his father died of cancer. As Pieter talked, he teared up and several times had to pause and catch his breath. While telling his story, he explained that his father died just after Madiba (Nelson Mandela) and that many people mourned Nelson Mandela as the father of South Africa. Pieter explained that he did not mourn him as a father because he already had a wonderful father whom he loved dearly as his role model. Pieter ended his story by telling us about a boy in his teaching practice that clung to him one day after school. He later learned that the boy did not have a father. Pieter concluded that he could become a “father to the fatherless” by becoming a teacher. When I later asked Pieter why he shared this story, he told me that it was the story that was on his heart. He also stated quite clearly that he did not change his story from his original intent, or alter his story in any way once he arrived in the story circle.

It could be argued that Pieter’s story set the stage for how the other facilitators would decide on what stories to share with the group. However, the collected and coded data does not

suggest that. What the data shared was that students in the story circle did not change the story they intended on telling once they heard the stories of their peers. Rob said that when he started to speak, “it just came out” and that not altering his story “was a matter of honesty.” When I asked Sisipha if she changed her mind about what she was going to say based on what she heard in the story circle, she said, “No, I didn’t change anything about my story.”

When I questioned Graeme about why he selected the particular story he shared and if he altered it once he heard Pieter and the other students, he stated, “I didn’t change my story at all. I told the full unabridged version.” Felix’s sentiment was along the same line. When I asked Felix in our interview why he wanted to tell this story, he replied, “This part of my life has moulded [sic] me to what I am now and this is the most significant factor that has added value to who I am now and where I’m going.” Andre replied to my question about why he chose this story and if he changed it at all after hearing the others, replied, “When the opportunity presented for me to tell a story, I knew this was the story. I didn’t think twice about it. This is who I am.” When I asked Sisipha why she picked the story about being raped and suffering abuse at the hands of her first husband to share over all of her other stories, she explained the process like this: “And then it just happened that when the moment that I held that stick in my hand, that was the only story that came across my mind. I didn’t have other stories to tell.”

The students in Rob’s group also were not influenced to shape their stories in order to match their colleagues’ stories. Erin told me she felt she could be “honest without fear.” Jake also said that he went into the story circle with an idea before hearing any other stories and stuck with that story despite what he heard from his peers. Another student (#68) from the larger class told me in my office that for her the process was about digging deep and being true to herself, which did not include altering her story.

However, the data changed dramatically when students realized that as part of their grade they were required to show their stories in a public venue, held on a Saturday, in an auditorium with the friends and families that any student in the class invited to participate in the viewing. In my field notes, I documented a group of students from the course stating that they would change their stories for the public viewing because they did not want to share anything “personal” with a large audience. Three additional students also challenged the lecturer on why they were being forced to share their stories because the “Digital Storyteller’s Bill of Rights” they were given at the beginning of the class stated that each storyteller had a right to share or not to share their digital stories. Sam was an additional student who also made two completely different videos, one for his story circle and one for public consumption. Sam told me that he felt too exposed to share his original story in the large group. Student (#61) also said her story was too personal to share in a public venue and that she felt lied to by the teacher. Student (#4) also did not want to share her story publicly.

Tayla also created a completely new digital story for viewing day. The digital story she composed during the facilitators’ workshop was called “Daddy’s Girl.” In this digital story, Tayla shared with us how she found out by mistake that the man she thought was her father was really not by overhearing a secret conversation. From the evidence provided in other sections of this chapter, Tayla felt relieved after sharing her original story with the small group. And, other students reevaluated how they felt about her after hearing her workshop story. I recall Graeme stating that after four years he finally “knew her now.” However, Tayla did not want to share this personal story with a public audience, so she made a new story to share on viewing day. Luckily, Tayla has high literacy skills and was able to craft a new video on short notice. The new story Tayla showed in the public venue had her smiling in every frame standing in front of a

chalkboard and talking about the beauty of teaching in South Africa. When I asked Tayla how she felt about the public viewing, she said, “It was bad that it was compulsory to come. And, it was expensive to do so.”

Mia also changed her story completely. In the story circle, she told of being bullied for being overweight and created a video to correspond with this theme. She reported that this was her “main story” and that she could not tell any other stories until she “let this one out.” When it came to the viewing day, she, too, made a completely new video. Her new video mirrored Tayla’s.

Felix also had an issue with sharing his story publicly. During the workshop, Felix detailed how he spent seven years in a downward spiral due to being addicted to drugs. He told us how he spent time in jail, how his parents lost their home because of his addiction, and also how he was a premier cricket player with a lot of potential but that drugs ruined that for him, too. I remember after Felix told this story that he received tons of support from his peers for turning his life around. I remember telling him specifically (as I did with other students in my group) that we knew his story now and we liked him anyway.

When Felix realized during the course that he had to show his story publicly as part of his grade, he literally became sick about it. He told me in the interview that for the entire week leading up to the event that he had stomach pains. Felix shared with me the horror of sharing his story in front of strangers. He stated very clearly that he did not want his friend’s parents to know his story. Ultimately, since Pieter was in charge of running the videos on show day, a few of the other facilitators asked Pieter just to skip Felix’s story altogether. Pieter agreed and in the loop of 71 videos that were being shown, nobody noticed that Felix’s video was not shown

publicly. However, on the screening day, Felix was told early on that he would not have to show his video. He later shared that he felt “relieved” by that action.

*The grading and the brief.* Coding the data and talking to students additionally offered insight into how the students felt about being graded for sharing their personal stories in a classroom setting. Even though students were asked to craft a story for a grade that related to their experiences in becoming teachers, the data revealed that many students composed stories that were filled with trauma and loss and overall deeply personal. Graded personal writing in classroom spaces has long been a topic of conversation in composition studies. Hence, I was interested in how students navigated the prompt, their replies, and the expectations of grading in general.

What the data illuminated was that although students included segments of the prompt in their final digital stories, the prompt was not their main motivation for telling the story that they shared. Take Pieter’s story as an example. Becoming a teacher was a very small part of it. And, certainly one could argue that Pieter could have left the part about his father out altogether. Telling the part about his father, for Pieter, however, was his way of working through his pain. At the time he shared his story, Pieter was not concerned that he would ultimately be graded for this story. As I reported earlier, when I asked Pieter why he decided to tell this story over all his other stories, he told me that he had a story to tell that was on his heart and he wanted to share it. He did not reply that he told this story because of the assignment. When I asked Rob to share his thoughts on his story being graded, he responded by telling me a short story. Rob shared with me that during the workshop one of the professors he had known since his first year, a professor he thought was “scary,” made herself available each day of the workshop. She brought the students lunch, she asked them how they were doing, and genuinely, in Rob’s opinion, this professor



seemed to care about the storytelling process and in establishing a relationship with the students outside of her class. Rob said this compelled him to care about creating a good project rather than worrying about a grade. When I asked Mia how she felt about being graded and the prompt, she said, "I forgot we were being marked on it. I forgot all about it."

When Sisipha talked about overcoming rape and domestic abuse in the story circle, she shared that she was only thinking about telling-and moving past-her story. Sisipha did not mention the prompt or the grade. Nor did Tayla, Mia, Andre, Graeme, Rob, or Luniko, all who told stories of pain and loss and stories at best loosely related to becoming a teacher. Luniko also told me that when he was thinking about the story he wanted to tell, he did not care about the brief and that sharing his story had "nothing to do with the mark." He also went on to say that personal stories should not be marked and that "the telling should be good enough." Andre also wanted to share *his* story, to tell his colleagues "This is who I am," which resided outside of the grade he might receive. Thabisa and Tayla also commented during their interviews that their stories were personal and they were confused how they could be graded. Overall, the data provided evidence that students felt driven to share personal experiences in the form of a story despite the prompt of journey to becoming a teacher. The point is that if students have something on their heart that they need to let out, they will despite the grading and the prompt.

Lastly, both Graeme and Pieter also had interesting commentary regarding how they were graded versus how the Black students in the course were graded. After going through the process, Pieter and Graeme shared with me that they did not think it was fair that the Black students were graded the same way as the White and Coloured students. Specifically, Graeme mentioned that this particular student group (Black students) did not have the same access to technology that he grew up with. And, Graeme added that the Black students came from

township areas without standard access to electricity that put them at a disadvantage. Pieter was another student that specifically commented on the unequal advantage that students with higher literacy skills (i.e., access) had in completing the assigned task.

*On public story viewing and the marks: Six months later.* As I mentioned earlier, personal writing that is both traumatic and attached to a grade has long been a topic of debate in writing studies. The juxtaposition of these aforementioned elements brings forth ethical questions regarding how personal experience-in whatever form-is integrated into course content and then graded. Hence, I felt it important to continue examining the interplay of these topics, in addition to gauging how students felt about their personal stories being graded and publicly consumed six months after the completion of the project. I also was interested in finding out what factor(s) created an environment where students did not place a high priority on a grade for the project.

Tayla shared with me that she felt that the story circle was a comfortable space that led her to not care so much about the grade. She had this to say, “They made you feel comfortable. It was the environment that was set at the beginning.” Pieter added this to the conversation,

The space was created without me even knowing it ...only once I started speaking did I know that I had to go all out and I couldn't leave anything behind because then it wouldn't be the story. I thought the story was irrelevant for the grade because I thought they were looking for more technical aspects... can you make the picture move, work with the sound. That is what is going to give you 50% and make you pass.

Pieter continued by sharing the only consideration he had was the actual “telling” of his story at the onset. In Pieter's words, “When I started speaking the big issue was can I tell the story that was really on my heart. As soon as I started speaking, I knew it had to be the whole thing. Go big

or go home.” Felix shared the same sense of exigency in regard to telling a story in the story circle that was on his heart. In Felix’s words, “I felt that what happened in my past affected me the most. It made me who I am today. I had to tell that.”

When I asked Luniko how he arrived at a place where he did not care about the grade he said,

I think it is knowing that your story is your story. There is nothing you can add. There is nothing you can take away. So, you just tell it as raw as it is. There is nothing you can actually do to your story to get good marks. We have different stories, so that mark was just out for me... I believed my story is special. The marking part was really with the expectation that it would be marked on the technical part. My story will always be my story... and I didn’t, like, match my story with the marking.

However, the data also highlighted a disjuncture between the organic and open process of telling stories from the heart during the story circle and the realities of the class that included being graded by sharing a digital story for public consumption on viewing day. The public consumption of the stories on viewing day continued to be a topic under investigation, as well as, it was on the minds of the students that I interviewed during my second visit. When Pieter expressed why he thought that fellow students changed their stories for viewing day, he agreed with my initial findings and stated, “The problem is that the people who are outsiders coming to watch, like the friend’s mother, they aren’t aware of the Bill of Rights. So you feel like this person is not part of that safe group.” He continued by adamantly stating, “Members of the public are not in the story circle.”

When I asked Pieter about how he felt about the storytelling process and grading six months later, he mentioned how some students did not want to share their stories publicly and

how he agreed with them because “The Bill of Rights said we had the right to share our stories... if we wanted to.” Pieter also noted the danger of students changing their stories because they do not want them to be shown publicly versus telling authentic stories from the heart, which he felt was the true purpose of the digital storytelling project. Pieter stated:

Going in with knowing that the story is going to a public space will change what you say in the first place. Either you start with saying everything is open and you can have the safe space and say what is on your heart, or you enter it and hear, ‘Say whatever is on your heart, but please remember that this is going to a public space.’ But that is going to change things. Big time.

Rob also mentioned the privacy issue surrounding sharing stories in a public venue by stating that people in his group did not want to show their stories publicly because they did not know who would see it or what impact it would have on the people outside of the story circle. When I asked Felix about the public viewing day, he said he also felt as if he would be judged by people that did not really know him. In Felix’s words,

Even though people say that they shouldn’t judge, people judge. And, there is a stigma attached to any bad thing. People may say, ‘Why are you in education if you have such a past?’ That is just the reality of it. It just happens.

To illustrate his larger point, Felix additionally told me a story about a girl he just met who was warned away from him from her grandfather, even though it had been seven years since his drug abuse and he had changed dramatically.

When I interviewed Tayla about the public viewing day, she mentioned the expense on coming to campus on a Saturday and further stated, “It was odd that people were forced to share their stories [publicly]. I made my new story in a day.” I remembered Tayla’s secondary story

where she was smiling in every frame and proclaiming how wonderful it would be to teach in a new South Africa, versus the story she told from the heart in the workshop story circle.

After Tayla made this comment, I challenged her by stating, “But your new story...was the fakest story ever!”

Tayla replied, “And, you could see it in the mark. Everyone could see it coming. ...the moment we had to change our stories.” Tayla continued by commenting on how she felt the stories, overall, were scored:

And unless your story is traumatic, it doesn't count. But, yet, we are trying to put out there that every story counts...and yet you are saying your story isn't good enough. It doesn't count. Someone else's is more traumatic so it counts.

Another issue that came about during my second round of interviews had to do with stories as performance sites. Rob mentioned during our talk that he knew before going into the class that he had to tell a sad story. I felt that this was an important enough statement to follow up with the rest of the facilitators. When I asked Tayla if she knew about the project before entering the class, Tayla said she saw a few digital stories during her third year of classes that put the idea of emotional stories in her mind. Tayla said she felt that before going into the class that she had to “tell a story worthwhile,” or as she stated, her “main story.”

Due to Rob and Tayla's sentiments, I also wondered if the students felt pressured to tell a personal and perhaps traumatic story before even entering the class. Pieter disagreed on feeling pressured and stated the following about the story he shared:

I couldn't have planned it. There was no way that I could not tell that story. Because of the timing, I had to say that specific story. At that point in my life, it wasn't the main story. It was *the* story.

When I asked the other students in subsequent interviews what they had heard, if anything, about the class in advance, the majority of the students (Andre, Mia, Graeme, Luniko, and Pieter) said they did not have any preconceived notions about the class. Pieter in fact said that he did not really know anything about the project beforehand.

As Sam reflected on the digital storytelling process six months later, he told me he enjoyed the process but still felt that personal stories should not be shown publicly. He was quite strong in his adherence to the sentiment. In fact, the way the project was handled seemed to turn Sam off of digital storytelling all together. One last note about Sam: Sam wrote me a personal and hand-written letter before I left South Africa explaining in detail why he felt the need to alter his story for viewing day. I will not get into specifics, but Sam, like Felix, did not want outsiders to know his personal thoughts and feelings. Therefore, he felt compelled to change his story.

### **Altering Classroom Habitus**

#### **Question three: How might the digital storytelling process alter classroom spaces?**

Triangulating and examining student conversations exposed that student housing patterns are situated in mostly racially segregated residential spaces. However, university classrooms are located in spaces requiring students to transverse borders and boundaries, leave comfort zones, and attend classes in integrated spaces. And, unfortunately, the findings from this study provided evidence of how segregation found its way into the classroom environment as well. I was told by a faculty colleague before I arrived that students still self-segregated themselves by color in university spaces. I observed this as well on the first day of the workshop and on the first day of the course. Black students sat in the back, Coloured students in the middle, and White students located themselves at the front of the room. During the interview, Thabisa made mention of seating patterns in her interview saying, “As you've noticed in our classes, we sit

separated. So we don't mingle at all.” Mia stated in her interview that she did not mingle with people outside of her race (Coloured) until she started college. Sisipha also mentioned the seating arrangement (Blacks in back, Whites in front) in the classroom as well during our interview.

Thabisa, however, added an additional dimension to the hierarchy of the student seating arrangement in the classroom. Thabisa said even in these separate groupings that if you speak Afrikaans you move closer to the front. As an example, Afrikaans speaking Coloureds would sit in front of English speaking Coloureds. Tayla also commented on linguistic and racial hierarchies in regard to classroom seating placement in her interview. There was one exception in regard to how students in the classroom were seated on day one of the course. Two facilitators, one White and one Coloured, who had already completed the digital storytelling process during the workshop, sat next to each other at a table by themselves.

*Classroom environment: The story circle.* Students in this course started the class in their segregated pockets; however, on day one, to kick off the digital storytelling project, the course lecturer randomly assigned students into mixed groups. This was done by students counting off from numbers 1-10. Each group was then led by one of the course facilitators. The students remained in these groups throughout the duration of the project.

The data collected through participant observation, by means of field notes, and student conversations, illuminated how the classroom environment played a key role in the digital storytelling process. The day students were placed into their groups is etched in my mind and also detailed in my field notes. Students, under no circumstances, wanted to work with people outside of their friends, or in the case of these students, their racial categories. Students were very verbal about their discontent, shouting “NO,” and murmuring to each other in angry

whispers. In fact, this was the only time that I saw Black students talking out loud in a classroom scenario. I also heard the word “uncomfortable,” which is documented in my field notes. From what I understand from conversations with students, this was the first time in their college careers that students were placed in integrated groups.

What I witnessed in the classroom space, as well as what the students have documented both in interviews and in the reflective texts, was that the story circle became a transformative space. I report this because as students were sharing their River of Life, stories came pouring out of them. One student (#24) said this about sharing her personal story, “It was part of my life that was buried, and it was good to tell it without interruptions.” These stories were highly personal in nature and covered a wide variety of themes. As an example, just from the facilitators’ group, students talked about whatever was on their heart at the time of the sharing. In fact, this was just how Pieter described the story he told, as a story that was on his heart. The term “heart” was also used by a few other students as they shared how they told their stories.

Additionally, these stories seemed to exist outside of the prompt (“journey to becoming a teacher”) students were tasked with answering. As examples, the facilitators’ stories were comprised of the following themes (as they told in the story circle and as represented in their digital stories): father dying of cancer, surviving being hit in the head by a brick during an apartheid riot, feeling isolated and alone at school, extreme drug abuse, overhearing a conversation stating that her father was not really her father, surviving a rape as a pre-teen, being bullied for being overweight, existing in his brother’s shadow, and growing up in poverty within a township.

The stories students shared were highly sensitive in nature, and I was curious how sharing such personal material made students feel, not only in the story circle, but in the context



of an integrated classroom space. Students commented widely about the nature of this project and addressed the story circle, specifically, in their reflective texts. I also questioned students about the story circle during the interview process. One student (#28) described the story circle like this, “We went around the circle, and as the students began sharing stories filled with tragedy, pain, and loss, tears filled my eyes. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.” This is how I, too, experienced the story circle.

In an analysis of the reflective texts, students described the story circle as both a place of safety and trust. Not only did students report feeling a sense of security, but words like “comfortable” and “trust” and “safe” filled their writings. As an example, Tayla wrote, “The space in which we expressed our feelings in was very safe.” Another student (#11) mentioned feeling that she was in “a circle of trust” inside of the group. One student (#28) additionally equated the story circle to a place of trust, writing, “sharing stories created a level of trust within the group.” Words from another student regarding the story circle noted, “In a safe environment, people spoke from the heart” (#6). During the group interview, Rob said this about the story circle, “I was comfortable in my group. I felt safe enough.” And, Mandla added this, “It’s actually amazing how comfortable I began to feel. I felt safe; I could openly speak about my past without being judged.” During the interview, Thabisa also shared that she experienced safety. In her words, “I was comfortable. I just poured my heart out.” Andre labeled his experience in the story circle as “a moment of trust.”

The group rules and the facilitators also added an extra layer of safety and security for the students. It did not go unnoticed that the established rules were the same for everyone and given to all of the students at the same time. Many students reported the rules added to their sense of comfort, and one student (#7) said the rules made her feel “at ease.” Students also noticed the

change in the classroom climate once the groups and rules were established. Student (#24) wrote, “The small groups led by facilitators created a different environment.” Additional students noted there was “a sense of warmth and security in the classroom” (#5). Student (#71) said the room was “filled with positive energy.” The idea of a safe place and the ground rules seemingly worked together to create an atmosphere of trust, as one student commented how the rules were “reassuring and I could trust my group members” (#7). And, a last comment indicative of how the groups operated,

What I liked about the digital storytelling were the class rules that were set such as honesty, respect, and support. The rules made me feel strong as it was my first time discussing my personal life with other people more especially the Coloureds and the White students. (#30)

Students also remarked on being placed into integrated groups within their reflective texts. Although they very clearly did not want to be mixed up at the beginning of the project, students had positive feedback about the groupings. One student wrote, “I liked that we got jumbled up into smaller groups, not with your friends or people you normally engage with even though I found it odd and uncomfortable at first” (#24). Another student (#55) wrote, “What I find was one of the highlights of this project was that we were placed into groups and had to work with and share our stories with people that we’ll never consider to work with.” An additional selected comment, “It created such a wonderful feeling of mutual respect within a group of people who are so different and opened our eyes to the beauty of each other’s stories and our own” (#48). Andre commented on the value of the pairings after the fact, noting, “These were students we wouldn’t socialize with before.” Lastly, Pieter added this, “It was fantastic to

witness other people really care about what you have to say--people you really hadn't spoken to much before."

I also questioned students about the story circle environment during the end of the term focus group interview. One of the students (Coloured, female) said this about the story circle, "We were in this environment where no one was judged on their stories." Her friend, also a Coloured female, stated, "We were in this safe and secure, honest environment." Because these ladies had been dominating the interview up to this point, I turned to two of the Black females (BF1 and BF2) who also took part and asked them if they felt safe. Here is an excerpt from the interview transcript between myself (PI) and these latter students.

PI= Girls, did you feel the same way? Did you feel that it was safe for you to tell your stories?

BF2= Yeah at first... I thought wow...at first I was not comfortable with my group and I was having these thoughts. What would they say? Would they judge me? Would they listen to me? But now I was moving away from my friends... people that I was used to everyday...and go to people that I don't want to socialize with... but they surprised me with empathy.

PI= How did they surprise you?

BF2= At first I thought like they didn't have problems. I thought because they came from ... I thought they coming from different backgrounds so they don't have issues; they don't have problems.

BF1= mmmm (nodding her head in agreement)

BG2= But I saw that everyone has problems. We've got similar problems even though we come from different places and backgrounds.

*From feelings of apathy to empathy.* The feelings of safety and security students experienced in the story circle allowed for other emotions to surface. Another theme that appeared in the data illuminated that students felt empathy and support for and from their peers within the story circle. One student (#65) wrote in the reflective texts that the story circle “promotes unity and creating empathy towards others.” Student #4 summed up the story circle this way, “The support, counselling, guidance, and suggestions received were worth being in that story circle.” Another wrote,

I have seen [through this process] a great deal of empathy shown by fellow colleagues. Through them I have been taught ways of expressing feelings and appreciation towards others who have opened up and exposed their vulnerable side, placing complete trust in them. (#33)

Student (#22) noted how empathy and open-mindedness were “two fundamental values” that she could “not help but to practice throughout this entire project.” Comfort, empathy, and trust led to students feeling secure enough to tell personal stories in their groups. As one student (#36) stated, “I felt comfortable sharing it [the story] as the group showed empathy and compassion.” A different student described his experience in the circle this way, “Sitting and looking deep into my friends’ eyes and seeing the hurt and just a simple hug, or saying, ‘I am here for you’ was really great for me” (#23). And, lastly, perhaps the best comment from this thread, “The good thing was that I had support from people I never thought could support me” (#30).

I also asked the students in Rob’s group to share their thoughts about the story circle and the digital storytelling process in general during our face to face interview. Each talked openly about their experiences and observations during their time together. One member summed it up

this way, “We became more empathetic.” Another student described the camaraderie in the story circle like this, “Tears broke out as the stories were told; our group held hands supporting one another.” From the same interview, another student added how she now felt concern and empathy towards her colleagues and that she could now say, “If you ever need a hug. Come here.” Noticing how their stories were in some ways complementary and overlapping led students to care for one another. And, after hearing Mandla’s story of township life, one student stated “wanting to extend that kind of love” to Mandla.

Lastly, the story circle was described by students as “phenomenal” and “the best part” of the digital storytelling process. Student (#41) wrote the story circle allowed him to share a part of himself with the world. And, student 16 expressed the story circle in this way, “I gained trust and I don’t trust people easily. This was a big turning point in my life” (#7). I would like to end this section with one additional student quote relating to empathy and support as revealed throughout the story circle process:

What made this part of the process even more special, was hearing the stories that I would have never have imagined my peers to have been the authors of; knowing that they too had struggled, survived, and coped with life’s hardships made sharing my own story much more worth it. (#22)

*A space to heal and to be heard.* Revelations and examples of empathy and trust in the story circle led students to experience the digital storytelling process, overall, as a place to heal and to be heard. An emergent theme from the digital storytelling data highlighted students’ desire to voice their story, which altered the students’ sense of agency as both a student and a person. One student (#5) articulated her response to the story circle in this way, “Something ignited in me. I felt the need to tell my story.” As a rationale for this move, this same student

further explained in her reflective text that sharing her story was her opportunity to redefine herself. In her words, to “get rid of the stigma attached to me.” From the reflective texts, one student (#6) wrote, “It was good to let out what I had kept buried inside for so long;” and another, “I felt like I allowed them to see the real me, and not the me who hides behind a mask” (#46). And a last, “It helped to speak about things you usually don’t speak about. I now see the world from a different perspective” (#16). And, student (#49) claimed that the digital storytelling process has “given us a platform to open up and speak our minds.” During one of my impromptu train conversations, I asked one of the students what it felt like to tell her story. Her response, “I felt like I could fly!” As she said this, she spread her arms like wings and planted a huge smile on her face. An additional student (#23) relayed that the value of voicing stories could provide a place for students to “glance into their untold stories.” And, I believe the best quote yet from a digital storytelling student (#4) regarding the healing aspect of the digital storytelling, “I could tell that they felt like taking my pain away the first time I told my story, but how could they be able to? They had no idea that they did just by listening.”

During the interview, when I asked Andre why he selected this story to tell versus all the rest of his stories, he kept repeating, “This is *who I am*” (with emphasis) and that once he was given a chance to tell his story that he “didn’t think twice about it” and he “knew what story to tell.” Mia also had interesting commentary during the interview regarding sharing her story. She said that she could not tell any of her other stories until she told *this* story. Mia claimed she “needed to let that story out.” Luniko described sharing his story and the digital storytelling process as “a powerful tool that can be used to give voice to the voiceless.” Adding to this theme, student (#40) stated that what she loved most about the process was that her “voice was heard.” And, another student comment told to me in my office, “This story tells you who I am.”

I continued to observe the special relationship between the altered classroom space and the students, mainly during the story circle, but also as students progressed through the project. I watched as students opened up to each other more and really just started to authentically communicate within their group spaces. Meaning, the tension that seemingly filled the classroom over the first few class periods evaporated and students started mingling and talking more to each other.

This new environment yielded what students described as a therapeutic space. In fact, one student (#44) said it best, “After telling my story, the healing process began.” During the interview, Sisipha said the digital storytelling process “opened a path,” which allowed her to make “peace with the past.” Luniko also used the same phraseology, stating that the process “can help learners who are walking with burdens of the past to take them off of their shoulders and make peace with the past.” An additional student (#78) reported commentary along the same vein. She stated that the digital storytelling process was “psychological and emotional therapy.” In the reflective text, a student (#33) said he experienced the story circle as “a healing process,” and Tayla wrote that the project allowed her to “rehabilitate and to heal the wounds.” The story circle was the space one student (#29) coined “therapeutic” in her reflection, and student (#35) described the project as “healing because I shared what I kept inside for so long.” Lastly, student (#28) wrote how sharing her story gave her a sense of peace.

***Where the magic happens: Connection, vulnerability, and story.*** The data throughout this project has consistently pointed to the story circle as a special environment. There is no question that within the story circle, students felt safe. They felt safe enough to share personal stories with little thought to both the task that was assigned to them and the potential grade that they might receive. In order to unpack the special environment the story circle provided further, I

investigated what made this space so unique and additionally examined factors that contributed to students feeling like the grade and the assignment were not primary considerations. What I learned from the students strengthened my position of both ensuring the sanctity of the story circle and the significant relationship between vulnerability, connection, and storytelling.

Pieter was among the first that I questioned. To understand Pieter's words in their entirety, it is important to know that Pieter has been a rugby player and an intense, competitive athlete since he was a child. In many ways, Pieter's size and the toughness associated with his sportsmanship has served to define him, both personally and within social circles on campus. When I asked Pieter why he thought the story circle was rare, his response encapsulated the following information:

I even learned a bit in that I always knew that I had stories to tell, but people always see me as a certain kind of person... 'Oh, Pieter he's that strong guy. He will continue until he can never stop. He's impenetrable. He's that big strong bear.' All kinds of things. It was very important to me to show that I am very much human. No one ever batted an eye thinking that I can't cope with the stress or the workload, that I'd always make it... 'Oh, it's Pieter; He'll be ok... Don't you worry about him. He'll make it' because over the four years nobody ever offered help to me. I suppose the persona I had was that I take care of business. And, it was very heartwarming for me to actually be vulnerable. I didn't have...there was never the forum to do it [before]. For once I wanted to tell people that they can hear a side of me that they hadn't heard before. I have a softer side to me. There is an underbelly to this crocodile.

Pieter also noted the space of the story circle was special because, in his words, "it was a space with equality." Pieter, along with Luniko, mentioned the story circle rules, the jazz hands,



and the class mantra of “What happens in the story circle, stays in the story circle,” as characteristics that added to a feeling of both safety and security. Lastly, when I told Pieter in our second interview that one of my findings was that students really needed the story space to speak what was on their hearts, Pieter made the jazz hands signal in agreement to my statement.

I had a joint conversation with Tayla and Mia regarding the digital storytelling project during my second trip. When I asked both girls to tell me more about the storytelling process, Tayla said:

When the first person told a personal story, it made everyone else feel that they are not alone. We share something. So Mia shared a story and she trusted me with it. Mia let her guard down, so it is ok for me to let my guard down. Because now I have something on her. If you tell my story, I'll tell yours... and that takes away the fear. I believe that if the first person didn't tell a personal story, nobody else would have.

Tayla also had interesting commentary about Pieter telling his story first in the workshop. Tayla felt that Pieter created the environment by being the first person to share a story that was both personal and traumatic. Tayla talked about that moment in the story circle as she listened to Pieter's story. As Tayla recounted,

Then, all of a sudden, you are trying to make connections with him and you went to your sad place. And, all of a sudden that was the only story you had. You opened up this sad door and you were forced to go through that same door.

I followed up this statement with a clarifying question, “But... you *wanted* to be connected to Pieter?”

Tayla responded, “You *had* to be connected to him.”

Mia chimed in, “You opened up the door that bothered you. So once you opened it...ok... that part of me bothered me so now you understand why it bothered you and you can get over it now. You accept it now.”

Tayla kept talking and added this to the conversation, “Now that I’ve told my story, it doesn’t matter anymore.” She expressed that a weight had been lifted off her and the power the story had over her had been taken away. Tayla continued, “Your story does matter, but it only matters to you when it is only on you. When you share it with people, they take that weight off of your shoulders.”

I remembered what Mia said at our first interview and repeated her words to both girls: “Once you open that door, you have to let that story out.”

Tayla agreed and replied, “It’s like a drain blockage. Nothing can flow until you unblock that drain.”

In my conversation with Felix, I wanted to learn from him what made the classroom environment and story circle stand out in his mind. Felix told me,

It was special that I would see everyday someone coming into to campus... but when you really got to know someone in the story circle, you to know what touched them, what moved them ...what’s affected them... what brought them to that point in their lives. You really got to know their deep side.

When I asked Luniko what was it about the storytelling environment that made him feel safe enough to share a personal story and also to comment on why he thought all of the students shared stories about pain and loss, Luniko had this to say:

You know what causes that actually? From my experience, when I am with my friends, we don’t have time to share our painful stories. We always focus to the good. No one

wants to tell his Black story. They are too common, and we are too ashamed. So we go out and look for a nice story...but I've been telling them. That is why I chose to tell my 'tragedy' story in the workshop. The environment--the space--was very safe. You know when people meet you on campus they see that smiling Luniko. They actually don't know the real me. So I was just so excited to express myself. The marks were just out for me. This was my chance to let people know me. I wanted to share where I am from.

I then asked him if this was the chance for him to say the things left unsaid. He replied, "*Ja.. ja...* people would see me on campus and think, 'He was never poor.'"

Luniko and I then talked about history revealing itself through stories, particularly how White students were now able to see some truths about the living conditions of Black students. Luniko responded to my line of thought in this way,

*Ja*, as much as I wanted to hear from them. I wanted to stand up and share. For example, they've never actually been in my area. They don't know what effort I needed to be at CT. I wanted to express that.

Luniko continued by sharing what he learned through this process. I have included this quote because what he says at the end is the point I want revealed:

There is this culture in the Black community that White people have it all. If they [Black people] see me wearing nice clothes, they'll call me a White person just because I am wearing nice clothes. So I grew up with that perception that a White person could never be poor. It was shocking that they [other students] also experienced what we experienced. We are all humans. When it comes to social issues affecting South Africa, actually they are affecting everyone.

Lastly, I asked the other facilitators why they thought the stories they shared and heard across the board from the other students were stories of pain and loss, and how they thought these stories might identify each student. Felix had the best answer to this question. He said the stories were not about pain and loss at all, but about success. He went on to express that many Coloured and Black students in “Mandela’s Generation” were first generation college students. So, according to Felix, these stories did not typify pain and loss; the stories were just examples of how students *arrived* at this place in their lives.

### **Disrupting Notions of People and Places**

**Question four: Does digital storytelling contribute to a change in students’ perceptions of the people and places that surround them?** I return to Mandla in order to provide the first documentation of altered perceptions and attitudes after experiencing the digital storytelling project. The text provided earlier in this chapter shows Mandla as very outspoken in his belief that White people had better lives. In his interview, and before the digital storytelling process, Mandla also stated he did not believe that he shared the same stories as White people. After encountering the digital storytelling process, I asked Mandla to share with me what he thought after hearing the stories of his colleagues. He answered in this way, “So when I heard that even them, they are facing the same problems that we face as Black people, so I have changed my thinking. So, when I heard their stories it made me to change my mind.” (Mandla’s statement is aligned with Luniko’s sentiment as reported elsewhere in this chapter).

Mandla then went on to surprise me even more. He said that the digital storytelling process made him curious to hear more “White stories.” Mandla explained that in a post-apartheid South Africa, the Black experience had been equated to what he called “Black stories,”

stories of pain and struggle. Mandla said stories that expressed “White problems” or the “White experience” for this generation of young people were non-existent. Mandla finished our conversation in this way, “through stories you are connecting.”

Overall, the words “connection,” “judge,” and “bond” played a pivotal role in the data I collected. In fact, these themes represented the largest codes in the data pool. As examples from the thread, student (#71) stated in her reflective text, “Some of the stories were very similar; this also helped in creating a more solid bond,” and student (#16) added, “I have learned not to judge.” Similarly, student (#17) added, “What I think is so fantastic about this process is that you get to tell your story and to connect with people.” During our interview, Felix added this sentiment, “Once my colleagues knew my story and I knew theirs, I encountered a stronger bond between us. I learned that we had a greater understanding for each other once we knew each other’s stories.”

What students found through the process, and also what they reported, was how they had relied on assumptions and stereotypes of their colleagues in order to substantiate their opinions of each other. The digital storytelling process, however, inspired students to get to know their colleagues. This space then revealed an avenue for transformation, both in terms of how students viewed themselves and how they conceptualized each other. As one student (#46) wrote after hearing her colleagues’ stories, “I feel like there is so much that we don’t know about each other.” Student (#65) stated, “After this beautiful gathering we shared ideas. This gave me a paradigm shift and aided the way I currently view things as opposed to before.” Student (#32) phrased her experiences with the storytelling process in this way, “At campus we came to class, talked to each other and place judgments on people but we don’t know what that other person is going through in their life. I learned to respect others around me more.” Student (#7) discussed

her moment of change through the story process in this way, “I gained trust and I don’t trust people easily. This was a big turning point in my life.” Student (#52) reported, “I found it was so brave of them to have told their stories. This opened my eyes and heart to various different aspects about life and caused a real, reflective process in my life.” And, student (#51) described her moment of change in the group:

I was comfortable with my group. We shared stories, cried a lot, but we comforted and gave advice to each other. I never thought they would be like that. My perception of them changed from those moments. They proved me wrong. Hearing other people’s stories made me change the assumptions that I had about them. This was an eye-opener for me.

Students in Rob’s group also offered insight into how their feelings about their colleagues shifted during the digital storytelling process. During the interview, one of the female members stated that once she heard the stories from her group, she felt closer to them. This sense of closeness was also documented in the reflective text of one of the members of this group. After working with her group, she wrote that they now share a “bond that is unbreakable.”

Moving to students outside of Rob’s group, student (#30) wrote about her adjusted feelings towards her colleagues. She equated this connection to that of a family by writing, “My fellow students became my family, people that I can trust and share my problems with.” And a last comment, student (#33) noted that after the project he felt a “greater sense of solidarity” among his peers.

Students also started to get a sense of the struggles their classmates faced, which led them to move from feelings of indifference to compassion. I recorded this impromptu statement in my field notes during an office visit from a student in the course who shared her experience with me, “One lady started to cry and I started to cry. You think *your* life is bad.” One of the male

students (#30) in the course summarized his exposure to the project with this statement, “They made me realize how important it is to listen to other people’s problems as you end up noticing that you are not the only one with a problem; we all came from somewhere.”

A last conversation with Thabisa led me to ask her if she would use stories in her future classroom. She claimed two things: One, she stated that she did not know how to teach through story; and, two, she would not allow any personal activities in her classroom. In my mind, Thabisa still did not grasp all that stories could do. So, I started talking. I told her different ways that she could use stories with her young learners. I then told her about Michigan and all that I left at home so that I could come to South Africa in order to study storytelling. I told her about my two boys, and we laughed when we figured out that she also had two boys who were similar in age to mine. Our conversation got better when we realized that both of our elder sons exhibited the same qualities. When I then explained how difficult it was to go to school full-time and to work while raising boys, she nodded and smiled in understanding. I told her about my commute to school that could, depending on conditions, take close to two hours; and how, after teaching all day and attending night classes, I did not get home until 10:00 PM when my boys were already in bed, leaving me to effectively miss their entire day. Again, Thabisa understood. Finally, I asked her if after all of this she still felt inferior, if I still made her uncomfortable. I am happy to report that Thabisa said that she could “relate to me now” because she heard my story and I knew hers. And, unlike the first time I touched Thabisa on the shoulder when I was helping her to edit her story and she flinched, when I hugged her goodbye, she hugged me back.

*A collective story: Interview with Rob’s group.* It has been documented so far in this chapter that students felt a sense of disconnection to each other resulting in their perception that they shared few commonalities or life experiences. Rob’s group actually talked me through their

“before” and “after” storytelling thoughts during our interview. The group shared with me how at the beginning of the project that they did not believe they shared comparable stories. At the end of the process, however, students in Rob’s group commented that hearing how they had similarities made them feel like they were not alone in life. Rob phrased it this way, “Sometimes you tend to feel alone, going through certain things and knowing that there’s [sic] people around that also face some kind of hardship, it makes you feel lighter.” A student in Rob’s group also revealed they now had, “A new respect for the person that you were... the person who is speaking ... the person who is listening.” Jake, from Rob’s group, stated he did not realize how easy he had it in life until he was able to witness what other students did not have growing up. Jake went on to say this about the digital storytelling process, “It changed my perception in a better way.”

I also want to note that I closely followed Rob’s group in my field notes through observation. I detailed how they meshed as time progressed. Also, I should add that there was one female student in this group that I documented specifically on a few different occasions. First, I witnessed her anger through non-verbal body language the day students were placed into groups. She confirmed this anger during the focus group interview when I mentioned it. However, I also watched as this same student became lighter, happier. I even told her in that interview that she smiled more (as documented in my field notes). I also observed how students in Rob’s group hugged each other when saying hello, an act I did not witness before the story circle. I watched the girls as they shed tears listening to Mandla and Jake share stories. I documented how the group held hands while in the story circle in the section on empathy. I also talked to the girls when they realized that they had misjudged Jake. And, finally, I watched as



these students socialized as a group at the start of class (before class really got going) when other students met with friends or people in their race groups before class started.

*A shared story.* For many students, an instrumental part of the digital storytelling process was hearing that other students experienced hardships in life. In this way, students connected and a common experience was established. Luniko stated that he “needed to hear that we all had struggles.” Student (#33) wrote, “Beyond racial differences, we are all individuals who go through the same or similar joys and also struggles in life.” An additional comment from a student (#30), “I learned that we might have different cultures and different backgrounds but we have experienced similar problems.” Andre had this to add, “It was good to listen to other people’s stories. It was clear that I was not the only one with difficulties.” Felix also added to this data stream stating, “My colleagues and I all have one thing in common; that we all have a story to tell and that we all experienced some kind of hardship in life.”

*Demystifying perceptions of otherness.* Another evidence of before and after change in regard to student perceptions of their colleagues came from a female in the course. She (#16) added this statement in her reflective text, “Before we did the digital story, I did not know that it would change the way I see people.” Student (#30) also noted her transformation, writing “From that day (after story circle) the way I see other people changed completely. Student (#7) labeled her experience as “sad, but life changing,” further elaborating, “Judging people by their looks or how they act in class is not fair as we don’t know their situations.” Sisipha added that the project taught her about the value and beliefs of others; and student (#32) now says, “I learned that I could trust the people around me.” A last piece of data collected from the reflective text comes from student (#16). She noted,

It was very sad to see that you are friends with people for four years but yet you never knew their story nor did you ever share yours. I have learned that I don't easily trust people but I have put my trust in my colleagues. I have learned that my colleagues are just like me.

A close reading of the digital story reflections exposed that not only did students change their perceptions of their peers throughout the digital storytelling process, but that the storytelling process disrupted their notions of their colleagues as "other." To prove this point, student (#7) stated in her reflective text, "I learned a lot about the friends that I thought I knew." Student (#65) added, "After the digital story, I feel that I am able to understand my colleagues, others, and my co-existence in the world." Student (#26) reported feeling a "deeper side of my colleagues that I would have never known. I found a new and deeper respect for them." Student (#16) added, "This project has also built new relationships between me and my colleagues." And, finally, Graeme had this to say about Tayla after hearing her story, "I know her now." I would like to end this section by framing it within a student (#71) quote found in a digital story reflective text:

After four years, you know all your classmates by name and face, and that is about it. Except for the small details you notice, like what car they drive, how they speak and how often they attend. Digital storytelling changed all of that, it elaborated on the reasons why they drove that car, why they speak out loud or why they hardly say a word. Often we come to our own conclusions, but this process made you almost feel so guilty. It carries lessons.

*Stories to transform South Africa.* There are wounds still visible in these students that remain from centuries of racial domination by one race presiding over the others. Healing, then,

becomes an act that is not just limited to repairing the self. As many students noted, the theme of restoration and the value of digital storytelling can apply to a country like South Africa, where past trauma still impacts current-day ideology. As student (#48) in the reflective text mentioned, “This type of respectful story sharing is so beneficial to a country like South Africa where we are still in the process of breaking down the walls left behind from our segregated history.” An additional student (#52) claimed that this project brings awareness to people, meaning, “We will all learn to show regard, compassion, love, and understanding for one another despite any differences we might have.” In recognition of how stories are passed down from generation to generation, a student in Rob’s group had this to say, “If we can have a positive and such a good influence on them [students], they can go and change the mindsets of their families.”

These sentiments for change in South Africa extended to South African classrooms as well. Student (#41) shared in her reflective text a vision for learning in South Africa, stating, “In South Africa, we have a lot of diversity in the classroom and we want our learners to get along and to live in harmony.” She further noted that digital storytelling is the best way to make learners empathetic and for them to know “how we got to where we are.” Felix also commented on his vision for South Africa. He wrote, “I learned that I have got so many skills learnt from life that has the potential to add value to education, especially in the context of South Africa.”

Andre wrote in his reflective text that “the aim of this project was to bring all cultures together.” He provided these aforementioned words, but Andre also added the word “ubuntu” to make his point. The concept of “ubuntu,” a Bantu word used by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and adopted by Nelson Mandela during his presidency, was thrown into public rhetoric in the 90s as an attempt to unite South Africa’s diverse and linguistic populace after the fall of apartheid. Ubuntu means, “I am who I am because of who we all are.” Mandla also mentioned ubuntu

within his reflective text writing, “Stories bring people together. Ubuntu.” Luniko also wrote about ubuntu. In his words, “This project can help learners understand the spirit of UBUNTU so we can help future leaders who won’t live in isolation.” An additional statement from Tayla,

All of this has taught me that we are all human and all have our own story to tell, whether it be sad or inspiring. No person is greater than the other. All people have to be respected as equals and I have to do my best to help others. I can not [sic] be without you, and you cannot be without me.

During the interview, Andre had the most to say about the value of stories, how digital stories can change South Africa, and the idea of ubuntu in general. Andre deemed the digital story as a “breakthrough for South Africa” and equated the project to the work of missionaries. Andre also had this to say about how stories should be used in schools, “The digital story project is a must have in all the schools in South Africa. Our country is too far divided amongst socio, racial, and political environments.” He claimed that digital storytelling should become a “mission to equal all of the people.” Andre further stated,

So with this digital story-will-I think will eliminate the previously disadvantaged of the past. So, which means it doesn’t matter if you are from Khayelitsha or you’re from Constantia. You live in the shack or live in a mansion. Imagine if all the people in Khayelitsha, everyone, would have a digital story to share. It will change their socio thoughts of *who they are* and *what they’re capable of*, which then the people of Constantia won’t be scared to travel to Khayelitsha.

The spirit that foregrounds the meaning of ubuntu is one of togetherness, understanding, and love. Ubuntu starts with an understanding of how these fundamental and primary characteristics work together. In part, for story work to be successful in South Africa, students

have to factor in ubuntu's role. I recall Graeme running up to me in class one day and proclaiming, "I know what stories are now. I get it. They are love." Graeme went on to share what he has learned through stories and how stories have impacted his life, "psychologically, emotionally, and culturally." Felix added to Graeme's sentiment by sharing with me something his dad used to say to him, but that he did not understand until now. Felix provided this quote, "To know someone's story is to love them."

This feeling of transforming South Africa was also mentioned by another student. She (#16) wrote in her reflective text, "I now see the world from a different perspective." During our interview and the mapping exercise, Andre argued for the value of storytelling stating that it can be used to unite the people of South Africa. As Andre related,

You know people have equal rights and equal opportunities but the stories, the digital stories, will equal all the people. It doesn't matter where they come from. You know because people in the red dots and the previously advanced people or purple dots; Look at their stories and look at my story. And they will find common ground somewhere in between.

This section will end with the words of Andre, words that have resonated with me even after I left South Africa and as I have been in the position to surmise the benefit, value, and beauty of sharing stories: "I've now been trusted with somebody's story. I carry the story with me. I didn't used to carry it all of the time."

***Lack of connection due to apartheid.*** Data derived from the interviews and mapping exercise revealed that students felt a lack of connection to each other and to people outside of their racial categories. This "disconnect" was especially true when the topic of apartheid was brought into the conversation. During Rob's group interview, a student reported that apartheid

was everywhere, so much so that you could “smell it in the air” and that it has “swooped down around us even now.” When I asked students how they learned about apartheid in their one-on-one interviews, I found that mainly students reported learning about history through stories their parents and grandparents passed down to them. As examples, a White student repeated stories from a racist grandparent and a Coloured student was now telling his own children tales about when he was involved in the struggle.

Students, of course, learned about Nelson Mandela in school, but I did not get a sense that their history curriculum was deeply invested in apartheid (or even anti- apartheid) education in this regard. In fact, one colleague stated that it was not compulsory for students to take history after grade nine. She then went on to tell me how she had to teach this cohort (in a different class) about the Immorality Act because students did not know anything about it. She told me this with total exasperation and went on to explain how shocked the students were when they realized that during apartheid one could be arrested just for marrying someone from a different race. In Rob’s group during the interview, students stated that apartheid was a “hot topic” and not dealt with, taught in school, or even talked about.

Interesting data further came from questioning students if they felt that anything had changed since apartheid. Two of the White students and three of the female Coloured students, in group and in one-on-one interviews, stated very clearly that they felt that apartheid had been “switched” due to such political movements like Black Economic Empowerment (or BEE). They went on to state that Blacks were now “favored” and “advantaged” getting all of society's perks in this new democracy. My colleague just happened to be in our office after one of the students expressed the apartheid being “switched around” sentiment. When that student left the office, I

expressed my shock and disbelief to my colleague. He replied that students today did not realize that they were “part of the same book, but a different page.”

Although not in a classroom space, I also documented two conversations I had with White (Afrikaner) people who both wanted to protect the past and who currently felt either threatened or disadvantaged. The first conversation took place with the owner's son at a restaurant I frequented. I found myself telling the son my observation of racially segregated spaces existing in Cape Town. He replied like this, “You outsiders come here and think you can change things. But this is how *it has always been* and *we like it this way*” (the emphasis was his). The second conversation happened at the local bar where I became a regular. In fact, I was such a regular that if the owner was dining with his friends or even alone, I was always moved to his table and I never paid for my food or drinks. One Saturday, during a very important Springbok rugby match, I found myself with the owner and his friends watching the game. When one of my dining companions asked about my work, I filled him in on what I wanted to accomplish with my research and how I hoped it could bring equality to people and educational practices in general. After my statement, my dining companions went silent and simply stared at me. It seems cliché to report, but this was one of those times that you could hear a pin drop on the table had there been such a pin. After a pause, the same man said this, “Do you know the student who has been left behind in the new democracy?”

I thought a moment and then answered, “The Indian?” I said this because, in my experience, Indian South Africans were not as part of the national conversation as they should have been.

He replied, “No, the White Afrikaner student.” He went on to tell me stories of woe regarding how these students could not get scholarships for school because money was being

given to Black students. And, how these students were now required to work multiple jobs, endeavor stress, and hope for education.

I include this data from outside of the classroom in order to substantiate the perspectives felt by the White and Coloured students that I talked to as part of this study. It is interesting, however, that the students who felt that apartheid was now favoring the Black population, in the classroom, would all be considered “Born Free.” Students like Andre (Coloured and not “Born Free”) did not share these feelings. And, none of the Black students mentioned, ever, a semblance that apartheid was still active and now putting them in a position of power. Mainly, Black students responded to my question noting that some things had changed since apartheid, like that they had freedom, for example. However, Cebo, one of the Black students, said this when I asked him this question, “Some things have changed, but education hasn’t. I don’t see any change. Children are failing. Those who are in charge taught in apartheid time.”

In fact, during Rob’s group interview, Erin was one of these aforementioned students who made a statement about apartheid being turned around. Mandla was also in the same group, but said nothing to dispute Erin's claims. After the interview, I pulled Mandla aside and asked him why he would let her statements sit unchallenged. As fired up as Mandla was during our one-on-one interview, he still could not bring himself to publicly challenge another student even when the student was making ridiculous claims. When Mandla answered why he did not challenge Erin, he said that he “knew her” and that she would “never change.” Hence, he thought it would be futile to say anything.

Unfortunately, I believe that Mandla was falling victim to a pattern that he has been subjected to his entire life. People of color, as I will illustrate, continued to sit in deference to White people. This was very evident in classroom spaces as Black students would not raise their



hands to answer questions. Rather, they would let White students dominate all classroom dialogue. An additional piece of evidence came from Sisipha. When I talked to Sisipha during our interview about the benefits of the digital storytelling process she told me that before this project she did not know that she *could* critique others. In Sisipha's words, "We haven't been raised to criticize things. Oh, so we haven't been raised to think that you can say things." Lastly, although Coloured and not Black, Mia did tell me during her interview that throughout school she was taught to never question authority, political or otherwise. A side note about Mia: Mia reported attending an all Coloured school and did not socialize with White people until college. In college, Mia told me that she constantly tried to adapt and assimilate herself to her environment.

### **Student Reflections and Reactions: Six Months Later**

**Question five: Have students integrated digital storytelling into their classrooms or curriculum as first-year teachers? How are students appropriating the digital storytelling process after the completion of the course?** I returned to South Africa six months after classes ended in order to ask this last question to the students that I have identified as facilitators. Mainly, although this project had been in place since 2010 and quite a few papers have been published by the research team of Gachago, Condy, Ivala, and Chigona, the team had not yet looked at the transferability of the project as a pedagogical approach the students might use outside of a university classroom context. Since the digital storytelling project is an eight-week curricular initiative within the professional studies course, I thought it would be valuable to investigate what the students took away from the project after its completion and as they took up posts as teachers in Cape Town.

In my return trips to Cape Town, I was only able to secure interviews with Graeme, Rob, Pieter, Mia, Tayla, Felix, and Luniko. However, I also had informal conversations with two of the female students from Rob's group and with Sam. Outside of the interviews, Felix and Graeme took me to a rugby game and we met up with Sam afterwards. Additionally, I was invited to make visits to the classrooms of Andre, Mia, Felix, and Graeme. Additionally, through conversations with both my former student-subjects and my South African colleagues on this trip, I was able to gain a deeper insight into my findings.

Mia, Tayla, Felix, Pieter, Sam, and Luniko all (at the time of this writing) hold teaching positions in and around Cape Town. Graeme works part-time in a school while finishing his BEd, and Rob was hired (while I was in town the second time) to teach English as a Foreign Language in South Korea, which was his plan when I left Cape Town after my first visit. Two former members of Rob's group became primary grade teachers at Mia's school.

Overwhelmingly, the students who hold teaching positions (including Graeme) reported not using the digital storytelling model as they experienced it during the professional studies course in their own classrooms at all. Each of the students reported that the National Curriculum, or its revised version called the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS, Department of Basic Education South Africa, 2015), as the reason that they are unable to implement digital storytelling into their course curriculum. When I first met Graeme at the workshop so long ago, he was the first to question the viability of the project because he knew he would face CAPS once he became a teacher. However, I can report that even though the curriculum students are mandated to follow has been expressed as restrictive by the students, all of the students reported taking away different aspects of the digital storytelling project that they now use in their daily lives or classrooms.

*Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS): Why CAPS impedes digital storytelling.* Pearson South Africa (2013) defined the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as an extensive curriculum outline where “every subject in each grade will have a single, comprehensive and concise policy document that will provide details on what teachers need to teach and assess on a grade-by-grade and subject-by-subject basis” (para. 1). CAPS was implemented on a rolling basis between 2012 to 2014; and, according to Pearson, it was put in place to ensure consistency in teaching and provide clearer expectations on what is to be taught to students on a term by term basis. CAPS ensures that all learners in South Africa get an identical education as CAPS provides yearly and week-by-week planning for teachers to follow and offers textbooks aligned with this outline. On a positive note, CAPS addresses the inequities of the past by certifying that all students receive the same equal and impartial education. As it was expressed in chapter 2, this was not always the case in South Africa.

However, when talking to my students who are now teachers, they described CAPS as “oppressive” and “without depth” and “restrictive.” Students reported that teachers must create what they call a file (really a massive portfolio) inclusive of every lesson plan they teach, which must include how each individual learner responded to each lesson. Before the lesson plan can go into the file, it must be stamped and approved by each teacher’s department head (as observed in Mia’s file). Teachers also must procure a file of learner profiles documenting the progress of each student in the class. This can be challenging when the average class has around 35 students. One teacher (Andre) stated that he has one class with 47 students and 17 of those students are grade repeaters. All of the students reported staying up into the late hours of the night to finish grading and commented on missed weekends due to planning, grading, and report

writing. One student noted being so overwhelmed with work that she enlisted her boyfriend's help when grading papers.

To ensure CAPS is followed, The Department of Basic Education sends curriculum advisors to assess the teacher's files a few times each term. Since adherence to the CAPS is mandatory, many of the teachers are not even allowed to write their own lesson plans. Rather, their departmental head writes the lesson plans they must use to ensure that the lessons are CAPS aligned within the grade, the week, and at the correct time in the term as CAPS dictates. As an example, when Tayla teaches 7th grade English, CAPS tells her that she must teach nouns (as an example) for so many minutes on a specific week and day of the year. Tayla's grade level partner, who also teaches 7th grade English, must be at the same place in the curriculum at the same time. In fact, every 7th grade English teacher in South Africa teaching English, according to CAPS, should be at the same point in the curriculum at the same time and spend the same amount of minutes covering the topic. Tayla phrased teaching through CAPS as a collaborative performance and stated, "When we move, we move all together." Felix also expressed frustration that his learner and CAPS logs have to look the same as his grade partner's logs, or he stated the department will come and question him. He called this process "cruel." Andre also used the word "impossible" when describing his effort to keep aligned with CAPS. Luniko, Andre, Philip, and Mia also commented on the challenge of maintaining this complex system of administrative work.

Since all of the macro lesson planning is done for the students by CAPS and a majority of the micro lesson planning is done by school subject area department heads, my former students do not feel that they really get to teach in the way that they would like, or in a way that they were trained for during their four years of university. My colleague at CT actually described CAPS as

“bad teacher proof” making a point that any person could be a teacher now as all the work is done by CAPS.

Overwhelmingly, the biggest complaint I heard from the students is that they felt both let down and oppressed as teachers because of CAPS. Mia stated that the curriculum is “preparing a South African population of students who are narrow-minded.” Luniko also described CAPS as oppressive, stating, “They watch every step we take. Every day we must do the same things. It is impossible.” Felix added, “I don’t like CAPS at all. It’s not only that it is too restrictive, it’s too shallow. It has no depth, no substance.” Andree agreed and stated in his interview, “We forget about the holistic learning. CAPS doesn’t prepare you to deal with social problems. CAPS is one click.” Andre also stated that CAPS is “dangerous ground” and that the lowering of standards should cause all of the schools to lower their South African flags. Graeme had this to say about CAPS, “CAPS does not let us think out of the box or be innovative. It wants us to be robots because they want to control what we teach the kids.”

When I asked the facilitators if they were using digital storytelling in their classrooms, Pieter expressed that he has “struggled to find a place in our reasonably structured CAPS environment.” Pieter did mention that he has used a few of the aspects of the project. He shared how he turned the River of Life into the River of Sports to facilitate teaching poetry. Pieter also reported instructing his students to use “jazz hands” in group scenarios. Felix also noted that lesson planning for English (where he thought digital storytelling could be best integrated) was done for him by the head of the English department at his school; therefore, he had no control over including digital storytelling into his specific class curriculum. Felix did say that he has told some of his stories, as examples of life-skills lessons, to his fourth grade class. However, Felix does believe that digital storytelling would be a difficult assignment to replicate in his classroom

due to a culture of silence imbedded in his learners. Felix feared that parents tell their children not to discuss personal matters at school.

Tayla shared with me that she is now teaching Afrikaans and English in both grades seven and six, and she is responsible (as is every teacher at her school) in planning all of the lesson plans for two subjects. Tayla plans English grade six and technology for grade seven. For the subjects that she teaches and does not plan, like Afrikaans, those lesson plans are given to her by another teacher. For the subjects that she plans, she has to set up the lesson and do all of the copying and preparation.

When I asked Tayla if she was implementing the digital storytelling in her classroom, she reported having used the “talking stick” at the beginning of the term in order to find out what her students liked about themselves. However, she said she is unable to do anything else with the digital storytelling. To emphasize her point, Tayla told me an anecdote about having to attend a professional development workshop called “Disciplining with Courage.” Tayla shared that she struggled to take this workshop seriously due to her large class sizes and the fact that students with special needs are integrated in mainstream classrooms without support, which she believed causes unusual classroom dynamics. Tayla explained the “Disciplining with Courage” workshop to answer my query regarding her use of digital storytelling in the classroom.

And the principle tells us, ‘You have to be this child’s parachute. He’s falling! You have to catch him!’ I am thinking kids that come from broken homes, social issues ...disruptive kids. So I asked my principal, ‘How do I complete my curriculum? How am I all of these things at the same time?’ So my answer to you is...it is almost impossible for me to incorporate that [digital storytelling] into my class...with all that I need to cover. They don’t leave you room to be human. They don’t leave any room for humanity. Yet, they

expect you to be humane. That makes no sense to me. They expect you to be a parachute, but they don't leave room for it in the curriculum.

During my post-course interview with Mia, I also asked about the use of digital storytelling in her seventh grade classroom. She reported, "I want to tell my kids my story. I started something at the beginning of the year where they did their own timeline and wrote about themselves...but I haven't gotten anywhere." When I asked her if she did not use digital storytelling in her classroom because of the curriculum, she replied, "Exactly that." Mia also reported incorporating one of the improvisation games she learned during the workshop called "Crazy Rio" as an ice-breaking activity for her students.

Luniko, also, lamented about the CAPS, the logs, and the administrative work that he did not know about before going into the profession and stated, "If I was not so strong, I would stop." When I asked him about using digital storytelling in his class, he said, "I would love to do a similar project. As a teacher, that would be ideal." Further, Luniko stated that he has not fully added the digital storytelling process [as he learned it] into his class. However, he has allowed his students to use their personal knowledge and their own life situations when writing stories, which was something he learned from the digital storytelling process. He said his aim was for his students "to take their lives as their own stories."

Felix also had interesting commentary regarding CAPS. When I talked to Felix about CAPS during our second interview, he claimed:

CAPS destroys whatever you want to do with your class and what you deem fit to do with them. There is no time. There is absolutely no time. It is actually sad. I have to steal time to actually read to my kids so that I can inculcate a culture for them to love reading.

Although Felix felt under-prepared going into his first year as a teacher, he claimed that he would not have preferred a different curriculum to replace digital storytelling. However, he did feel that he was not prepared to adequately write reports. On the digital storytelling he experienced in university, Felix replied, “There wasn’t much that was better than that [digital storytelling] ... I would just add in report writing.”

At our second interview (and school visit), Andre continued to see the value of digital storytelling, but he, also, was unable to integrate such a project into his curriculum due to the same reasons (CAPS, no control over lessons, etc.). However, he does not want to do the project with his students, first, anyway. Andre continued to believe the ability to make change on a larger scale has to start with the parents of his students. Andre would like to start sharing stories at a parent meeting later this year. His goal is to start with the parents and bring it down to his students. As for his students, when it is time, Andre wants to use digital storytelling in order to teach them about their own culture and the history of the Coloured people. He also does not think the parents of his students know the history of their people, which Andre thought was strange since only Coloured people live in his area.

There are other issues outside of CAPS to contend with, like load shedding and the lack of resources teachers must grapple with that prohibits working with technology. The city of Cape Town participates in load shedding, which is a city-wide, in fact country-wide, rotating power shut down. At the time of this study, there was a rotating two-hour blackout period. Typically, this does not happen during school hours, but the cost of power is an issue that every resident contends with. As for technology that would be required to create a digital story, I did not see or hear of any school that was equipped to offer the resources required to complete a digital project. As an example, Mia has to bring in her own computer if she wants to show the students course



materials on a projector. There is no Wi-Fi at her school. At Andre's school, there was no projector, Wi-Fi, or computer in his classroom. Andre only had access to a chalkboard. His school, however, did have a very nice computer lab for the students to use for math lessons. Mia's school did not have any technological resources at all. Lastly, teachers will most likely not write lesson plans for other teachers who are unfamiliar with the components of the digital storytelling process. Teachers will also not write lesson plans that include multimedia components in buildings where technology does not exist.

*Digital storytelling and better human skills.* I was also curious if the digital storytelling project impacted the lives of the students outside of the classroom. When I asked Rob his thoughts about storytelling six months after the project, he stated, "I do not think about it consciously, but I know in my mind it is there." As an example, Rob told me about an event that happened just the morning of our interview. He said that one of his dogs got loose and he saw his neighbor who had a reputation of being a mean person run after his dog in anger. Rob said instead of getting upset with the neighbor, he wondered what her story was and what made her behave in the way that she did. Rob said that taking part in the digital storytelling process made him think that there was another side or "story" to this neighbor.

Rob also stated that he had been using parts of the digital storytelling process at his part-time job. He explained that although he had been working in his current position and for a particular boss for two years, he really did not know his boss. Rob said his boss had a reputation for being cold and not very friendly. Since the digital storytelling project, Rob decided to start taking his smoking break with the boss so that he could simply be available if the boss wanted to talk. Rob said that during the break, the boss started initiating small conversation, which has resulted in Rob seeing a different side to the boss. Overall, Rob said that mainly the project

taught him how to be “open to listening.” Rob shared with me that he is applying this willingness to listen with his peer group as well.

Additionally, Rob used the current issue of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa as an example of how it made him think about storytelling. Rob now understood South Africans needed to hear about oppression in all its forms. As Rob noted, “If other people knew why they are here...it’s not just them that are being disadvantaged...maybe it wouldn’t be a problem.” Rob expressed that nobody was hearing the story of the people being attacked. Most importantly, Rob clearly stated that he did not think this way before the project.

When I talked to Tayla and Mia about their feelings towards the project six months after its completion, Tayla said this about her professional studies colleagues: “We started becoming a lot closer. A lot of people that you actually never spoke to, you started speaking with. You could actually see this at graduation. It changed people.” Mia also had a positive response regarding the aftermath of the project. She told me that now she wanted to get close to people. This is shy Mia who reported six months ago that she felt she had to change herself in order to assimilate with people not like her at college. Incredible that Mia was now stating how after the project she was trying to meet new people.

Pieter and Andre also reported positive feelings and attitudes towards the project six months later. Pieter said that being a facilitator taught him leadership skills. In his words, “It was a skill that I helped teach to adults who had a story that needed to come up. And, if I can do that for adults, I can do that for kiddos. So, it gave me an extra bit of confidence.”

Andre, as usual, had profound words to describe the digital storytelling project six months after its completion. When I asked him about the project, he said it was a “holistic” learning experience utilizing the “mind, body, and soul.” Andre also shared with me how he used

digital storytelling outside of the classroom. In addition to being a teacher, Andre is also a part-time pastor and therefore intimately involved in his local church. For Mother's Day, Andre shared his digital story and asked the children of the church to talk to their mothers and ask them to tell them their stories. Even with storytelling at the level of the church, Andre was insistent that stories must start with the parents first.

Andre also stated post-project that he became a better listener. Andre said he has applied these new skills when listening to the social problems his students bring to the classroom. Andre also stated he has not used the River of Life with his students, but he did mention that *he* was part of each student's River of Life. Andre elaborated, "because whatever I do... if I put a dent on them, tomorrow they come to class and say, my teacher, he did this for me." Andre then went on to say, "It is about a relationship. They are still on their journey. I want to put myself in a good place on their river of life." Andre said he learned about relationships and relationship building through digital storytelling. Andre illuminated this point by repeating the title of his own digital story, "Brick by Brick," which was actually a title he and I came up with together during the editing process.

Tayla also shared that she is now a much better listener now than she was before the project. Like Rob, Tayla says she is subconsciously using the project without realizing it until afterwards. To explain, Tayla stated, "We do it self-consciously. I listen without knowing why I am listening." After she said this, I asked her if she listened this way before the project. Tayla's response, "No. You hear, but don't listen. But now I listen *and* hear now."

Tayla then went on to describe a situation with what she called a "problem student" to share how she has become a better listener. Tayla illustrated this student's behavior in class as "totally berserk." In her words, this student "screams and shouts and acts out." In fact, Tayla

shared a story of another teacher asking her why she didn't "lose it" with this child and yell at him. Tayla replied to the teacher that she was listening to him when he acted that way. Tayla then went on to say,

So even though he does this and I should be very angry at him, I am not... because I don't know his story. There is *something*. He needs time to trust me. But there is no room in the CAPS to get that story in there. They expect so much. There is not time as a teacher to find out what each one of those 40 stories are. You are not going to progress until you know their stories. You won't get through to them and understand them if you don't know their stories.

Graeme also disclosed an example of how he is using the project six months later. He said that his friendship with one of his former group members has now progressed to hugs whenever he sees this former member. Graeme said he has long conversations with this student now while they wait together for the train. On their new relationship, Graeme revealed they now have a "proper human connection that would not have been possible if it was not for the storytelling."

Additionally, Graeme told me a story about seeing this student two months after the conclusion of the project studying alone on campus. When he stopped by to ask how she was doing, she replied, "struggling." Graeme does not believe that she would have told him she was struggling if it were not for the storytelling, nor would he have stopped to ask her how she was doing if not for the project. Graeme ended up helping her study for two hours and later she told him that she would not have passed her exam if he had not stopped by.

When I asked Luniko if he was using any part of the digital storytelling process outside of his classroom, he replied,

Yes. With my friends and at social gatherings, I always tell my friends about the digital storytelling and how the people of South Africa can walk with pride with their untold stories. I was just telling my friend how the project was healing and how it was good to hear from what other people had to say about their lives and how good it was just to sit and listen to other people's stories because actually it was teaching you as a person to learn to listen and to just give other people their space...to just let them speak... give them a platform to express themselves and share the power of listening.

Luniko says he practices these skills with his friends when they are just "chilling." His friends have even asked him to teach them how to make a digital story. Rob said something similar to this sentiment. Rob said that now when he is with his friends he is more open to listening. And, Felix also stated that he shared his story with some of his old friends (whom he labeled as "gangsters" and "criminals"). As Felix expressed, "I showed some of my old friends the story and they were really impressed. And, they, were like, 'Wow... anybody can change if they really want to.'"

### **Summation of Chapter Six**

On thinking about the stories Luniko heard during the term, he had this to say, "They are still living with me. I carry them." Luniko's sentimentality surmised the gist of digital storytelling project and storytelling in general. Brian Boyd (2010) is right. Stories are not things that are, but things that do. And, stories should be thought of as active and not passive, as verbs versus being counted as nouns. What I gleaned from this data is the classroom became a space each student called for in a moment of need, kind of like the room of requirement from the *Harry Potter* (2002) series.

The data presented in chapter six provided insight into how digital storytelling, and sharing stories in general, served to alter classroom spaces. Other results pointed out how creating a digital story and participating in a story circle can lead students to disrupt pre-conceived notions and beliefs that they had of their colleagues before entering the classroom. In addition, this type of respectful story sharing could become a place to interrupt historical silences (to hear the “gaps” of stories), as digital storytelling moves “the story” from the status of an artifact and into a teachable moment.

## CHAPTER VII

### **Digital Storytelling and Implications for Future Practice**

“Everyone has a story.

The world would be better if we knew each other’s stories.

To know someone’s story is to love them” (Felix).

#### **Locating the Facilitators’ Stories**

The facilitators’ narratives represented a microcosm of the students from the course at large and served to highlight subjectivities of race, culture, class, and the intimate feelings of the students who authored them. As for structure, the facilitators’ verbalized their stories as first-person, autobiographical accounts using the subject position of “I.” Thematically, distinct tropes emerged and pointed to what Bamberg (2004) would articulate as master narratives located within a broader recognizable frame. In regard to focus, although the facilitators were asked to share an account of why they decided to become teachers, instead they told highly personal stories that had little to do with their assigned task. For the purpose of analysis and without identifying the students who shared in the story circle, the following themes that marked each narrative will be listed below and then located within a larger theoretical framework. Note: these are the original and organic stories students told in the story circle, not the stories (Tayla and Mia) altered for the viewing day.

- (1) drug abuse (including incarceration)
- (2) father’s death
- (3) extreme poverty growing up in the Eastern Cape

- (4) poverty, rape, domestic abuse, survival
- (5) existing as a “little brother” without an identity
- (6) issues of weight and identity
- (7) feeling isolated; existing in his sister’s shadow
- (8) growing up during apartheid, including taking a head-shot by a brick during a riot
- (9) this student documented how she overheard that her father was not her biological father.

After examining the stories individually and collectively, each student’s response documented autobiographical reflections of lived experiences by means of sharing a personal and traumatic story. What is recognizable now in looking at the stories as a collective (and after examining the students’ reflective texts) is how their commonality stems from the fact that they can all be defined as critical stories. I base this delineation from Nado Aveling’s (2001) stance that critical storytelling can be a “springboard for change” (p. 45) as the students expressed character transformation as a result of the digital storytelling process. After sharing the stories orally from within the story circle, students worked towards crafting their words and ideas into digital productions. At this point, their stories became “digital stories,” following Lambert’s (2012) philosophy of providing ordinary people a platform to make social and personal change through storytelling utilizing available media tools. And, for the students who expressed “change” in either the reflective texts or in the interviews, their stories took shape as “critical digital narratives,” combining elements of critical storytelling and mirroring Vasudevan’s (2006) notion of multimodal productions that became new sites of identity and exploration.

Looking at the list as it is grouped above, it would be challenging to attach gender, race, language, or socioeconomic status to each story. It can be surmised that story work humanized a



student population who reported before sitting in the story circle (1) not feeling like they had a common story (2) showed evidence of self-segregation by the way they grouped themselves in classroom settings, and (3) reported they had really never mingled within university spaces despite that they had travelled as a cohort through the university system. Further, all of the facilitators expressed within the story circle that a burden was lifted. Tayla said a drain had been unblocked. Mia related she could not tell other stories until she “let this one out,” and Sisipha stated how she was able to make peace with the past by talking about it, as examples. Therefore, it is fair to report that stories 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9 align with Wortham’s (2000) concept of “narratives of self-construction” where the author changes who they are by telling stories about themselves (p. 2). In fact, all of the students reported that story work provided a space where they altered the opinions they had of their colleagues, echoing Wortham’s position. Additionally, all the students’ stories followed Bamberg’s (2004) claim that narratives reveal “character transformation in the unfolding sequence from past to present” (p. 354).

In furthering categorizing the stories the facilitators shared by kind and type, students 3, 4, and 8 told stories that would fall within the definition of counter or resistance stories as discussed by critical race theorists (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Scholars who work out of this paradigm believe counter stories are strongly focused on transforming society through social justice education and represent stories from people of color positioned in the margins of society (Delgado, 1989). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) have defined a counter story as serving four functions:

- (a) They can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice,

- (b) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems,
- (c) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position, and
- (d) they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone. (p.36)

Stories 3, 4, and 8 fall within a counter storytelling structure as they were authored by students of color in the “margins of society” and countered hegemonic definitions people from the “center of society” attached to them. These stories further provided a liberating and healing space for each student to redefine themselves in front of their peers. Further, all of these particular students disclosed they were given a voice in the classroom, which is another element of a “counter story” and was not necessarily highlighted by the White students either in the interviews or in their reflective texts. In agreement with Bamberg (2004), these stories evoked a “potentially emancipatory and liberating agenda” (p. 362), a sentiment that was reported by a variety of students in chapter six. This is not to say that storytelling did not heal or in some way unburden other students existing outside of “margin,” but sharing a story as a person of color in an integrated setting carries a particular import in South Africa.

### **In Critique of the Counter Story**

To be fair, I must point out a few obvious critiques of locating stories within a counter storytelling paradigm. Bamberg (2004) claimed that in order to have a counter narrative there must be a story or an experience to counter. In assessing the data from the class at large, the data

revealed there were no White people in this class outside of the facilitators and Jake who “bought into” the process. The other White students, in my opinion, resisted course activities as evidenced by little to no attendance and poor classroom attitudes. So, for the class at large, it would be difficult to label certain narratives as either “counter” or “resistance” stories as there was a noticeable lack of White (“center of society”) presence in the classroom. Therefore, two conclusions can be surmised: One, perhaps indigenous Black students, as examples, viewed the Coloured student population as positioned higher in the social order and therefore their narratives could become a counter story in that scenario. However, for Coloured students, with no White students’ narratives to “counter,” their stories were for the self and align with Wortham’s (2000) stance. Or, secondly, perhaps students felt a need to just tell their story, despite who was (or was not) located in the classroom. This latter suggestion parallels with a majority of the facilitators’ sentiments.

I would like to offer a supplementary critique of the counter storytelling paradigm: First, if a person of color shares a story it should not automatically be characterized as a counter or resistant story (reference stories 6 & 9). Secondly, a real problem exists with identifying and then categorizing people who author stories as located outside of mainstream (i.e., “center”) society. Pointing out that some of the stories were “resistant” and some were not may serve to further marginalize certain students and call attention to what Adichie (2009) has defined as the “single story.” According to Adichie, the single story can establish a version of a person where they become (and remain) the abject other. Although the data demonstrated the single story cycle was broken for this group, certainly this will not always hold true. I wonder under which scenarios the “single story” could be diminished, and what conditions could cause the single story to be recycled. What will be the ramifications to the student and the classroom habitus, more broadly,

if this is the case? Further, there is danger in labeling some stories as “counter” and others as “master.” This characterization automatically defaults students into an unintentional and forced hierarchy.

An important part of this project was to identify exactly what kind of stories students authored and place those stories into a larger disciplinary conversation. Therefore, for my own understanding, it was important to locate where the stories could reside in the literature. Emotionally, I prefer to situate the stories of Mia, Felix, and Sisipha as human stories and narratives or critical stories containing personal accounts that changed them and others. I take issue with counter storytelling as a theory due to its nature to essentialize race as a defining characteristic; and although I understand the need for such theory and a position, I challenge a focal point that exists solely out of essentialization. All stories are multi-faceted, subjective, and represent a place and time important to the author at the moment of the telling. Highlighting race as the story's most salient feature could act to reify a stock or master narrative as the storyteller's single story (Adichie, 2009).

As for the students of color in the facilitators' group, stories 1, 6, and 9 were authored by people of color, but they did not offer a counter story as the critical theorists have outlined. It is true these students took a moment to redefine themselves against any perceived notions their peers may have attached to them. However, I do not believe they constructed their stories as representative of race or social justice, which are both fundamental elements of counter or resistant stories derived from the critical theory paradigm. Rather, these stories can be classified as critical stories (Aveling, 2006) or narratives of self-construction (Wortham, 2000) as each story acted as a conduit for change for the students who authored them and for the students who heard them.

### **Stories of Resistance**

Students reported feeling a sense of security in the story circle, which sits in complete opposition to how students started the class by sitting in arrangements grouped by race. Hence, stories materializing from the story circle became “resistance stories,” as narratives in this space opposed prescribed racial hegemony as revealed from the mapping data. Further, the mapping highlighted how before the onset of the story circle, students bought into a “White places are good” and “Black places are bad” majoritarian story residing within the critical theory paradigm as Solórzano and Yosso (2002) have theorized.

An additional theme materializing out of the facilitators’ stories centered around a specific resistance to the prompt and course directions, as the data exposed that students shared a highly personal story despite the grade and the prompt. One way to look at this data is through the lens of fractured schooling systems in South Africa. In chapter two, a historical outline was provided that detailed the increase of standardization in higher education, coupled with a decrease of teacher (and therefore student) autonomy after the onset of democracy. This type of “curricular resistance” could be correlated to an education and or a classroom structure that from within students felt both a loss of power and identity. Resisting the prompt and teacher directive allowed students to reconfigure themselves within a larger context of power (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). In this way, students democratized power hierarchies typical of higher education classrooms by displacing the teacher as “all knowing” and thereby controlling the curriculum in a way that made sense to them. Many students seized the opportunity to “give voice to the voiceless” (Luniko), effectively taking ownership over both their authorship and education. Lastly, the narrative of South Africa before democracy had always been told single-handedly by those who held the power in society. In many ways, South Africans have always been “storied”

by others (Vasudevan, 2006). For these students, modifying the curriculum offered an avenue for them to resist a pre-positioned master narrative and to become the authors of their own stories.

### **The Culture of Fear, Crossing Borders, and Rewriting Classroom Spaces**

The data stemming from the mapping exercise divulged a paradox between how students felt in Cape Town public areas versus how they came to acquire a sense of comfort in the classroom. Before the storytelling project, borders of fear kept the students from truly getting to know one another on campus. White and Coloured students blamed their divisions on diverse first languages and fear; Black students narrowed it down to racism. Pierre Bourdieu's (1977/2013a, 1980/1999) notions of both habitus and silent violence seem applicable for extricating student attitudes regarding their perceptions of how classroom spaces transitioned from the start of the project to its completion. Bourdieu has described habitus as socialized norms that guide behavior and thinking within environments, and he additionally positioned silent violence as the deliberate act of imposing the will of one person over another, tacitly, as a form of power domination within an environment.

The data pointed to the story circle, in particular, as the place where the students' altered perceptions of habitus began. Once the students entered the story circle, the environment transformed and produced a new spatial orientation, one that was *not* configured around the arrangement of power. Where the students sat and staked claim to a space (reference Soja's idea of "territory," 1971) was not reflective of a predetermined hierarchical order as was the standard with this class. Edward Soja (1971) has also called attention to how one distinguishes his or her standing within, what he terms, "spaces of occupation." This standing, referred to as a "hierarchical ordering" by Soja (1971), and "strategies of condensation" by Bourdieu (1989), is influenced by several variables that reify distances between people. Remarkably, the students

were willing to cross into difficult terrains and to participate in story circle discourse that perhaps they had never encountered before. The story circle became aligned with Bhabha's (1994) assertion of the need to think beyond narratives of subjectivity and instead "focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (p. 1). Bhabha further interpreted these places of articulation as "in between spaces," resulting in new sites of identity, which provide a landscape for redefining society itself. These "spaces" fall in line with Soja's (1996) Thirdspace, a space where "everything comes together," a place that is open to otherness (p. 56). Bhabha's concept of in between spaces also encapsulates the story circle as a place where "differences are overlapped and cultural values are negotiated" (p. 2).

Placing students in facilitator-led groups outside of their comfort zones shifted the environment, challenged student perceptions, and led students to reposition themselves both as individuals and small-scale social actors. Further, this safe environment was established by providing *all* of the students the same rules of engagement (not rules divided by race). This included balanced and identical talking time for all of the students, forging a space where each participant was equally valued. Flipping the environment and neutralizing the space without a central authority figure was vital to constructing this reimagined habitus. The story circle became a fully recognized version of Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) "safe house," a term Pratt has used to express where within legacies of subordination groups need places for healing and mutual recognition.

Henry Giroux (1989), in his work surrounding border pedagogy, has stipulated that students have to produce certain knowledge as border crossers; and, fundamental for instructors teaching in these spaces is an understanding of the political trajectories and divisions that impact students. As an alternative intellectual space, digital storytelling humanizes the storytelling.

Digital storytelling additionally places a face on social issues that may seem abstract to many, allowing students to experience a learning event that is authentically and critically rendered.

Overall, digital storytelling privileges a particular way of knowing not found in books.

Transforming the classroom environment legitimized a space for students to assess the boundaries of their own knowledge, the position from where they speak, and to locate how their stories linked to the collective narrative of those around them. Nado Aveling (2001) has argued that teachers must learn to “problematize race and racism, gender and discrimination, social class and poverty if they are to become successful practitioners who are more than ‘good technicians’” (p. 36). Noting that all stories are situated within a larger social and political framework, digital storytelling, with its emphasis on orality, created an entry point for dialogue that unpacked the cultural and historical factors that have shaped the stories students tell. Not only is this kind of learning valuable for teacher educators, but learning how systemic inequities work to form current power structures is knowledge all students should have.

Further, an examination of how classroom dynamics were reoriented must take into consideration the evolution of the South African education system as outlined in chapter two. The literature highlighted the inconsistencies applied to education in South Africa starting with the arrival of the Dutch until the onset of democracy in 1994. Schooling until apartheid's demise was meant to divide and segregate, to demean people of color, and to promote the ethos of a minority White population. For White students, school was a place of safety where their cultural values, as a form of cultural, economic, and social capital (Bourdieu 1983/1986), were entrenched. For people of color, school was just another avenue of domination. However, the digital storytelling process disrupted the students' notion of otherness and opened a space for dialogues across difference. I bring this evidence into this chapter as for *all* the students in this



study, the story circle became a place of safety. The story circle, based on equity and equality, was not a place where the will of one was imposed on another, where silent violence was the hidden curriculum (Bourdieu, 1977/2013a). Students came to this position because the classroom environment, *the habitus*, was reimagined. By flipping the spatial dichotomy and transferring power from the teacher to the students, digital storytelling worked to balance classroom dynamics and acted as a mechanism to neutralize dominant power structures that may have inhibited learning.

Although the story circle became a place of safety, the data revealed that students still feared public spaces outside of their homogenous living areas. The digital storytelling process affirmed that storytelling aided in disrupting notions of otherness from inside the classroom, but it did not make the students more apt to travel to places they either associated with danger or that they simply felt were not for people like them. However, this is not to say that students (the facilitators specifically) did not take digital storytelling skills to the streets, as they provided evidence of a reimagined perspective about the people in their lives. Rob mentioned the one-sided approach from media regarding the vilification of those who suffered xenophobic attacks. Graeme commented on the “proper human connection” he now had with a member of his group - a lady outside of his racial category that he remained friends with after the project. Tayla spoke of waiting for the “trouble-making kid” in class to share his story so that she could know him better, while Andre dreamed of collecting the stories of both folks from his church and the parents of his current students in order to promote the Coloured culture outside his classroom. Perhaps the students are not yet crossing borders into places that they fear, but their mindsets have been altered and the perceptions they had surrounding some boundaries have been reconfigured.

Lastly, negotiating a reimagined spatial orientation also led students to deem any potential grade they would receive for this project as unimportant. When examining what led students to feel as if the grade was secondary, it was discovered that the students wanted to be connected to each other and cared for, either through building relationships with their colleagues or with the teacher. I draw attention again to facilitator Mia who, in interview, reported “forgetting” about the mark. Luniko also specifically stated that he did not align his response for this project with the grade, and Pieter relayed that this was his main story and he could tell no other story. Thabisa shared that she just wanted people to understand her situation. Tayla felt that she “had to be connected” to Pieter. And, as for Pieter, he reported that the storytelling process was what was “best” for him. Based on student responses in both interviews and from the reflective texts, I have concluded that the change in classroom habitus led students to this stance. For some students, I do believe that finally having a platform where their voices were welcomed, and also requested, created a liberating space for them to “let that story out” as Mia has related. For students like Mia, Andre, and Luniko, grades did not matter as much as their own personal expression. Telling a personal story became an activity for the students, not for the teacher or for a grade. Most importantly, the findings revealed that if the students had a story on their heart and if they felt safe enough to share it, they would. No matter the grade, despite the prompt.

### **Restorying the Self and Other**

Through analysis of the facilitators’ stories, it is clear that the subjects these students covered were sensitive in nature and consisted of personal themes outside of the prompt. When I questioned the facilitators about why they decided to tell *this* story over any other story, students reported they felt a need to share *their* autobiographical narrative. As Andre stated, he wanted to

tell the world, “This is who I am!” The data communicated the digital storytelling assignment, both in regard to the facilitators and from the class at large, became a chance for each student to (re)define themselves in a public space. For students like Luniko and Pieter, the story circle became an emancipating space where they could share their authentic selves with an immediate peer group. For Rob, the story circle became what he claimed was a “place of honesty.” What I find interesting is that perhaps students should have known each other better considering that they were a smallish group and had attended university together as a cohort for four years. However, boundaries and borders existed between the students, which they only traversed once the classroom became a place of safety.

Many students mentioned in the reflective texts (and also in interviews) how important it was for them to witness how their peers had experienced hardships in life. Recognizing that dealing with problems, what they called “struggle,” was not limited to certain groups of people—that everyone struggled in some way—led students to reevaluate how they felt about their classmates. In fact, Mandla was very adamant in wanting to hear more “White stories” after he figured out that there were commonalities between himself and his White peers. A reimagined classroom habitus revealed each student to the next, providing a space for students to reaffirm essential past identities while establishing new ones with people, who for the first time, became colleagues versus classmates.

### **When Storytelling Does Not Work: Manipulating the Personal**

As a component of this course, in addition to participating in a story circle, students were required to screen their digital stories publicly, on a Saturday, in front of all of the students and their invited guests. An obvious critique of sharing personal information through storytelling, or writing assignments in general, is its questionable connection to ethical classroom practice

relating to student grading. In a classroom, students are powerless and at the mercy of instructors and the assignments they select. This holds particular valence in South Africa where many students (mainly of color) do not speak up in class, nor would they ever challenge a teacher, especially if that teacher is White. Prompts or learning environments that promote or request students to share intimate details of their lives for a grade is not only unethical, but it can cause students to feel like they do not have the right lives to get a good grade, can force students to cross into emotional terrains that they may not wish to travel, and place the teacher in a role to play pseudo-psychiatrist (Alton, 1993; Read, 1998; Reynolds, 2007; Ruggles Gere, 2001). Further, as Jonathan Jansen (2009) has explained, being forced to listen to stories can evoke intense emotions and may not be constructive and or have little educational or social value.

Although personal narrative and storytelling have been linked in the literature to scholarly and academic work (Benmayor, 2008; Oppermann, 2008; Spigelman, 2001), much literature exists that equates personal assignments to acts capable of unearthing student pain or even causing trauma after the class has finished. Daphne Read (1998) has questioned if instructors can guarantee the safety of students in multicultural classrooms, as multicultural classrooms represent a microcosm of the nation and for many the nation is not safe. Read's claim is particularly valid in a South African context when considering that students had not mixed or socialized previously, which resulted in a classroom environment where diverse cultures intersected. This is an environment Mary Louise Pratt (1991) has labeled a "contact zone." Pratt has written that spaces such as these cannot be thought of as neutral spaces, particularly within places that feature legacies of subordination. The notion of place (or space) holds symbolic meaning in South Africa where power structures and social hierarchies stemming from the aftermath of colonialism have made their way inside classroom walls.

With this class in particular, it is clear that the facilitators did not care about the prompt or the grade, but rather felt a need to share what was on their hearts and minds. However, overwhelmingly, the students identified as facilitators had nothing positive to report about the public viewing day. Tayla felt “betrayed” and “lied to” and ultimately changed her story as did Mia. Felix was ill the entire week leading up to the event, and Pieter stated emphatically that the “public was not part of the circle of trust.” What this points to is when students were forced to share stories outside of their comfort zone (the circle), the stories became a performance. One could additionally argue these stories were merely constructed for a grade. Most importantly, these public stories aligned themselves within the literature relating to forms of narrative and personal writing as a socially constructed enterprise (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Newkirk, 1997; Wortham, 2000). Joe Lambert (2012) takes up this position as well. Lambert has deemed that digital storytelling is “essentially private media” and as “close and personal as a family” (p. 2). It is also stated in the “Digital Storyteller’s Bill of Rights” (Lambert, 2012), that digital storytellers have the right to share or to not share their stories. Hence, storytelling as an academic endeavor should be ethically grounded in order to protect the storytelling process and, above all, the storyteller. Central to any classroom digital storytelling project must be an overarching ethical practice that questions (and challenges) if the classroom can truly become a safe house for sharing the personal (Pratt, 1991). If the classroom habitus cannot be altered and the story circle emphasized as the real course commodity (versus the digital product), then such a project should be reimagined. Unquestionably, a right to privacy for all students must be protected, even if this means that teachers must modify assignment sequences and perhaps suspend grading policies.

Conversely, experiencing someone's story alongside of them may act as a powerful vehicle for inspiring both personal and social transformation. Many students in this study noted the story circle changed how they felt about themselves and their peers. Note how the phrase "story circle" was used versus "public viewing day." Data from this study revealed the story circle worked to disrupt notions of otherness more so than the viewing day. To be clear, very few people would argue against the value of testimony in a South African context. In fact, much effort was placed into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings (1995) in South Africa that created a public forum where those who experienced past apartheid atrocities could participate in a national platform as a way of healing. A digital story viewing day that distributes personal and historical narratives may actually be aligned within a South African cultural ethos of public redress. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings were not done by force with a vulnerable student population. And, the critique being made here is in regard to the interplay of grades, students, and personal stories that are displayed for public consumption, not the necessity for victims of trauma to have access to a public venue for redress.

### **When Digital Storytelling Does Not Work: Stories as Performance Sites**

The reflective texts from the students overwhelmingly reported nothing but positive accolades in regard to the digital storytelling process, which included students reflecting on their participation on the viewing day. The students on the viewing day, additionally, were emotionally invested and excited about sharing their stories publicly (as my field notes revealed). However, the facilitators' data pool clearly marked this group's negative experience with the public viewing day. Additionally, Sam (from the larger class) reported he was still very angry about the process when I saw him six months after the term, although his reflective text stated the opposite. In fact, even the White students, who showed little interest in the project based on

classroom observations, conversations, and poor attendance records, noted how the project impacted them in a positive way. Certainly, some of these positive responses have to be attributed to the “story as performance” (Newkirk, 1997) theory as mentioned above. True data of change mainly is derived from the students and facilitators that were interviewed, both during the project and then after its completion. This data can be examined two ways. First, either the public viewing day radically altered the minds of all the students who showed resistance to the project over the duration of the course, or students wrote in their reflective texts what they believed the teacher wanted to hear and would result in them receiving a higher mark. Based on my work with the students, observations, and the collected data, I believe it is accurate to report that many students “performed” for a grade.

### **Digital Story Work and Implications for Future Practice**

One of the many benefits of digital storytelling is that it places emphasis on lived experiences and provides a space for critical awareness of both the self and other, what Freire (1970/ 2000) would label “conscientization.” In this way, digital storytelling facilitates both personal and collective growth. What digital storytelling has the ability to do is to create a space where classroom dialogues, even those that can interrupt historical silences, can begin. However, without a classroom that reimagines “the way of the space” (Bourdieu, 1977/2013a), students do not have the ability to fully establish lines of dialogue or equitable relationships across difference. Additional projects could examine other classroom initiatives (outside of digital storytelling) that serve to alter classroom habitus and teacher positionality.

Next, it is clear that although students felt safe in the classroom, they did not feel secure enough to venture into certain areas of the city. Hence, the idea of transfer habitus is worth

considering. How might instructors get students to take what they have learned in the classroom (i.e., the valuable skills from digital storytelling) out into their communities and home-lives?

Additionally, data revealed the story circle became a liberating space where students could unburden themselves through story and redefine themselves against the lines of historically inscribed representations. However, because students professed to feeling liberated after the story circle process does not necessarily equate to students becoming emancipated in a socio-political context. Nor, does it suggest the status of these students within society will change simply because they altered how others perceive them. I question, for some, if pain that has been historically embodied can be fixed simply by participating in story work? Digital storytelling is not to be thought of as a Band-Aid pedagogy, but rather as a space to extricate the social and political structures that worked as driving forces *behind* the story. Without deconstructing how power hierarchies have encouraged oppression in the first place, I question if sustained feelings of liberation (and healing) are actually possible. An additional study could look at the long-term effects of making a personal story public and also assess students' notion of "healing" and "liberation" long after the completion of the project.

Equity of access to media platforms via digital storytelling is an argument Jean Burgess (2008) has made in regard to classroom applications of digital storytelling. Burgess has articulated that creating Internet based content does not mean students become people with power who have gained capital access within Internet domains. Digital storytelling can create an entry point for dialogue considering that students have created a product that could be shared online, but that does not necessarily mean that students have changed the way power systems work or the way access is democratized. In fact, there is an emerging critique that centers around world languages not being as accepted as English in digital venues, leading to what has been



labeled as a form of digital colonialism (Koutonin, 2012). A future study could specifically look at digital literacy practices relating to feelings of student agency, both inside and outside of the classroom.

An additional study could specifically examine the “Rainbow Nation” ideology and investigate if feelings of unification still hold true today. Along with this, research could focus on if there is a collective spirit—even after the death of Mandela—of ubuntu. The phrase “ubuntu” came out of the data as connected to a “we are all one” mentality. However, ubuntu was only mentioned by Coloured and Black students within the data and not by Whites. A case study of only White students could examine perceptions of status in a new South Africa. Along with this, direct attention could be given specifically to what factors could lead specific student groups into becoming stakeholders in a digital storytelling process.

The use of the digital storytelling medium for creating reflective pre-service teachers cannot be undervalued. The data is clear that the group labeled as facilitators benefited from the storytelling process in a way that enhanced how they interacted with students. However, further queries could look at other factors that might garner the same results (perhaps a mentorship with other teachers, etc.), to truly test the efficacy of such a project. Also, the national curriculum and lack of technology has impeded students’ access of digital technologies in schools. Therefore, programs that promote digital storytelling in areas with limited access to technology should examine the benefits of storytelling without the technological component. In South Africa, a case study of students who completed the digital storytelling project and who are currently in the schooling system as teachers could also be implemented in order to find out where (and if) there is room in the curriculum to integrate a digital storytelling / storytelling project.

Lastly, the results of this study revealed how digital storytelling can connect students across difference and disrupt notions of otherness. To that end, this research inspired collaboration between university students in South Africa and the United States (Stewart & Gachago, 2016, in press). Both student populations examined notions of “otherness” as they investigated what it means to be human today in both local and global contexts. Students participated in an eight-week curriculum initiative that utilized Facebook as a platform for engaging in guided discussions, cross-talk, and the sharing of their digital stories. Ultimately, students learned that they had more in common than they originally expected. By the end of the course, students desired to be connected both locally and abroad, and they learned that what it means to “be human” is really the same no matter the location. Further research in this arena could examine best practice as it relates to faculty collaboration across continents.

## Chapter VIII

### What's Left Unsaid

“The DS process made me feel that I had these  
Lego blocks of different sizes and colours and shapes  
without any other instruction other than a title saying,  
‘The end result is you’”

(student #52).

“You may say I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one.  
I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will be as one”

“Imagine” by John Lennon.

South Africa's history of racial inequality lends itself easily to narrowing all of Cape Town's problems to ones that stem from race. Due to my limited knowledge of Cape Town when I first arrived, that is exactly what I believed to be true. However, I have learned that historicized inscriptions, through public and private venues, speak to what is an obvious disconnect between two competing South African narratives. The first story encompasses the idealized Rainbow Nation; it is part Mandela and comprised by ubuntu philosophy and a “we are all one” mentality. The second narrative revolves around ongoing racial disenfranchisement, fractured education, economic disparity, and ongoing segregation. In Cape Town, “no go” areas and demarcated landscapes carry an energy so heavy they make a person feel written upon. Over the course of this project, I came to understand knowing Cape Town as a site and subject of study was central to this dissertation, as the issues affecting the city would impact the students within this study.

As I wrap up this project, a few questions remain and some new ones have been formed: What is the goal of digital storytelling? Can digital storytelling reconcile Cape Town's competing narratives? How might South African teachers integrate a curriculum of redress and equity into classroom spaces as the national curriculum mandates, and *is this what the people of South Africa really want?* I bring this last question into this dissertation finale based on my own observations and conversations that developed during my time in South Africa, specifically on my third trip that has resulted in my recognition that there is a large and growing faction of Black South Africans disillusioned with the idea of a Rainbow Nation, feel growing resentment towards what Nelson Mandela both did and did not do for people of color, and have the desire to, once again, be segregated by race.

Some of these aforementioned issues were addressed in a TV series on the South African Broadcast Network (found on YouTube) titled *The Big Debate* in 2014. One segment featured racism as a topic, and the moderator led the audience in questioning if the "Rainbow Nation Project" had failed. A guest-panelist termed the Rainbow Nation as "one big grey mess where the majority takes everything." Another audience member had this to say about the Rainbow Nation: "It was never successful because it was never a reality." Overall, a theme emerging from the panel centered on a collective notion that White people have not done the work required, including acknowledging how they continued to be beneficiaries of apartheid legacies, in order to move the democracy forward and become a united South Africa. A few audience members advocated for a return to segregated spaces that would promote specific cultural values and form an apartheid anew.

An additional sentiment of a growing social and racial disillusionment came out of The Ruth First Memorial Lecture that took place in August of 2015. Sisonke Msimang (2015), in her

talk titled, “With Friends Like These: The Politics of Friendship in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” called for the rejection of the “increasingly irrelevant, weepy and unhelpful mythology of Rainbowism” (p. 4). Lastly, in a podcast authored by Panashe Chigumadzi (2015), Chigumadzi claimed there was frustration with White people who have yet to take responsibility and make true change, and she advocated for segregated schooling systems once again. As for the students in this project, a last look at the data revealed the word “ubuntu,” the phrase meaning “I am who I am because of who we all are,” was a word that emerged from the data, but only from the students of color. This begs for an additional investigation of the realities of unification and if it is still an ideology that South African people find valuable.

In addition, sentiment advocating for a neo-apartheid has been coupled with rhetoric that is anti-Mandela in nature. To start, a quick Google search with the phrase “Mandela dislike” produced several articles. One author even labeled Mr. Mandela as a Black racist who only wanted to kill White people (Eowyn, 2013). In speaking with colleagues, questioning the students once again, and talking to my various friends (of all colors) in and around Cape Town, I wanted to garner a better understanding of the feelings of negativity directed towards Mr. Mandela. Lastly, I wished to grapple with if the people in Cape Town wanted to be united as Mandela and others envisioned.

I did notice on my second trip that a “Mandela presence” was not featured in the classrooms or schools that I visited. Meaning, in the USA, it would not be uncommon to see photos of our heroes lining public school walls. When I caught up with Mia on my third visit, I asked her about her feelings towards Mandela. She reported she loved Mandela. On that same visit, I had an opportunity to visit Felix and Graeme’s school, and Felix reported the same kind of feelings towards the ideology Mandela stood for that Mia shared with me. Felix also gave

examples of how he had integrated “Mandela lessons” into his course curriculum. And, in this school, I saw evidence of Mandela--posters, a chair with his face on it, his quotes. However, a different friend claimed that Mandela did not negotiate land for people of color and this was why economic disparity continued to exist. Other friends reported Mandela seemed to take all the glory for the struggle and was called the “father of the nation” when in reality many others (like Oliver Tambo and Ahmed Kathrada) played significant roles in the new South Africa. (To be fair, I thought Mandela (1995) did credit many who had participated in the struggle within his book, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*).

Twenty years after the fall of apartheid, and despite all the unifying efforts by Mandela and others, a divide remains within South African society. There seems to be “White issues” versus “non-White issues,” a demarcation that immediately diminishes South Africa’s eleven national languages and multiple ethnicities to that of a black and white binary. Nearing the end of 2015, Cape Town suffers a trifecta of rotating problems that take center stage in the media on different days of the week--and all of them inhibit true transformation. Enduring racist mentalities persist in defining the rhetoric of Cape Town spaces (reference Dawkins, 2015; de Vos, 2009; Fikeni, 2014; Legg, 2015; Maditla, 2013; Polgreen, 2012), substandard education remains at all institutional levels (*The Economist*, 2010; Holburn, 2013; Wilkinson, 2014), and crime and gang violence shape the narratives of many Cape Town spaces. Systemic poverty and inequality continue to burden Black South Africans, which has inspired them to mobilize “pooh protests”--literally throwing human feces at public places and monuments--as a way to make the reality of township life visible (BBC, 2013; Bester, 2015; Davis, 2013). The “pooh protest” even found a way into the university and inspired the #RhodesMustFall (2015) movement, a student-led effort to decolonize higher education by demanding the removal of a Cecil Rhodes statue on

the campus of the University of Cape Town. All of this draws attention to the complex and shifting narrative of Cape Town's story, one that is entirely dependent on whom you talk to.

What I had to negotiate at the end of my time was what my friend and colleague termed an "existential crisis." My colleague used this term to describe her own journey. She, too, hoped that digital storytelling could bridge South African divides, but she encountered a population still crippled by apartheid and claimed the Rainbow Nation concept is an ideology they no longer desired. I can report that such a crisis is exactly what I was faced with on my third trip. I found myself questioning Mandela himself--his motives, his life's work, and his mistakes. I wondered if his vision was an idealized myth by people like me, looking from the outside in, without having truly lived the reality of a South African life. For sure, Mandela was a flawed man. He was only human. Although, I believe the surreal nature of his life has led many to forget his humanity. And, now that Mandela is gone and there is no comparable person to take his place, it is easy to criticize all that Mandela was and was not. After many moments of reflection on Mandela's life and work, I have concluded that although he was flawed, his vision was not. What I now understand is that true transformation exists outside of race and outside of blame. Reducing all of Cape Town's problems down to race puts blame on people for the past and does not encourage a movement forward. Blaming people, even though many continue to deny how apartheid's legacy has sustained White privilege, will not transform South Africa. And, further, blame does not support the legacy of Nelson Mandela.

And, as for digital storytelling, its effectiveness with the students in this study remains clear. Six months after the project, the facilitators noted how digital storytelling became a catalyst that modified how they viewed the world. They are doing what story work is supposed to do as *I envision it to be done*. My teachers carry the stories of others with them, and this is

something they did not do before the onset of this project. By carrying stories, my teachers are reimagining a different South Africa; and, in a small way, continuing the legacy of Mr. Mandela.

In my final pursuit to understand the multifaceted nature of Cape Town spaces, I asked my friend Jack, who moved from the Eastern Cape to Cape Town, if as a Black man he felt the city was indeed racist. Jack shared with me that he did not believe that Cape Town was a racist city. Rather, he felt that people “just don’t grow.” The largest and most beneficial aspect of this project, for me, was watching the students’ transition from the first time we met to our last...and as they continue to evolve as we talk on Facebook, Twitter, and through WhatsApp.

Transforming curriculum, what it all boils down to, is not only the pursuit to change educational (and pedagogical) paradigms, but true transformation relies on building relationships with those we work with, whether they are students or colleagues. This can only be done, as Andre would say, “brick by brick.” In South Africa, rewriting spaces must begin by facilitating nurturing environments that serve to humanize versus divide. Although this dissertation focused on South Africa, I cannot help but to think this idea might also serve American classrooms and work environments as well.

Finally, this is where I leave this chapter and dissertation: Storytelling seems dependent on a collective experience. It is true that you cannot share stories without both story listeners and storytellers. However, what I have learned is that once you enter the story circle, storytelling is really an individualized endeavor where *you* decide whether or not to listen and where *you* may or may not select to alter *your* own code of conduct or value system. As the quote framing this chapter illustrates, a person can serve as a witness to different stories of all sizes and shapes and colors. But, overall, the end result is all about you, about what you are going to do with the



knowledge that you now have gained, about how you will carry the stories for which you now bear witness.

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## Appendix A

### Course Syllabus and Project Outline for Professional Studies

# Course outline Digital storytelling in Education

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27<sup>th</sup> August 2014 – 22nd October 2014

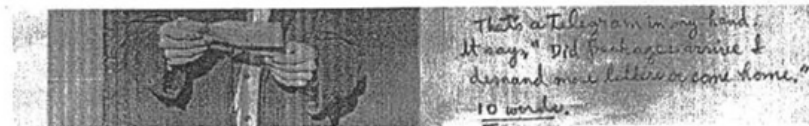
## Introduction

### Teacher portfolio

As part of the Professional Development Course, fourth year Education students have to develop a final year Teacher portfolio. Since 2010 this teaching portfolio is being developed as a digital story.

### Digital stories

The Center for Digital Storytelling at the University of Berkeley (<http://www.storycenter.org>) defines digital stories as:



### digital story (dig-i-tal sto-ry)

A short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds.

### Digital stories in diverse classrooms

Digital stories have been used in diverse classrooms as a way to openly listen, understand and appreciate experiences of students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. One of the main purposes of digital stories is to give every student, also those who traditionally are silent or at the margins of society, an equal voice. In addition to creating digital stories, we will explore ways of using digital stories and other pedagogical tools, such as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) techniques in a diverse classroom.

### Course outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able:

1. To help your students write and edit a personal narrative that reflects an understanding of the complex socio-economic realities that affect today's South African society, and in particular South African's classrooms.

1. Describe the actual incident in detail.
2. Explain why the incident was critical or significant for you.
3. Explain your concerns at the time.
4. Describe what you were thinking and feeling as it was taking place, and afterwards.
5. Mention anything particularly demanding about the situation.
6. Explain how the incident impacted on your studies.
7. Place the incident in a broader socio-political and historical context.
8. How else could you look at the incident?
9. Explain how it will impact upon your future role as a teacher.

#### Guidelines

- Your story should be told as a personal narrative in your own personal voice. The narrative will reflect on a social issue in Education that you have selected, interlinked with your own personal experience of this social issue. The narrative should explain why this social issue is close to your heart.
- You can write your story in any language you want. However you will need to provide an English translation to include subtitles into your digital stories. You will receive help with the translation of your stories.
- The script should be 300-500 words long, and the digital movie not longer than 4 mins.
- Your story should be critically reflective and show honesty and authenticity, in particular regarding the emotions you are trying to convey through your story. Criteria for 'critical reflection' will be negotiated together in class.
- The digital story will incorporate images and sound.
- You need to be aware of copyright infringements and where possible use your own media or media that are licensed under the creative commons license.
- List all your references of media used in your movie, such as images in the film credits (even if they are licensed under the creative commons license)
- You can use any software you like to create your digital story.
- Submission of work: you will submit a folder including the 1. typed copy of your script, 2. The photostory project file, 3. The published movie.

**Deadline: 17th October 2014**

## 2. Reflective Essay brief

**Aim:** to write a reflective essay on your experience of the digital story project

In this essay you will reflect on:

- How you experienced the digital storytelling project, e.g. what you liked and didn't like about the digital storytelling project
- What you learnt in this project about yourself and your colleagues

## Course plan (draft, subject to change)

	Topic	Activities	Who	Homework	Location
WS1: 27 08 14, 1 session, 8.30-11.45	Introduction to critical digital storytelling (30 mins) Rules of Engagement (30 minutes) 6 steps of DST (45 minutes) Intro in PLA techniques River of Life (45 minutes) Check out – in groups (15 minutes) Whole class reflection (15 minutes)	Presentation Discussion River of Life – individual, sharing Freewriting	ME	Reflection on critical incident / critical incident analysis Reading First draft of script	1.20 + HA lab
WS2: 03 09 14, 1 session, 8.30-11.45	Large group – story circle rules (30 mins) Small group - Story circle – brief meditation (2.5 hours, 15 minutes per story)  Script writing (45 minutes)	Check in Brene Brown video Presentation Sharing of stories Freewriting	ME	Second draft of story Reading	1.20 + HA lab
WS3: 17 09 14, 2 sessions, 8.30-11.45 and	Large group – check in Script reviewing and pair work (1 hour for solo writing, 20 minutes for pair review) Find/make/take images Copyright issues / Creative commons (handout)	Check in Analysis of movies Discussion Scripting Storyboarding (handout)	ME	Final draft of story Collecting images  Development of storyboard	1.20 + HA lab
WS4: 01 10 14, 2 sessions, 8.30-11.45 and	Large group – Photostory tutorial and sound tutorial Storyboarding (handout)	Check in Presentation Sourcing of images	ME	Collect images	1.20 + HA lab
WS5: 08 10 14, 2 sessions, 8.30-11.45 and Friday all day	Morning/afternoon group Work on movie Recording voice	Check in Importing and editing images Recording	ME	Working on digital movie	Khanya lab
WS6: 15 10 14, 2 sessions, 8.30-11.45 and Friday all day	Polishing and exporting final stories	Check in Recording Transitions Publishing movie	ME	Working on digital movie	Khanya lab

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## Appendix B

## Interview Questions Pre / Post

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Can you please share with me why you selected this story to tell for this specific project?
2. What factors did you consider as you wrote this story?
3. Why was it important to tell this story over a different story?
4. In your opinion, what features comprise a 'good' story?
5. In your opinion, what features comprise a 'bad' story?
6. Do you think that you will use stories in your classroom when you become a teacher? If so, why? If no, why not? How will you teach stories (follow up if yes)?
7. What are your thoughts on the stories that you have heard from your classmates?
8. Have the stories that you have heard made you reconsider a previously held belief or opinion?
9. Do you think that telling and writing stories is a valuable part of a classroom experience? If so, why? If not, why not?
10. What did you like best about sharing your story?
11. What did you like least about sharing your story?
12. Were you able to express yourself in the way that you wanted by telling this story? Why or why not?
13. Is it important to write stories? Why or why not?



14. Is it important to share stories? Why or why not?
15. What do you think stories do or accomplish?
16. Where did you get the idea for your story?
17. What factors do you believe impacted the story that you shared?
18. Will you integrate multiculturalism into your curriculum? If so, how? If no, why not?

Interview Questions  
Post Course

1. Tell me about your experiences in creating the digital story?
2. Would you change your story, now, if you could? If so, why?
3. What did you learn about yourself as a writer during this process?
4. What did you learn about yourself as a teacher during this process?
5. What did you learn about yourself as a student during this process?
6. Have you changed the way you view teaching since viewing the stories?
7. Have you changed in any other ways? Personally, professionally, or otherwise since viewing your classmates' stories?
8. What did you like best about viewing your classmates' stories?
9. What did you like least about viewing your classmates' stories?
10. What did you like best / least about sharing your own stories?
11. Do you think stories make a difference in a classroom environment?
12. In your opinion, what do stories do? (What is the purpose of a story?)

## Appendix C

## Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your willingness to be involved in this research project! My name is Kristian Stewart, and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. The goal of this research is to gain insight on the role of storytelling in South African pre-service education classrooms. You have been asked to participate in this project in order to garner your knowledge about storytelling.

I will be taking notes of the classroom environment and observing the classroom interactions as part of my study. All data that is collected (including data from your digital story) will conceal your identity by use of a pseudonym. Also, please note that your participation is voluntary and you may choose to not to participate at all without penalty any time during the duration of this project, from August 15, 2014 to November 15, 2014.

The data that I gather will be stored electronically on a password protected laptop computer. I, along with my faculty advisor, Dr. Christopher Burke, will have access to this data. At the end of this study, I will retain the data for future use and it will be stripped of any identifying markers.

Lastly, there is no foreseeable risk to your participation in this study. Again, you may select to conclude, not participate, or remove your data from this study at any time during its duration. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them at any time.

Kristian Stewart

Doctoral candidate  
College of Education, Health, and Human Services  
University of Michigan-Dearborn  
313-587-1887 or at [kdstew@umich.edu](mailto:kdstew@umich.edu)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ verify that this study has been explained to me and that I voluntarily agree to participate. I understand that if I have any hesitation I reserve the right to discontinue my participation in the project up until November 15, 2014, and that I may request that all information that has been provided be destroyed. My signature also verifies that I am 18 years old or older.

---

Signature

---

Date

## Appendix D

## Interview Consent Form

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your willingness to be involved in this research project! My name is Kristian Stewart, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. The goal of this research is to gain insight on the role of storytelling in South African pre-service education classrooms. You have been asked to participate in this project in order to garner your knowledge about storytelling. The timeframe of this study is from September 15 of 2014 to March 1, 2015.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may select to conclude at any time before or during the interviewing process. Additionally, you may also select to pause or take a break at any time during the interview. Our time together will not exceed 45 minutes, and if there is a question that you would prefer to not answer, you are free to skip that question in its entirety.

With your permission, I will record our interview conversation and keep that recording as data for this project. If you do not wish to be recorded, I will take notes instead. At the end of this study, I will retain any data for future use, but all identifying markers will be eliminated. Additionally, all data that is collected will conceal your identity by use of a pseudonym. The data will be stored electronically on a password protected laptop computer, and I, along with my faculty advisor, Dr. Christopher Burke, will have access to your data.

Lastly, there is no foreseeable risk to your participation in this study. Again, you may select to conclude, not participate, or remove your data from this study at any time during the duration of this study until December 1, 2014. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them at any time.

Kristian Stewart  
 Doctoral candidate  
 College of Education, Health, and Human Services  
 University of Michigan-Dearborn  
[kdstew@umich.edu](mailto:kdstew@umich.edu)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ verify that this study has been explained to me and that I voluntarily agree to participate. I understand that if I have any hesitation, I reserve the right to discontinue my participation and / or request that the information that I have provided be destroyed and not used in this project until December 1, 2014. My signature also verifies that I am over 18 years old.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature  
 My signature below verifies that I, \_\_\_\_\_, also agree to being audiotaped.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

Appendix E

Google Map

