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“What is my Story?”

Older people re-framing their lives through digital storytelling. An ethnographic approach

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to explore the use of digital storytelling with older people in community settings and residential care homes. It seeks to understand how older people experience and engage with the process of digital storytelling and explore how this facilitates the telling of stories from lived experience.

The need for the study flows from an earlier EU-funded project, using digital storytelling with older people to bridge the digital divide. Literature discussing digital storytelling and its application within the contexts of health, education and community engagement are discussed as well as key debates concerning voice and listening. The potential for digital storytelling within narrative research and humanistic gerontology is also explored.

Ethnography was considered the most suitable methodology for the project, resonating with the underlying ethos of digital storytelling and my own practice. A chapter is dedicated to close examination of the digital storytelling process, presenting the 'classic' model, discussing its merits and challenges in using with older people. Adaptations made during fieldwork to enable people who had cognitive or physical impairments to participate are presented. These were important developments, to remove barriers and not deny them the opportunity of voicing and being listened to.

Analysis of the stories produced revealed themes concerned with identity and its loss, rituals and attitudes for life, work and gender, glimpses into harsh childhoods and the relationship between nation macro stories and individual micro stories. A thematic analysis drawn from semi-structured group interviews discusses the process as a means to develop empathy, improve confidence and self-esteem, increase understanding of others and provide the space for voicing and deep listening.

The study concludes with a discussion on the affinity between humanistic gerontology and digital storytelling, proposing a collaborative approach to developing a significant body of work within the field of ageing studies, using digital storytelling and placing older people at the centre.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Fred and Jeanne. They were great storytellers and would have loved to have contributed to this research.

Chapter One
Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to this research, which is exploring the use of digital storytelling with older people in community settings and residential care homes. It seeks to understand how older people experience and engage with the process of digital storytelling and explore how it facilitates the identification of stories that they wish to tell. It also analyses the fourteen digital stories that were produced by participants during fieldwork in terms of their form and content and the responses they elicited from audiences.

It outlines the background and context (section 1.1), the purposes of the research (section 1.2) and an outline of the remaining chapters of the thesis (1.3).

1.1 Background and context

This study, examining the use of digital storytelling with older people was triggered by three key factors: the prevalence of discussions in circulation in relation to the rising ageing population; the results of an earlier EU funded project, *Extending Creative Practice*, which explored the use of digital storytelling with older people as a means to bridge the digital divide; and the direct, personal and painful experience of my father's demise and eventual departure attributed to Lewy Body dementia and his journey of transfer from independent living to residing in a nursing home.

When I began this research, the Unequal Ageing report (Age UK 2009) had estimated that the UK population would grow from 60.6 million to 71 million by 2031 and that people over 65 would increase from 9.7 million (in 2006) to 15.8 million in 2031 – from 16% to 22% of the population. "Europe as a whole must adapt to a new world where it is projected that almost one in three people will be over 65, and more than one in 10 will be over the age of 80" (Creighton 2014:3). At this time debates concerning the deficit and hostile narratives in circulation (Boorman 2010) discussed the rise of 'boomer bashing' and negative stereotyping especially of older women (Segal 2013). Karpf (2014) questioned the categorisation of older people solely through their numerical age, pointing out the absurdity of envisioning everyone over 60 as one single 'older' cohort. Segal's work led me to want to explore further how digital storytelling could be used to counter such representations through fostering greater understanding of older people sharing their lived experiences. Karpf's book led me to the

humanistic gerontologists, for whom ageing is rooted in time, “yet time is usually reduced to chronometric time; a mere measurement that has been emptied of the narratives that were traditionally part of it” (Baars 2012:143).

Extending Creative Practice (ECP) was funded by the European Union (EU) Grundtvig adult learning programme and involved five partners from four European countries: Finland, Romania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. It ran between 2010 and 2012 and was devised and led by my company DigiTales, which is hosted by Goldsmiths, University of London. ECP was designed to address a number of objectives identified by the EU in the 2006 Riga Ministerial Declaration that provided a definition of “e-Inclusion”, which was followed through by the 2010 e-Inclusion initiative (COM [2007] 694 final), launched by the European Commission. In response to the demographic challenges being faced within Europe, 2012 was designated by the EU as the “European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations”. ECP addressed these two policy concerns by testing the use of digital storytelling as a means to address the digital divide amongst older people, thereby contributing to the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Active Ageing Policy Framework 2002, as it “provided opportunities for older people to take part in both online and offline participation and social interaction” (Rooke and Slater, 2012:8).

One of the main findings of the ECP pilot was that older people appreciated being “invited into the present time and the opportunity to have their intellectual capacity stretched and their creative capacity realised (ibid)”. Another finding was that “the opportunity to be involved in creative activity, which was both enjoyable …. and productive, resulting in something the older people could share with others with pride, was particularly valued” (ibid:23).

The recommendations from Rooke & Slater’s (2012) evaluation report were useful as a means to apply for further funding, however the report is clearly locked into a reporting style against the policy drivers of the funding programme, which leaves little space for wider critical analysis of the conceptual basis of the project, linked to theoretical touchstones.

Extending Creative Practice is also discussed in Gregori-Signes and Brígido-Corachán (2014) in a chapter authored by Dunford and Rooke (2014: 205-221), which identified some benefits for the older people who participated in the project through the quotes collected in the evaluation process and links them to the increase of number and ranges of voices in contemporary media practice identified by Couldry (2010). There is brief acknowledgment of the tension between generating digital stories from unheard voices and finding audiences for

them. “Digital storytelling increases voices in media practice, but, like much community media, these voices are often isolated and therefore remain largely unheard, in their position on the margins of media practice” (ibid: 219). The chapter acknowledges that these issues merit further discussion, however it is more of a presentation of the successes of the ECP project and a call to arms to extend digital storytelling work with older people across Europe than a critical discussion and does not delve deeper into issues of voice and listening raised by Couldry (2008;2010), Matthews and Sunderland (2013) and O’Donnell, Lloyd and Dreher (2009).

Crisan and Dunford (2014) focus on follow-up research in 2013 with older people between the ages of 60 and 80 (the majority of whom were 60 – 70) in Romania, who had taken part in the ECP project, in which they have taken four ‘areas of expression’ in relation to digital storytelling literature: a) expression of vernacular creativity (Burgess, 2006); research method for local health issues (Gubrium, 2009); personal creativity (Lambert, 2013); and community identity/oral history (Klaebe et al, 2007) to devise a questionnaire that would assess which of these was most important for attendees of the workshops. Using an online survey to collect the data, with the help of librarian facilitators based in the county libraries, the piece concludes that

> DS workshops are mainly ways of streaming creative energies and expressing vernacular creativity in the age of web 2.0. It is an opportunity for our contemporary elderly storytellers to continue the same time-honoured activity as their ancestors, tell their stories, pass their wisdom, educate the new generations, but with a digital twist. (ibid:185).

Whilst the outcomes of this research provide some useful signposts to identifying the benefits and challenges of using digital storytelling with older people, its findings are specific to the cultural and infrastructural contexts of Romania, which had the lowest number of internet users in the higher age brackets across the European Union. The significance of investment into the library system by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation enabled the highest number of older people across the partnership to participate, with some 400 stories generated as a result of ECP and the legacy of digital storytelling as a continuing library service to date. Extending Creative Practice was selected as an example of good practice by the UK National Agency and awarded a prize by the British Council.

My role in ECP was to train professionals from our partner countries in the facilitation of digital storytelling workshops so that they could test the efficacy of the method within their own contexts as a means to engage older people with digital technology. I was inspired by

the results of ECP and was seeking an opportunity to work with older people directly myself, as the project did not accommodate directly working with older people in the UK, hence beginning to consider doctoral research as a potential route. I was also interested in developing my research capacity beyond addressing specific policy drivers from funding programmes.

At around the same time as being awarded my studentship to enable me to carry out this study, my company, DigiTales, also successfully secured funding to run *Silver Stories* through the EU Leonardo da Vinci 'Transfer of Innovation' programme. The aim of the project was to transfer the innovative practice of digital storytelling to its use in the training of health and social care professionals working with older people in both community settings and in nursing homes. *Silver Stories* developed out of the ECP partnership, adding new partners from Portugal and Denmark. The project was designed to transfer the practice of digital storytelling with older people to the new partners, whilst providing the opportunity to the ECP partnership to test digital storytelling with other marginalised groups. Once again, my role as one of the UK partners (the project was led by the University of Brighton) was to deliver facilitator training. There was no provision in the UK budget for any digital storytelling directly with older people to take place.

Undertaking this doctoral study enabled me access to the Essex participants through our partnership with the Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA), with whom we had previously conducted facilitator training to enable staff working with homeless young people to use digital storytelling in their practice. SAHA also runs housing schemes for older people around the UK, which foster community-building and wellbeing activities through creative activity and SAHA's experience of digital storytelling and my own facilitation approach enabled the fieldwork to take place with support and enthusiasm. *Silver Stories* also enabled me to extend the study to exploring digital storytelling within residential care homes through the relationship I developed with the Instituto Politécnico de Leiria in Portugal. It had not been possible to identify a partner in the UK to work within care homes, so my original research proposal was to focus on working with active older people in community settings; the access to residential care homes through the *Silver Stories* partnership added a relevant and rich additional context that led in particular to important discussions around voice and agency, empathy and understanding in relation to the most vulnerable and the least visible older people. I was supported to undertake this element of the study after *Silver Stories* had been completed, with support from the Erasmus+ programme.

The third reason for my desire to pursue this study at doctoral level flows from my observations of my own parents' ageing in relation to how they felt once the opportunity to engage in paid employment had ceased and how, living solely on state pensions, limited their choices were, and how little control they had over their own destiny without the intervention of our family. When my father, Fred, was showing signs of potentially having dementia, he was reluctant to engage with medical professionals because he was afraid of what would happen to him. He was afraid of being 'made' to live in an institution. As a family, we were concerned that if we left it too late, he would not benefit from the little treatment there is available for dementia. However, Fred found strategies for hiding his condition and for passing the doctors' tests such as recognising the time on a picture of a clock and knowing the name of the prime minister! When he had taken to wandering off in the night and getting lost in the street, he reluctantly agreed to have an assessment, which meant being admitted to a residential facility for three weeks in order for the medical team to undertake a range of tests and observations to enable a full diagnosis. As a family, we had not been prepared for the risks of moving someone living with dementia to an alien space and this is probably one of our deepest regrets. Seemingly from the moment he arrived there, his agency denied him – the residents there were kept behind locked doors – his voice, his personality, his very being was erased at an alarmingly rapid speed. By the end of the third week, he was beginning to forget who we were; he thought he was at work, running a business and that the other residents were colleagues; he had episodes of lucidity, though, when he absolutely knew what was going on. He watched staff members tap the security code on the door and one day, in such a moment, memorised the code for long enough to walk out of the building and escape. He was missing for six hours in mid-winter, wearing only slippers and indoor clothing. After this, he was not 'allowed' to return home for his own safety and the safety of my mother. His wishes were not listened to and our concerns were dismissed, as something we had to accept, as though he was no longer there as a person. He deteriorated so rapidly as a consequence that we had no option other than to find a nursing home that would 'accept' a person with dementia. In the search for somewhere suitable, that we could afford, my sister and I were shocked by the ways in which some institutions regarded their residents. One memorable occasion was on a tour of a nursing home in Surrey, where the entire half an hour at the site entailed giving us the detail on how they managed the toileting of the residents, and how they dealt with 'human waste'. We were appalled and disgusted, that people were seen only as functions to be managed.

In many ways, undertaking this study is a tribute to Fred – he had many, many stories! If what I have learned through undertaking this study enables me to stimulate future work, that can use digital storytelling to facilitate approaches to research within gerontology/ageing

studies that place older people at the heart of the process, then perhaps we can create positive change in attitudes, and in the development of inclusive policy and provision for older people. I undertake this study in his honour.

1.2 Purposes of the research

This study aims to explore the relationship between the practice of digital storytelling, its use with older people and the digital stories produced by older people in three research settings. It addresses the research questions:

1. What are the opportunities and challenges of participation in the digital storytelling process for older people?
2. In what ways can older people's lives be reframed through their digital stories?

The aims of the study are:

1. To gain an understanding of how older people choose to represent their lives through digital storytelling;
2. To gain an understanding of what effect the processes involved with digital storytelling have on older people participating;
3. To examine how the digital storytelling process with older people influenced their choice of stories they wished to tell and share, and how they wanted to tell them.

The study seeks to find ways in which digital storytelling can be used to generate knowledge with older people, collaboratively, and find a robust theoretical framework in which to situate the practice.

1.3 Thesis outline

Chapter Two reviews scholarly literature that discusses digital storytelling as a practice, that began to emerge following Lundby's collection of essays exploring the relationship between storytelling and what was then still referred to as the 'new digital media' (2007:1). The connecting concept of mediatized stories was used to apply to a wide range of digital forms, including digital storytelling, as defined and codified by the then Centre for Digital Storytelling (now Storycenter) by Lambert et al (2002; 2006). A history of digital storytelling introduces the development of the digital storytelling curriculum embodied in Lambert's subsequent publications (2010; 2013a;2013b) and cites its emergence alongside other parallel

movements in community and alternative film and video (Fountain 2007; Coyer, Dowmunt & Fountain 2007;Coyer & Hintz 2010). The emergence of Participatory Video, more or less mirrors the timeframe charting the rise of digital storytelling, especially in the interdisciplinary field of Development Studies (Shaw and Robertson 1997; Lunch & Lunch 2006; Roberts & Muñiz 2018). Freire (1970) is identified as a key and continuing influence across all of these practices which share a commitment to community-based education created by people themselves out of their lived experience.

Hartley and McWilliam's 2008 volume dedicated entirely to digital storytelling and bringing together contributors from across the globe asserts its position as the first book to address the under-theorisation of digital storytelling, positioning it within the context of new media studies. Since then, there has been a proliferation of academic writing about the application of digital storytelling across disciplines, together with four books gathering perspectives from contributors on education (Gregori-Signes & Brigido-Corachán 2014), Higher Education (Jamissen et al 2017); practice and theory, form and content (Dunford & Jenkins 2017) and Indigenous Education (Pratt 2019).

Voice and listening are discussed as central preoccupations of both practitioners and academics engaged with digital storytelling (Burgess 2006; Couldry 2008a, 2010; Poletti 2011; Dreher 2012; Lambert 2013; Matthews & Sunderland 2013, 2017); Dunford 2017; Jenkins 2020). The criticism of digital storytelling as a practice without an audience (Burgess 2006; Hartley & McWilliam 2009; Hartley 2013) and the necessity of attentive listening (Dreyer 2012; Couldry 2008b) if voicing is to provide any agency is largely discussed in relation to the failure of the 'movement' (Lambert 2013) to reach large-scale audiences if any change is to be effected. These debates are re-examined across all phases of the digital storytelling workshops carried out in the field, including the story circles, informal conversations and the one-to-one exchanges between individual storytellers and facilitators where the 'classic' model has been adapted in order for arguably the most voiceless and disregarded older people to participate. This refocuses digital storytelling within a specific context – in this case working with older people - that absolutely engenders voicing and listening, rather than challenging its ability as a form to compete with other kinds of digital media practice to exploit the possibilities of greater distribution across the Internet.

Narrative theory is discussed in relation to voice, not only in relation to what stories people tell, but *how* they tell them (Riessman 1993;2008) as well as challenging the notion of 'giving voice (Iacucci 2017; Riessman 2008), as opposed to facilitating the conditions in which people are enabled to speak and be listened to. Multimodality brings additional and different

layers of meaning in their employment of a range of modes of signification (Hull & Nelson 2005; Mills 2016) and in this study the use of modes other than the physical human voice in the narration of stories from life of older people were essential to some participants to enable them to express their story.

The final part of the literature review brings the field of humanistic gerontology into the discussion, recognising the centrality of narratives to ageing studies if we are to understand what it *means* to be ageing or old, or what it *feels* like (Baars 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2019; Randall & Kenyon 2004; Cole et al 2010). Micro narratives within empirical studies of ageing are seen by humanist gerontologists to be of primary importance because they articulate human experience (Baars 2011,2012). The marriage of the process and practice of digital storytelling with the philosophical, epistemological and ontological stance that underpins humanistic gerontology would seem to constitute the perfect match, however there have been no studies with older people that have combined digital storytelling as an inclusive and collaborative means to produce data and generate knowledge, within the field of ageing studies through the lens of humanistic gerontology. This study addresses this gap and establishes the groundwork for future research placing narrative through digital storytelling at the centre of studies concerned with age, ageing and older people.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology, the rationale for which is based upon my own student/participant centred practice as a teacher and facilitator, underpinned by Freirian principles and influenced by Participatory Action Research characteristics, notably the engagement of participants in the co-construction of knowledge (McIntyre 2008). Ethnography, as a multi-method approach, was considered the most suitable for the project as well as being sympathetic to my own position as a researcher. The relationship between ethnography and humanism, placing value on human agency both individually and collectively also resonates with the study not only in terms of the means by which data was collected and knowledge co-created, but also in its resonance with humanistic gerontology. Elements of autoethnography (Chang 2016) are also incorporated into the methodology, enabling the exploration of the digital storytelling workshops in Chapter Four to be liberated from abstract, impersonal writings through the thick description employed in undertaking this deeply immersive process. The data collection methods include participant observation, field notes, semi-structured group interviews, audio recordings, photographs, scripts and the digital stories produced with the older people. Data analysis methods drew upon techniques associated with Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2014), starting from open coding through to identifying themes emerging from both the practice of the workshops as well as the stories themselves. Ethical considerations discuss issues concerning anonymity, given that the

participants wanted their real names on their authored digital stories, which were to be shared by almost all online. Ethics concerning the blurring of roles between the facilitator/researcher are also discussed (Vacchelli & Peyrefitte 2018), concluding that transparency about the dual nature of the role resolved the potential ethical issue.

Chapter Four focuses on the digital storytelling process and the co-creation of knowledge through the presentation of ethnographic case studies at the data collection sites, focusing on the first of the research questions: what are the opportunities and challenges of participation in the digital storytelling process for older people? The effect of the informal spaces around the workshop settings is also discussed (Caretta & Vacchelli 2015), the 'pre-story spaces (Ogawa |& Tsuchiya 2017) which can stimulate unexpected communication that may not surface in group settings. The phases of the 'classic' model is described in detail, drawing from Lambert (2010,2013) and other practitioners' applications (Gubrium 2009; O'Donnell et al 2013; Dunford & Jenkins 2017) before discussing the method in terms of its accessibility. The field work projects describe the adaptation of the process in depth, to enable the participants to make their digital stories in different contexts and circumstances, with limited resources and the need to 'fit in' with each location's particular schedules and requirements. In Essex in particular, there is detailed presentation of conversations in the story circle as well as from one-to-one exchanges between the facilitator and the participant in the coaxing (Burgess 2009) and co-creating of their stories. In Portugal, the adaptation of the method to enable participants with complex cognitive and physical impairment is discussed in relationship to the role of the facilitator/care giver in the two residential care homes. The engagement (or not) with the technical side of the participant is also discussed in relation to the participant's control over the final shape of the story.

Chapter Five sets out to address the second research question: in what ways can older people's lives be reframed through their digital stories? Stories can give us valuable insights into the 'inside of ageing' (Kenyon & Randall 1999:1). The telling of stories from life can reveal a number of dimensions, including personal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural ones (Kenyon & Randall 1999) that tell us something related to ageing but may not necessarily be *about* ageing. Fourteen stories created at the three data collection sites are presented and summarised and the remainder of the chapter analyses them through thematic and structural analysis (Reismann 2008). Themes include discussions on identity, rituals and attitudes for life, work, achievement and gender, glimpses into harsh childhoods and the relationship between nation macro stories and individual micro stories.

Chapter Six presents the findings of the research and is based upon data collected in semi-structured group interviews at two of the research sites, Essex and Alcobaça in Portugal as well as returning to observations captured through field notes. The data is analysed through thematic analysis, drawing also upon debates concerning the digital storytelling method, voice and listening and life narratives and agency. Dominant themes enabled discussions concerning how the process enables older people, who feel that they have no story to tell, to find, craft and share something that they and others feel is worthwhile (Gubrium 2009). Empathy in relation to the story circle process discusses how the space created for storytelling and listening stimulates an empathetic response from fellow participants. Likewise, in the adapted one-to-one co-facilitation process, the relationship between facilitator/care giver and participant is enabled to grow beyond that of professional/patient. In the screenings of the stories, viewers including family, friends, neighbours and staff provoked empathic responses, a feeling of having 'walked in their shoes'. The importance (or not) of the digital element of the process is discussed in terms of access and the importance of not denying opportunities for voicing and listening because participants are not able to use the technology is seen as paramount. Enjoyment of the process and pride in having taken part and produced something tangible from their life stories is also highlighted, and the story circle is favoured as the most important element of the process in working with older people in the particular conditions under which these stories were produced.

Chapter Seven concludes the study, reflecting on the research process and discussing the implications of the key findings. It discusses the value of the classic model against the factors required to deliver it, and the barriers to participation that can pose for older people, from the perspective of the resources required, the availability of participants and their cognitive and physical capacities to engage with the process. In re-examining the critique of digital storytelling in its lack of generating large-scale audiences (Hartley 2009, 2013; Dreher 2012; Matthews & Sunderland 2017,2019) the impact of listening at many different levels, great and small is discussed in relation to agency of older people, especially for those who are residing in nursing homes. Individual autonomy and connectedness, essential for wellbeing, which may decline for some older people as they age (Machielse & Hortulanus 2014) strongly need both voice and listening. In this study, the scale of voicing and listening may not achieve the scale that is demanded of a practice that self-identifies as a movement, however they do contribute towards creating circumstances through which change can happen, however small, that can over time contribute to policy and practice and, within society, greater understanding of older people's lives. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the affinity between humanistic gerontology and digital storytelling as a data gathering method to inform ageing studies, not only through the additional and different

layers of meaning proffered through the multimodal form, but also through the compatibility of the participant-centred processes that underpin both practices. If micro-narratives are key to studying older people and ageing because of their ability to convey insights into how it *feels* to grow old (Baars 2012; Jenkins 2020), then how much more deep, rich and nuanced can the data produced through the process of creating digital stories *and* the digital stories themselves be? How much more can we discover through the multimodal elements at play, revealing emotions, or adding social or personal context beyond the content of the story itself? The study demonstrates the potential for digital storytelling to contribute to ageing studies through a humanistic gerontology approach and makes a compelling argument to move beyond one-off projects with older people in order to generate a body of work, theoretically anchored placing older people at the heart.

The final section of the chapter explores key issues for future research, building on the issues that emerged from the findings and proposes some ideas for future study around inclusive ageing, building directly from this research and potentially fundable through a current ESRC call for Inclusive Ageing research (March 2021).

A longitudinal, intergenerational study is also proposed, to stimulate dialogue and challenge the negative or deficit representations of ageing that have been circulating over the last decade or so (Boorman 2010; Segal 2013; Karpf 2018; Sternberg 2019). Exploring and discussing policy, representation and attitudes around ageing and the ageing society through digital storytelling could be an effective way in which to counter 'intergenerational warfare (Segal 2013).

Also discussed are ideas for research to respond to the challenges concerning the visibility of digital stories, being accessed often only by the stakeholders of any single project rather than generating audiences. However, rather than from the perspective of 'new media studies' (Hartley 2009), the proposal explores the possibility of collaborating with archives and museums to enable digital stories of older people to earn a place within local and national archives (Jenkins & Hardy 2020).

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

Digital storytelling is a term that can be applied to a wide range of narrative forms, from online gaming and interactive entertainment (Miller 2004, cited in Lundby 2008:2), to the use of digital effects as a storytelling tool in feature films (McClean 2007:5) and, within journalism and media studies, to refer to a variety of new and emergent forms of digital narratives, including web-based stories, interactive stories and narrative computer games (Davis & Weinshenker 2012:47). As Lundby (2008) argues, the Internet offered an expanded space for personal digital storytelling encompassing a wide range of forms, including blogging, self-representations in a range of social media forms, from Facebook posts, to Tweets, to Instagram and self-made movies shared on YouTube (Dunford & Jenkins 2015: 27; Dunford and Jenkins 2017:2).

However, the present study focuses on and applies the specific digital storytelling participatory practice developed by the Centre for Digital Storytelling, now Storycenter (rebranded in 2015) as digital technologies entered the domestic marketplace during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Digital storytelling, as referred to in this thesis, emerges from the community media movement, has a specific collaborative production methodology and results in short, autobiographical films that can be shared online, through digital storage hardware such as DVDs or pen drives, or broadcast on television. The 'classic' digital storytelling model, as it has come to be known (Gregori-Signes and Pennock-Speck 2012; Hardy and Sumner 2014; Matthews and Sunderland 2017) consists of a three-day intensive, facilitated workshop-based process by which 'ordinary people' can create their own short films (Burgess 2007:207). The focus is on 'story' rather than 'digital' and the approach to participation is firmly grounded in the facilitation of the 'storycircle' where individual stories are found, developed and crafted using a series of different storytelling techniques to enable a group of around ten participants with limited technical or storytelling experience to tell a personal story (Dunford 2017:314). The stories can be markedly different from storyteller to storyteller, but what unites them is the personal voice (Lambert 2010) and their formal conventions: a short, two to three-minute, first person video-narrative created by combining the author's recorded voice, predominantly still, self-sourced images, and music and/or other sounds, typically focused on a particular moment in the participant/storyteller's life (Lambert 2010; Burgess, Klaebe and McWilliam 2010; Dunford and Jenkins 2017).

“Literate or not, all known cultures, past and present, practice storytelling” (Sugiyama 2001:234). Digital storytelling practitioners and researchers often talk about the practice as “a modern technological expression of the ancient art of storytelling” (Thursby 2006:78), in which the digital stories “derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid colour to characters, situations, experiences, and insights” (Rule 2005:1, in Thursby 2006:78). The digital element enables potentially powerful and lasting personal stories to be captured and shared online, whether within teaching, learning and campaigning contexts, or simply as a means to build personal legacies through the bringing to life of the storytellers’ own personal photo and story archives: legacies to share with family and friends. Hardy and Jenkins (2020), discuss this in relation to the potential for digital storytelling to go beyond a means of creating multimodal personal archives, to challenging the conventional concept of archive as a repository of data controlled by those whose power has been traditionally unchallenged.

There is an expanding community of practitioners and researchers applying digital storytelling in a wide range of contexts, whilst academics have located the practice within a number of theoretical frameworks to be explored later in this chapter (see sections 2.3 and 2.4). Some see digital storytelling as a means to develop literacy and storytelling skills, combined with an introduction to basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills (Dunford & Jenkins 2017), whilst others see it as a means to democratise technologies from the grassroots, through user-led cultural production, an expression of vernacular creativity, where people reveal a kernel of their own reality (Burgess 2006). Other researchers and practitioners see the application of digital storytelling as a research method for local health issues (Gubrium 2009), as a form of personal creativity (Lambert 2013), as a way to influence approaches to health care (Hardy & Sumner 2015) and as a means of preserving a community’s identity – a form of oral history (Klaebe et al. 2007). Writers in the education sector have seen digital storytelling as a “strong asset to the 21st century classroom” (Gregori-Signes & Brígido-Corachán 2014:15 cited in Dunford & Jenkins 2017: 4). This literature review sketches a brief history of digital storytelling and then sets out some of these contexts within which digital storytelling is being applied, and outlines some key theoretical anchors in relation to scholarly writing on digital storytelling. It concludes by discussing digital storytelling in relation to ageing studies, in particular its potential within the fields of humanistic and narrative gerontology.

2.1 A brief history of digital storytelling

Digital storytelling has its roots in the artistic and cultural activist movements in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, emerging through collaborations between San Francisco Bay media artists, community and citizen activists and radical theatre makers. Lambert (2009) places digital storytelling in a distinctly American tradition, citing folk music, reclaimed folk culture and cultural activist traditions of the 1960s (2009:2). As digital technologies became increasingly available, accessible and affordable during the late 1990s and early 2000s, artists and educators saw their potential as empowering tools for personal storytelling. The digital storytelling method was developed by Dana Atchley, a media producer and interdisciplinary artist with his partner, Denise Aungst (later Atchley), with Joe Lambert and his partner Nina Mullen, and computer programmer Patrick Milligan (Lambert 2006:8-10, cited in Hartley & McWilliam 2008:3). Whilst piloting the method, they discovered that people with little or no prior experience of using computers or multimedia, could create powerful personal stories using digital media technology (Burgess 2006:207; Lambert 2010; Dunford & Jenkins 2017). The group established the San Francisco Center for Digital Media in 1994, where they developed their digital storytelling method. In 1998 the Center moved to Berkeley, California where the group refined what it described as the digital storytelling curriculum that became the basis for the digital storytelling community workshop practice (Lambert 2015).

This curriculum, published initially in the *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (Lambert 2002), provides a largely anecdotal account of the seven steps, or seven elements method, whilst exploring story archetypes and different ways in which to engage participant digital storytellers in crafting these focused, short multimodal stories. The seven elements are the 'ingredients' of a multimedia story, to be kept in focus throughout the process and include point of view, dramatic question, emotional content, voice, soundtrack/music, economy and pacing (Lambert 2006, 2013; Gubrium 2009:188; Hardy & Sumner 2014:45; Lindvig 2017:137). Lambert's 2013 publication *Seven Stages: Story and the Human Experience* expands on the seven steps/elements and focuses on story-finding, story prompting and story samples. The fourth edition of the Cookbook (2013), now entitled *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* expands upon the practice to include more case studies, additional story-making tools as well as interview contributions from other practitioners from a range of contexts including health (Hardy and Sumner: 163-174), ethnography and indigenous peoples (Pratt: 150-162) and education (Shewbridge, Gjestvang & Diermyer: 175-189). These publications have been key to distributing the method and lay the foundations for what has become a distinct format for the stories that are

produced from digital storytelling workshops. Lambert's 'classic' method is discussed in detail in Chapter Four in relation to the digital story work undertaken with older people for this study.

Parallel movements in community and alternative film and video, or 'radical alternative media' (Downing 1984) were also emerging during this period, such as the film and video workshops and co-operatives in the UK (for example, the London Filmmakers' Co-Op, Four Corners, Retake, Sankofa) and the video art collectives in the US (such as Videotage and the Los Angeles Filmmakers' Cooperative). They shared a key driver which also fuelled the pioneers of digital storytelling: to challenge mainstream media representations and messaging, address the exclusion of 'ordinary voices', and provide access for alternative and different voices (Hartley & McWilliam 2008:4). The desire to democratise media production and distribution precedes the digital storytelling movement and the publication of influential writings that contributed towards the shaping of contemporary approaches to participatory media in the 1960s and 1970s (Dunford 2016) can be traced to key publications, most notably Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). This text promoted a community-based education, created by people themselves, out of their lived experience in order to achieve 'bottom up' social transformation. His criticism of 'conventional' education is that it is embedded within oppressive structures and as such is designed to pacify and subject the student into compliance (Garavan 2010). Applied to the role of the media, the emergence of the alternative media movement, with its focus on people creating their own media products, from a position of their own lived experiences and perspectives can be seen to act as a tool of liberation with the foregrounding of ordinary voices as a means to shifting consciousness and effecting change. Freire's proposition for an approach to education that is forged with, not for, the oppressed, in order to promote dialogue and active engagement is echoed as a key motivator for the community media movement. Community media organisations have a long history of activating citizens and facilitating participation, founded on Freirian principles of collaboration for active engagement, creating spaces in which the direct engagement of local communities and marginalised groups, such as young people and migrants, can promote active citizenship and voices for change (Coyer & Hintz 2010).

The struggles of media activists for "a voice for the disenfranchised and the powerless" (Fountain 2007:10) can be traced back to the workers' films of the 1930s in the United Kingdom, which saw the collaboration between trade unions and political activists to make films about poverty, unemployment, fascism and poor housing. In the United States at this time the Workers Film and Photo League (known as the Film and Photo League after 1933) was part of an extensive cultural movement known as Workers International Relief (WIR),

which saw film production and distribution, especially of alternative newsreels, as a major mobilizing device for political change (Campbell 1985).

If we fast forward to the alternative filmmaking movement of the mid-1960s onwards, we can follow through these routes and identify key characteristics as including a critique and challenge to mainstream media, transformation of people's relationship to media through participation and democratization and an aim to contribute to the transformation of society (Coyer, Dowmunt & Fountain 2007). Pre-internet, even if the means of production were becoming increasingly accessible, distribution remained the problem, with strict professional technical specifications for broadcast quality placed on access (or rather, denying access) to broadcasting plus the broadcasting unions protecting 'professional' territory. In 1972, the BBC established Open Door, then Video Nations that was a broadcast space for a small number of non-professionals to access the resources needed to produce 'broadcast standard' (technical) programmes and the airspace to share them. It pioneered the video diary (self-authored documentaries about people's lives told from their own point of view) from the late 1980s and ran until 2004 (Dunford 2015), which can be linked in terms of purpose and authorship, if not in terms of formal qualities, with digital storytelling. Digital stories are primarily shown on the Internet, though there have been some broadcast on television, notably the Capture Wales initiative at the BBC, which ran from 2001-2008 (Meadows & Kidd 2009; Dunford 2017; Lewis & Matthews 2017).

Within the broader territory of community video lies the practice of Participatory Video (PV), which emerged predominantly, though not exclusively, through the social sciences, especially within the interdisciplinary field of Development Studies and mirroring a similar timeframe to the rise of community video which located itself more firmly within grass-roots political activism (Porter 2007:74). Shaw & Robertson (1997:26) describe participatory video as "a process of media production to empower people with the confidence, skills and information they need to tackle their own issues". There are many practices that have contributed to the development of participatory video processes and all of the canonical texts on PV all refer to Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy as having influenced their participatory video practice (Shaw & Robertson 1997; Braden and Huong 1998; White 2003; Lunch & Lunch 2006; Roberts & Muñiz 2018), foregrounding again the significance of Freire's critical pedagogy, centring on group reflection on issues pertinent to their lived experience to enhance participants' critical consciousness in order to both 'read' and 'act' in the world to effect social change (Freire 1970, 1974). As with digital storytelling, the emphasis is on the process and many of the workshop practices echo those used in digital storytelling. Workshops are led by an experienced facilitator or team of facilitators, who use games and

exercises to both develop technical and film-making skills and to enable participants, as a group, to identify the issues they wish to tackle through the participatory video process. The participatory video methods and ethos shares with digital storytelling a tried and tested, documented process not dissimilar in approach, during the 'story finding' (Benest 2010) element of the workshops, to the digital storytelling curriculum (Lambert 2015), and facilitators across both practices undertake training in the specifics of their respective methods and processes. As in digital storytelling, participants usually have little or no experience of using video production or editing technology, nor of film-making practices. However, whilst in digital storytelling the emphasis is on finding and producing individual, personal stories, including for the purposes of social change, in participatory video the focus is predominantly on group video production with a purposeful intent to create a video to promote social change (Lunch & Lunch 2006; High, Singh, Petheram & Nemes 2012; Roberts & Lunch 2015; Roberts & Muñiz 2018).

Lewis & Matthews (2017), together with Hartley & McWilliam (2008), and Alexandra (2017) underline the importance of the process perhaps even over the products as a defining factor of digital storytelling as opposed to other forms of community or alternative media whose primary objectives have been to speak to audiences to engage in social change, or to argue for change at policy level (Nemes et al. 2007). The process of creating a digital story offers opportunities for "critical reflection, creative self-expression, collaboration and dialogue around issues that are often silenced and marginalised" (Alexandra 2008:101). The definition of a digital storytelling 'curriculum' by the founders of the method (Lambert 2015) denotes not only a political positioning of an alternative means of telling, and alternative story authors, but also of a clear method that could be promulgated and propagated across multiple settings, contexts and situations, across the globe. McWilliam (2009) undertook the first evidence-based trend analysis of digital storytelling practice, focusing on 300 programmes that had a prominent online practice, centred around the classic model of digital storytelling workshops and presenting an ongoing commitment, rather than a one-off experiment, to continuing to run digital storytelling workshops. In terms of global reach, at the time of this research, digital storytelling was most prominent in North America, Europe and Australasia but was less visible in Africa, Asia and South America. Participatory video has a relatively high use and profile in the global south, owing to its roots emerging from the field of international development, and from practitioners with backgrounds often in ethnography or anthropology. McWilliams' survey features in *Story Circle - Digital Storytelling Around the World* (Hartley & McWilliam 2009), prior to the publication of which, Hartley states, "little has been written on digital storytelling outside of the occasional 'how to'

guides by practitioners...There has been little of substance to analyse and situate digital storytelling in the context of new media studies" (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009:5).

Although no such survey has been carried out since, the geographical reach and (inter)disciplinary application of digital storytelling and proliferation of academic writings on the topic can be evidenced within recent books (Gregori-Signes & Brígido-Corachán 2014; Dunford & Jenkins 2017; Jamissen, Hardy, Nordkvelle, & Pleasants 2017; Pratt 2019) dedicated to the exploration and analysis of digital storytelling in a range of contexts, not to mention a plethora of academic papers, case studies and published articles presented during the last decade at the international digital storytelling conferences (Ankara 2013, Boston 2015, London 2017, Zakynthos 2018, Loughborough (virtual) 2020). Dunford (2017:315) suggests that the make-up of speakers, audience and focus of presentations cluster digital storytelling activity in specific sectors including working with young people, within Higher Education, health services, museums and libraries and "initiatives designed to foster citizenship", however the practice has found its way into many more activist/practitioner and academic spaces, such as working with refugees (Alexandra 2008, 2015, 2017; Lenette et al. 2019; Bonini Baldini 2019); working with migrant women (Vacchelli & Peyrefitte 2018; Vacchelli, Mesaric, with Jenkins, Taheri 2018); and working within decolonising interventions with indigenous peoples (Poitras Pratt 2019).

Digital storytelling has been gathering momentum as a movement of activist practitioners over the last twenty-five years. At the 5th International Conference of Digital Storytelling (2013) in Ankara, Turkey, John Hartley and Joe Lambert each gave keynote speeches from starting positions on the opposite ends of the spectrum: as the consummate media theorist and as the dedicated practitioner. Both sought to bring a greater understanding of the practice of digital storytelling by arguing for a need to 'theorise' the work (Dunford & Jenkins 2017:1; Matthews & Sunderland 2013:100; Vacchelli & Peyrefitte 2018:1). Over the last ten to fifteen years, digital storytelling has been gaining traction as a research field with scholars from around the globe, including Alexandra 2008, 2015a, 2015b, Brushwood Rose 2009, 2014, 2017; Burgess 2006, 2010, Couldry 2008a, 2008b, 2014, 2015, Dunford 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017; Dush 2012, 2016; Gachago & Ivala 2013; Gachago & Sykes 2017, Gubrium 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2019; Hartley 2008, 2009,2013, 2015, 2017; Jamissen, Hardy, Nordkkvelle & Pleasants 2017; Lewis 2017; Lundby 2008; Klaebe 2007, 2010; Matthews & Sunderland 2013; Poletti 2011, Spurgeon & Burgess 2015; Spurgeon 2017; Thumim 2008, 2012, to name a few of the more prominent examples. My own co-authored book with Mark Dunford, *Digital Storytelling Form and Content*, brought together both practitioners and academics to bridge the divide between theory and practice, so that the

digital storytelling form or genre could be better understood by practitioners, by theorists, by policy makers and by educationists (2017:1). In truth, these examples barely scratch the surface and many others are referred to throughout this research. Digital storytelling is often self-consciously characterised as an emergent movement within the media landscape (Dunford 2017), having "evolved to become an international movement of deeply committed folks working with story in virtually every field of human endeavour" (Lambert, 2013:1). It is defined in its own Facebook private group, as bringing together at the time of writing (2020) over 680 "practitioners, researchers, companies and social workers using digital storytelling to stimulate communication and generate social change" (Facebook DS Working Group home page, 2020).

Having outlined a history of digital storytelling from the perspective of its roots, beginnings, dissemination across disciplines, across the globe and evolution into a community of practice, it is now worth discussing some of the contexts in which digital storytelling has been applied and the theoretical touchstones that have informed and analysed the practice, its evolution and the outcomes resulting from digital storytelling interventions.

2.2 Digital storytelling, voice and listening

Voice and listening are central preoccupations of both practitioners and academics working with digital storytelling. "Listen Deeply, Tell Stories" (Lambert 2013: i) has long been the mantra of Storycenter and it refers to the process of making digital stories: the empathetic, compassionate, sometimes therapeutic space that is created by the story circle process (Hardy & Sumner 2014:45). Indeed, as Poletti (2011:74) points out, the majority of scholarly work emerging during the early days of significant academic engagement in the field focused on its capacity to amplify the voices of ordinary and marginalized groups in the public sphere (Burgess 2006; Couldry 2008).

Many digital storytelling projects state that their aim is to 'give voice' to those whose voices are not normally heard, in order to empower socially marginalized people. In *Why Voice Matters* (2010), Couldry refers to a 'contemporary crisis of voice' that has been growing over the last three decades under neoliberalism owing to the focus on global market functioning in Western wealthy economies as the overwhelming driver for social organisation. Couldry's exploration of voice within this context of neoliberalism, culture and politics reveals the shortcomings of both voice and listening in depth. "A system that provides formal voice for its citizens, but *fails so markedly to listen*, exhibits a crisis of political voice", (2010:101). In discussing voice as value, Couldry refers to Foucault's notion of 'narratable selves' (p.13,

citing Foucault 2008: 62), - the value placed upon humans to give an account of themselves - whereby 'voice', is not simply about valuing particular voices, but, as a concept, values all human beings' presentations of self, regardless of their political or social status, or their particular practice of democratic engagement (from liberal, to conservative, to republican, to radical) as an "inescapable aspect of human experience" (Couldry 2010:13). He argues that under neoliberalism, unless all of these positions unite as, or can be encompassed within manifestations of market processes, their voices are denied value and are thereby undermined because the of neoliberal terrain in which those voices speak, meaning that they are either heard, or not heard (Couldry 2010:114). If "the articulation of life stories is the activity through which meaning and purpose are inserted into life" (Bauman 2001:13), it is not simply enough to articulate and to share and to request to be heard ("*listen deeply*" Lambert 2013: Foreword) if the ideological landscape in which stories are produced does not provide the conditions for such engagement. In relation specifically to digital storytelling, Couldry (2008) identifies the need for empirical research to examine the contexts and conditions under which digital stories are "exchanged, referred to, treated as a resource and given recognition and authority" (Dreher 2012:159).

Couldry (2010) identifies five new possibilities of voice enabled by digital technology, namely opportunities for new voices to speak and be heard; an increased mutual awareness flowing from a greater influence of distribution; new scales of organisation for circulating material; the changing nature of the spaces required for political organisation and the potential for new intensities of listening as the space of media discourse is opened to new voices. He cites digital storytelling as an example of a vernacular form created through digitalisation where makers or storytellers are able to exert a previously impossible degree of personal control over the development, production and distribution of their material. Yet, while Couldry acknowledges the classic model of digital storytelling, in this discussion he is referring to the broadest definition of digital storytelling as one which enables individuals to tell and publish via social media (relatively 'private' – to 'friends') and via video publishing sites (public), such as YouTube.

This study considers voice and listening in the context of older people, however it must be acknowledged that the voices of older people do not necessarily sit comfortably within the framework of self-representation and self-publication on social media or other web-based opportunities, such as blog posts. There are some obvious reasons: lack of skills with the technology; a cultural block: "why would anyone want to listen to what I have to say – I don't have a story to tell' (Jenkins 2020:188); resistance – nobody has 'real' conversations any more, young people are just attached to their devices; fear – many older people are

concerned about threats to their privacy (Sloan & Sayago 2012). However, in addition, as Couldry states in his citation of the oral historian Ronald Blythe, the conditions of voice that are set for older people in attempting to retrieve events in which they were involved or witnessed in the past, especially within the context of the digital world, are distorted and not necessarily their own: "Constantly as one talked to the aged, one felt this struggle to say who they *are,* not just who and what they have been" (Blythe, cited by Couldry, 2010:123). This study explores how older people respond to participating in digital storytelling in relation to voice and to listening, and attends to the choices they make in representing moments from their lives through digital storytelling. Certainly, there is some evidence to suggest that the engagement of older people with digital storytelling can challenge Blythe's concerns about situating the identity of older people solely in the past. Moreover, the process can reach beyond limiting engagement with older people within the realms of reminiscence, as Rooke & Slater (2012:20) point out in their evaluation of "Extending Creative Practice":

> By uniquely combining storytelling, which uses resources from the past (such as memories, stories, images and photographs) together with digital technology, which is very much of the present, the project has offered older people an opportunity to think about the ways they may wish to narrate their experiences into the future *and* the means of doing so.

Rooke & Slater's perspective raises the question of the power and possibility provided by 'voicing'. Is telling your story automatically transformative – both personally and publicly? These are frequent assertions made by digital storytelling practitioners. Yet, "The issue is what governments *do with* voice, once expressed: are they prepared to change the way they make policy?" (Couldry 2010:146; Matthews & Sunderland 2017).

Many projects including my own - *Extending Creative Practice* (2011); *Silver Stories* (2013-15); *Untold – stories with homeless young people* (2015), have each shared the ambition that policy influence would be an outcome of creating and sharing digital stories, however concrete strategies as an essential ingredient to achieve this in digital storytelling projects are frequently absent (Lénart-Cheng & Walker 2011; Matthews & Sunderland 2017). Dreher (2012) discusses 'voice' in relation to the social inclusion agenda in Australia, and argues that equal attention needs to be paid to the foregrounding of listening, to promote Couldry's (2009) notion of political listening, without which the promise of voice is merely partial because voice is not adequately valued. As Dunford (2017:315) suggests, opportunities to create media have proliferated, however the emphasis within digital storytelling and other participatory media practices continue to privilege providing the means to speak over the

means to engaging with audiences. As Matthews & Sunderland (2017:6/3834) assert, “we need to go much further if we are to answer the question: are policymakers listening?”

In order to discuss voice, we must also pay attention to the storytellers. Who are they? How do they access digital storytelling? According to Lambert (2013:2) a digital story could be “an expressive form for anybody, from students in a middle school to retirees in a nursing home”. The digital storyteller is

> …anyone who has a desire to document life experience, ideas or feelings through the use of story and digital media. Usually someone with little or no experience in the realm of video production, but time to spend a few days attending a workshop and developing a story with creative support and technical assistance from compassionate, highly experienced facilitators.
> Centre for Digital Storytelling (now Storycenter) website 2010.

Whilst Storycenter continues to offer public workshops, for which any person may pay to attend, the vast majority of participants who engage in digital storytelling around the world (including Storycenter’s own projects) will have been recruited or selected by researchers, by community projects or other stakeholders who use digital storytelling to deliver data, or policy outcomes, or creative outputs. Whilst it is true that, however a participant is recruited, they access opportunities for creative expression, for learning new skills, for finding a new means to find and amplify their voices, it is worth paying attention to the impact of the commissioning process on voice *and* listening.

Many funding agencies who commission participatory projects identify the marginalised or hard-to-reach as their target groups, therefore already such voices are necessarily constrained by the policy drivers of the commissioning body in order to deliver their own policy goals. Moreover, the categorisation of people as marginalised “establishes a creative space which can lock storytellers into the logic of their oppression” (Lynch 2017, cited in Dunford 2017:318). As Dush (2012:627) argues, digital storytelling is not a neutral process, but an “*embedded* practice” which is impacted by institutional discourses, whether these are commissioning bodies, or education establishments, or other spaces in which participants are invited to engage in digital storytelling (McWilliam 2008; Thumim 2009). If the commissioning agencies’ intention is exactly to harness the voices of participants with the intention of listening to affect change, then it could be argued that the space for both voice and listening is legitimately democratic. However, the very act of commissioning imposes a power structure that can temper or alter the voicing of stories, resulting in a reception of those stories that does not constitute ‘political listening’ (Bickford 1996; Couldry 2009, 2010). Jo Taachi argues that encouraged voicing may not be heard and that even participatory

approaches could equally be top-down, whereby 'insiders' (are) learning what 'outsiders' want to hear, or simply an exercise in administrative task-sharing or the necessary rhetoric to win funding (Taachi 2009:170).

Dunford (2017:318) draws upon the example of our (DigiTales) digital storytelling work that was commissioned by the Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) during our Silver Stories programme, in which the stories "typically end with an uplifting comment about the support provided by the Association for the storyteller". Whilst the stories produced by participants each had their individual style and distinctive voice, the mediating presence of the commissioner on the voices of the storytellers inevitably leads to similar conclusions within most of the stories: that without the intervention of SAHA, they would never have overcome the challenges they faced (which may be true, of course), resulting in what Dunford (2016:29) calls a "ventriloquizing of the commissioner's voice". Of course, this is not unique to digital storytelling. Any commissioned process is subject to such conflicts of interest, or misappropriation of the notion of participation, as Shaw (2012), Roberts & Lunch (2015) and Roberts & Muñiz (2018) note in relation to participatory video, when it transpires that the commissioning agency's objective was rather to secure community validation for decisions already made, rather than eliciting community input.

Poletti (2009) echoes this in her discussion of the formal limitations on voice within digital storytelling, whereby particularly stories completed through commissioned projects are frequently structured to result in positive or cathartic endings, thereby endorsing the interests or policies of the commissioning agency. This is to an extent inevitable, given that funding programmes are designed to promote particular policy drivers, therefore the very arguments used by the applicants of funding, be they researchers within academic institutions, community organisations or activist practitioners, in order to enable them to carry out digital storytelling already mediate the voices of the participants, even before a workshop begins.

Burgess (2006:209) extends this argument to encompass the role of the facilitator when it comes to enabling the authentic voice to speak, be listened to and to be heard. Drawing on her own experience as a researcher within the field of cultural studies, she observes that "for too long we have been interrupting the ordinary voice, speaking instead of listening – repurposing 'found' everyday culture (by applying liberal doses of theory) in ways that complement our own sub-cultural taste patterns". The politics, beliefs, assumptions and preconceptions held by the facilitator can, if not uber-sensitive and self-aware, further mediate the voices of the storytellers, not only through the ways in which they help participants to shape their stories, but through subtle suggestions of words that could be

used, or images, or other sounds. What stories are told, how they are told, and how they are subsequently used are, in effect, defined by the institutions that find the means to make them happen, whether they are a response to a research question or a means to tackle digital exclusion, or social inclusion. In Burgess' case, as a cultural studies academic in the role of facilitator/researcher, she observes complicity with the enabling institutions' perspectives, limiting or defining the possibilities of voice and the audiences for listening. O'Donnell, Lloyd & Dreher (2009) also observe that, in the analysis of story-based practices within the field of cultural studies, listening is under-discussed in comparison to questions of voice. Matthews & Sunderland (2013:203) develop this argument in drawing attention to the dominance of academic writings that are based on projects in which researchers have been involved as facilitators or educators (citing Burgess, 2007; Brushwood Rose 2009; Gubrium 2009; Hull & Katz 2006; and Rossiter & Garcia 2010), arguing that the alignment between the philosophy of researchers and those who seek to facilitate the creation of stories, which also could be seen to impede analytical and critical distancing from this method of storytelling and the personal narrative data it produces by adding a further mediatizing layer between the voice of the storyteller and the way in which stories are articulated, depicted and nuanced.

This is further explored by Alexandra (2015) as she draws attention to the diverse and at times conflicting interests of all who are involved in the delivery of a digital storytelling workshop – participants, funders, facilitators, supporting agencies – and the consequent power relationships that determine which stories to tell, which 'communities' should tell them and how they should be told (or not). The extent to which digital storytelling can be seen as representing the voices of the participant, and/or the commissioning agency and producers/facilitators varies according to the conditions in which they have been produced (Dunford 2017:319). Moreover, when attending to listening, one of the most voiced criticisms of digital storytelling is the lack of visibility of the stories beyond the commissioners and participants of individual projects once they have been produced (Lundby 2008; Hartley 2008; 2013; Dunford 2017:320).

> As a movement, its propagation and dissemination strategies are hopeless – most digital stories persist only as unused archive; and it has a very low profile on the Net, making little use of interactivity and social networking. (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009:15).

The tension between generating digital stories from unheard voices, through projects and finding wider audiences for them is not a new phenomenon, since, like much community media, "digital storytelling increases voices in media practice … but these voices are often

isolated and therefore remain largely unheard in their position on the margins of media practice (Couldry 2009:219). The limited distribution of digital stories in a digital age has been levelled as a criticism in terms of effective voice-giving (Hartley 2008, 2009) especially in terms of influencing social change. "Self-expression is not enough to achieve communication with others" (Hartley 2013:77). However, we should question the idea that the only form of effective change-making through the amplification of voice is to reach mass audiences in an already noisy digital landscape. Perhaps the more targeted, subtle and personal stories reaching specific, attentive, truly listening ears can have greater impact on effecting change, whether that change be on a micro or macro level. Mead's influential work in the field of cultural anthropology draws from the underlying theory that change begins with the self and her much-quoted insight provides us with a useful point from which to pause and consider such questions of voice, listening, audiences and change:

> Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
> (1978, cited in Lutkehaus 2008:261)

2.3 Digital storytelling and narrative theory

Moving from voice and listening to considerations of narrative theory in relation to digital storytelling, I shift focus to examining the ways in which stories help people make sense of the world and how people make sense of stories. That is not to abandon the notion of voice, but to reposition the discussion from the perspective of how personal stories are constructed and how they are interpreted, particularly within the formal constraints of digital storytelling. For this study, these questions are raised in relation to the stories of older people: how can personal stories generate meaningful qualitative data and how representative are those stories of the 'authentic voice' (Dush 2013:629)? How much of the 'voice' is revealed through the choice of image, of sound, of order of events and sequencing of images, of nuance in the performative telling of a story? Are there recognisable digital storytelling generic conventions that influence the kind of story a person tells, the style of voice they use, that are perhaps the result of particular styles of facilitator input: mediatized by the process? (Jenkins 2015:47). What do we mean when we talk about digital storytelling as a means to 'give voice' through the construction of personal narratives? The use of the expression "give people a voice" implies an underlying assumption that they do not have a voice until we (the researchers, the practitioners, the facilitators, the commissioners/funders) give it to them.

> Isn't it true that people have a voice even if we don't listen? Isn't it ridiculous to think that we have the power to give people a voice, as if our inability to listen defines their ability to speak?
> Iacucci, A.A. (2017:1)

From the perspective of narrative research, Riessman (1993:8) clarifies this position further: "We cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret". Once a marginal approach to gathering data, narrative has become a recognised key concept in social science research, especially with reference to personal histories, biography, framing identity and coping with illness (Cobley 2014:212). Riessman (1993:4) foregrounds the importance of 'meaning making structures' that contribute to the richness of the data that can be captured through narrative research. Rather than the traditional ethnographic approach, narrative studies does not treat language as a transparent carrier of events. The 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) that characterises ethnographic approaches to research is constructed by the researcher or investigator. In narrative research, language is neither transparent nor invisible and in the case of digital storytelling, we are dealing with a number of languages – image, text, spoken words, intonation - making meaning separately and together. Narrative approaches to research acknowledge that the subjects – or informants – of research will create an order and use a voice or voices to articulate their story. There is no neutral element of form nor content. In narrative study, attention shifts to the details – how and why a particular event is storied, perhaps, or what a narrator accomplishes by developing the story that way, and the effects on the reader or listener. In narrative research, we need to ask, who elicits the story, for what purpose, how does the audience affect what is told, and what cannot be spoken? Particularities and context come to the fore; the story space, the place in which storytellers are given licence to tell their stories are never neutral, but shaped and bound by the circumstances of production, not by happenstance.

However, the limitations of researcher-led data making, where the very shape of questionnaires, or guided conversations inevitably can close down and narrow the range of responses, or stories, narrative-based approaches to research open up the potential for multi-faceted data to emerge through the act of storytelling. Human agency and the imagination of storytellers (and listeners and readers) can be interrogated, allowing research to include many voices and subjectivities (Riessman, 2008:12-13). In this study, in analysing the stories of older people, the linguistic tropes and cultural influences may reveal more than the story content itself: the forms of telling, in this case through multiple channels of signification (image, text, voice). We can ask "why was the story told <u>that</u> way?" (Riessman 1996:2).

Let us stop for a moment to consider what we mean by narrative. Cobley applies his simplest definition, "narrative is a sequence that is narrated" (2014:6) to a television nature documentary such as *Life on Earth*, in which we watch a series of images arranged in sequence on-screen, which are narrated by a voice-over commentator. This, apart from the length of the narrative, resonates with the formal qualities of digital stories generated through digital storytelling workshops, where the authoritative voice-over is that of the storyteller him or herself, telling or presenting their own personal story from life experience in the way in which they want to tell it. If, however, we accept Cobley's suggestion that the voice-over is not the only way for the viewer to interpret that narrative, but that the images and their composition, effects (such as zoom or close-up), other sounds that may be present – diegetic or non-diegetic – also constitute narratives in their own right, that may confirm or compete with the voice-over commentary, then to consider digital stories as data sources becomes a far more interesting and complex proposition.

In our consideration of digital storytelling within narrative theory, and the centrality of not just what is told, but how it is told merits a discussion of their place within the realms of broader definitions of multimodal texts, the study of which has its roots within the theoretical framework of social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and "attends to meaning-making of diverse kinds, whether of words, actions, images, somatic meanings or other modes" (Thibault 1993 cited in Mills 2016:1725 Kindle). For digital storytellers, telling stories within the stylistic boundaries of the form, the multimodal approach afforded by the process enables them to provide layers of meaning within the short story length, characteristic of digital stories.

> A multimodal text can create a different system of signification, one that transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts. More simply put, multimodality can afford, not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning. (Hull & Nelson 2005: 225).

Each digital story combines different modes of signification that could include photographs from family albums, photographs taken for the digital story, video clips, drawings or paintings, text in the form of captions, or images of text such as newspaper clippings, a voiced narration, sound effects and music. Each mode of signification is originated by the storyteller, with the exception of the inclusion of images, sounds and music sourced from the Internet that the storyteller feels are necessary to help to convey their story in the absence of self-originated material. In order to enable online sharing, facilitators direct storytellers to sources of copyright free images, music and sound to enable sharing online. In cases in which storytellers do not wish their stories to have an online presence, they may instead use

a favourite song or piece of music that has particular meaning for them in relation to the digital story they have created, as they will not encounter issues pertaining to copyright if they are not sharing stories wider than immediate friends and family, or project stakeholders. We remember our lived experiences in multimodal ways – sights, sounds, smells. Using multimodal ways to tell our stories and preserve our heritages can be configured differently, and shared with others (Giaccardi, 2012; Mills, 2016)

From a visual perspective, each photograph, moving image clip or drawing used within the production of a digital story contains denotated messages, which when interpreted by the reader suggests connoted messages, depending on the cultural reference point from which the story elements are read (Barthes 1977:17). The sequencing of the images, the choice of words and performative style of the voice over serve to anchor the reading of the digital story to the perspective of the storyteller. As multimodal texts, analysed element by element, digital stories can provide additional insights beyond the immediate story content as selected and told by the narrator; insights into culture, heritage, customs, traditions, values, fashions and lexicon, as well as providing contextual or additional information relevant to the story itself, but not directly told in the voice-over.

However, although multimodal texts are defined as just that – using signs from across a range of senses – multimodal approaches to narrative theory have been criticised for 'ocularcentrism', emphasising the dominance of the visual over other modes of meaning making (Mills 2016:1987 Kindle). In digital storytelling, the physical recorded voice of the storyteller takes prime importance, as the form of a digital story is as much about focusing the audience on listening as on interpreting any other form of signification within the story, thus mirroring the ethos of the story circle in which storytellers find and develop their stories with the support of their listening co-participants.

> In digital stories, voice not only tells a vital narrative but it also captures the essence of the narrator their unique character, and their connection to the lived experience. One's voice is a truly great gift as it is a testament to one's fragility and strength …if an image acts as the hand that leads us into the river, the voice is the riverbed below our feet.
> Lambert (2010:18)

Riessman (1996:4) describes narrative research as comprising a range of techniques, including structured interviews and therapeutic conversations within which narrators "create plots from disordered experience". Her five stages (1996: 4-8), identifying levels of representation in the research process, underpins my approach to adapting this model and theorising the stages within the digital storytelling process with older people, extending it to

take account of all elements of the multimodal text and all of the processes that contribute to its making. "Like spoken narratives, images contain theories based upon the image-makers' understanding about what they are looking at" (Riessman 2008:143). The same can be said for multimodal texts, for the digital story: we are bringing to bear our understanding and interpretation of narrative and narration, still single images and sequenced images, the impact of editing software on the storyteller's selection within an image and the audience or listener's directed attention. The bringing together of narrative and visual methods with the ethical and philosophical stance of humanistic gerontology in relation to the lived experience of older people places digital storytelling as a potentially powerful tool not only for the gathering of data, but also for its potential to mobilise and equip older people with the means to voice and to be heard in a digital age.

2.4 Ageing, humanistic and narrative gerontology and the significance of story

According to *World Population Prospects 2019* (United Nations 2020), there were 703 million persons aged 65 years or over in the world in 2019 and the number of older persons is projected to double to 1.5 billion in 2050. Globally, the share of the population aged 65 years or over has increased from 6% in 1990 to 9% in 2019 (ibid). Conventionally, gerontologists and demographers identify 60 or 65 as the lower limit of "old age" and in Western societies, they have become the common ages at which people retire from paid work (Thane 2010), although in Europe and the United Kingdom, since 2011, the state pension age has been steadily increasing to reflect the cost of supporting larger numbers of older people. Population ageing is in many ways a human success story, however focusing on statistics as a success measure does not illuminate a great deal about the significance of ageing as one of the four global demographic 'megatrends' in terms of individuals', communities' and societies' responses to the lived experience of ageing.

Indisputably, we are ageing from the moment we are born. However, there is a point at which 'one is labelled as *aged* or *older* (older than whom, or what?) and life beyond that point is labelled as 'ageing' (Baars 2010:108). Most definitions of ageing are derived from clinical measures (degenerative symptoms associated with ageing), or social measures (such as the age of retirement) based on the chronological measurement of age. Some definitions of age and ageing attempt to avoid numerical delineations marking the point at which we become old, such as the distinctions between the "young old, the old and the oldest old" (Neugarten1974; Suzman, Willis, & Manton 1992) and between the Third Age and Fourth Age (Baltes 1997; Laslett 1991), in which "Third Age refers to the life period of

active retirement, which follows the first age of childhood and formal education and the second age of working life, and which precedes the fourth age of dependence (Rooke & Slater 2012:8).

These definitions avoid numerical age; however they are still both linear and chronological. Such measurements displace ways of articulating what it *feels like* or "what it *means* to grow old?" (Cole & Ray, 2010:1). Whilst traditional gerontology focuses largely on the physical states associated with the chronology of ageing, humanistic gerontologists have, over the last twenty years or so, shifted the focus to exploring *what it feels like* to grow old. At the Seventh International Symposium on Cultural Gerontology, Jan Baars (2011/2012:143) spoke of ageing as being rooted in time, "yet time is usually reduced to chronometric time; a mere measurement that has been emptied of the narratives that were traditionally part of it". He argues that "micro-narratives are important for empirical studies of ageing as they articulate human experiences….". This being the case, the ''digital sonnets from the people' (Meadows, 2006), the 'little nuggets of media called digital stories" (Lambert, 2013) should be a rich source of narrative data that could contribute meaningfully to research into ageing, and policy and provision for older people.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the think tank on ageing, the International Longevity Centre (ILC) encourages discussions of ageing across all aspects of life, at all ages (including financial planning, social well-being and combating negative stereotypes of ageing), not just health (Jenkins, 2017). Educating people at all ages about the importance of looking into the future and planning for each stage of life is central to the life course approach. However, according to Baars (2012:7), there is an underlying assumption in life course advocates that supposes that young people and adults are what is termed "prospectively oriented" (Baars 2012:7), making plans for the future, whereas it is assumed that older people have "retrospective orientations … as if they have lived their lives and should keep themselves occupied with memories" (ibid).

Humanistic gerontology is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ageing that prioritises qualitative research methods, particularly narrative approaches, and pays attention to such philosophical questions. Humanistic studies of ageing draw upon biography, narrative and life course as important interpretive tools to explore the human experience of living in time (Katz & McHugh 2010:271). To quote Baars again, "micro-narratives remain important for empirical studies of ageing as they articulate human experiences' (2011:1). Humanistic gerontology challenges the use of generalisations about people with a certain 'calendar age', in terms of a cause-effect style account of the ageing process, simplified to a point of

meaninglessness (the numerical age being the causal factor). A person reaches a particular numerical age, then inevitably certain things will happen. However, “such a causal concept of time can never generate knowledge that might explain something of the obvious *differences* that exist between human beings of the *same* age” (Baars 2010:109).

As Anne Karpf (2014: 3) points out, “how absurd of us to envisage 40- or 50- or 60-100 year-olds as a single cohort – no less ridiculous than conceiving of the ages of 0 to 40 in such a way”. So many other factors are at play – cultural, social, geographic, political and individual – that it is, of course, an over- simplification to categorise whole groups of people based only upon numeric age.

In the context of ageing studies, “a focus on stories gives us valuable insight into the ‘inside’ of ageing” (Kenyon & Randall, 1999:1). By telling stories about specific moments in life, the storyteller can reveal a narrative identity that goes beyond their chronological years. As Baars (2012: 69) points out, how do personal identities stand a chance of occupying significant space if “chronometrically ascribed identities” dominate the ways in which people are defined by societal structures, by policy makers, by cultural representations? However, narrative is also chronologically arranged: telling a story, digitally or otherwise, involves separating and sequencing events in time into a semblance of coherence, taking place in time and space and, if the act of telling is drawing on western storytelling conventions, these stories too are often based on causality; the difference is that the numerical age is not necessarily the causal element in a story told by an older person. Moreover, the same story events can reveal other stories if, for example, several people are asked to tell the same story, or if the same person is asked to re-tell their story from another perspective. “Different stories may express other experiences, other evaluations, or different points of view precisely” (Baars 2010:113).

Combined with other research, “narratives have the capacity to create a picture of ageing… (we can) begin to comprehend the varieties of ageing experience in our time” (Wyatt-Brown 2010:57). From a narrative approach to ageing, more light can be shed on its rich pluriformity; therefore, there has been a growing interest in narrative approaches to ageing in which ageing persons are not merely subjected to tests and questionnaires, but are allowed and even encouraged to speak about their lives (Baars, 2012: 173; Birren & Cochran 2001;; Kenyon, Clark, and de Vries 2001; Randall and Kenyon 2001).

Narrative gerontology situates itself within the field of critical gerontology, “an approach to ageing research, policy and practice, which questions the assumptions underpinning the biomedical model of ageing and the notion that older people are a burden on society”

(Ranzin, 2005:1). Narrative gerontology sees the use of narrative approaches to documenting ageing in all its complexity as important sources of knowledge that reach beyond more traditional approaches to research, to generate different and enriching perspectives on ageing that can enhance theoretical study exploring life as story (Kenyon & Randal:1999). Zeilig (2011) cites the value of narrative in gerontology as a teaching tool with "pedagogical potential" (Randall & Kenyon,2004:11) and "as a heuristic for critiquing social policy and as a conceptual mode for considering biographical life stories". Accounts of narrative gerontology as a research method also refer to the impact of participating in narrative based research studies as an older person. "Narrativity has been examined as a research method, a description of ageing… and as a form of therapy" (Biggs, 2004:50). This observation is echoed in research into digital storytelling, such as in Thumim (2012) who notes the assumption that digital storytelling is most often encountered as a process that functions to democratise media spaces, but also often results in therapeutic outcomes. She argues that by focusing on the tension between discourses of therapy and democracy we may find more satisfying explanations of meaning within digital stories.

Digital storytelling has been used to complement research into ageing, notably in the work with people living with dementia, such as Hardy and Sumner's 'Dangling Conversations' project, commissioned by Edinburgh University School of Nursing, which was designed to develop a learning package for student nurses. The stories resulting from the project did not directly address issues of living with dementia, however they are stories that matter in that "they reveal the person behind the illness: an aspiration of person-centred care" (Stenhouse & Tait, 2014:214). They are important stories, whether or not they generated the data that was the intention of the commissioned project.

Gerontology-related approaches even to narrative inquiry predominantly focus on the process of ageing, but narrative gerontology promotes the idea that " 'age' and 'ageing' encompass more than straightforward physical decline and decrepitude, that alone these categories explain nothing about an individual" (Zeilig, 2011:30). Whether or not digital stories made with older people generate data about ageing is not the most important issue: it is what can be revealed through multimodal micro narratives, perhaps unexpected revelations that throw light onto an individual's experience of living (rather than ageing) and the various contexts at play with that experience that makes them matter.

2.5 Conclusions

Over the last ten years, there have been a number of funded digital storytelling interventions with older people, not least of all my own two flagship projects, *Extending Creative Practice* and *Silver Stories*, which have been documented largely through project evaluations rather

than through peer-reviewed scholarly writings. The absence of critical, analytical literature with a focus on digital storytelling with older people contributed to the genesis of this study, together with a desire to create a space in which to assess the process and study the outcomes of digital storytelling – the stories themselves – with older people, free (as much as that is possible) from pre-determined outcomes and conclusions that are the inevitable result of reporting on commissioned or funded projects.

Defining exactly what we mean by digital storytelling is a crucial starting point, locating this study in the very specific practice defined by Lambert (2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2018) and underwritten by an international community of researchers and practitioners from all corners of the globe, in many different academic and community contexts (Dunford & Jenkins 2017). In terms of considering how and why we might want to explore the practice of digital storytelling with older people, retracing the origins of the practice enables us to identify the key cultural and historic drivers and enables us to draw some motivating factors for its development over time and its continued application in multiple fields of inquiry. The Freirian philosophical and ethical foundations of digital storytelling – and other participatory media processes – remain at the heart of the practice (Hardy & Sumner 2014). The parallel growth of community media and participatory video reveals a discontent with mainstream media and their institutionalised representations of the world, and absences of diverse voices in those representations (Fountain 2015). Examining digital storytelling in relation to parallel participatory media practices reveals commonalities and differences: approaches to story finding through workshop-based practices are to an extent mirrored across all 'alternative media' (Porter 2015) applications and there are distinctive similarities in approach to enabling 'own-grown' (Benest 2016) narratives to emerge from those specific curricula. However, whilst community and alternative media, including participatory video have all at least attempted to reach alternative, but sizeable audiences, albeit problematic to do so (Dunford 2017), digital storytelling, whilst being criticised for failing to do this (Hartley 2008,2009, 2017) is perhaps equally as effective in changing hearts and minds on a micro rather than a macro level (Jenkins & Hardy 2020).

Questions of voice and listening are discussed in some depth, as pivotal to the development and growth of digital storytelling and the importance of articulating life stories through digital storytelling, as a means of identifying, revealing and telling them *and* as a process to encourage and promote active, engaged listening. These debates are critical in relation to the presence – or absence – of the voices of older people, whether within the realms of policy making or service provision, or simply (or complexly) making the diversity of the demographic category that we label 'old', or 'older', 'aged' or 'ageing' visible and explicit.

What is told and by whom is inevitably bound up with how it is told and in what context, foregrounding storytelling and all of its elements as a vehicle for revealing rich data within the context of narrative theory and research practices. The layers of meaning afforded by multimodality add to this potential for deep data (Mills 2016), however very few studies have interrogated digital stories with older people in this way. Gregori-Signes & Alcantud-Diaz (2016:19) offer an insightful analytical framework based on the theory of social structure (Bamberg 1997) to deconstruct 46 digital stories into topics and language used by storytellers, but they do not consider the images (still and moving), multilayering of signs, such as the use of captions and the effect of the performative element of storytelling on the production of data. Hausknecht, Vanchu-Orosco & Kaufman (2018) also present a thematic approach to their analysis of stories produced during their study with 88 older people in Canada, but do not consider the multimodal meaning-making elements of the stories.

Locating this study within the context of ageing studies creates a logical link between identifying a need to undertake digital storytelling with older people for reasons of voice, of listening, or representation and self-representation and the ways in which conventional gerontology presents ageing as a process defined solely by numerical age (Baars 2010;2012). Exploring the efficacy of digital storytelling through this study as a way in which to challenge such approaches to ageing – to foreground the lived experiences of older people over the assumptions that go with numerical age markers – within the context of the roots of the movement and the key theoretical touchpoints of voice, listening and narrative theory as a means to both identify and fill the lacunae evident in both studies of digital storytelling and within the fields of humanistic and narrative gerontology.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter sets out to present the research methodology employed in carrying out this study, a methodology that seeks to explore the opportunities, benefits and challenges for older people participating in digital storytelling and the ways in which they frame and re-frame their lives through digital stories. It will discuss the rationale leading to the choice of methodology and the range of methods employed in data gathering and data analysis, as well as explaining some of the wider considerations leading to the adoption of these methods. Digital storytelling workshop methods and the production of digital stories are afforded their own chapter (Chapter Four) to examine in depth how the specific activities associated with digital storytelling generate data, taking account of the rationale for the methodology and the overall project design.

3.1 Rationale for the methodology: a discussion

A number of key factors influenced the choices of methodology and methods for data gathering and data analysis undertaken. They evolve from my own longstanding position as a teacher/facilitator/practitioner in the field of participatory media and, in the last 15 years, as a digital storytelling practitioner. A fundamental principle of participatory practices, and emphasised particularly in my own version of digital storytelling practice, is to put oneself in the position of the participants with whom one is working (Jeffs & Smith 1999: 26 cited in Sobers 2010:108), not only to promote empathy, but also to embrace Freire's (1972) approaches to collaborative knowledge production. Freire's texts are not fully discussed in this methodology chapter, as his methods are not actively employed in the gathering of data for this research; however, as with many digital storytelling practitioners (Lambert 2008, 2010, 2016; Gubrium & Scott 2010; Hardy & Sumner 2015), I use Friere's philosophical stance as a guiding principle for my own practice, whether that is as a researcher, or a practitioner, or both simultaneously. Freire's (2000) process of conscientization, involving a process of ongoing dialogue, reflection and action with participants leading to the transformation of unjust structures is at the heart of participatory work and it underpins many Participatory Action Research (PAR) projects that focus on stimulating social and political change (Gubrium, Harper & Otañez 2015). Chalfen & Rich (2007:63) observe, "scholars

often take the participatory turn out of a commitment to 'upending the political structure' of research as usual." Whilst my research ethos was inspired by PAR approaches, having conducted a number of PAR-based interventions through community media and digital storytelling projects over the years, the research objectives were not specifically focused on the mobilisation of older people in terms of effecting actual political change. The central PAR characteristic that is most pertinent to my ethical and philosophical position in undertaking this research (and indeed it informs and guides most of my work) is "the active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge" (McIntyre 2008:ix). This most certainly took place during the digital storytelling workshops with older people carried out in the field; moreover, it also reflects my own resistance to the idea of research 'subjects' in which the researcher enters the cultural space, extracts 'knowledge' and then departs without leaving any particular legacy for those who have contributed to knowledge making (Ellis 2007). This characteristic reflects the co-creative ethos of digital storytelling and the re-positioning of (silent/observer) researcher and (observed) subject in a more transparent process. Although this research did not embrace the PAR method in the shaping of the research project, with the conscientization cycle fully intact, what is retained is a commitment to the co-creation of knowledge through story-making, which does go some way to posing larger social questions about the distribution of power and voice (Rooke & Slater 2013:10), and these concepts are central to digital storytelling as discussed in some depth in the literature review. The intention of this research was to gain knowledge with and from participants and not, as with PAR, to engage participants as co-investigators in a participatory research project, in which they had co-designed the research questions, shaped the project and engaged in 'cycles of feedback, reflection and action as it happens' (Caretta & Vacchelli 2015: 3.2).

The approach taken to the research methodology needed to be sympathetic to the underlying principles of my own practice as well as being suitable for the subject matter and the premises of the research project. It also needed to be cross-disciplinary and flexible and an approach that would embrace a multitude of data collection methods, including anecdotes and storytelling, interviews/conversations both semi-structured and informal and the digital storytelling workshops themselves. Ethnography, as a multi-method approach was adopted to enable the broadest range of tools for data gathering to be employed in order to explicate the ways in which older people could present and re-present their lives through digital storytelling and document how they experienced this process. The project is largely a discovery-based approach to addressing the research questions (Kuper 1996:15) and provides opportunities to examine the micro contexts – the 'microscopic social mechanisms'

(Blommaert & Jie 2020:16) – revealed by the data gathering activities whilst considering these against macro contexts embodied by historical, political, social and cultural milieus.

Ethnography's origins in anthropology, essentially the study of what makes us human, is important to consider, given that this research focuses on accounts of the lived human experiences of older people that are offered in this project through the medium of digital storytelling. Ethnography has been described as anthropology's "methodological baby" (Paff 2020). … a methodological approach to learning about a culture, setting, group, or other context by observing it yourself and/or piecing together the experience of those there. Central, though, is the drawing upon anthropology's primary ontological and epistemological perspectives through the lens of humanism, which emphasises the value and agency of human beings both individually and collectively. The agency of older people in representing their lives is of key importance in this study, another rationale for selecting an ethnographic approach. The approaches taken to data gathering methods include semi-structured interviews, guided and free conversations in formal and informal spaces, always with the intent of recognising the presence of the researcher as a participant in a conversation – a dialogue - rather than as an interviewer extracting information from a set of rigid question (Briggs 1986), with a view to both stimulating the telling of and recognising the significance of anecdote. As Briggs discusses, the term 'anecdote' suggests that these stories do not hold much importance, but, on the contrary, they are "the raw diamonds in fieldwork interviews" (Blommaert & Jie 2020:51). Telling anecdotes not only provides content, but also tells us something about the teller's relationship to the story, whether it affects him or her, what other experiences, or details are brought to bear in the telling. "Anecdotes, in sum, contain all the stuff we are after"(ibid: 52).

In the process of digital storytelling, the very heart and soul of digital stories emerge from anecdotes that are developed and rehearsed during the process of identifying and articulating stories with storytellers, through the story circle.

This also aligns with the way in which I draw on narrative theory (Riessman 1993; 2008) in terms of examining not only the what is said but the *how* it is expressed. Narrative and life-story work position and value participants as expert witnesses as they choose what to tell and how to represent their own experiences (Nind 2011; Satchwell, Larkins, Davidge & Carter 2020). Digital storytelling brings the addition of multimodality to the telling of stories from life, generating different forms of meanings (Hull & Nelson 2005). As Alexandra (2015:42) states, digital storytelling, within an academic context is a fairly recent addition to the collection of methods used in visual methodologies approaches to research and has, not

surprisingly, focused on fields that align with those in which narrative theory has developed its strongest foothold, such as health (Gubrium 2009; Gubrium & Turner 2010) and community development/community cohesion (Burgess, 2007, Brushwood Rose 2009, Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, Haigh & Hardy, 2010). Visual methods can add depth and richness to data, enhancing it by signifying different layers of meaning than verbal and written methods. They can capture rich multidimensional data and add insights into the worlds of participants (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton 2017). Digital technologies can enable us to work alongside participants to co-create research and communicate it (Gubrium, Harper & Otañez 2015); digital storytelling brings the added dimension of narrative creation and a focus on the storyteller's physical voice, unique to the storyteller and nuanced through accent, cadence, tone and performative qualities (Burgess 2006:9). In this study, whilst participants' responses to engaging with the process of digital storytelling, as well as other stakeholders' perspectives on the participants' experience of the process has employed a range of ethnographic methods, the co-creation of digital stories with older people is also simultaneously employing and assessing digital storytelling as a research method. Ideally, and idealistically perhaps, I assert that digital storytelling is a method that can be used to: increase project participants' control of their lived experiences that researchers seek to collect and represent, helping to redefine the traditional notions of academic work as a knowledge production enterprise controlled by university representatives (Otañez & Guerero 2015: 57). This, for me, represents a more democratic approach to knowledge production, one that can not only generate different kinds of knowledge but also make it more relevant for broader audiences.

Returning to the underpinning philosophical stance of humanism within ethnography, another clear rationale for employing it as a methodology runs in parallel with the concerns of humanistic and narrative gerontology (Baars 2010,2012a, 2012b; Katz & McHugh 2010; Kenyon & Randall 1999, 2004; Ranzin 2005; Zeilig 2011). In foregrounding my own presence as a researcher, I adopt some of the principles of autoethnography as a means to producing meaningful, accessible and evocative research grounded in my own experience, not only as a digital storytelling practitioner and as a researcher, but also in terms of my own ageing process. I am, chronologically speaking, in the category of 'older person' within the numerical definition of ''old', which also makes sense in terms of entering the data gathering space, the research field, as someone who is ostensibly in the same 'target group' (a term I dislike, but that has been an essential instrument in the definitions of externally funded research spaces), as the participants. Having said this, the participants in this research ranged from close to my own age - early 60s - to late 80s. Non-chronometric definitions and discussions of ageing through the humanistic gerontologists' perspectives (Baars

2010,2012a, 2012b), see the measurement of age numerically as representing only bureaucratic, age-related structuring of stages of the life-course, as childhood, working age and retirement. They question the view that people's age in itself could represent an adequate assessment of their potential, health or life expectancy. As Baars states in the blog post) 'Tame the Cultural Dominance of Chronometric Age' (2019), "Our culture bridges the gap as if there would be a logical and natural connection between the age of somebody and certain characteristics." However, this would assume that everybody shared the same socioeconomic (in)equalities, or health trajectories, or genetic predispositions. "So how can chronometric age (as in time since birth) be an adequate indicator of ageing processes? It is not, it just measures them".

In considering all of these factors, an ethnographic approach, flavoured by collaboration and humanism, and inspired by the centrality of story – of narrative and narration - to my work in the field of digital storytelling and now in digital storytelling with older people seemed the most rational choice of methodology to undertake this study. Ronald Manheimer's (2009: 283) observation from his own experience rang particularly true with mine:

> Whichever gate they have traversed, once humanistic scholars enter the land of older people they are bound to encounter familiar faces – their own. That's where the fun begins. For here is a hermeneutic circle or set of concentric circles through which, by virtue of the scholar's own ageing process, he or she moves ever closer towards the centre. As the scholar attempts a deeper understanding of what it means to grow old, he or she must struggle with the problem of finding a suitable framework – one that includes the student of ageing as well as the subjects.

For this reason, incorporating the added dimension of autoethnography into the methods of gathering and analysing data contributes another layer of meaning, by making the researcher's own personal experiences of both conducting the research and relating to lived experiences relevant and meaningful and, hopefully more accessible and engaging for a more diverse group of readers beyond the perimeters of the academy (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). As Chang, (2016:52) quoting Nash (2004:28) suggests, autoethnographic writing can "liberate researchers from abstract, impersonal writings and 'touch readers' lives by informing their experiences". Moreover, this approach reveals some of the researcher's own vulnerabilities in its pursuit of levelling the playing field between researcher and participant, to create common ground in the pursuit of co-creating knowledge. As Vacchelli & Peyrefitte (2015:5) describe their experiences as researchers in participating in a digital storytelling workshop, sharing personal data:

> "we were simultaneously occupying the position of storytellers. This position made us experience the same vulnerability that our research participants probably felt in the act of opening up and exposing their personal stories to the group".

Autoethnographers believe that research can be both 'scientific' – rigorous, analytical, theoretical *and* "emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena… (they) value the need to write and represent research in evocative, aesthetic ways" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). Autoethnography also provides a place for my own narrative to feature as part of the data set, to "embrace an approach to writing that favours emotional self-reflexivity as a rich data source" (Chang, Wambura & Hernandez 2012), which aligns with the principles of knowledge co-creation applied in undertaking the digital storytelling workshops in this study. Whilst I would not claim that this study is an autoethnography, it does draw upon methods of data collection used within autoethnographic approaches, including story prompts and identifying "epiphanies" – moments for the researcher and for the participants that are perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Couser, 1997; Denzin, 1989; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). These specific methods will be discussed and explored in depth in Chapter Four, which focuses on the digital storytelling process itself as a means to generate data.

Moreover, in studying Chang's (2016: 73-4) strategies for embarking on autoethnographic research, I was struck by the idea of creating a themed autobiographical timeline in which the researcher reflects upon key moments or episodes in their lives and I realised that I had, in fact, inadvertently done this in the first tentative academic article I published in the journal *Cultural Science* early on in my PhD journey (2015). In the article, as well as exposing some vulnerabilities experienced at this stage of the research process, I reflect on my consistent interest, in whatever strange route my career path took, in untold, or unheard stories, from my entry to university as the first person to do so from my working-class family background, through to undertaking this research study. It is worth revisiting, as it reveals something of my own story that bears direct relevance to my education, research and career choices over the last forty-odd years that have led me to this study (note that I am, in this article, in denial about how long I have actually been engaged with these questions):

> As a teacher and practitioner of participatory media for some thirty years, over the last ten years, digital storytelling has re-kindled some of my early personal drivers for working in this field. My politics were strongly influenced by the Marxist theorists shaping the curriculum of my film and theatre studies minor course at university in the late 1970s. Using semiotic analysis to challenge the Leavisite traditionalist approaches favoured by my English Literature major course, my dissertation focused on working class novelists of the 1930s – I wanted to write about the form and

> content of the stories of those who were not in the great canon – the stories of 'ordinary people'. (Jenkins (2015:39).

Having said this, it is important to be clear that the term 'autoethnography' has come to refer to a whole range of narrative inquiry approaches across different disciplines (Chang 2016:56). This study includes autoethnographic elements, including the use of writing prompts (Chang 2016:80) and 'significant objects' to stimulate life storytelling within digital storytelling workshops with participants and with myself, but it is not in itself an autoethnographic study.

3.2 Research Design

The area of inquiry involves an in-depth exploration of working with older people who are participating in digital storytelling activities and produce digital stories about their lives. There were no requirements to impose any specific angles or topics to the stories. It builds upon research questions that emerged through two European-funded digital storytelling projects with older people, which had been designed to address specific issues across several European countries, such as bridging the digital divide experienced by older people and the use of digital storytelling by health and social care workers with independent older people and with older people in residential care homes as outlined in the introduction to this study. The focus on these specific project outcomes and outputs that were testing the efficacy of digital storytelling as a means to deliver them revealed a gap that had not been closely explored within scholarly research: how do older people talk about their lives when taking part in digital storytelling? How do they respond to the workshop activities? What do they choose to tell and how do they choose to represent their stories1 The research methods employed in this study have been devised to enable the gathering of rich and varied data to interrogate these questions, whilst embracing the ethos of the practice of digital storytelling as well as foregrounding my own positionality as a researcher.

3.3 Aims and Objectives

The research set out to meet the following aims:

1. To gain an understanding of how older people choose to represent their lives in digital storytelling;
2. To gain an understanding of what effect the processes involved with digital storytelling have on older people participating;

3. To examine the influence of the digital storytelling process, including the role of the facilitator, with older people on the digital story product.

In order to achieve these aims, the following objectives serve to determine the general approach adopted to fulfil the vision for this study:

Objective 1:
To Identify the samples of older participants who would take part in a digital storytelling process and use a range of methods to record the steps towards identifying a life moment they wished to share, including researcher's log, audio recordings of conversations in both structured and unstructured moments during the workshop process, as well as photography and script co-creation;

Objective 2:
To build upon observations and field diary notes by interviewing other people who interact with those in the sample, and with older people more generally, in their professional capacity, to gain an external perspective on older people's responses to the digital storytelling process;

Objective 3:
To incorporate autoethnographic data from my own experiences of working as a digital storytelling practitioner and researcher and examine the touchpoints of co-creation and co-learning.

3.4 Negotiating participation in the digital storytelling workshops: recruiting participants

According to Carlsen & Glenton (2011), qualitative research can enable the exploration of a topic in depth, not least of all because it can employ a range of data gathering and analysis methods. In the case of this research, participation of older people in a digital storytelling workshop was the primary focus for data collection and the methods associated with digital storytelling processes and this required a clear rationale in the identification and selection of participants. The data collected on each participant involved intensive study of participants' responses to the digital storytelling process, the co-production of digital stories and a thematic analysis of workshop activities and the digital stories. It was decided to limit the sample size of older people participating in the research to fourteen in order to undertake an intensive study. (Cleary, Horsfall & Hayter 2014: 473).

The category ‘older people’ required refinement given the inadequacy of simply choosing people by numerical age (Karpf 2014; Baars 2012). In addition, the research project required commitment by participants to a minimum of thirty hours, in addition to pre and post-workshop research activities. The process is resource heavy in terms of time, facilitation and equipment, and the method requires time and space to develop trust and rapport. Because of these factors, to facilitate access to participants, I decided to align the field research with the Silver Stories project, where I had established positive and supportive relationships with some of the project partners, who were in effect ‘gatekeepers’ to the participant samples through their institutions. Therefore, the life phase approach was used to determine the participant profile: the ‘Third Age’, i.e. the life period of active retirement and the ‘Fourth Age’ of dependence (Baltes, 1997; Laslett,1991). Silver Stories, as a transnational project, enabled access to ‘third age’ participants at two UK sites, in Lewisham and Essex; and to ‘fourth age’ participants at two residential care homes in Alcobaça in central Portugal. The alignment of research participants with Silver Stories also provided access to other stakeholders at each of the data collection sites, who could contribute to the data from their own perspectives.

3.4.1 Significant Challenges

The prominence of the “Silver Tsunami” (Maples 2002) ageing populations debates (Segal 2013; Boorman 2010) has resulted in considerable research and project activity undertaken by universities, arts organisations and voluntary sector organisations, funded by both public sources and private donations from corporates and from private trusts and foundations, that is focused on older people. Funding opportunities are of course to be welcomed, however there is the danger it can lead to flurries of funding-led project proposals, all of which target the same voluntary sector or public sector age-related projects and services to find the ‘target group’ required to secure the funding. The result is that these organisations are sceptical of the motivation for partnership work and feel that their members, residents or participants are over-researched. For example, when I was approaching organisations to enable me to procure the fieldwork sample in London, the director of a well-known arts organisation specialising in working with older people described how he is approached on a weekly basis by researchers and artists who would like to ‘borrow a bunch of our 75 year-olds’. This was a further reason for aligning the research to the Silver Stories project, except for in the case of the Lewisham fieldwork project, where I was engaged with the organisation both as a trustee and as a volunteer at an arts project for older people.

At the Lewisham location, a change of management led fieldwork at this site into a research cul-de-sac, in that it became untenable to continue to attempt further research there beyond the two digital stories that I was able to co-create there under difficult and challenging circumstances.

As I embarked on undertaking this study, my original intention was to conduct a longitudinal study, to go beyond the usual 'one-off' digital storytelling workshops that are most commonly offered to participants of projects and research studies. I wanted to see what happened when three or four workshops took place over an extended time period; whether the stories would change, whether with increasing confidence in using the technology this might influence how participants wanted to use their newly learned skills. I had planned for this to take place in both UK locations, however for different reasons, this did not turn out to be possible. It is something that I still wish to do.

3.5 Data Collection

This qualitative research study has engaged a multi-method approach to data collection in order to attempt to understand the lived experience of older people who have been invited to participate in digital storytelling workshops to present, capture and share elements of their lives. Data collection has encompassed participant observation, field notes and research diary, semi-structured group interviews, audio recordings, transcriptions and photographs of the digital storytelling workshop processes in action, together with scripts, storyboards and the co-construction of the digital stories themselves.

3.5.1 Participant observation

Participant observation was employed in order to collect data during the delivery of the digital storytelling workshops themselves. Participant observation has been seen as a defining method of research within the field of cultural anthropology (DeWalt, K. & DeWalt, B. (2011:2). Bernard (2006:343) describes participant observation as a "strategic method" that can enable the researcher to collect any kind of data, "any kind of data that you want, narratives or numbers" (ibid) from being in the centre of the research site. Mason (2002:84) sees participant observation as "methods of generating data which entail the researcher immersing himself or herself in a research 'setting' so that they can experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting".

Whilst cultural anthropology may employ participatory observation to document daily activities of different cultures by the researcher actively participating in the daily lives of particular communities, this study used these techniques specifically to focus upon the behaviours of older people participating in the specific and extraordinary creative activity of digital storytelling workshops in terms of their responses to particular workshop activities, to the act of creating digital stories themselves and to their reflections after taking part in the activities. Some of this involved my observations and innermost reflections and impressions – my own, individual interpretation of events as 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) - whilst other elements were more in the spirit of participation and collaboration through semi-structured interviews and informal discussions in breaks between workshop activities. By interacting within the familiar settings inhabited by the participants in the study, a sense of *what it feels like* could be generated through a more empathetical positioning of the researcher. Capturing these observations and feelings through a research diary written from an autoethnographic perspective enabled the research not only to delve more deeply into the events in play, but also to be placed into a personal context through the interactive engagements between the researcher and the participants and through emotional responses as well as more 'scientific' observations. This approach also reduced the "problem of reactivity" (Bernard 2006; Guest, Namey & Mitchell 2013:80), where people change their behaviour around 'outsiders' and "gaining intuitive understanding of the meaning of your data" (ibid) to avoid misinterpretation of the data.

In considering the ethics to participant observation methods utilised, the particular philosophical and epistemological stances underpinning this research, around co-creation of knowledge and the visibility of the researcher and the research processes needed to be brought into consideration. Reflecting also on my own positionality, as Mason (2002:87 states, "You may feel it is more *ethical* to enter into and become involved in the social world of those you research, than to attempt to 'stand outside' by using other methods".

The intention throughout the study was always to be overt, rather than covert in gathering the data: the participants were made fully aware that, as well as taking part in what we hoped to be an enjoyable and meaningful creative activity at all stages of the data gathering process, they were also participating in a research study. It remains, nevertheless, problematic in terms of whether, in the analysis of data and presentation of results, the way in which the study represents accurately, without being influenced perhaps by assumptions made but not strictly evidenced, the life experiences of older people. For this reason, other methods have also been employed in tandem with participant observation.

3.5.2 Photography and photographs

Within both the participant observation processes and the digital storytelling workshops themselves, photography was used as a visual means to document the data collection process at the digital storytelling workshops in order to add depth to the fieldwork diary and capture the process in the research locations (Collier & Collier 1986;1995). As Holm (2014:385) states, "There is no agreement on what the best approach is for researchers to take photos in the research setting. Some argue that by taking photographs immediately, at the beginning of the study when entering the scene, the camera can function as an opening device to create contact with the participants. Others argue that it is necessary for participants to get to know the researcher first, in order for them to feel comfortable with the camera and with being photographed. In the case of this research study, the camera was integrated into the workshop practice. The participants were happy for images of them participating in the workshop to be captured and shared, especially with their families and friends. Moreover, they were delighted to know that their stories – not just their digital stories, but the stories of their participation – had been documented and were being shared on international academic stages at conferences on digital storytelling! I intended the photographs to help capture the ambience of the workshop venues, the spirit of the workshop, the engagement of the participants. Images were produced to add depth and feeling to the presentation and then analysis of the workshops, always mindful that, just as in choice of words, clause structures, use of punctuation to guide the reader to the rhythm of the text, images are also not neutral, or innocent: composition, angle, colour will also affect meaning. As Kress & van Leeuwen (2006:2) state, "they will be *realized* differently".

In the digital storytelling workshops, story-making based on images provided by the facilitator served to stimulate storytelling skills and this is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Participants also brought photographs from their own photo albums and, echoing methods used in photo-elicitation interviewing, these were used to explore participants' memories, values, beliefs (Prosser & Schwarz 1998:124) and episodes from their own lived experiences. Many of these images are often family photographs which, as Kuhn (2007:284) points out, have considerable cultural significance and their role in the construction of digital stories provides for "performances of memory". Richard & Lahman (2017) discuss the history of photo-elicitation as a research method and identify useful benefits of using photography to enable participants to share knowledge, looking back to

Collier (1957) who identified the sharing of knowledge and intense feelings that can emerge from the method, through to Harper (1994) and Collier (1995), who focus on the potential as a model for participant to researcher collaboration. All of these observations tally with the use of photographs in a digital storytelling workshop, except that the shift is that the photographs are used to enable the participants to craft stories: photo-elicitation interviewing becomes photo-elicitation storytelling.

3.5.3 Semi Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the older people who participated in the digital storytelling workshops and with other stakeholders of the research project. The other stakeholders interviewed had supported and enabled the study to go ahead and it was important to this research to provide additional perspectives on how older people had responded to digital storytelling after the digital storytelling workshops in each data collection site had taken place. Semi-structured interviews can occur either with an individual or in groups and in the case of this research, both scenarios took place. The interviews were constructed using open-ended questions which were pre-determined, but designed to promote dialogue and conversation rather than elicit a fixed range of responses. In addition to the questions, a variety of probes were used for the purpose of bringing forth more detail and building rapport through demonstration of the researcher's active listening skills and full engagement with those being interviewed (Given 2008:811). Locating this style of interview within an ethnographic approach, it is important to note that "interviews, like every form of human interaction, always have a metalevel. It is not just *what* people tell you, but also *how* they tell it that requires our attention" (Briggs, cited in Blommaert & Jie 2020:42). This is echoed also in Riessman's (1993:2) observations concerning approaches to narrative methods, to consider why a story was told in a particular way, as well as what was told within a story. The semi-structured interviews were designed to stimulate storytelling within the exchange with the researcher, in the sense of encouraging anecdote to illustrate their responses by including my own anecdotal material into the conversation. The questions were designed to discuss how the respondents saw the effect of participating in a digital storytelling workshop on the participants and the potential for the digital stories to have audiences and uses beyond the participants and their immediate friends and families. Although this method did produce rich data, their limitations need to be recognised, as they rely on individuals' ability to remember and vocalise their thoughts, given that they took place some considerable time after the actual digital storytelling workshops were delivered (Kidd 2005: 74). It is important to note that, with semi-structured interviewing, affinity with the respondents is essential if they are to reveal and discuss rich data during the once-only

interview occurrence. With all of the respondents, including the participants themselves and the other stakeholders, a strong and positive relationship had been developed over time, at each stage of the research project, from its planning, through delivery and final evaluation/reflection. As well as recording and transcribing these interviews, observations of group dynamics and the interaction between different members of the group were also noted. (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006:315-6).

The following semi-structured interviews took place after the digital storytelling workshops had been completed:

Location	Interviewees	Duration	Notes
Essex	Mark (Open Talent Manager, SAHA); Stuart (Regional Manager – Agency Managed Services, SAHA); Margaret, (Scheme Manager, SAHA)	1.5 hours	Conversation included both reflection on the workshops and their effect on residents and projecting forward to potential future work.
Essex	All participants who created a digital story.	1 hour	Note that the timing of this was not 'neutral' in as much as anything can be – it was immediately prior to the celebration screening event.
Alcobaça	Occupational therapists and nurses at the care homes (also students of IPL): Rute, Nadia and Patricia Dora and Vania Tânia and Patrícia (Evora do Alcobaça)	 1.5 hours 1 hour 50 minutes	Interviews took place a week after the screening events at the care homes. This interview took place in English. These interviews took place in Portuguese and were translated after transcription.
Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (IPL)	José, Director of School of Health Sciences, IPL. Maria, Head of School of Health Sciences and Ana, Senior Lecturer, Health Studies	1 hour 20 minutes 1 hour	One to one semi-structured interview. These interviews took place during the same time period as the participants at Alcobaça.

Semi-structured interviews with participants or staff at the Lewisham location were not possible for a range of reasons including staff changes and a shift in organisational culture and this is discussed later in this section to reveal the challenges faced in conducting the

research for this study. However, responses from one of the participants in Lewisham were recorded as part of informal chats that took place before, during and after the digital storytelling individual workshop, enabling some of this data to be incorporated.
The interview questions devised for both participants and other stakeholders are documented below, although because of the intention to stimulate dialogue they were guide questions (rather than concrete questions that had to be adhered to) in the process of undertaking the semi-structured interviews.

In Alcobaça, it was not possible to conduct semi-structured interviews with the participants because of health issues, language barriers and the time available within the restraints of already busy daily working schedules and routines that could not be further interrupted.

Guide questions – semi structured interviews – stakeholders in Essex, UK and Alcobaça/IPL in Portugal
1. When did you first hear about digital storytelling? 2. Can you describe what you thought it involved? 3. What did you think was the process, and what was the product? 4. Did you do the facilitator training through the *Silver Stories* project? 5. From your understanding of the digital storytelling process, how do you find the story circle? 6. How about when the stories are shared, when we have a screening at the end of the workshop? How do you think it feels as a process for the participants? 7. How do you think story sharing feels for a wider audience? 8. What do you think about the role of the facilitator? 9. Can we discuss what kinds of benefits we think there are in the use of digital storytelling with older people, from your perspective? 10. How do you think that other people in the community*, who have not done a story themselves, but have seen those of their peers, respond? 11. How about family members of the people who have made stories? 12. How about the professionals within the community who work with older people? 13. In what contexts could you see the stories being used beyond the personal contexts of the storytellers themselves? 14. How do you think that digital stories could be used to influence policy around ageing?

Guide questions – participants in Essex
1. When did you first find out about digital storytelling? 2. What did you think digital storytelling involved when you first heard about it? 3. How was digital storytelling described to you before you decided to participate? 4. What made you decide to do the workshop in digital storytelling? 5. What did you hope to get out of participating? 6. How did you feel during the story circle when you developed your own story? 7. How did you feel during the story circle when you were listening to others as they developed theirs? 8. How did you feel during the technical side of the process? 9. How did you feel during the screening, or sharing, of the completed digital stories? 10. What element of the process had the most impact on you? 11. Please describe how you benefited from doing the digital storytelling workshop? 12. Do you think that the stories that you produced have a benefit for others beyond the project in which you participated? If so, please describe how. 13. Any further comments.

3.5.4 Digital Storytelling workshops

Digital Storytelling workshops took place at the four data gathering sites, although each of them took slightly different formats in order to adapt to the needs of the participants and the organisations that facilitated the access to them. Chapter Four explores in depth the processes involved in digital storytelling as a means of generating qualitative data. Caretta & Vacchelli (2015) discuss workshops as sites for data collection, in terms of the 'hybridization' of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) through the incorporation of art or creative-based approaches, such as using prompts, collage-making and other exercises that are introduced by a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is crucial to the successful outcome of any workshop practice, however whereas in many workshop settings, the goal is for participants to reach consensus as a group, to produce a collective change plan or summary of learnings, in digital storytelling group consensus is not necessarily the aim. The processes involved in establishing group rapport, finding and sharing stories, and then shaping stories involve group interaction and feedback – a supportive atmosphere in which participants can gain encouragement, self-esteem and constructive feedback on the form and content of their proposed stories. Once the technical side of digital storytelling begins to

unfold, each individual participant is assisted to make their own digital story. When all of the stories are complete, they are shared at a group, celebratory screening with all participants and other invited guests. The role of the facilitator can also be problematic, as Gubrium states (2009: 187) "the aim is to have participants construct their own digital story and to avoid having the experts, the trainers, construct stories for them". Moreover, as Dush (2012) and Dunford (2017) discuss, the relationship of the facilitator to an organisation providing resources, or having a stake in a digital storytelling project can also influence the types of stories that are produced in a workshop and in this research study, the role of the Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) and of the Instituto Politécnica de Leiria (IPL) were constantly held in check by me as the facilitator, and as the researcher, to ensure that the workshops retained integrity.

Digital storytelling workshops were both research method and research subjects and bringing other qualitative methods into the workshop space provided an opportunity to expand on Caretta & Vacchelli's (2015) arguments for workshop spaces to be valuable places to gather insights into the experiences of research participants and for drawing on collective learning.

The processes undertaken in the digital storytelling workshops are discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

3.6 Data analysis - methodology

Thematic analysis was undertaken by initially examining all of the data produced at the different locations, a summary of which can be seen in the table below. Analysis software such as NVivo was deliberately excluded as a tool for a number of reasons: I wanted to immerse myself fully in the data to become more than familiar with it and I wanted themes to emerge out of the data, rather than having an initial set of codes generated by the software. The data generated were varied, and the audio recordings, whether as part of the digital storytelling workshops, or as the sound tracks to the digital stories themselves, held nuanced data that required careful listening prior to analysis. All modes of data required immersive and active reading in order to reveal meanings and patterns. Transcription of the story circles and the semi-structured interviews were also carried out by me, based on Riessman's (1993) recommendation to do this as a full-immersion process into the data.

Table: Summary of data gathered at the research locations

Location/description	Data generated	Notes
LEWISHAM UK. A weekly arts and culture club for the over 60's based in a South East London Arts and Community venue. Aimed particularly at isolated older people. 2 participants	- Photographs x 30 - Digital stories x 2. - Field notes including notes of informal conversations.	Relationship with organisation developed through regular volunteering. Staff changes and culture prevented completion of full research project
ESSEX UK. A managed housing scheme, run by the Salvation Army Housing Association, in Essex. 7 participants 3 staff also supported workshops and were interviewed for the study.	- Story circle transcriptions. - Semi-structured interviews (staff and participants). - Digital stories x 7 - Photographs x 50	Relationship with organisation developed through, 'Silver Stories'. Attempted longitudinal study curtailed by organisational restructure and funding cuts.
ALCOBAÇA, PORTUGAL Residential care home for older people with additional facilitators who had been trained via Silver Stories working alongside the researcher. 3 participants Facilitators (staff) were interviewed for the study.	- Story circle transcriptions - Semi-structured interviews - Photographs x 40 - 3 digital stories	Relationship developed through Silver Stories. Story circle and workshop activities took place in Portuguese, so semi-structured interviews were key, as the researcher's level of Portuguese was not at that time fluent.
EVORA DE ACLOBAÇA PORTUGAL Residential care home for older people and people with acute dependency needs. Additional facilitators as above, also interviewed for the study.	- Story circle transcriptions - Semi-structured interviews - Photographs x 40 - 2 digital stories	As above
Instituto Politécnico de Leiria Three professionals at the School of Health, who were partners in Silver Stories, were interviewed for the study.	-Semi-structured interviews	IPL was Silver Stories partner and able to provide another perspective through the interviews.

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This was also important in that again, within the transcriptions, it was important to capture, record and label other elements than simply the content of what was being said, including vocal inflections, pauses, emotional responses, for instance.

The analysis made use of techniques associated with developing grounded theory (Charmaz 2014:110) in terms of a starting point involving open coding. The data was examined closely and repeatedly and labels were generated as themes began to emerge. Putting into practice techniques I use when facilitating participatory video and most significant change' evaluation workshops, I used Visualisation in Participatory Programmes (VIPP) cards to assist in categorising and re-categorising the data. VIPP cards are paper cards of different shapes, sizes and colours these enabled initial labelling to take place of the various data sets, including 'memo' labels to capture analytic ideas as the process unfolded.

Selective coding followed this process to draw out the most common codes and identify emerging themes, in order to organise the data into meaningful groups (Braun & Clarke 2006). Grouping the data through visual means such as thematic maps, initially using the VIPP cards, assisted this process before moving on to interpreting the data.

As well as analysing the data for themes, the digital stories were further analysed using narrative approaches to thematic analysis, in order to "keep a story intact" (Riessman 2008:53). Dialogic/Performance analysis was applied to the digital stories to explore not only what is told, and how it is told, but also to whom it is told (Riessman 2008:105): participants had, after all, produced digital stories that were created for the purposes of sharing with others, not simply as data generated for research.

The final phase of data analysis was to assess the themes that emerged from the data against key theoretical concepts already associated with the field of digital storytelling, including voice, listening, and self-representation to locate and identify the new knowledge emerging from this study.

3.7 Ethical considerations

An Ethical Review Form was completed and submitted to the university detailing the research methods and design, identifying the types of participants and ensuring that safety and legal issues were fully accounted for. I also undertook an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check to certify my suitability for working with vulnerable people.

A Participant Information Sheet and an Informed Consent Form was created and written informed consent was obtained directly from participants where possible, or from gatekeepers where this was not (the participants in the second residential care home in Alcobaça who had acute illnesses such as dementia required consent from a family member and the management of the care home).

A release form was also created to enable participants to agree to the use of their data in a range of settings. This was also created because of the requirements of the Silver Stories project which requested the sharing of digital stories created and photographic images of participants for the project website and for a final exhibition that travelled between European partner destinations. They could choose to give consent for all data to be used, in all settings or for limited data to be used.

All of the above was translated into Portuguese in order to enable the data collection to take place at the two care homes in Alcobaça and Evora de Alcobaça.

The first names of the storytellers in all locations are used in the presentation of this research, as they gave consent for this and most of their stories are online, in the public domain, credited with their actual names. When participants create a digital story, they are usually proud of the results and want to share them, taking full credit as the authors of the story. This can present ethical issues concerning protecting the identities of research informants through anonymity, as is usually the case with qualitative research studies. Participatory visual research – and digital storytelling in particular, with its focus on participants' use of their own photographic archives – includes identifying images, which can blur the edges of protocols surrounding ethical research. "When the goals of a project are 'broader impacts', dissemination, and reuse, traditional guarantees of confidentiality may need to be renegotiated" (Gubrium, Harper & Otañez 2015:25). This was certainly the case for this study, given that the digital stories produced were also a contracted output for the Silver Stories project, to be shared online and to be used as teaching resources on undergraduate and post-graduate courses training health and social care workers who were to be working with older people. These issues continue to be explored by the digital storytelling community, especially in relation to the use of personal stories, sometimes stories that reveal sensitive and painful content, after a workshop has taken place, without the storyteller being present, perhaps as a teaching aid or as an example of a digital story in the setting up of a new digital story project (Dush 2012; Gubrium 2014 & Spurgeon 2017).

In this project, some storytellers did not want their stories online, but gave consent for them to be used for education, training and research purposes, offline. These stories have been password protected so that they are accessible to the examiners of this thesis only. A final version of this thesis, if it is to be stored online, will remove these passwords prior to digital publication.

Another ethical consideration from the perspective of autoethnographic approaches is that consent is sometimes overlooked because researchers use their autobiographical stories as their data. However, storytellers can be equally characters in the stories of others and to this effect, their stories can draw upon and present the stories of others (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:2). As Chang (2016:55) asserts, "Do they own a narrative because they tell it?". These issues are pertinent to not only the researcher of this study, but also the digital storytelling participants who tell, show and share information about other characters in their stories. The use of the family album not only to stimulate storytelling, but also for the photographs to feature as key elements of the stories can also raise ethical issues, as the photos may contain images of family members and other people who have not given permission for their photos to be part of a digital storytelling workshop or a research project (Allnutt, Mitchell & Stuart 2007).

The blurring of roles, between facilitator, researcher and participant can also present ethical questions, as Vacchelli & Peyrefitte (2018:5) discuss in their article about a two-day digital storytelling workshop with migrant women which, in fact, I facilitated whilst they took part as participants and researchers.

> Both of us felt that this was a difficult position to be in – we had to reassure our research participants of our ethical way of working while admitting to the fact that were going to use the stories for our own research.

This resonates with my own feelings; however, I was transparent about the dual nature of the digital storytelling activity and about what each of us would gain from the experience – as Vacchelli and Peyrefitte state, "a slippery and potentially dangerous trade-off" (2018:5), but nevertheless one that paid off in the undertaking of this research.

Chapter Four:

Digital storytelling and the co-creation of knowledge with older people: opportunities and challenges

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Introduction

This chapter sets out the digital storytelling process as ethnographic case studies at the four data collection sites, focusing on the first of this study's research questions: what are the opportunities and challenges of participation in the digital storytelling process for older people? During the fieldwork, it was necessary to adapt my approach to digital storytelling, retaining the ethos and spirit of the method, whilst ensuring that barriers to participation were addressed. For this reason, I begin this chapter by describing and discussing the 'classic' digital storytelling curriculum and model, as originated by Storycenter in the United States in order to illustrate how I adapted the method to ensure that all participants could engage meaningfully. It builds upon the historic roots of digital storytelling as a method, aligned with community activism and community media, rooted in Freirian principles of community knowledge building and focuses on the ways in which digital storytelling workshops enable the co-creation of knowledge through the production of digital stories with older people. It also explores the workshop environment itself, including the various creative workshop activities and the informal breaks and interactions with participants as valuable data generating spaces. This is presented using thick description (Geertz 1973; Denzin 1989), as it both describes and interprets the behaviours and interactions between the facilitator and individual participants, within the workshop environments (Ponterotto, 2006:543).

In order to demonstrate the different approaches developed to facilitating older people to create their digital stories, taking account of the contexts and circumstances in which they were produced, these descriptions begin to discuss the meanings, intentions and motivations within these settings (Schwandt, 2001: 255). The adaptations of the digital storytelling workshop model are set out in detail at each setting. The richest and most detailed descriptions are associated with the Essex workshop, owing to the length of time spent with participation over a period of some months. In Lewisham, I describe the adaptation of process to enable me to create digital stories with just two participants. In Portugal, I supported newly trained facilitators, so the presentation of approach was more

observational and less focused on the language and exchange used within story circle, partly because my Portuguese is not well enough advanced to discuss the linguistic nuances.

In using thick description, where possible I have foregrounded the 'voice' of participants during the workshop phase, using excerpts from dialogues between participants and me, and interactions in group discussion in the story circle and informal workshop spaces (Ponterotto 2006:547) to enable further exploration of the concepts of voice and listening in digital storytelling practice (Couldry 2010; Lundby 2008; Hartley & McWilliam 2009; Dreher 2012; Dunford 2017). These descriptions are based on the field notes collected at each site, and are enhanced by photographs taken during the process.

As Caretta & Vacchelli (2015:4.17) observe, workshops and the informal spaces around activities can stimulate unexpected communication, including one-to-one communication that perhaps wouldn't surface in the group activities. I see these processes as "pre-story spaces" (Ogawa & Tsuchiya 2017:140), in that fragments of stories emerge and start to form the basis of the final digital stories, but are in themselves rich sources of data. Also discussed are the variations and adaptations of the 'classic' method that were required to enable the research to take place with the participants in each of the locations; this is an important discussion in relation to accessibility, whether in terms of participants' ability/disability, or other factors, such as the routines and workloads at the hosting organisations. Access to digital technology and connectivity are other factors impacting on how digital storytelling workshops are made available to participants and these issues are explored through how they were addressed at each of the research sites.

As Gubrium, Hill & Flicker (2013) and Hardy & Sumner (2015) observe, workshops can offer a potentially meaningful process to participants, whilst resulting in digital stories and other voiced data that can be shared and used in a range of different ways. Although the aim of a digital storytelling workshop is to enable each participant to create an individual story, the centrality of the collaborative process leading to the creation of the story is key. The encouragement of participants assisting each other through the process and the final screening is 'precisely what makes the experience effective for participants' (Hessler and Lambert 2017: 26).

This chapter focuses on the processes that were developed in order to facilitate the workshops in the four settings, to enable stories with older people to be made. This process includes the final screening sessions at the end of each of the workshops and the role and

importance of story sharing within the group are explored. The uses and potential uses of the digital stories themselves, beyond the workshop space and with other audiences, however, are explored in the next chapter. I conclude with some reflections on the successes and challenges of the adaptations to the classic model undertaken in the field, in particular the role of the facilitator when the workshop model changes from collective to one-to-one and some of the consequent ethical issues are also explored. Are adapted digital storytelling workshops, where participants have either chosen which elements of the workshop they wish to participate in, and which not, still digital storytelling workshops? Are the outcomes the same?

4.1 Digital storytelling workshops: introducing the 'classic model'

> The circles of stories passing through the journey of my life as a digital storytelling facilitator have brought me back to this. As we are made of water, bone, and biochemistry, we are made of stories. The students that share their stories in our circles recognise a metamorphosis of sorts, a changing, that makes them feel different about their lives, their identities (Lambert 2010: v),

Lambert (2010) introduces the Digital Storytelling Cookbook compiled by the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS – now known as Storycenter) team with some reflections about the circular movements of stories that led to the process of 'story circle' as a pivotal part of Storycenter's digital storytelling workshop practice. The potential of digital storytelling as a transformational and life-changing experience (Lambert 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2017; Lambert & Hessler 2017:27) has been the driving force of Lambert's work and the process, as 'codified' by CDS (Gubrium 2009), involves participants attending a digital storytelling workshop that takes place over three full days, intensively. The aim of the workshop is to support each individual participant to construct their own digital story based on their lived experience. The format is typically a two- to three-minute video, with a voice-over, accompanied by still or moving images and sometimes enhanced by additional sound effects or music. The CDS format emphasises the use of still images rather than video sequences (Davis & Weinschenker 2012) in order to enable the production of a full story (video editing is far more complex) and to focus the attention of storyteller and audience on the storied voice. Stories are shared at the end of the third day with the group, and, subsequently, often with others, such as family members or the local community and, in the case of funded or sponsored workshops, stakeholders may also attend.

I was fortunate enough to assist with facilitation at a Storycenter public workshop, led by Joe Lambert, in September 2015, which took place immediately after the Sixth International

Digital Storytelling Conference at Smith College in Massachusetts in the United States. Therefore, the account of the classic digital storytelling model brings some of my observations from that experience into the exposition of the classic model, which draws from a range of sources, both academic and practice-based.

Before the workshop, participants are asked to have constructed a first draft of their story to a length of about 250 words. They are also asked to bring photographs, digital or printed for scanning, and any other materials that they might want to incorporate into their stories, such as drawings, or short video clips (Gubrium 2009: 186).

Depending on whether the workshop is one of Storycenter's 'public workshops', in which individuals pay to attend to create a story of their choice, in some cases – usually if the workshop is part of a funded project, or a research project – participants will be asked to focus on a particular theme or topic. As McWilliam (2008:146) observes, although this classic model would appear to enable the most diverse range of stories and voices to come to the fore, in Australia, where the practice became adopted in significant ways some ten years after CDS modelled the curriculum, since the early 2000s, most digital storytelling programmes have occured in specifically targeted spaces. These include educational institutions, community centres, locally based arts organisations and community groups. This 'targeting' is echoed across the US, UK and Europe given the funding sources' influence on who participates in digital storytelling workshops, what stories are told and for what purpose (Dunford & Jenkins 2017; Dush 2012; Hartley & McWilliam 2009).

4.1.1 Classic model phases

The classic model is organised into three distinct phases and the preferred ratio of facilitator to participant is generally no more than one facilitator to three participants. Facilitators mentor and support the storytellers through the process, but the most important element is that participants are learning by doing, from the crafting of the content of the stories, to the 'performing' of them, through to their technical execution (McWilliam 2008; Gubrium 2009; Dunford & Jenkins 2015;). Facilitators have to find the balance between enabling participants to create their own stories in their own styles, whilst taking care not to impose their own ideological or stylistic preferences (Hartley 2008, 2013; O'Donnell, Lloyd & Dreher 2009; Thumim 2012; Alexandra 2015).

Workshops usually provide access to sufficient digital hardware – computers, scanners, an audio recording facility, cameras – and software to enable each participant to edit their own

story themselves. Mac-based workshops use Final Cut Pro or iMovie for video editing, whilst PC-based workshops use Adobe Premiere or Movie Maker. iMovie and Movie Maker are both free editing packages and to enhance accessibility it is my preference to use them, as the form is simple and the software is widely available. To enable each participant to have their own computer for editing, workshops are often held in spaces which have computer labs; some practitioners have their own sets of mobile kit that they take from workshop to workshop to ensure that each participant has an equal technical experience. More recently, some workshops invite participants to use their own laptops through the use of a cross-platform cloud-based post production application, WeVideo, which was piloted extensively by Storycenter as the application developed. The advantage of WeVideo is that people can use their own equipment, since it does not matter whether they have PCs or Macs; they can also edit as a group, which is an interesting departure from what is often seen to be a solitary activity. However, the disadvantage is that excellent, high speed connectivity is required, which is not always available to digital storytelling groups.

The table below shows the flow between the three phases that constitute the content and structure of the classic DS workshop:

Phase	Activities
One	• Overview of digital storytelling by facilitators • Presentation of examples of digital stories • Presentation of the 'seven elements', or basic ingredients of a digital story • Writing and talking activities to develop story skills and write for spoken voice
Two	• Story circle (sometimes story circles are repeated after second drafts have been created) • Working with images (photography activity, image manipulation, scanning and saving images) • Final draft scripts • Rehearsal • Voice-over recording • Storyboarding
Three	• Learning a video editing package • Rough edit • Final edit • Presentation of individual stories to the group

Fig.1 The phases of a classic digital storytelling workshop

Phase One

In the first phase of the workshop, facilitators present examples of digital stories and provide an overview of the philosophy and method. As ice-breakers, or warm up exercises, participants may be asked to perform short writing exercises, such as writing a postcard to thank someone for a gift, or; or interviewing the person next to them and then each person introducing them to the group. The 'seven steps' of digital storytelling is the crucial element in this phase of the workshop. As Lambert (2010:14) explains:

> During the first few years of our workshops, we would discuss with participants what made a story a digital story, and what made a digital story a good digital story. We came up with seven elements that outlined the fundamentals of digital storytelling and discovered that formally presenting them at the beginning of workshops greatly improved the process of the stories told.

The seven steps evolved from the initial 'seven elements' which formed the heart of the curriculum for DS workshops and were published in the first edition of the Digital Storytelling Cookbook (2003).

	Seven Elements	**Definition**	**Seven Steps**	**Definition**
1	Point of view	Perspective of the author and main point of the story.	Owning your insights	Helping the storyteller to find the story and uncover its real meaning; understanding what makes it the storyteller's own version of the story.
2	Dramatic question	A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and is answered during the story.	Owning your emotions	Through questioning, revealing the emotions in the story and deciding on which to focus.
3	Emotional content	Connecting the audience to the story through the issues explored.	Finding the moment	Identify the moment of change, which is used to shape the story (see Fork in the Road prompt).
4	Voice	A way to personalise the story with the 'gift' of your voice, as unique to you.	Seeing your story	Taking that moment and describing it within a scene; starting to visualise the story.
5	Soundtrack/music	Music or other sounds embellish or support the story.	Hearing your story	How the storyteller performs the story; ambient sound and music that work with the narrative.

6	Economy	Just enough content to convey the story without overloading the viewer.	Assembling your story	Bringing the story to life through arrangement of the multimodal elements: storyboard.
7	Pacing	Rhythm and speed of the story and its progress.	Sharing your story	Who is your audience? Why do you want to share the story? Will it be used after it is completed and why?

Fig. 2: The Seven Elements vs. the Seven Steps

The re-framing of the elements into steps is explained by Lambert as representing where he and his team had shifted into thinking about the workshops as journeys upon which participants – and facilitators – travel; the idea of 'steps' as a metaphor represents a more meaningful way to "guide storytellers along the path of creating a meaningful digital story" (Lambert 2010:9). The idea of elements more literally represents the form and content that should constitute a digital story, whereas the steps are more about the process of finding, crafting and sharing a digital story through guided and careful questioning by the facilitators, throughout the story development and scripting process (Lambert 2010; Hardy & Sumner 2015:45).

Alongside the seven steps, the 'Four Cs' (Lambert 2010; Leaf 2015) of storytelling provide some guidance on developing a simple story structure: connect suggests jumping into the scene of the decisive moment in a narrative – take the moment just before something happens and leave it hanging, unresolved; context advises to give just enough information for the listener to understand what is happening and why it is important; change asks the storyteller to move the listener through to the conclusion of the scene including how the storyteller responded; closure suggests exiting the story with an appropriate level of narrative closure or summation.

The integration of the seven steps not only as points of progression in the development of individual participants' stories, but also as check points of reflection during the drafting and redrafting of the scripts have to be skilfully woven into the facilitation, using questions – "What is the story really about? How does this story show who you are?" (Lambert 2010:10); using examples or simple illustrations of story types, for example, is the story of a change that came to you, or did you go towards a change – a stranger came to town, or we moved to a new town (Lambert et al, 2010:15). These techniques are used to help storytellers convey emotion, work out start and end points – start at the beginning, or start at the end and flash back?

Phase Two

The story circle is at the heart of the classic workshop method. It represents a safe space, within which participants can share their stories and come together as a community, to support one another through "mutual mentoring" (Gubrium 2009:188). Story circle enables participants to share their stories as they develop and it is likened to ancient traditions of sharing stories around the campfire. The circle also represents trust, essential for preparing the ground for people to share sometimes intimate moments from their lives. In practical terms, it is also the best way to enable everybody in the group to maintain eye and ear contact. Ground rules or the process and engagement during story circle are discussed with the group, ensure that the space is supportive and co-constructive and that there is an appropriate tone of mutual respect (Lambert 2010:77). Each participant is given the same amount of time to present their story ideas and 'deep listening' (Lambert 2006, 2010, 2017) is carried out by the group and the facilitator(s). Positive feedback is encouraged, and could include questioning and encouraging the storyteller to develop particular aspects of their story ("I really enjoyed listening to you describing when…; I really wanted to know more about when you spoke of …). Subjects might be sensitive and the experience can be healing, although again the facilitation must take care that no harm is done to storyteller or listeners. Taking part in story circle can be therapeutic (Gubrium 2009; Gubrium et al 2016; Thumim 2012; Hardy & Sumner; 2014) and is generally experienced as a positive and enhancing experience that helps each participant to develop and improve their stories.

After the story circle (which may recur when the participants have further developed a draft script), the process of finding or creating images takes place. Visualization exercises are used to help storytellers find images to convey their stories, such as 'photo safari' where emotions or other intangible concepts are identified, and participants are given time to take cameras outside of the workshop to find images that could represent those ideas. Although participants are asked to bring photographs with them to the workshop that they anticipate might work with their stories, sometimes their stories change, or the telling of them does. Again, skilled facilitation is required to shift participants from thinking 'I haven't got an image to go with that part of my story' to thinking creatively about the way images signify in multimodal texts. Facilitators gently guide participants into shaping their modal choices (Pahl & Rowsell 2010:93), illustrating how they can layer the different elements to create multi-sensory and deep stories. At this point, individual participants complete their final drafts, begin to practice 'telling' and audio record their scripts. They will also begin to

organize how they wish the different modes to come together through using storyboarding techniques.

Phase Three

In phase three of the workshop, facilitators may present a demonstration of how the editing package works to the participants as a group and then support individuals to import their media into the editing package, understand how the timeline works for ordering the images, how to use transitions and how to enable the sound track – or tracks if using music and other sound effects – to work together. After the rough cut, if there is time, participants may share their roughly assembled stories, to gain feedback and positive and encouraging suggestions from the group. Once the final edit is completed for all participants, the stories are shared within the group and appreciation of the group of every individual effort is warmly and openly demonstrated. Depending on the nature of the workshop (for example if the stories are being created within a research study, anonymity may be required, so stories are shared only with the group) it is common to have a celebratory screening to which family members, community and stakeholders are invited.

4.1.3 The classic model – some observations

The classic model is certainly very effective in terms of the intense nature of a three-day experience from beginning (no story) to end (my story/our stories) and the momentum that builds, the group bonding, the excitement as the stories begin to emerge and the growing sense of pride is palpable in the workshop environment. For these reasons, as a facilitator, a three-day intensive approach has been my favourite way in which to run a digital storytelling workshop. However, there are limitations to the method, in terms of resourcing requirements, participant availability and, perhaps most importantly of all, accessibility of the workshop practices to participants. There are other advantages of running workshops over longer periods of time and these are discussed in the concluding part of this chapter.

The emphasis for the classic DS workshop model is placed on “helping storytellers find the stories they want or need to tell and help them clearly define what it is in the form of a solidly written script” (Lambert 2010:14). That the focus is on participants’ writing and script-writing is interesting in terms of who participants might be. They have to be motivated to write a story before they even arrive at the workshop, which pre-supposes a high degree of motivation, a functioning level of literacy and even some ideas of stories from their lives that they have been able to identify and feel inclined to develop and share. When working with disadvantaged groups, or marginalised communities, these pre-requisites can be asking too

much and the workshop space is often the first-time participants have thought about telling and sharing a personal story.

The term ‘classic’ approach was not coined by Lambert, who speaks of the many different kinds of collaborations Storycenter has developed over the years, from local schools to ‘giant universities’ and international NGOs. He states that he has ‘deliberately avoided situating our work as addressing a singular theoretical framework’ (2017:22). He acknowledges the many and varied ways of deploying digital storytelling workshops in locations and contexts all over the world in which the method has been adapted – an ‘evolution of new practices’ (2017:23), including Storycenter’s new, broader focus on ‘story work’ that draws upon a wide range of story-based processes (Dunford & Jenkins 2017:5). As Lambert says in the Digital Storytelling Cookbook (2010: v), we have to adapt the recipes according to what is available and what is the circumstance.

The following sections of this chapter explore a range of adapted facilitation methods to enable older people in community settings and in residential care homes, to participate in digital storytelling. It is also mindful of the position of the facilitator as both enabling the process with older people simultaneously whilst conducting research into the process, the impact on participants and the stories that emerged as a result.

4.2 Digital Storytelling in Lewisham

4.2.1 Location and Context

The arts club takes place in a lively café in the arts centre each week and members arrive at around eleven o’clock, settle in around tables each of which is decorated with a vase of flowers and upon which are various art and craft materials, games and books and the lunch menu, whilst volunteers greet them, help them in from their transport and bring them tea or coffee and biscuits. The space is light and airy, with a café open to the public and it looks out on to a garden, with high raised beds to enable members of this club and other community groups to grow vegetables and flowers, supported by a dedicated gardener. There is also a chicken run and some members enjoy feeding them as part of their Tuesday routine.

As well as the café environment, there are break-out rooms available for activities that require dedicated spaces. I had anticipated using one of these spaces to run digital

storytelling workshops with a group of older people over several weeks, as well as transferring to the library for the weeks when we would need access to computers. However, owing to internal changes at the organisation, this was not supported, therefore I had to adapt the method to work in a different way, using the café environment with any interested individuals. Digital storytelling was not offered on the menu of arts activities to the members.

I had, in my capacity as a volunteer, worked on a collaborative digital poem with a poet who works regularly with one particular group, at a specific table at which people who liked to talk, tell and listen to stories sat regularly. After the poem was completed and shared, I asked them if they would like to bring in an object, or some photographs and share some stories with the group, and that I would do the same.

Only two members of the group, Ted and Fred, with whom I had already developed close relationships, wanted to tell stories from their lives. In a classic model of digital storytelling, the atmosphere of trust and developing close relationships and deep listening is developed collectively as part of the facilitation process and story circle plays a pivotal role in this (Clarke 2014; Alexander 2015; Dunford & Jenkins 2015; Hessler & Lambert 2017; Lewis & Matthews 2017). This could account for the lack of take-up by other members of the poetry group. Because it was not possible to offer digital storytelling as another choice of creative activity, with its own space and dedicated weekly slot, the collective workshop activities and the story circle that usually draw people in to the process and develop those relationships, could not be accommodated within the café environment. The environment itself, wonderful and vibrant as it is, was also not conducive to sharing stories in a group, especially when many people have hearing or other impairments. Digital storytelling became simply something that one of the volunteers was doing with a couple of members in the café space and not a recognised artform offer at the club.

4.2.2 Adapting the process

In order to enable the two participants to create their stories, a one-to-one co-creation approach was adopted. Storyteller Ted was, and continues to be, the club's star singer and I had developed a particularly close relationship with him by accompanying him on the piano as he rehearsed and subsequently performed some of his favourite songs, as well as co-starring with him performing a duet at one of the shows. The photographs at Figure 4.4.2(a) of the two of us working together on creating his script and posing together after we had recorded it capture the closeness of the relationship we had developed.

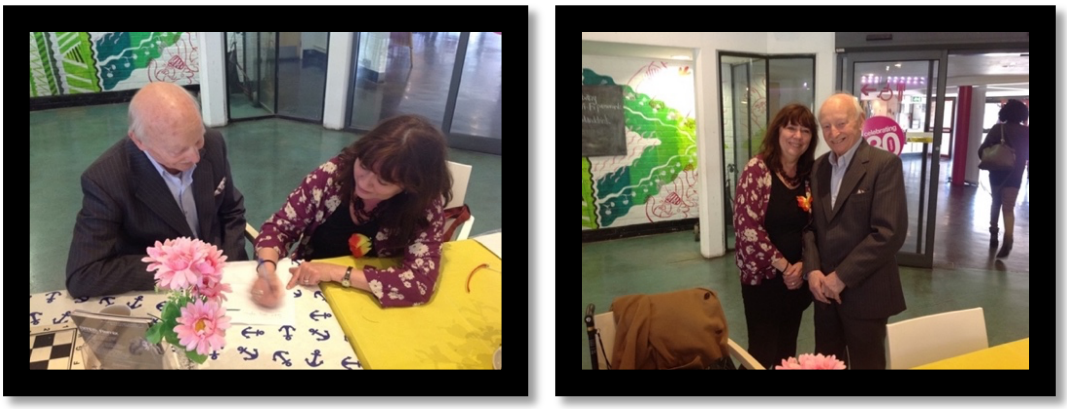


Figure 3 Co-creating 'Stage Fright' script with Ted

Ted is unable to write comfortably because of arthritis in his hands, so we worked on a script together telling the story of his recent emergence as a singing performer. I recorded Ted telling the story in the way in which he would tell it to a group of friends. I transcribed the story and printed it out in large format and the following week we edited it together. Once satisfied with the story structure, we rehearsed Ted's performance of the story and recorded the audio track in a quiet office space. Ted brought his photo albums to the club the following week and together we chose and re-photographed the images he wished to use in his story. Many of the images were not high quality and not properly in focus, and the lack of proper scanning resources at the location meant that re-photographing was the only means available to capture the images digitally, which was not ideal but achieved what we needed to do. We also looked through other images that had been taken of Ted performing in public and singing round the piano at the club to incorporate into the story.

As Ted's story began to take shape over the weeks, we were chatting with other members of the table, especially Fred. When Ted brought in his photo album, other members gathered round to hear him talk about the cruise that launched his singing career. Conversations took place around the activity – it was not a focussed A – Z process. It was woven around asides, other anecdotes and several cups of tea. It provided a rich starting point for exchanging information about one another – I told stories too.

I also showed Ted photographs from my own family album, of my father playing the piano whilst my mother sang, and of him playing the piano accordion in a dance band in the 1940s, when he was a soldier. This sparked many conversations about favourite songs and I showed him a photograph of me playing the piano whilst my father and my mother were watching on, which sparked this exchange:

Ted: “So that’s your Dad looking on is it?”

Me: “Yes that’s right – it’s at their house in Farnham”.

Ted: “And is that your Mum?”

Me: “Yes – she liked singing too, although not in public like you.”

Ted: “Was she a good singer?”

Me: “Yes she was, but she always sang slightly out of tune – half a semitone sharp I’d say, and she was always racing my Dad – half a bar ahead. I made a digital story about her that talks about it – I’ll show it to you if you like?”

Ted: Oh yes please – have you got it here?

Me: Yes, it’s online – I’ll show it to you at lunchtime.

Ted: What are you playing in that picture – can you remember?

Me: Lara’s theme from Dr. Zhivago.

Ted: Can you still play it?

Me: Hmm maybe – probably, why?

Ted: It’s a lovely song – if you have the words – I know the chorus – we could do it together at lunchtime – the piano’s over there. Would you try?

Me: OK why not! I don’t know if I’ll remember all of it, but I used to play it a lot for Dad and Mum

I downloaded the words, printed them out in large format print and no more work on the digital story happened that week: we were too busy practicing for our impromptu lunch performance.

The following week we worked together editing the story, him directing me on the order of the images and when to change them against the story line. Once the story was completed, we decided upon the title and used the audio track from some video footage that I had recorded on another occasion of Ted singing in public as intro and outro sound tracks. When he was happy with it, we showed it to a few club members who were sitting nearby, but it was quite difficult to hear in the café atmosphere. We did manage to screen some months later, however to give Ted the credit he deserved for his story and his rendering of it.

Fred enjoyed watching Ted and me work together but thought that he could not make a digital story himself because, in his words, he had no story to tell and he also had no photographs. When he moved to his care home, none of his photographs nor much of his personal memorabilia had survived – a common trait when older people have to transfer from their own homes to care homes in which they have to live in much smaller spaces with various institutional constraints (Paddock et al 2018).

However, Fred and I had a running joke. He had told me some months before that he had been a boxer in his youth and I told him that I had also taken some boxing classes. Our weekly greeting therefore was to pretend to give each other a jab and a right hook, accompanied by a generous dose of laughter. In the poetry group, Fred had also created some lines for a poem about his boxing career. I suggested we start from there. We created Fred's story over a number of weeks, in and around the other activities taking place at the club, much as I had done with Ted.

Because Fred had no photographs of these times, we worked together, researching online to see if we could find any images of the boxing club in the Old Kent Road. He also mentioned Henry Cooper, the well-known boxer who rose to fame in the 1960s, so we managed to source an image of him online to include. I then recorded him speaking his poem, together with some additional 'ad lib' material, followed by a video shoot around the club, using my iPhone, to show him making some boxing moves, encouraging him by using our mock boxing spars that were our signature greeting. I found a mirror in a corridor, and we shot some footage of him sparring with himself, which again sparked much laughter.

Once we had gathered images and the video clips, we sat together building the story on the timeline on the laptop over the next two weeks. Fred had some speech and language impairments and to enable him to make choices, I showed him different ways that the story would look as we built the narrative. Once we had assembled the rough cut, I took the story away and fine-tuned it, including adding some sound effects from boxing matches from that era, such as the crowds, commentary and the boxing bell sound used to start a round. This was my surprise for him, as I had got to know well his sense of humour and I anticipated the effect it would have when he saw the final product: he nearly fell off his chair with laughter.

4.2.3 Screening and celebration

Both stories were screened at the club after lunch one week on a big screen, with good audio, so that everyone could see and hear the stories easily. The screening was not a planned event, however I had known that the big screen and speakers would be erected for an event the following week, therefore I asked the technicians if we could play the stories over lunch.

The audience included fellow club members, volunteers and staff, as well as the public who were having lunch at the café. I also presented Ted and Fred with their stories on DVD, with

a cover including images of the storytellers and frames from their stories, at the end of the screening.

Screening and sharing the stories is a highly important part of the workshop process. As part of the facilitation process, we discuss the audiences that the storytellers have in mind for their stories. For some people, they have no audience other than close family and friends in mind, but for others, they want it to reach many (Lambert 2010:68). The 'afterlives' of stories (Matthews & Sunderland 2013) in terms of their potential and their limitations are discussed in the next chapter. However, the celebratory sharing at the end of a workshop process, in which individuals have both collaborated and created their own stories is a significant moment in the process. The recognition of achievement and endeavour, the listening to the stories can be transformational for both storyteller and audience. Although Ted and Fred were not afforded that space formally, their pride in the showing of their stories on a big screen to an audience was clear to see and the audience's appreciation was much appreciated and enjoyed by both of them, especially Fred, who is not a natural performer.

4.3 Digital Storytelling in Essex

4.3.1 Location and Context

Hazelwood Court has a community space in a separate building from the houses and flats occupied by residents, where people meet for social events, or clubs, or other festive occasions aimed at bringing people together. The space has a flexible layout, as it is open plan and tables and chairs can be moved in or out of the space as required. It is cheerfully decorated, has its own kitchen and overlooks the well-tended gardens in front of the houses and flats arranged around a cul-de-sac. Participants were also active older people who had other commitments during the week, rendering the three-day classic workshop model neither possible nor desirable. They were also initially averse to the notion of a 'workshop' which sounded 'too much like school'. A large-screen iMac had been purchased for conducting digital storytelling and for offering other digital training and access to a computer for the residents. Unfortunately, there was no internet access at the site (except in the manager's office), but we used the personal hotspot on my mobile phone when we needed to go online. SAHA arranged for me to introduce the project through a taster session and twelve residents as well as the scheme manager attended. Mark, SAHA's Open Talent Manager, had been trained in digital storytelling facilitation through the Silver Stories project and was keen to put his training to use by supporting me to run this research. Mark is very popular with residents and staff alike, worked with me to show some digital stories as examples, and explain the

process from his perspective, and how the experience felt when he participated in a workshop that I had facilitated. We explained what would take place in the workshops and we discussed what they might like to achieve from taking part. I also explained that the workshop was part of my own research process and that by undertaking the workshop and discussing the process together, we would be collaborating on producing not only their stories, but also generating some of the research data in the workshops. Eight participants, seven women and one man, were recruited and we commenced the workshop two weeks later, to be a part of the 'fish and chip Friday' regular group lunch date, every week, for fourteen sessions.

4.3.2 Adapting the process

The first phase of the workshop took place over two sessions and took some similar approaches to the classic model. Mark co-facilitated with me at most of the sessions, both to refresh his skills and to see how the model we were testing could be developed for future use across more sheltered housing schemes. We gave a more detailed overview of digital storytelling, and showed some more examples, including stories that had been made by homeless young people who were residents at other SAHA housing schemes. We then had a discussion about what makes a good story and whilst I drew upon the seven elements, I did not present them as formally as I had seen carried out at the 2015 classic workshop, as I was mindful that the participants' comments in the first meeting at the site.

Frequent breaks involving refreshments are very important elements of these workshops, not only as key to creating a safe and welcoming space (Hardy & Sumner 2014:43), but also to contribute to the enjoyable atmosphere and ensure that participants have a good experience. They also enable plenty of space for informal chats and, at this site, residents brought cakes they had made to share during tea and coffee breaks. The fish and chip lunch was also key to the workshop's success, as we continued to tell stories around the table, embedding Mark and me into the normal Friday social routine. In the afternoon of the first session, I introduced a series of story prompts (see Fig 4) based on those used in classic digital storytelling workshops and, rather than ask participants to write for 7 minutes before sharing (the classic model), asked for us all, including facilitators, to choose together a story prompt, and then to discuss in pairs a story from our lives related to that prompt. They chose ''first impressions …' as their first story prompt and after 15 minutes, we shared the 'first time' story with the whole group.

Fork in the Road	Think of a moment in your life when you had to change direction. What made you make that decision? Was it a person, an event, an opportunity? Was it external circumstances? What was the deciding moment
First Impressions	Tell a story about a 'first' – for example, the first day at school, college; your first job; your first kiss; the first time you heard your favourite song.
Then and Now	Tell a story about looking back, and looking forward; this could be about a journey, or you could be comparing your childhood or teenage aspirations with where you find yourself now, for example.

Fig 4. Story Prompts

We followed this with a discussion about what in each story could be developed, and what structure might work well. We also posed the idea that these could be the basis of their digital stories if they wished.

During the second session, the following week, we continued exploring the seven elements, but again in the form of an exercise on the role of images in a story, rather than a more formal presentation as is usual in the classic model. I used an exercise I devised called "Every picture tells a story", in which participants worked in pairs to create a story based on unknown images, which I provided. The images were from my own family and travel albums so that participants would not recognise the images or characters within them and to provide an additional opportunity to share something of myself (I did not tell them that the images were from my own collection until after the exercise was completed). I encouraged them to avoid simply describing what was in the image, by providing a series of prompts - see Fig. 5 below - to help to develop storytelling skills. I provided guidance on story structure through a series of questions that were worked through together. These questions were designed to prevent participants from simply describing the image. They encouraged participants to think about character, dialogue, location, *mise-en-scene*, whether the story was about the person in the picture, or the person taking the picture, etc. The exercise was designed to demonstrate that the recorded audio story does not have to 'match' the images and to help participants apply this to the construction of their own narratives. It was also designed to demonstrate how many different stories and interpretations of stories could come from a single image. After about forty minutes, I projected each image on a large screen, and each pair told their story about the image they had been given. I had encouraged participants to

dramatise the story, to use dialogue and to avoid describing literally what could be seen in the images. I did this by using an example and 'performing' a story myself to the group. At the end of this process, I revealed the 'true' story behind each photograph, which participants found enjoyable, as I was also sharing more personal information about my own life with the group, further including me in the group and building trust. This also prompted a discussion about how many meanings their own photographs could have, depending on who is interpreting them and how they wanted to use them with their own stories.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY
WHO IS TELLING THE STORY?
• Is it the person(s) in the image? (So, the story would be in the first person "I" or 'we'). • Is it the person's mother, father, sister, brother, friend? • Is it a journalist? • Is it a random encounter with a stranger?
WHAT DOES THE BACKGROUND TELL YOU?
• Context – what year, time, season? • What country? • What situation? e.g. Everyday? War? Peace? • What do the clothes tell you about the person/people?
WHERE IS/ARE THE PERSON/PEOPLE LOOKING?
• Is the person looking at the camera? • If there is more than one, where are they each looking – at other people in the picture, outside of the frame – if so what is *beyond* the frame – another person, a situation (e.g. a robbery taking place; two people embracing?
IF THERE IS A MAIN PERSON IN THE PICTURE…
• Who are they? • Why are they there? • What is their background – nationality? Profession? Member of an organisation perhaps?
WHAT MIGHT THEY BE SAYING OR THINKING?
• What about using some dialogue to add some texture to the story? • What are they thinking? • What are they saying? • Is someone off-shot saying or thinking anything?

Figure 5: Every Picture Tells a Story

To return everyone's focus to the finding and developing of individual personal stories, I screened some more examples of digital stories made by storytellers of all ages.
Both Mark and I also shared a digital story that we had each made ourselves. In my practice, as a facilitator, I recognise that we are asking participants to share personal stories about their own lives, therefore we as facilitators should do the same. This is another strategy to help to develop trust and a deeper bond very early on in the process. The story I made, which was about my late mother, can be accessed at Figure 6.

Figure 6: screen shots from my digital story "Half a Semitone sharp and Half a BarAhead" (available at: https://vimeo.com/111100668)

By the end of the first story circle session, we felt that there would be a wealth of stories that would be generated by this group, which contained so many natural storytellers. However, surprisingly, the two most visible and vocal storytellers, who had dominated the story circle proceedings that morning, with their frequent and witty stories and interjections, were to be the two most difficult digital stories to produce: this is discussed below in discussions of adaptations to suit particular individuals.

The following week, we began the story circle process. I asked participants to bring with them a significant object or photo. At this point, the male participant did not want to continue to engage in any group activity, so a separate and unique method was developed for working with him, which is presented below (see section 4.3.3).

The objects were used to stimulate a story from each of the participants. I explained the way in which story circle should work, in terms of encouraging one another, providing helpful feedback or asking questions, to enable each storyteller to develop their stories further. The significance of using objects in narrative production is discussed later in this chapter and

revisited in the next chapter in terms of their significance in prompting not only storylines, but also emotional responses.

Following story circle, phase three of the process was developed together with the group. I made a production plan and schedule with participants so that I could continue to work with them in pairs or individually over the coming weeks. Between my visits, participants worked on developing their own stories, researching or selecting more images or honing script ideas. During a period whilst I was conducting fieldwork in Portugal, I ran a group session via Skype partly to keep the momentum going, but also to demonstrate Skype as a potential communication tool for them to use with friends and relatives. This was the first time that any of the participants had been introduced to video calls and they also enjoyed discussing with me the ideas that they had had whilst I was away, as well as a virtual tour of where I was living during that period (see Fig 6).

Figure 6 Skype session – story development

Upon my return from Portugal, I visited once or twice a week to work with individual participants until each of the digital stories were completed.

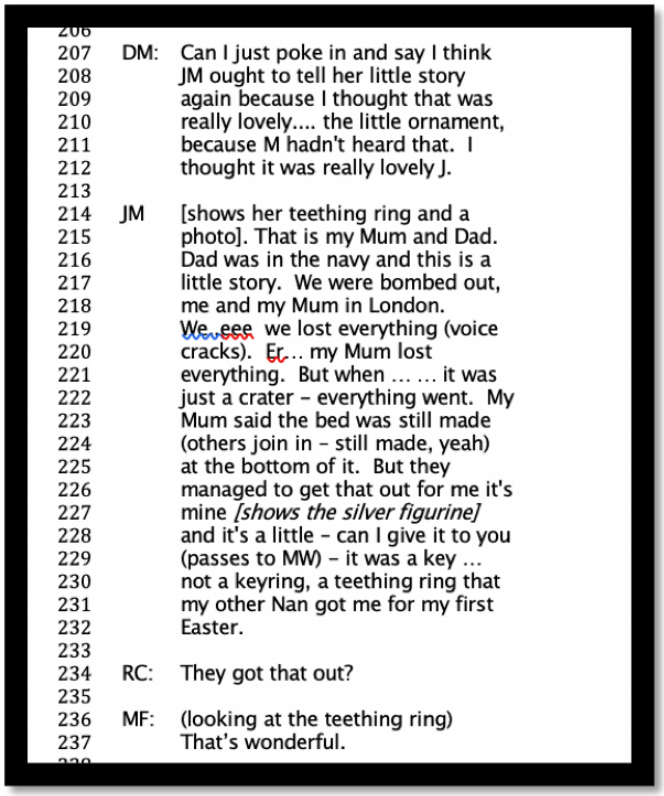
4.3.3 Co-creating stories with Individuals

When working with people who have different individual needs, whether these are health-related or for other reasons, such as challenges with literacy, or cognitive or communication impairments, for example, it is important to make significant adaptations to the workshop format (Stenhouse, Tait, Hardy & Sumner 2012) and after the end of the fourth session, individual story-building and production sessions were held with me until all of the stories had been completed. At this site, every storyteller had very different support needs, some of which were unexpected, having got to know the participants as a group. Each storyteller

required different ways of working to unlock their stories and to capture them as multimodal texts, therefore the approach to the process taken with each storyteller is now discussed.

Jan (JM in the transcriptions): Jan was a very quiet and shy member of the group during the first session. In the story circle, they brought objects images that they felt could spark a story. One of the most striking moments in this story circle was that participants, who had started the process saying that they had no story to tell, began not only to find their own stories, but helped others to discover theirs as well. Line 207 of the transcription from the story circle on March 20th (Fig. 8) marks the moment when one of the members of the circle, Diane (DM) encouraged Jan, the shyest individual in the group to share the story of her teething ring that survived a bombing during World War Two, with the group.

Jan began by telling the basic story about the bombing of her parents' flat in London, whilst passing round a silver figurine that had formed part of her teething ring, that had survived the blast. She found the story difficult to tell and became emotional during this account of a near death experience for her and her parents. At this point, the focus in the group shifted away from Jan's story and she retracted, silenced by her own response to the re-telling of the story and as a reaction to the more dominant voices taking over the space.

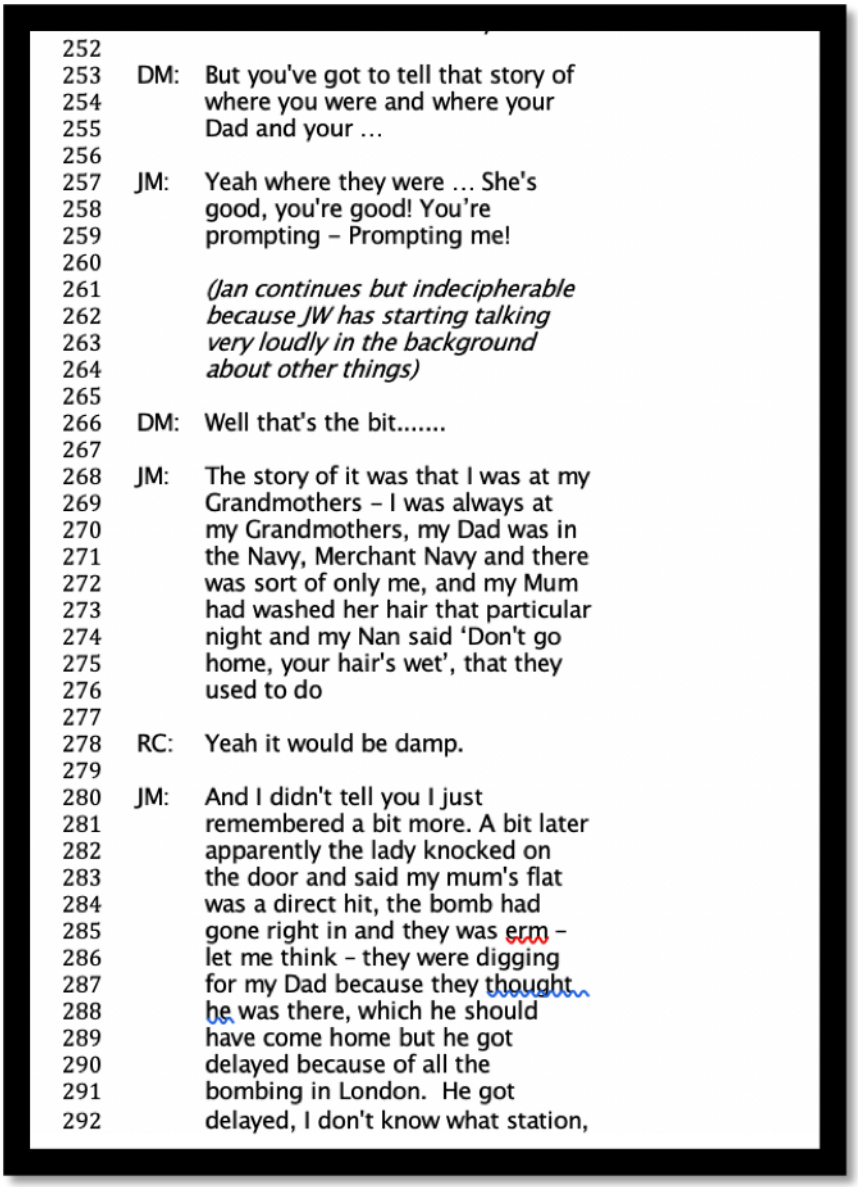


207	DM:	Can I just poke in and say I think
208		JM ought to tell her little story
209		again because I thought that was
210		really lovely.... the little ornament,
211		because M hadn't heard that. I
212		thought it was really lovely J.
213		
214	JM	[shows her teething ring and a
215		photo]. That is my Mum and Dad.
216		Dad was in the navy and this is a
217		little story. We were bombed out,
218		me and my Mum in London.
219		We..eee we lost everything (voice
220		cracks). Er... my Mum lost
221		everything. But when … … it was
222		just a crater – everything went. My
223		Mum said the bed was still made
224		(others join in – still made, yeah)
225		at the bottom of it. But they
226		managed to get that out for me it's
227		mine *[shows the silver figurine]*
228		and it's a little – can I give it to you
229		(passes to MW) – it was a key …
230		not a keyring, a teething ring that
231		my other Nan got me for my first
232		Easter.
233		
234	RC:	They got that out?
235		
236	MF:	(looking at the teething ring)
237		That's wonderful.

Fig. 8 Encouraging prompts from other members of the story circle DM is Diane, JM is Jan, RC is Rene and MF is Mollie.

At line 253 (Fig. 9), Diane (DM) continued to coax Jan and she recovered, acknowledging Diane's persistent but gentle encouragement: 'You're prompting – prompting me!' Jan was then able to recount the tale of her and her mother not returning home from her Grandmother's on account of having wet hair, the bombing of the flat, the assumption that her father had been killed, and the relief to find that he had not been able to get home because of the bombings.

At the end of the story the group showed much appreciation, thanking her for conveying such a lovely story, even though it had been challenging for her to speak up in a group context.



252
253 DM: But you've got to tell that story of
254 where you were and where your
255 Dad and your …
256
257 JM: Yeah where they were … She's
258 good, you're good! You're
259 prompting – Prompting me!
260
261 *(Jan continues but indecipherable*
262 *because JW has starting talking*
263 *very loudly in the background*
264 *about other things)*
265
266 DM: Well that's the bit.....
267
268 JM: The story of it was that I was at my
269 Grandmothers – I was always at
270 my Grandmothers, my Dad was in
271 the Navy, Merchant Navy and there
272 was sort of only me, and my Mum
273 had washed her hair that particular
274 night and my Nan said 'Don't go
275 home, your hair's wet', that they
276 used to do
277
278 RC: Yeah it would be damp.
279
280 JM: And I didn't tell you I just
281 remembered a bit more. A bit later
282 apparently the lady knocked on
283 the door and said my mum's flat
284 was a direct hit, the bomb had
285 gone right in and they was erm –
286 let me think – they were digging
287 for my Dad because they thought
288 he was there, which he should
289 have come home but he got
290 delayed because of all the
291 bombing in London. He got
292 delayed, I don't know what station,

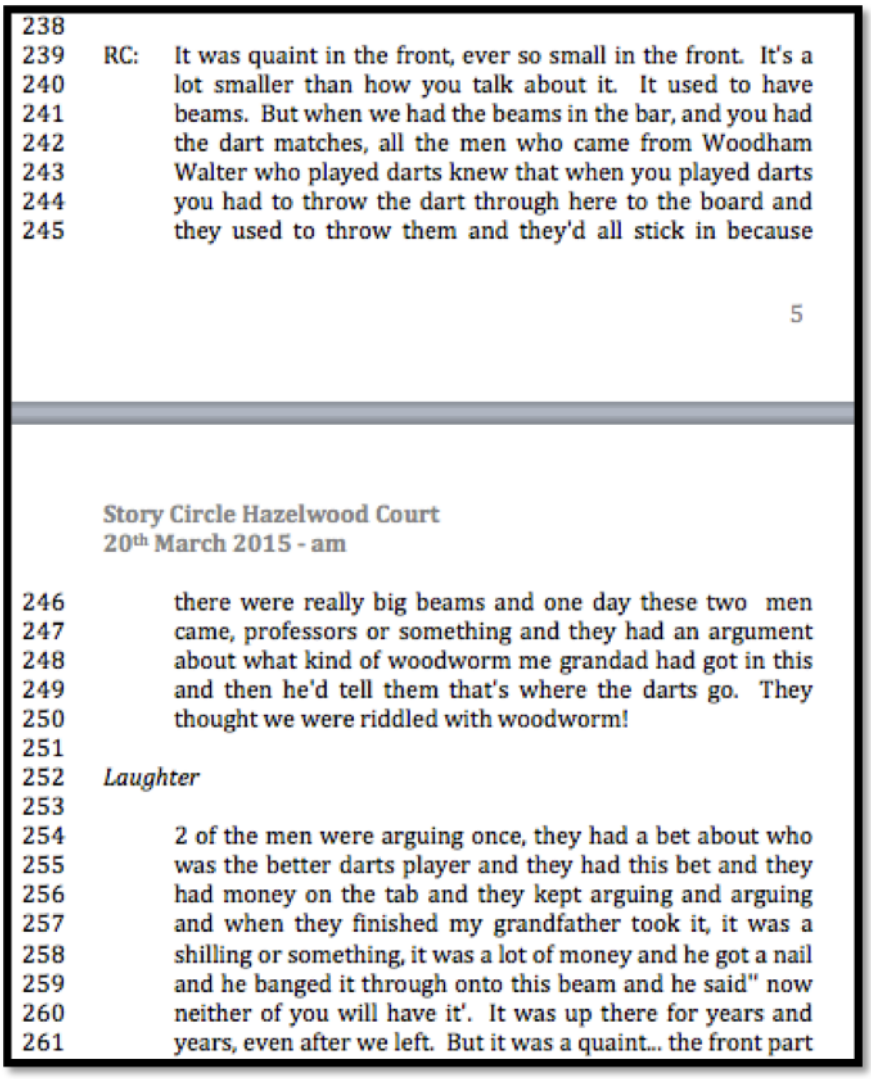
Fig. 9 Diane continues to support Jan

In the story circle, with the input of other members of the group, especially Diane, Jan was able to craft the story, which became her written script, audio recorded at the end of the same day of that story circle. It took five attempts to record the story because Jan would burst into tears just before the end of the story (which in turn meant that I did too!) and in the final take, which we used in the story, an audible crack in her voice can still be heard. As Jan did not want her story to be uploaded to the internet, she chose her mother's favourite song, *In the Mood*, as her outro to the story that became in fact a tribute to her grandmother and her mother, as copyright would not be an issue.

Rene (RC in the story circle transcription), was one of the most vocal members of the group, a great raconteur who kept everyone entertained with hilarious anecdotes about growing up in a pub, The Cats, in Essex, just before and during World War Two. Rene brought with her as her object a DVD transfer of a 9.5mm cine-film of clips covering civilian life that included the last few years of the Second World War. The film had been shot by 'Uncle Chan', an amateur cinematographer and regular visitor to The Cats. The footage had been stitched together by the transfer company and an accompanying 'silent movie' piano soundtrack had been added. The footage itself was very faint, sepia-toned and Rene provided a commentary of what was happening in each scene and who the people appearing were. There was a great deal of shaky camera movement, which also made it quite difficult to decipher. The footage lasted almost twenty minutes and the story circle participants made observations about the clothing, moustaches and cars that appeared. As each scene unfolded, Rene would recount another story-snippet, which would have everyone in the room in fits of laughter. A story about the mistaken identity of woodworm by visiting academics followed another account of an argument about the winning of a bet and her particular storytelling style can be seen clearly in the extract from the transcript in Fig.10 4.

Details of how the beer was kept in the barrels, the biennial visit of the 'tar pot men' who repaired the roads and the antics of a lady who would sing and dance, inebriated, standing on the tables, followed. The story of the regular who would bring his cockerel to the pub and get it drunk on beer and the tale of Grandad teasing the chickens by putting duck eggs underneath them to hatch flowed from Rene, the delivery expertly timed and crafted to gain maximum reaction from her audience. Many of the stories were about family gatherings, enormous Christmas celebrations, the relationship between the siblings, and the role of Rene's grandmother, who was very strict, but kind-hearted.

In Figs. 10 and 11, it is clear to see how Rene holds court. The overall transcription of the story circle session covered 578 lines, including blank lines when speakers changed or there was laughter or other commentary. Out of these, Rene's contribution stood out as the longest and most detailed, and least interrupted set of interventions. As the DVD footage played, RC told nine anecdotes relating to characters or events in the footage, and these took 135 lines of the transcription.



238
239 RC: It was quaint in the front, ever so small in the front. It's a
240 lot smaller than how you talk about it. It used to have
241 beams. But when we had the beams in the bar, and you had
242 the dart matches, all the men who came from Woodham
243 Walter who played darts knew that when you played darts
244 you had to throw the dart through here to the board and
245 they used to throw them and they'd all stick in because

5

Story Circle Hazelwood Court
20th March 2015 - am

246 there were really big beams and one day these two men
247 came, professors or something and they had an argument
248 about what kind of woodworm me grandad had got in this
249 and then he'd tell them that's where the darts go. They
250 thought we were riddled with woodworm!
251
252 *Laughter*
253
254 2 of the men were arguing once, they had a bet about who
255 was the better darts player and they had this bet and they
256 had money on the tab and they kept arguing and arguing
257 and when they finished my grandfather took it, it was a
258 shilling or something, it was a lot of money and he got a nail
259 and he banged it through onto this beam and he said" now
260 neither of you will have it'. It was up there for years and
261 years, even after we left. But it was a quaint... the front part

Fig. 10 Rene's storytelling style

After she had finished her contribution to the story circle, I asked Rene if she wanted to make use of the footage in her story, however she stated 'No, no. I just brought it for interest". She did, in fact, use the footage in her story, changing its form from a digital story to a hybrid of documentary/digital story, running at eight minutes rather than the usual two or three. As a facilitator, I could have steered Rene away from using all of the film footage,

however she clearly wanted to use it and it was an important piece of both family history and social documentation. Without Rene's interpretation, the footage would mean nothing to future generations.

DM: I was quite surprised how many cars there were for that time, on the film.

JM: They looked posh ones too.

DM: Posh area

Laughter

RC: But my Nan had got a heart as big as a balloon, she would do anything for anybody and at Christmas, like on there- there were her sisters - she had four sisters and a brother and because she couldn't shut the pub and go anywhere for Christmas, they all came, they lived in Hounslow and all up in them areas, they all came to Woodham Walter for Christmas and Nan used to have the house next door because they used to go away and had bedrooms there, and our house which was down in the village which had got four bedrooms there. The Cats with the four bedrooms and another house and she used to borrow all these houses (*laughs*) and at night time the children all stayed at the pub, all the cousins, and the aunties and the uncles all went to the different houses and slept in all the spare bedrooms. And we had, we used to be put to bed, and those little windows in the front, we used to get up and sit in to look to see the men coming out the pub drunk and they were going up the front, but one of us had to be on the landing so that if anybody came up the stairs, [*much laughter, inaudible*]. It used to be... all the cousins, there used to be about between 30 and 35 people sit down for Christmas dinner every year there. She used to have a goose and a capon chicken and the man who cooked the bread in the village who was the baker he used to come round Christmas eve and put them in the baking things and he used to put them in the baking ovens, then Christmas morning he used to deliver them all back to the people and then you'd put them on the side in a thing, as soon as the pub shut at 2 o'clock it was all systems go, the tables went out the bar tables went in. [*laughter*] everybody sat down for dinner.

That's amazing (me)

RC: We used to have some lovely Christmases when we were children. [*other talking].* When we all, me and my brothers and sisters we get together, we always finish up talking about The Cats and what we did, you know, with me nan and grandad and the parties and you know doing all the

Fig.11 Continued stories from Rene during story circle

The impact of the change in environment for the relaying of a story, from live to recorded was so striking that for this reason, I provide below some detailed contextual information regarding the steps we had to take to enable Rene to make her story. For Rene, the idea of creating a script and recording a story silenced the otherwise vociferous and most dominant storyteller in the group. The story circle had provided the live audience, the laughter encouraging her to continue and she would then find increasingly outrageous stories, doubtless embellished for effect.

When we met away from the group, we decided together that re-watching the film footage could spark some stories and we would work from that, just as we had done in the story circle. The quality of the DVD was very poor and the amateur camera work (possibly exacerbated by the fact that the footage was taken during parties at the pub) was handheld, unstable and largely out of focus. Before returning to work with Rene, I was able to 'rip' the DVD footage into an editing package and slow down the film sequences, also enhancing the worst images where possible, to make it easier to watch. I was also able to capture screen grabs to create stills of some of the characters whose images otherwise would have been impossible to decipher. As we watched the footage together, I asked her to provide some commentary and prompted her with questions. Although her responses were not dissimilar to the way in which she had told her stories in the story circle, they were more measured with fewer jokes and embellishments. Her responses to my questions were also more disjointed and it was challenging trying to shape a narrative from the array of family photos, these anecdotes and the movie footage.

Different sequences of the footage provoked different anecdotes, more or less the same as those she had told during the story circle. I also asked her direct questions either about the identities of the people in the film, or to explain terminology that I had not understood, such as who the 'tar pot men' were, for example. Towards the end of the session, RC became reflective and finally we identified the story she actually wanted to tell.

In the transcript extract in Fig. 12 below at line 323 she finds her story. It focused on the influence that her grandmother had had on her, her family and the population of the village. This is a very important shift in the process, where I drew upon the 'seven steps' techniques in the form of gentle but probing questioning to reveal and clarify the insights held by Rene ('owning your insights' – step one of the process, Lambert 2010:54). When we reach line 346, following a number of anecdotes about her grandmother, I ask her "Do you think it is

about her in a way?", a pivotal point in the coaxing of the life narrative into the public sphere (Poletti 2011). This is the point at which Rene began to identify initially what she wanted to say about her grandmother – her influence, her qualities - and to identify the episodes and the photographs or film footage that would illustrate them.

My nan... if I was to be honest, is the person who really made our life what it was. [timeline ref. 2451]. I suppose taught us - always teaching you something. She taught you but you had to learn you didn't muck about.

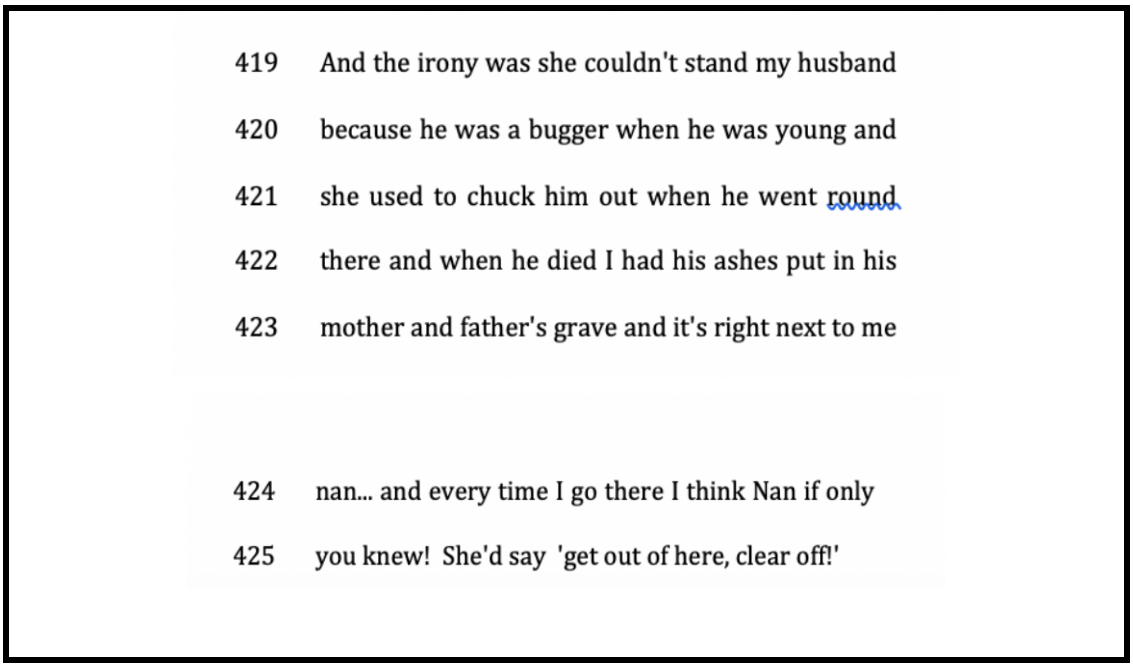
When we were kids, if you put your elbow on the table, she'd come along behind you, lift your elbow and put a plate under it because plates went on the table not your elbows, and you'd get your plate put there, And if you fell over and hurt yourself and in the country roads were rough and everything was rough and you got dirt and grit and everything and she would sit you on top of the rain butt with the lid off. so you held on it like this and then she'd pour neat iodine or peroxide so that bubbled and the germs were killed and if you hollered or wriggled you fell in the water so you held on. She was quite a hard but everything you learned from her you never forgot. She ... and I was thinking the other night, really she was showed us who we were at the end of the day.

Do you think the story is about her in a way?

Yes because she was a huge influence and everybody in the village respected her - there is

Fig. 12 The point at which Rene finds the focus of her story

She begins by talking about being taught lessons of life, table manners, not making a fuss if you fell and hurt yourself. These are stories of tough love in difficult times and circumstances and the remainder of the session focused on stories about her grandmother, until she finished with a cheeky anecdote – Fig.13 - about the location of her husband's ashes next to the graves of her grandparents and how her grandmother would react if she were here to tell the tale (she neither liked nor approved of Rene's husband); a punchline, much more in the style of her usual storytelling mode.



419 And the irony was she couldn't stand my husband

420 because he was a bugger when he was young and

421 she used to chuck him out when he went round

422 there and when he died I had his ashes put in his

423 mother and father's grave and it's right next to me

424 nan... and every time I go there I think Nan if only

425 you knew! She'd say 'get out of here, clear off!'

Fig 13. - Rene's humour returns with a punchline

After this session, we made an impromptu visit to The Cats, which is roughly fifteen minutes' drive from the housing scheme. This stimulated more memories and anecdotes and I documented the visit through photographs and notes, which were incorporated into the final story as images and captions. This could not happen within a classic or more traditional digital storytelling workshop model, which is restrained by resourcing and by the group as well as the individual needs, as well as the rigid time-frame from start to end of the digital storytelling process.

In the following session, we discussed the elements of the story that she wanted to focus upon and the order in which these should occur, which I audio recorded. I transcribed the session and then identified with Rene the footage and still images that would go with each episode, creating a shorter script for her to record, resulting in 'A Tribute to Nan'.

Fig. 14 Rene peeking into the past at a visit to The Cats

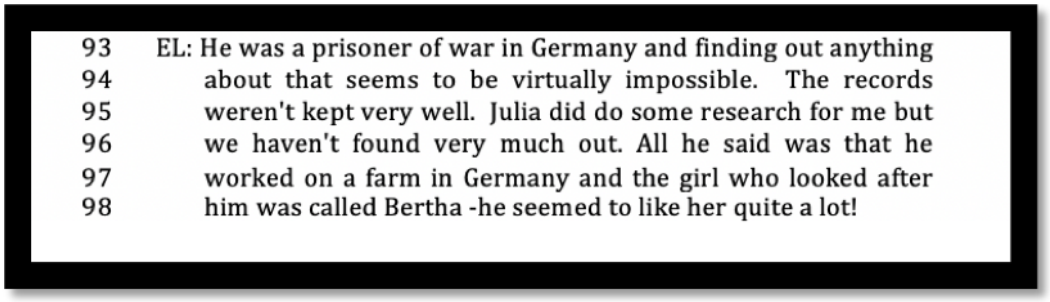
During the following session, we agreed the order of the images and how the film footage might be used. We began a rough cut together, however Rene asked me to complete the story for her to our agreed format.

In the classic model, the word count for a digital story is generally 250-350 words and the Storycenter practice channels storytellers through these constraints, asserting that the constraints in fact foster creative breakthroughs (Hessler & Lambert 2017:27) and whilst, in principle, I agree that creative choice can be hampered by an open-ended process, in this case we reached a compromise to enable Rene's incredibly valuable footage to find another life – one that would make sense to future generations – and to incorporate it. The voice-over story itself is nearer to the word-limit of a classic digital story, however it is interwoven between episodes from the film footage which creates a story of just over eight minutes.

I checked again whether she would not rather I return for another session; however, she told me she had no interest in the laptop editing process, so I completed the edit and showed it to her on my following visit. A few changes were made and she was able to add some captions to enable viewers to identify people and also understand better what was going on in the visual episodes in the film footage.

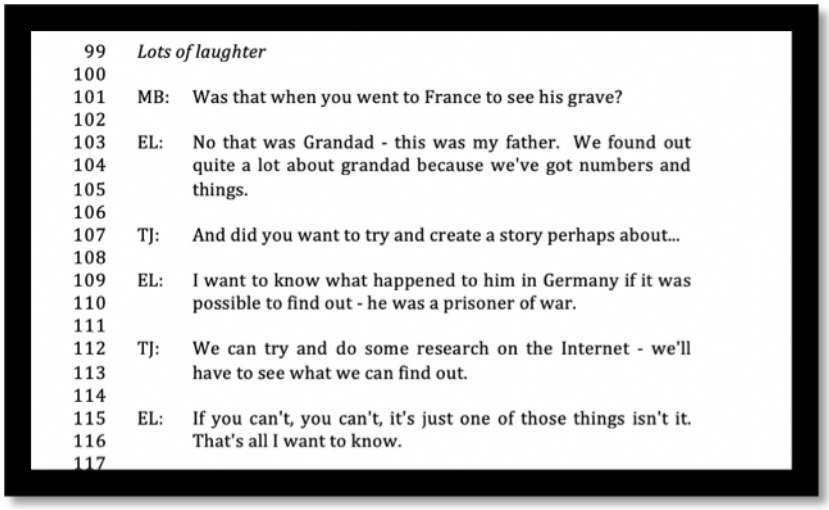
Eve: in the story circle, Eve shared two photographs of her parents that had been printed on glass and talked about how it seemed to be impossible to discover what had happened to

her father during his time as a prisoner of war, not even where he had been captured or held.



93 EL: He was a prisoner of war in Germany and finding out anything
94 about that seems to be virtually impossible. The records
95 weren't kept very well. Julia did do some research for me but
96 we haven't found very much out. All he said was that he
97 worked on a farm in Germany and the girl who looked after
98 him was called Bertha -he seemed to like her quite a lot!

Fig.15: Eve introduces the figure of Bertha to the group.



99 *Lots of laughter*
100
101 MB: Was that when you went to France to see his grave?
102
103 EL: No that was Grandad - this was my father. We found out
104 quite a lot about grandad because we've got numbers and
105 things.
106
107 TJ: And did you want to try and create a story perhaps about...
108
109 EL: I want to know what happened to him in Germany if it was
110 possible to find out - he was a prisoner of war.
111
112 TJ: We can try and do some research on the Internet - we'll
113 have to see what we can find out.
114
115 EL: If you can't, you can't, it's just one of those things isn't it.
116 That's all I want to know.
117

Fig. 16: Eve's request to research her father's war history

Eve mentions the mysterious Bertha, the only reference ever made by her father to his experience in captivity. After the story circle, over tea and biscuits there was much speculation in the group about whether Bertha was more than just a farm worker, amidst the usual laughter and interjections in particular from Rene and Janet. It was from this humorous exchange that the story began to take shape for Eve.

Eve had hoped to use the digital storytelling project to learn how to research online and to try to discover the story of her father's captivity, as she states in the story circle (Fig. 16). However, our research was fruitless and the story instead became a mixture of family history, a critique of the lack of information about ordinary soldiers in the war records and a humorous speculation into the identity of Bertha and whether or not she could have a half sibling in Germany!

Eve developed her story during the story circle process and when we started working one-to-one she found it difficult to find the story that in fact was “not there”. We talked a great deal about documentation through war records and I brought some of my own records of my Grandfather’s time as a prisoner of war in Burma, including telegrams from different prisoner of war camps and other official documents. I also showed her an account of that period written by the Captain of his platoon, which has since been published. We discussed the fact that my grandfather, like her father, is missing from these narratives: only senior ranking officers have presence, and actions and voices in the form of dialogue. My grandfather, like her father, appears only as a name and serial number in these documents. This discussion developed a close bond between us and as a result of sharing our similar experiences we decided that the story would be about the fact that the story was both lost and irretrievable owing to her father’s rank as an ordinary private soldier.

Eve found it difficult to write a script between our sessions, so in order to shape the story, we examined the images that she wanted to use – photographs of her father and mother, some scans of war records and some scans of newspaper headlines – and I asked her questions and scribbled notes furiously as she spoke. We then reviewed the notes and together expanded upon them and typed her responses onto the laptop. We then examined the material together and rearranged different elements of the text to form a narrative. We edited this down to create a script and tried out different ways of reading it. Eve then recorded her audio track and we worked together on arranging the images on the timeline. In deciding how to end the story, Eve thought she would bring into play the questions she has asked herself about Bertha over the years.

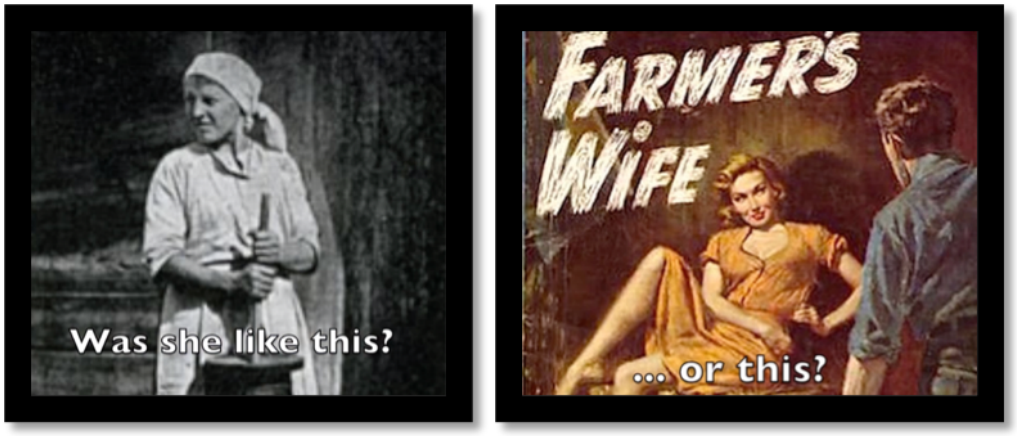


Fig. 17 Speculation – final images from ‘Who is Bertha?

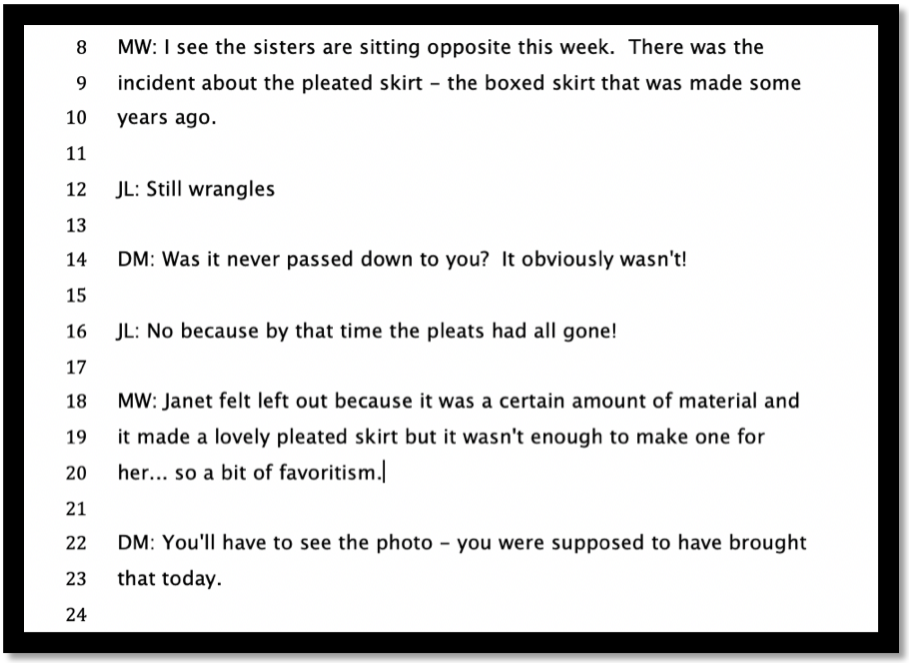
She sourced some images online to use in the final sequence of the story (see Fig. 17) to illustrate the extent of her speculation of the identity of Bertha before adding, with a giggle, as the final credits appear “and have I got any relatives?”

In the story circle, Diane spent a lot of time supporting other storytellers and asking them to share various details with the whole group, however, she did not develop her story in the story circle. She did bring images and press cuttings from her days as a model and passed these around the group, but she kept insisting that she had no story to tell. Reflecting later, she speaks of her story as being “a fluke, really; because everyone was showing pictures, I brought some not anticipating there was going to be a film made out of it at all”.

Her final story used the images to shape a commentary of her modelling career, however she did not construct a script with a plot, but her anecdotes are thoughtful and reflective. The soundtrack was constructed by asking her to tell the story of how she began modelling, which we then edited together to remove as many repetitions, or speech ticks as possible, to approximate a story structure. Diane had not wanted to write a script and this was at odds with the way in which she worked with other members of the group to hone and shape their stories. Her images, however, provided an interesting documentation of fashion of the time and of the conventions of modelling photography, not to mention the impact of marriage on women’s careers. We used the images to identify different periods of time and incidents from her modelling career and recorded her talking about each image. The recording was transcribed and we worked together from the transcription to create episodes in a particular order. We arranged the photographs in the order of her story and created prompts to help her to remember the different ‘chunks’. We recorded her story following the order of the images and edited the audio track subsequently to knit together the narrative episodes. As with other participants, we arranged the images against the audio narration together so that she could decide when she wanted the images to change and the overall pace of the story. The final step was to find some suitable copyright free music to add to the atmosphere, which we did together online.

Diane may not have developed her own story in the story circle, however the exchange she had with her sister Janet in the story circle played a big part in finding Janet’s story. Janet was almost as vocal as Rene in the group in terms of telling stories and commenting on others’ stories. During the first story prompt, *First Impressions*, she was encouraged by other members of the group to talk about her talent for dress-making and she told us how she had been an apprentice at the House of Worth, a French house of high fashion, making made to measure and ready to wear clothes, notably evening gowns. She spoke about how

she felt in that environment, about how she was developing her tailoring and dressmaking skills but also how she always somehow felt in the shadows. She ceased working there when she married. As she told this story, again the need to bring to the fore the 'pleated skirt' story took centre stage – she had told this story at the taster session and it was a regular audience-pleaser, mainly for the banter between her, Diane and the group.


MW: I see the sisters are sitting opposite this week. There was the incident about the pleated skirt – the boxed skirt that was made some years ago.

JL: Still wrangles

DM: Was it never passed down to you? It obviously wasn't!

JL: No because by that time the pleats had all gone!

MW: Janet felt left out because it was a certain amount of material and it made a lovely pleated skirt but it wasn't enough to make one for her... so a bit of favoritism.

DM: You'll have to see the photo – you were supposed to have brought that today.

Fig. 18: Story circle transcription showing on-going banter about the pleated skirt.

Fig. 18 shows an example of this banter, which came up at various opportune moments during the story circle and in the informal breaks, playing with snippets of the story, as an 'in joke' amongst not only the sisters, but also the whole group.

Janet brought a photograph of the two sisters, Diane wearing the pleated skirt and Janet wearing her straight one. As part of the fun within the process, we recreated the photograph with the sisters in the same pose now, including tying ribbons in their hair! Again, when the one-to-one work on the story began with Janet, there was a resistance to writing anything down in the form of a script. We talked around the photographs she had and using coaxing questions again, drawing on the seven steps facilitation techniques, I recorded our dialogue and transcribed it for the following session. I shared this with Mark, who had developed a very close rapport with Janet and he took over the facilitation, as it seemed that Janet was more comfortable with Mark's approach.

Fig.19 Screengrab opening image Story Five: The Pleated Skirt (left) and our collective attempts to recreate the pose during the story circle.

From the transcription, Mark was able to use it to guide Janet to identify key moments in her narration, which he would then use as prompts to record her telling. They then worked together on the timeline to assemble the story, although Mark had needed to do some considerable audio editing of the voice over in order for it to become a coherent narrative. Mark also worked with Janet to find additional imagery to illustrate other parts of her story, most notably her illness with diphtheria as a child. Mark completed the final edit of the story, following Janet's instructions and presented it back to her for approval the following week.

Molly's story and the way in which she told it was in many ways the most straightforward. In the group. She had a clear motivation for her story from the beginning, which was to bring to life the story of her daughter's wedding and her pride in their family in particular as being a cross-cultural family, as well as marking a significant moment of travel to Malaysia, where the wedding took place, as her son in law is Malaysian.

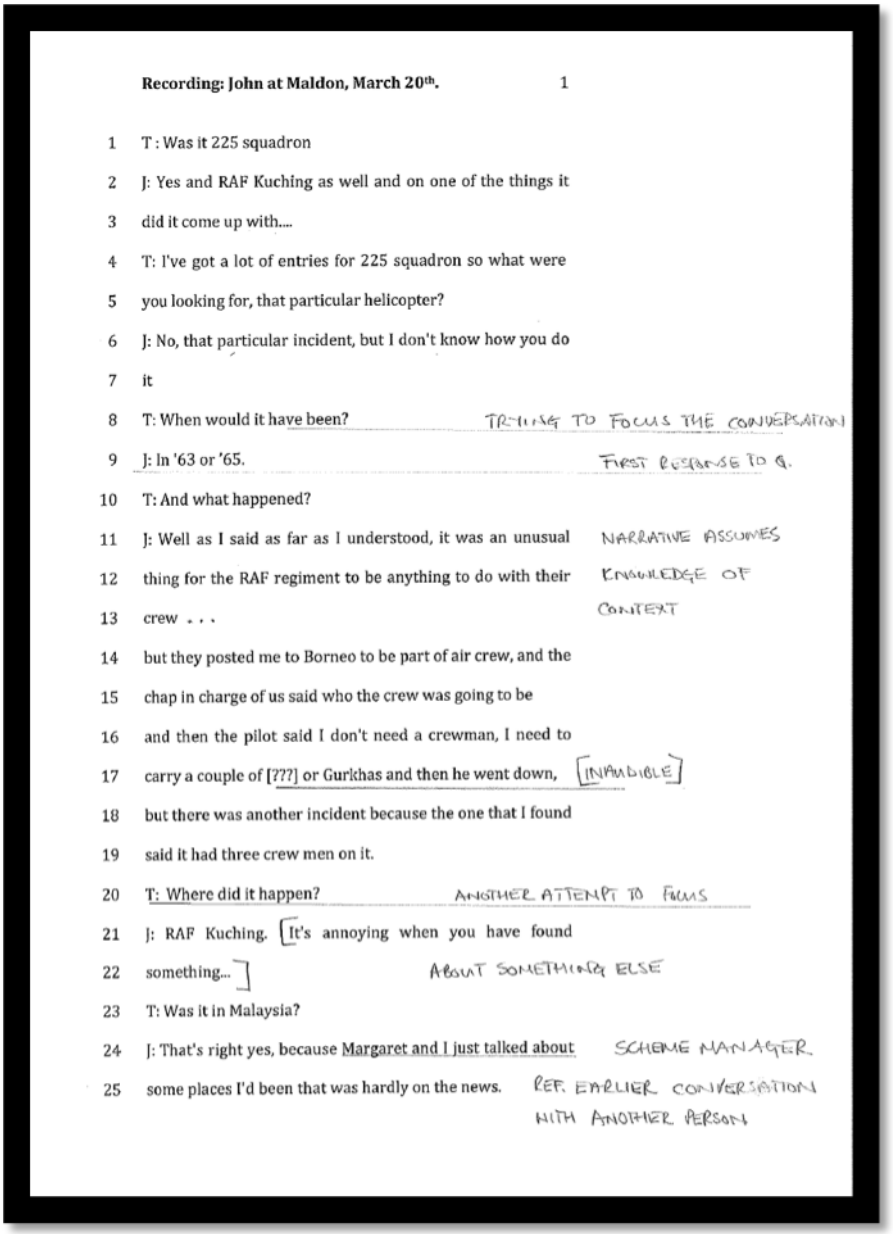
Molly actually created a script between sessions. She practiced it with us before we recorded it and we adjusted parts of the script that were easy to read, but not so easy to speak – to make it more colloquial, using phrases that she would use everyday. We then explored different ways in which to begin and end the story and we came up with shooting a snippet of video footage where she opens her photograph album at the beginning and starts to flick through, and then the reverse at the end of the story, where she closes it.

John did not participate in story circle, nor in the earlier phases of the process after the initial meeting to introduce the project. He arrived in the communal space after the story circle had

finished and participants had left for home. He was uncomfortable with group activities but he had many objects and images from his life in the military and was quite clear that he wanted to document his achievements.

He appeared somewhat agitated and wanted me to go to his bungalow to go through the various photographs and objects that he wished to include in his story. Knowing that it would be challenging for John to focus on any particular story, I decided to record our entire conversation for transcription and re-photograph everything that he wished to show me. I anticipated that I would be able to match the photographs to parts of the transcribed audiotape to provide us with at least some story clues. The bungalow was cramped and full of military memorabilia, mainly photographs, but also medals. There was one sole image of John's late wife on display, an original portrait that had been drawn by her niece before she had died. I had to ask him who she was. The conversation, which had continued on our short walk from the community centre to the bungalow, seemed to refer to the exploits of 225 Squadron, although it was difficult to ascertain exactly what was I being told. I turned on the audio recorder as soon as we were inside and John immediately began to sift through piles of photographs.

Fig. 20 shows the beginnings of the conversation and highlights the difficulties in obtaining clear information, or any insight into what John was thinking. or feeling. Unlike the interactions during the story circle with the group, this was at times an almost abstract 'stream of consciousness' flow. The transcription begins at the point at which John had been talking in a disconnected way about 225 squadron. My questioning (lines 4 and 5) attempted to discover what it was that John was trying to tell me. The response shows that I was not on the right track but that John was not able to 'find' "that particular incident" (line 6). "I don't know how you do it" suggested that John was not sure how to participate in the storytelling. A follow up, more direct question (line 8) did achieve a response: we had now established a timeframe from which to locate some stories to accompany the images that John wished to share. My subsequent question (line 10) tried to establish the 'incident' to which JW had initially referred. Lines 11 – 19 begin to outline the incident, however the way in which it was told assumed that I would have knowledge of the context.



Recording: John at Maldon, March 20th. 1

T : Was it 225 squadron

J: Yes and RAF Kuching as well and on one of the things it did it come up with....

T: I've got a lot of entries for 225 squadron so what were you looking for, that particular helicopter?

J: No, that particular incident, but I don't know how you do it

T: When would it have been? TRYING TO FOCUS THE CONVERSATION

J: In '63 or '65. FIRST RESPONSE TO Q.

T: And what happened?

J: Well as I said as far as I understood, it was an unusual thing for the RAF regiment to be anything to do with their crew . . . NARRATIVE ASSUMES KNOWLEDGE OF CONTEXT

but they posted me to Borneo to be part of air crew, and the chap in charge of us said who the crew was going to be and then the pilot said I don't need a crewman, I need to carry a couple of [???] or Gurkhas and then he went down, [INAUDIBLE] but there was another incident because the one that I found said it had three crew men on it.

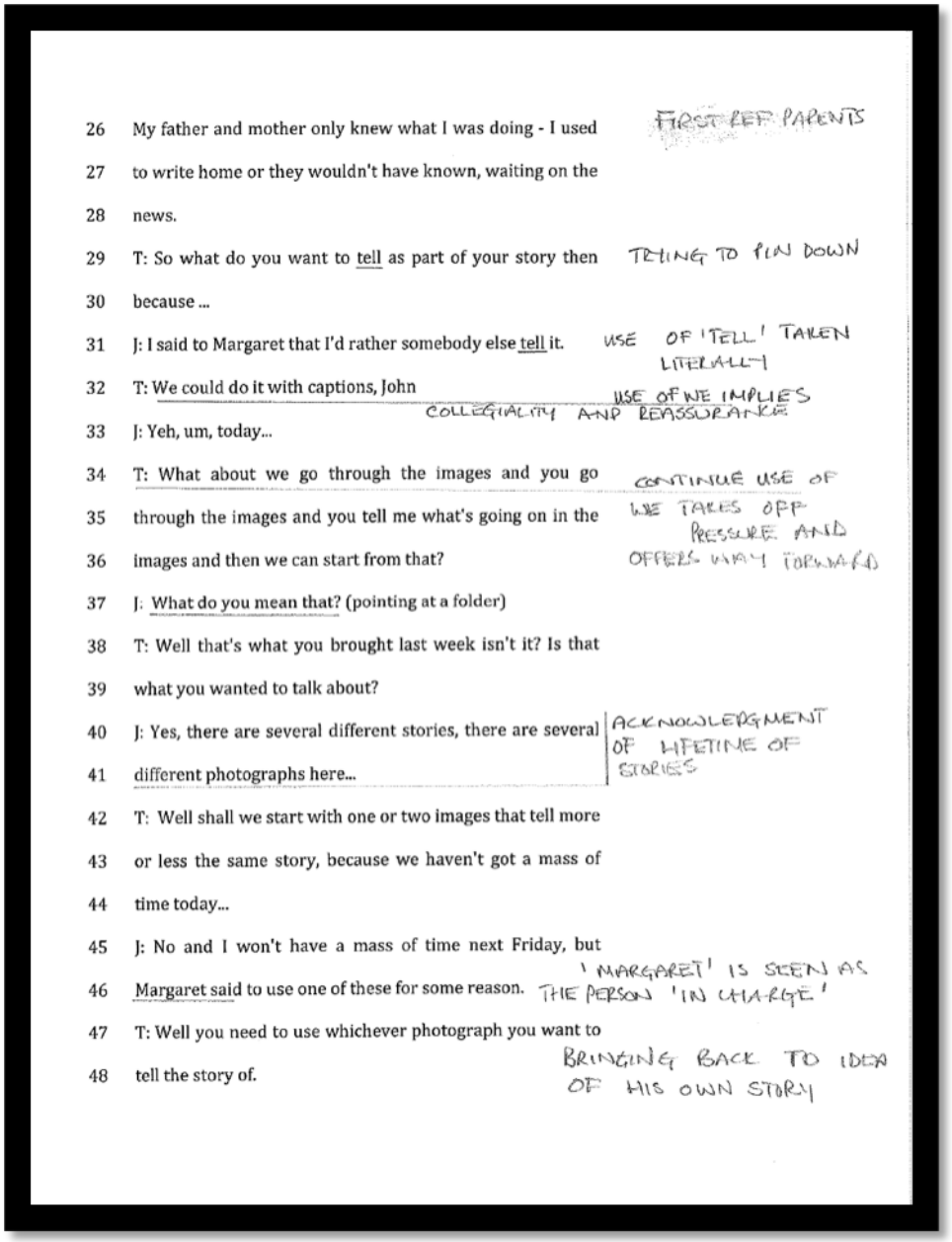
T: Where did it happen? ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO FOCUS

J: RAF Kuching. [It's annoying when you have found something...] ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE

T: Was it in Malaysia?

J: That's right yes, because Margaret and I just talked about some places I'd been that was hardly on the news. SCHEME MANAGER. REF. EARLIER CONVERSATION WITH ANOTHER PERSON

Fig. 20: Transcript of initial conversation with John



26 My father and mother only knew what I was doing - I used
27 to write home or they wouldn't have known, waiting on the
28 news.
29 T: So what do you want to tell as part of your story then
30 because ...
31 J: I said to Margaret that I'd rather somebody else tell it.
32 T: We could do it with captions, John
33 J: Yeh, um, today...
34 T: What about we go through the images and you go
35 through the images and you tell me what's going on in the
36 images and then we can start from that?
37 J: What do you mean that? (pointing at a folder)
38 T: Well that's what you brought last week isn't it? Is that
39 what you wanted to talk about?
40 J: Yes, there are several different stories, there are several
41 different photographs here...
42 T: Well shall we start with one or two images that tell more
43 or less the same story, because we haven't got a mass of
44 time today...
45 J: No and I won't have a mass of time next Friday, but
46 Margaret said to use one of these for some reason.
47 T: Well you need to use whichever photograph you want to
48 tell the story of.

FIRST REF PARENTS
TRYING TO PIN DOWN
USE OF 'TELL' TAKEN LITERALLY
USE OF WE IMPLIES COLLEGIALITY AND REASSURANCE
CONTINUE USE OF WE TAKES OFF PRESSURE AND OFFERS WAY FORWARD
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF LIFETIME OF STORIES
'MARGARET' IS SEEN AS THE PERSON 'IN CHARGE'
BRINGING BACK TO IDEA OF HIS OWN STORY

Fig. 21: Extract Two – John conversation.

John relayed incidents that were beyond his control: “but they posted me to Borneo to be part of air crew” (line 14), followed by “and then the pilot said I don’t need a crewman…” (line 16). The stories, or part-stories that emerged were predominantly the consequences of ‘postings’ and following orders and John’s positioning of himself as the unquestioning recipient of orders was the dominant mode of both recalling elements of stories and of telling them. At the end of the extract, John refers to ‘Margaret’ (line 24), which he does on several occasions throughout the conversation. Margaret, as the scheme manager, is positioned as a person in authority on several occasions by John. Later in the conversation, as we were

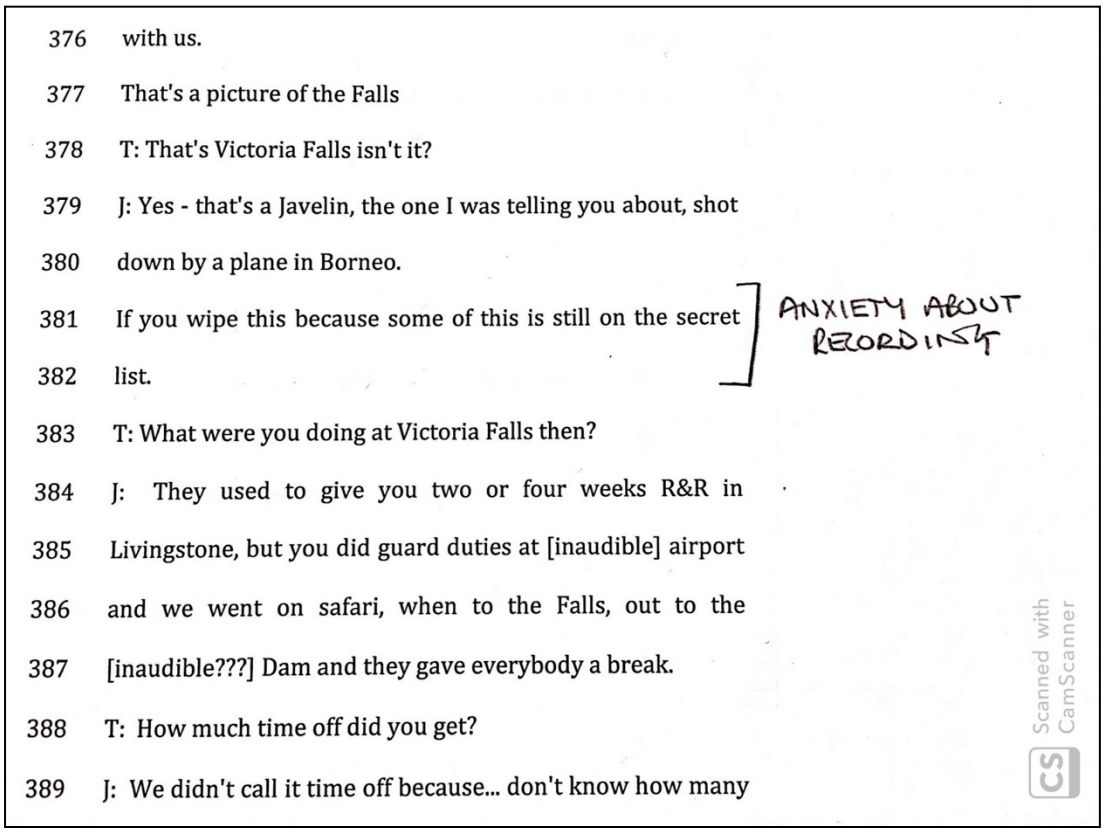
attempting to choose images, John stated that ‘Margaret said to use one of these for some reason’ (line 46) and again ‘Margaret said you can do … it will be deleted …’ (line 254). This pattern of quoting others’ opinions or instructions is repeated throughout the transcription. The absence of John’s own detailed articulation of events extends to a literal absenting of voice in his wish not to record any of his own audio using his own voice.

Fig. 22 shows other moments of anxiety around telling his own story.
In line 29, I ask John directly what he wants to ‘tell’ as a story and this word is taken literally. I reassure him (line 32) that he will not have to record his own voice – but that he could still ‘tell’ his own story, which could be conveyed using captions.

Anxiety over recording his own voice emerged again later in the conversation, when in line 249 he spotted the audio recorder once more and asked ‘what’s that machine doing? Is that a tape recorder?’ and again I reassured him that the recording was simply to enable me to remember his stories. Later, in Figure 4.5.3 (l), line 381, the anxiety is transferred to a concern about contravening the Official Secrets Act.

The difficulty that I faced in conveying to John, that the intention of the digital storytelling project was to enable him to tell his own story continues the ‘following orders’ theme, in that I was constantly asked which photographs *I* wanted. From the conversation, it would appear that to John, he had been asked to bring photographs and objects to the community centre, and I would use them for some purpose that had nothing to do with him.

The stories that were clearly important to John were those in which he had demonstrated courage, or daring and, in later life, those in which he had challenged and changed regulations.



376 with us.
377 That's a picture of the Falls
378 T: That's Victoria Falls isn't it?
379 J: Yes - that's a Javelin, the one I was telling you about, shot
380 down by a plane in Borneo.
381 If you wipe this because some of this is still on the secret
382 list.
383 T: What were you doing at Victoria Falls then?
384 J: They used to give you two or four weeks R&R in
385 Livingstone, but you did guard duties at [inaudible] airport
386 and we went on safari, when to the Falls, out to the
387 [inaudible???] Dam and they gave everybody a break.
388 T: How much time off did you get?
389 J: We didn't call it time off because... don't know how many

ANXIETY ABOUT RECORDING

Fig. 23: Extract Three, conversation with John

After transcribing the recording, I matched John's commentary to the images I had been re-photographing by organising them in a Powerpoint document and printing them out as notes. I sat with John the following week to go through the document and pin down dates and locations, names and events and, where possible, anecdotes, although these were somewhat fragmented. I recorded this conversation whilst also hand-writing on the document. Through this process, some fragments of actual stories began to emerge. Fig. 4.5.7 (m) shows the conversation about the campaign to wear the JPM medal and his representations that enabled this rule to be revoked forms a significant element of his final story.

Through these processes, I was able to capture phrases that were John's own mode of expression, to enable us to make this story that was to be told only with images and captions, to reflect his own personal voice. Figure 4.5.3 (n) for example, shows manoeuvres in Borneo and John's particular words used in the explanation of the third image when he tells me that the person on the outside of the helicopter was him "holding on for dear life – holding on for grim death".

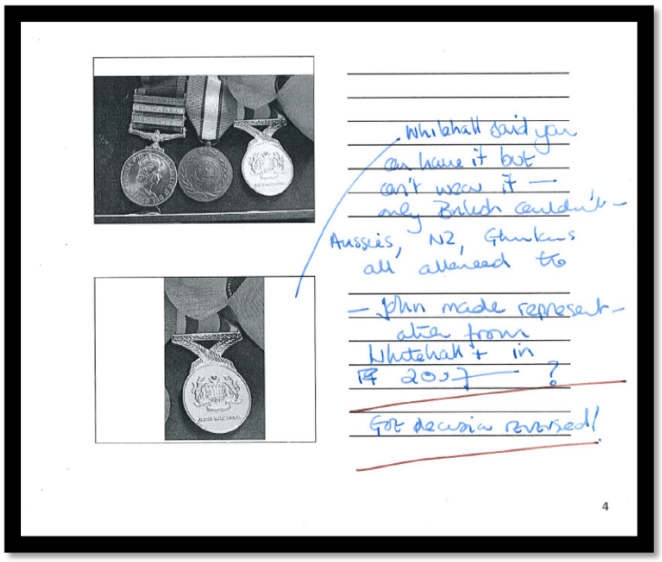


Fig.24: Extract from session with JW going through images to find stories and ensuring information was correct.

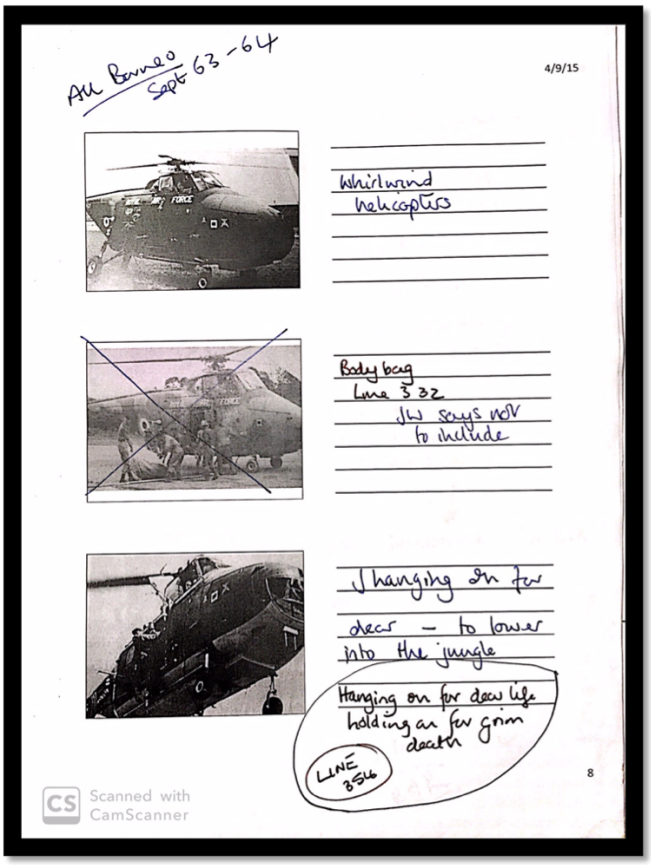


Fig. 25 Note showing John's personal turn of phrase

The final process was to sit with John, having placed the images on the timeline in iMovie and agree the captions that we would use to tell the story. Because of his condition, John was unable to sit for long periods of time and did not want to even touch the computer, so I edited his story with his input.

The final element that he required was to use the RAF march past 'Holyrood' military music as the soundtrack. John was delighted with the final outcome, which documented his life in the armed services in a way in which enabled him to present his story to others. He was awarded an Achievement Award by the Housing Scheme in recognition of his participation in the project.

4.3.3 Screening and celebration at Hazelwood Court

As we had departed from the three-day model, the group had not seen any of their co-storytellers' stories until the celebratory screening. The group invited friends and family, other residents from the housing scheme and the Chief Executive of SAHA also attended. We produced certificates to mark the storytellers' achievements and these were presented by the CEO. After all of the stories were screened, we had a garden party with food that had been prepared by all of the participants, the staff from SAHA and I also took food that I had prepared to contribute to the occasion. The screening provided a great opportunity for sharing of participants' life experiences and an occasion for celebration of their achievement. The enjoyment of the participants is evident in the photographs taken during the screening and at the presentation afterwards (see Fig. 26).

Fig.26: Screening, certificates and celebration.

4.4 Digital Storytelling in Central Portugal: Homecare Alcobaça and Santa Casa, Evora de Alcobaça

4.4.1 Location and Context

The two sites were residential care homes in central Portugal and the digital storytelling workshop processes were adapted and conducted together across both locations. Three participants were selected by staff at Homecare and three at Santa Casa, although only two at this site were able to complete their stories.

Each participant required extensive one-to-one support in both developing their scripts and in producing the digital products. Two of the three participants at the Homecare residence were not able to write scripts: one participant was blind, the other was not literate. At the Santa Casa residence, the participants had multiple dependency needs: one had multiple sclerosis and the other had dementia.

At each site, I worked alongside staff at each of the homes, who had recently been trained within the Silver Stories project and were now testing the method in the workplace. The idea of digital storytelling had already been introduced to the participants and I joined the team at the first story circle at both of the care homes.

4.4.2 Adapting the process

At Homecare, story circles took place in a cosy dining room with ample supplies of coffee and cake. Each of the three storytellers – Elisa, Lúcia and Carlos - had been invited to bring a favourite or meaningful object with them and any relevant photographs that could potentially contribute to the final digital story.

Fig. 27: Story Circle at Homecare Alcobaça

Elisa brought with her a beautiful embroidered white bed cover, which had been in her bridal trousseau and was a way of introducing her story of unrequited love to the group; Lúcia brought a photograph album containing images from her silver wedding anniversary party; Carlos did not bring anything to the story circle, because when he had moved to the care home, he was not able to bring many personal items and had lost all of his photographs and memorabilia. Unlike the Essex workshops, we did not use games or exercises but went straight to talking about participants' own personal stories. This was partly because the facilitators were trained by Lisbon-based company Media Shots, who follow the 'classic' model more closely than we do at DigiTales. In part it was also because the context in which storytellers were participating was bound by institutional constraints and by the cognitive and physical capacity of the participants. Each participant talked about their lives in turn and

after everyone had shared their stories we took a break for a compulsory coffee and 'pastel de nata'. We recorded all of the story circle sessions. Upon returning to the story circle, we invited each participant in turn to identify what they felt was the most significant element of their stories that we might focus on to create a short digital story. We reminded each participant of key moments that they had talked about and, mirroring what had taken place during the story circles in Essex, participants encouraged one another by asking for more details about certain parts of their stories, asking how they felt, or to describe an event or a person in more detail. As facilitators, we encouraged this by supplementing their questions and reflecting back elements of the stories that seemed to be revealing themselves as the focus for their final stories. At the end of the story circle, we agreed together over a special lunch that the participants would think about how to shape their stories and gather any images. They would each be assisted by the Homecare staff over the coming week.

In the second and final story circle after recapping on the stories that had been agreed, we split into small groups to enable facilitators to work with participants individually. I moved between participants and facilitators to observe how this process would evolve, partly because my Portuguese language skills were not advanced enough to undertake this process directly with participants. This was the point at which we honed the stories and created the scripts with each participant. Carlos co-created a written script about his childhood in poverty and his working life as a glass maker and we sourced images online to help him represent his story. Lúcia worked with us to identify prompts to help her remember each section of her story and the same technique was used with Elisa. We used the first half of the session to practice the stories and then, after the break, we recorded the audio with each storyteller (see fig.28)

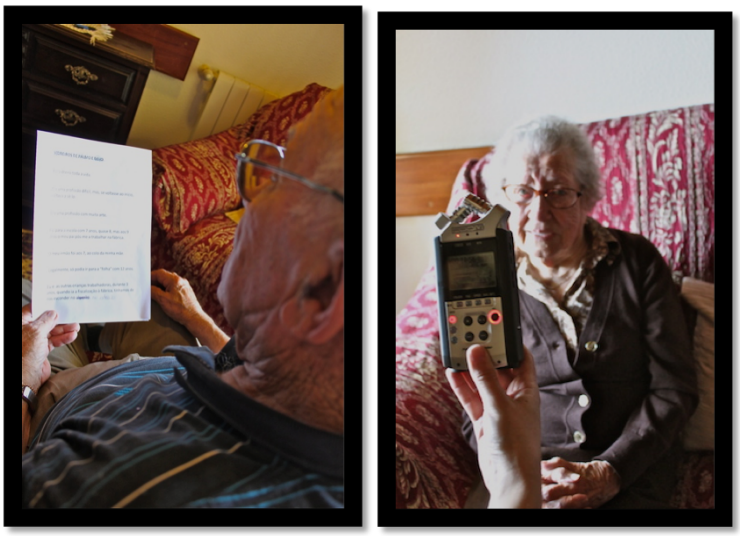


Fig. 28: Recording the stories at Homecare. Carlos (L) reads from his script and Elisa (R) prepares to record

Elisa had four photographs of her family, of her as a young woman and of her lost love, Raimundo, which were used in her story. Other images such as photographs of historic Lisbon were sourced and chosen by her, with help from facilitators, from the Internet. All of Lúcia's images were from her wedding anniversary album. The final edits of all three stories were produced by the facilitators and then shown to them for approval before the public screening.

At Santa Casa, the story circles took place in a meeting room and a similar format was employed, with each participant being encouraged to speak about their lives before honing down to particular moments.

Fig. 27 Story circle at Santa Casa

The first story circle was dominated by César, partly because he was the only participant who was able to speak at length. Teodora was only able to speak for short lengths of time, in fragments because of her dementia and Lícinia was so weak from her condition that she also could only speak for very short periods of time. César did not want to tell a story from his past. Instead, he wanted to take the opportunity to make a story about how the poor quality of the roads in the neighbourhood affected his ability to use his mobility vehicle, removing one of the few independent elements of his life. He also described at great length how wheelchair users are discriminated against in cafés and shops because the height of the counters are designed for people who can stand at them. He wanted the facilitators to help him take photographs of the offending pot holes and 'balaçoes' (counters) so that he could make a story to present to the mayor and the local authority. Admittedly, this was a story that I was very keen to encourage, to demonstrate the potential of using digital

storytelling to effect positive change. Unfortunately, although César did manage to take some photographs, assisted by one of the occupational therapists, he did not complete a digital story during the period of this research, although I was told some months later that he had completed his campaigning film and had used it as he had intended.
At Santa Casa, the facilitators worked individually with Teodora and Lícinia to produce their stories. In order to encourage Teodora to speak, the facilitator used photographs of the philharmonia band and traditional music to spark her story fragments. She then stitched together the audio track to create a story and undertook all of the post-production herself before presenting the finished product back to Teodora. Lícinia worked more collaboratively with her facilitator and provided two photographs from her own personal album for the story and an additional image was also created. This story took longer to produce because speaking for any length of time fatigued Lícinia. Lícinia also used captions to give greater depth to her story, which she co-created with her facilitator.

Fig. 28: Recording Licinia's story.

4.4.3 Screening and celebration

Screenings took place at each of the care homes and the storytellers attended at both locations. As in Essex, the screenings were seen to be an enjoyable activity for all of the residents at the care homes, the staff and friends and relatives and again, the events culminated in the sharing of cake and coffee. For the storytellers, it was also an occasion of great pride as can be seen in their faces in fig.29. The timing of the screenings was also carefully planned to coincide with Elisa's 101th birthday, so this was another way to make her day very special by sharing and celebrating her digital story.

Fig. 29

Responses to screening (left) and portrait of storytellers at Homecare (right)

4.5 Reflections and conclusions: adapting digital storytelling practices for working with older people in different contexts

All four sites required considerable adaptation of the 'classic' approach to enable digital storytelling to be made available and accessible and this emphasizes the need to be responsive and creative in order to generate the research data *and* to ensure that participants have an enjoyable and worthwhile experience (Hardy & Sumner 2015:44). It also underlines the necessity for recognising the individual within the group: one size most certainly does not fit all and to make the process accessible to as diverse a range of people as possible required flexibility, creativity and patience.

4.5.1 Group dynamics and relationships

Developing relationships was key to enabling the workshops to take place, not only with the storytellers themselves, but also with the gatekeepers and this became evident in that the Lewisham site, which potentially should have afforded the most straightforward location to undertake digital storytelling with older people. It was already a place where the members went specifically to engage in creative activity and had space and facilities to hand. A change in leadership was all that it took – the relationship was no longer there institutionally and most of the collaborative elements of the workshop, in particular the story circle with peers could no longer feature as part of the process. Given the importance of the group dynamic in terms of the 'transformative change' that many digital storytelling practitioners and researchers assert are the result of that process (Burgess 2006; Lambert 2010;2015;2017; Spurgeon & Burgess 2015; Hessler & Lambert 2017), it was challenging to find a mechanism to replicate this. On the other hand, this study is looking to identify how

older people engage with digital storytelling, what – if anything – they get out of it and how they choose to represent themselves. As Pahl & Rowsell (2010:39) state, "like all meaning making, talk is always transformational"; however, transformation on a grand scale is not necessarily a required outcome of participating. But could, in particular Fred, who generally attends the club for chats and the chance to interact with other people, have experienced a greater moment of transformation had he been afforded the opportunity to take part in a workshop with a focus on his life, and his stories? Would a scheduled screening, a 'big occasion', have had a greater impact on him and on his self-esteem?

Even in the absence of story circle in Lewisham, peer to peer engagement did take place: other members round the table were interested in what Ted was doing and Fred was inspired enough to have a go himself. Having said that, the role of the facilitator was much more blurred, as the activity had not been afforded the creative status of other artforms taking place at the club. As a volunteer, one is also a befriender and, whilst I always share stories from my own life in the story circle space, this was an entirely different space which raised some ethical issues. As Lindvig (2017:143) points out, there is an ethical challenge here: friend or researcher? In a research environment, the relationship between a researcher and research subject requires the building of trust and story circle can provide a means to level out the power relationship through the peer-to-peer exchange and comment it affords. The sharing of personal stories including stories from the facilitator, in a group situation, through story circle, is an attempt to level out the power relationships. However well-meaning our intentions are as researchers in a facilitator role, we are still treading a fine line ethically, as Vacchelli & Peyrefitte (2018) consider, given that, sharing or not, we are there to gather data from our participants for our own research. Without story circle,and without holding the identifiable role of facilitator, in shifting from the group to the one-to-one, in the role of a volunteer/friend, where did I sit in this relationship? By sharing elements from my own life stories – elements that I had specifically chosen because they had resonated with Ted's developing story – how much was I coaxing the story out of Ted for his benefit, and how much was I coercing the development of his narrative for mine? (Poletti 2014:77). Moreover, as I was writing up our conversations as part of my field notes, I wondered whether I should have gained informed consent for using our informal chats. Ted was aware that the digital storytelling activity was for my research as well as for him – I had made him aware at the beginning by going through the participant information form and he signed a release form giving consent for my use of all data generated, as did all participants. But was he aware that our chats as friends had also become part of my data? (Swain and Spire 2020).

4.5.2 Using prompts and objects to stimulate stories

In both Essex and in Portugal, although the facilities available were not as close to the more usual workshop space when delivering the classic model in terms of space and equipment, the support and adaptability of the managers of these sites were of far greater value in terms of enabling the process, to the point that at both sites, staff had already been trained in digital storytelling facilitation techniques and were keen to put their skills into practice.

At both sites, story circles took place using slightly different approaches. In Essex, we used story prompts and images to develop storytelling skills, as well as showing an example of our own personal digital story to the group, as an example of the formal qualities of digital stories. Schegloff (1997) observes that "prompt questions that stimulate narrative play an excessive part in shaping them as texts" (Cobley 2014:215). If prompts are being used in a more formal research setting as a narrative research technique within the framework of interviewing, then maybe this can be argued. The ways in which we use prompts in digital storytelling, however, is precisely to help participants shape their own stories and this is a transparent pedagogy rather than a research strategy (Hartley 2009; Lambert 2013; Dunford & Jenkins 2015).

Within the story circle environment at both sites, participants were asked to bring an object that was significant to them to the story circle. Stories can be stimulated by and related to material objects and the visibility and touchability of an object can change the way in which people talk their stories. "Artifacts hold diverse memories and heritages. They can create opportunities for a richer type of storytelling" (Pahl & Rowsell 2010:41). Objects have power; they can call up deep emotions and feelings (Bissell, 2009). Artifacts played a significant role across the research sites in Essex and Portugal and a number of stories resulted from the interactions with those objects. In Essex, Jan's story was stimulated by an object that she had kept with her since babyhood and her journey from hesitant participant to the first member of the group to complete her story demonstrates the power of objects to evoke buried emotions (Czikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981) and undergo a personal transformation (Dewey & Bentley 1949) as she gained the strength and courage to craft, tell and share her story. Artifacts can also be used as tools to promote empathetic listening (Pahl & Rowsell 2010:54). Echoing the ethos of story circle, they are effective tools for both developing voice and encouraging deep listening.

4.5.3 Having time and space to 'go with the flow'

At the Essex site, the story circle sessions had been used to enable participants to find and share their stories and create an environment in which participants came to value their own and one anothers' lived experiences as life stories that could be shared with others. The production process, including script development, however, became one-to-one interactions between facilitator and participant, which shifts the ambience of the process considerably. The decision to take this route was largely pragmatic: I had only my own laptop, camera and audio recorder; the new iMac on site was not always available. It seemed to be the only way in which each participant could construct their own digital story. Whilst I had some of the same reservations that I'd had in Lewisham, in terms of the role of informal chats in the data collection process, because we had had the story circle sessions, participants were focused and motivated in the sessions I had with them; they had also benefitted from the collaborative activities – story circle had made them story ready.

As discussed earlier, Storycenter's model strongly advocates the order and ingredients of the process, including creative and temporal boundaries in creating digital stories is less a constraint and more another tool to focus the mind and create a better story outcome (Lambert 2010). However, some interesting insights and inspiration arose from being able to stray from the workshop model spontaneously. When presenting the process used with Rene earlier in this chapter, I described the difficulties Rene experienced in shifting from live rapporteur/entertainer with an audience to formulating anecdotes to a script format. I wondered whether a visit to The Cats pub, which was the location of all of her stories and where she had grown up, would help. It was a lovely Spring day and I just said to her – "Rene – the Cats – is it far?" We hopped in the car and drove there. I recorded her as she told stories on site and took photographs of her in the grounds; we also went inside and she had a conversation with the current landlord and landlady. This would not have been possible within the constraints of a usual workshop structure, which is time-bound and group-focused. The visit did seem to shift Rene's storytelling perspective and it also provided space for an increased bond between us, as well as some contemporary images to incorporate into her story. Most importantly, she really enjoyed the experience of taking me there and showing me, having told me, the place that had so fundamentally influenced her young life.

4.5.4 The technical side

In the classic digital storytelling model, teaching the technical side of editing, albeit on simple editing programmes, forms an important part of the process in terms of empowering participants to have total control of making their own media (Lambert 2006, 2010, 2016). As Meadows (2010:198) explains: "contributors are not just originating their own material, for the first time they are editing it too". In our earlier *Extending Creative Practice* project, all of the participants, who were older people, learned how to edit their own stories, however this was the key driver of the project: to bridge the digital divide experienced by older people. Hardy & Sumner (2014) work extensively with people who have disabilities and impairments, including people with dementia. They describe the process of editing with people who cannot physically or cognitively manage to learn a digital editing programme within a workshop as becoming their 'digital chauffeur'. This is the approach I and my fellow facilitators adopted in Essex and in Portugal. In Essex, participants had a reluctance to engage with learning how to use even the computer that had been purchased specifically to enable them to make their own digital stories. Had we been able to give them a laptop each and plenty of support, the outcome may have been different. In Portugal, people's impairments made it impossible to include technical instruction into the process; and across all four of the sites, the participants did not actually *want* to engage in learning the editing package. The digital chauffeur method was a way in which to maintain the authorship of the shape of the stories, albeit that we must recognise that the facilitators' own creative approach to story structuring through editing does influence to some extent the way in which the stories are told (Poletti 2014; Hartley 2009). If participants do not engage with the technical editing process themselves, does this have an impact on the authenticity of their stories? Does it alter or diminish voice?

4.6 From process to product

The next chapter in this study will present the stories produced at each setting and comment on how the process influenced or shaped them. I will discuss form and content and examine themes emerging through the stories and reflect on how the process influenced participants' choice of story and the final form of their stories. It will also discuss audiences for the stories during and beyond the workshop period and reflect upon some of the ethical issues that arise from the use of personal stories made by older people in other contexts.

Chapter Five

The digital stories: data analysis and findings

Introduction

This chapter examines the digital stories created at the four data collection sites and discusses them in relation to the second research question: in what ways can older people's lives be reframed through their digital stories? The two sites in Portugal are presented together, as the stories were co-created during the same time period and the objective for this part of the study was to explore the use of digital storytelling within residential care home settings.

Being storytellers a*nd* storylisteners is fundamental to being human: we have stories and we *are* stories (Birren, Kenyon, Ruth, Schroots & Svensson 1996; Kenyon & Randall 1999:1; Randall 1995). Within the fields of narrative gerontology and humanistic gerontology, a prominent claim is that stories can give us valuable insights into the 'inside of ageing' (Kenyon & Randall. 1999:1); into what it *feels* like to grow old, what it *means* to grow old (Cole et al, 2010; Jenkins 2020:184). This study shares these epistemological positions in relation to the insights that we can gain through storytelling and, in particular, digital storytelling with older people, however it is not a gerontology study: the intent was not to study the process of ageing, nor the specific problems or challenges that older people have to manage in relation to ageing. In designing the digital storytelling workshops at all settings, participants were given free-reign in choosing what stories they wanted to tell, aided by undertaking the digital storytelling workshop processes. However, we can gain insights into older people's lives through providing the space for each of us participating in the workshops, to think about life as story (Kenyon, Ruth & Mader 1999; Ruth & Kenyon 1996); arguably, as a co-creative process with time to reflect – to listen and to tell – it is a heuristic process enabling each participant to discover or learn something about themselves for themselves, as well as learning about and from others. The telling of stories from life can reveal for us a number of dimensions, including personal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural ones, for example (Kenyon & Randall 1999:2) that may relate to ageing, but are not necessarily about ageing. The stories produced by older people in this study reveal these dimensions and more, not only in terms of their content, but also the ways in which participants chose to tell their stories using this multimodal form.

Digital stories are multimodal texts that have the capability of creating multiple layers of meaning through the collective contribution of their constituent parts (Hull & Nelson 2005:225). The opportunity to narrate life stories through this pedagogical practice (Hartley 2009; Poletti 2014:77) can provide the means to shift a one-dimensional story, perhaps an oft-told story, to become a dense text, a complex narrative (Pahl & Rowsell 2010:94). The form enables participants to step into a different space to impart life narrative. The digital storytelling process may enable participants to determine which element of a life story to tell and the role of the 'documents of life' (Plummer 1983:13) selected by storytellers, that could include family photographs, professionally commissioned images (such as wedding pictures), official documents like identity cards, passports, and press cuttings, provide the means to craft their stories with multiple dimensions of representation. (Brushwood Rose & Low 2014:30; Baars 2012). They may also have, during the story circle process, acted as memory triggers, hooks upon which to build autobiographical sequences (Baars 2012:183). The formal qualities of the 'genre' of digital storytelling, as stories based on lived experiences, coaxed from the participants within the workshop setting (Poletti 2011) are defined in the classic model through the seven steps approach. The key qualities of narrative accessibility, closure and coherence of theme are the means by which to liberate the storyteller from too many choices, not to curtail freedom of expression, but to help the storytellers craft their stories in ways that could enable them to enter a public sphere (Lambert 2016; Poletti 2011). Whilst I concur with this sentiment in theory, in practice it can also be a barrier to participation, especially when working with individuals with complex or challenging physical or cognitive conditions. Multimodality, though, can also provide a means by which people who would not usually want or be able to tell and share life stories to find a comfortable mode of expression, of self-representation that affords them the confidence or the aptitudes to do so. This study demonstrates this with examples from all of the research sites, such as John in Essex who was neither able nor wanted to speak in his own voice, but did want to share his story with others; in Portugal, Licínia used multimodal elements such as captioning to add additional information, or emphasise key narrative points that she wanted to communicate but felt hampered by her illness and Theodora was able to articulate some story fragments through the stimulus of the music and the photographs, despite her dementia.

The first section of this chapter presents each of the stories at all of the sites in summary form followed by a breakdown of the story elements and links to the stories themselves online. The second section draws out themes that emerge from the stories, comparing *what* life events participants chose to tell, whilst a simultaneous structural analysis discusses *how* they chose to tell their stories, the discussion shifting between the 'told' and the 'telling'.

(Reissman 2008:77). Through structural analysis, I examine how participants in this study used different modalities to tell their stories and what additional contexts and qualities the combinations of modalities they chose to present bring to them. I also explore how the use of different kinds of visual materials enhance, affirm or drive the narratives, as well as assessing the use of text within the stories in terms of the narrative role of captions. A detailed examination of two stories from the same historical period will determine how the multimodal layers contribute to the meaning of the story for storytellers and for audiences, before a concluding discussion explores the relationship between key elements of the digital storytelling process and the stories that have resulted from participation in this study.

5.1 Lewisham Stories: summaries

Two stories were produced at the Lewisham site and they were generated through one-to-one sessions with me, during the art club sessions that the two participants attended weekly.

5.1.1 Story 1: Stagefright!

'Stagefright' is about Ted's experience of his first public performance as a singer a few years ago. The story begins by talking about how he has always liked singing, at home, quietly on his own – anywhere in the house, in the bathroom, anywhere. He talks about his huge collection of music on records and CDs and his favourite songs: "Your Cheating Heart" and "I can't stop loving you" (which is also the song Ted is singing at the beginning and end of the story). In 2011, Ted went on a cruise around the Mediterranean with his daughter, June and on the last day she entered him for the talent show. Stricken with stage fright, he manages to overcome his nerves and now sings in public on a regular basis.

5.1.2 : Story 2 - A Boxing Club Down the Old Kent Road

Fred's story is about his memories of being a boxer, training and in competition in clubs in South East London. His script is based on a poem that he had constructed during group poetry sessions. He sets the scene by identifying with the qualities that were needed to get into the club – i.e. male and 'hard' and focused on training and improving. He describes the rigour of the training routine and the pressure to 'keep it up' and evokes the atmosphere of the boxing club through using the sounds associated with the training routines. We learn that Fred's boxing career was over by the time he was 15, but the toughness was also for living his life.

No	Title	Story-teller	Age	Dur	Topic	No. stills (personal)	No. stills sourced from Internet	No. stills created	Film/ Video clips	Voice	Text/ captions	Music/SFX	On-line
1	Stage fright	Ted	80+	3.08	Singing and performing – how it all started	9	4	1	2 clips	Ted v/o	Encoura-gement captions	Ted singing	Y
2	A Boxing Club on the Old Kent Road	Fred	80+	1.30	Life experience as a boxer	0	5	4	5 clips	Fred v/o	'Thwack!'	1960's boxing match sfx	N

Story No.	Link	Notes
1	https://vimeo.com/125595287	Silver Stories website
2	https://vimeo.com/377292237	Password protected

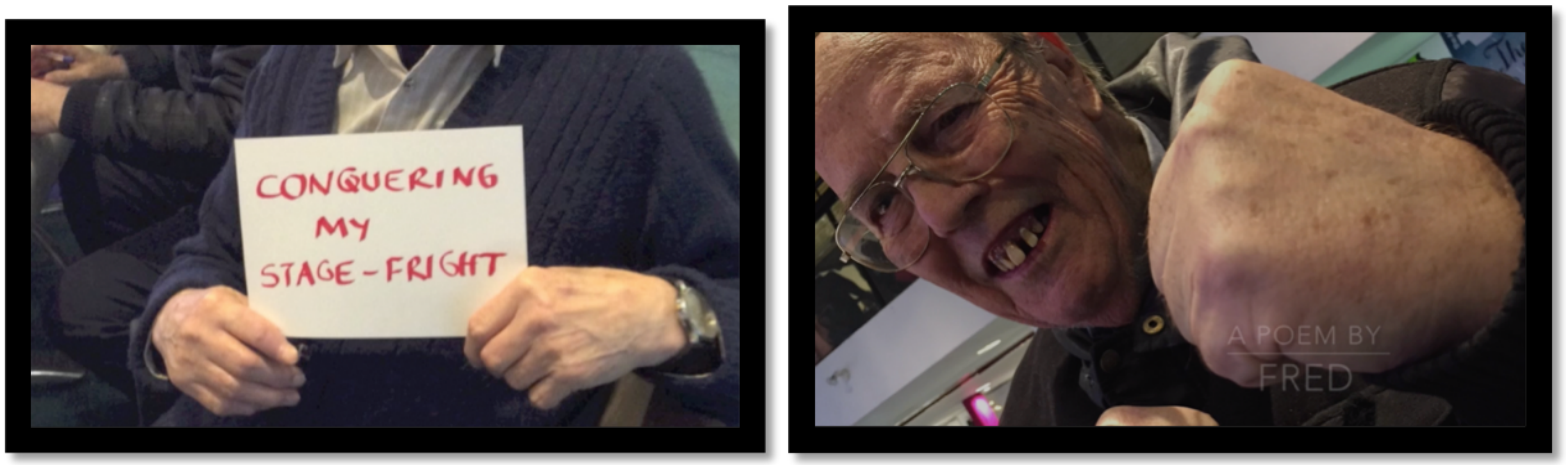


Figure 30: Summary of stories produced in Lewisham , links to the stories and opening shots from story 1 'Stage Fright' (left) and story 2 'A Boxing Ring down the Old Kent Road' (right)

5.2 Essex stories: summaries

Seven stories were produced at the Essex site, all of which, with the exception of John's story (Story 7) emerged from the story circle sessions that took place during the first weeks of the project. The technical construction of the stories were produced by working one-to-one with me and another staff member at the site in order to provide access to recording and editing equipment for each participant.

5.2.1 Story 1: The Story of the Teething Ring

Jan's story is set during the Blitz in World War Two, starting with the announcement that the family were bombed out in 1943, and that they had lost everything. It flashes back to the events leading up to the bombing, when Jan, a baby at the time, was at her grandmother's house, as was her mother, on the day that her father was due back home on leave from the Navy. Marking the occasion, her mother had washed her hair and was about to go home with Jan when her mother advised her against it. A neighbour tells them that their flat had been hit by a bomb. Viewing the site, all that was left was a huge hole in the ground, with their bed still visible at the bottom. People were digging to look for survivors and found a sailor's hat, which everyone assumed was her father's. However, it was their 'lucky day' because her father had not in fact made it on to the train home. All that survived the blast was the figurine from Jan's teething ring, which she has kept with her ever since.

5.2.2 Story 2: A tribute to Nan

"A Tribute to Nan" combines a digital story dedicated to the Rene's grandmother with cine film documenting life at The Cats pub in a village in Essex in the early years of World War Two and just after the end of the war. The story opens by introducing Rene's grandparents, who had come from Bethnal Green in London but who were re-housed to Woodham Walter owing to her Grandfather's post-war (World War One) health conditions. They lived at The Cats and Rene and her family moved to the village during the 1930s great depression. Because her mother was frequently unwell and her father was away for four and a half years during World War Two, Rene and her siblings spent a great deal of time at The Cats. She describes Nan's tough love approach, with an emphasis on manners and not making a fuss. She also goes on to describe the various visitors to the pub and the antics they got up to as children. She describes the visits of Uncle Chan, who had shot the film footage incorporated into the story and how at Christmas he would bring cinema equipment and show movies.

She ends the story by speaking of the respect that not only the family, but the whole village had for her grandmother and acknowledges her centrality to their lives.

5.2.3 Story 3: Who is Bertha?

'Who is Bertha?' is storyteller Eve's account of the lack of a story about what had happened to her father who had been taken prisoner of war in World War One, in Germany. She tells of how her father and mother met, and of some memories of her father during her childhood. The story then changes direction and begins to ask more questions than can be answered. It charts her quest to dig through war records to try to establish where her father was held captive and what happened to him during that period. As her father never talked about that time, this period of his life remains a mystery – except for the existence of a woman on the farm called Bertha. He spoke of Bertha, but it was never clear who she actually was. The story concludes with a series of questions about Bertha.

5.2.4 Story 4: Catwalk

In 'Catwalk', Diane tells of her modelling career when she worked for the London Cooperative Society in the East End. She describes attending Lucy Clayton's School of Deportment for training, modelling at the Festival Hall at the Co-Op's Exhibition and meeting famous people at catwalk shows. Having thoroughly enjoyed her time modelling, she curtailed her career when she got married in 1953.

5.2.5 Story 5: The Pleated Skirt

'The Pleated Skirt' by Janet (sister of Diane) sets the scene through a series of captions which describe the outbreak of diphtheria in postwar Britain and how this had caused her to spend lengthy periods in hospital. Returning to school behind in her studies, she decribes the new skirts that she and her sister had been given school: a box pleated skirt for her, and a pleated skirt for her sister. She would have loved a pleated skirt. The story builds upon this theme of the older sister, with dark hair and eyes, looking better in photographs and getting better things. She says that she was not jealous, but she was always 'doing herself down' and this was simply how she felt as a child. Despite this early rivalry, she describes how once they had families, they spent more time together and are now very close. Closing captions explain that the pleated skirt is a long-running family joke, but that she will always be 'the girl without the pleated skirt'.

5.2.6 Story 6: The Wedding

'The Wedding' opens with a video sequence of storyteller Molly as she turns the pages of her photograph album of her daughter's wedding. As her voice over begins, she gives an account of how her daughter met her future husband, their reaction to the wedding announcement and the subsequent ceremony that took place in Maldon in Essex. She describes a trip to Malaysia for a further reception that had been organised by her son in law's family – a trip of a lifetime. She describes the traditional saris that she and her daughter wore and how she felt like royalty. The story concludes with her pride about her children and grandchildren and finishes with a video sequence mirroring the opening of the story.

5.2.7 Story 7: Travel, Adventure, Service

'Travel, Adventure, Service' is told through written captions and a military music sound track accounting for John's service overseas in the RAF from 1963 to his final days as a police officer before retirement and moving to the housing scheme. The story describes how he and his fellow officers spent their free time, what training they undertook and gives a chronological account of the various postings abroad. There is a final posting to Northern Ireland in 1972-3 before returning to England to join the Ministry of Defence Police at Salisbury Plain. The final part of the story covers awards and honours he received, and his campaign to be allowed to wear the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (JPM) Medal. The story charts a lifetime's service, followed by John's campaigning for recognition of that service.

No.	Title	Story-teller		Dur.	Topic	No. stills (personal)	No. stills sourced from Internet	No. stills created	Film/ Video clips	Voice	Text/ captions	Music/SFX	On-line
1	The Story of the Teething Ring	Jan	70+	2:12	WW2 bombing survival	10 album	4 (bomb-sites)	1 teether	0	JM v/o	Tribute at end	Air raid sirens, bombing and 'In the Mood'	N
2	A Tribute to Nan	Rene	80+	7:51	Childhood and Grandmother's role	17 album and screen grabs	3 Poster and tarpot men	9 (visit to The Cats)	6 clips trans-fer from cine film	RC v/o Audio Richard Tauber	Captions to identify people. Tribute.	Copyright free library piano/silent movie effect/ Richard Tauber	Y
3	Who is Bertha?	Eve	80+	3:05	Father prisoner of war, WW1 mystery	4: 3 x Father; 1 x mother.	8: historical documents and papers; 3 images of possible Berthas.	4 Father's war docu-ments	0	EL v/o	9 – Info. And questions	Copyright free library music Ophelia's Dream	Y
4.	Catwalk	Diane	80+	2:50	Pre-marriage modelling career	14: Catwalk shots & wedding	1: location shots Co-Op	4: News-paper clipping	0	DM v/o	9 Feelings	Copyright free 'In Your Arms' K.Mcleod	Y
5	The Pleated Skirt	Janet	70+	3:10	Childhood experiences and sibling relationship.	11: family album	3: Diptheria posters & hospital	0	0	JL v/o	5 – inform-ation and inner feelings	Copyright free piano	Y
6	The Wedding	Molly	80+	2:58	Account of daughter's wedding in UK and Malaysia	21: wedding photos/ family album	1: airborne plane	1 Freeze frame	1 opening sequenc e	MF v/o	1 Infor-mation	Copyright free Chopin Etude in E flat	Y
7	Travel, Adventure, Service	John	70+	3:02	Account of life serving in the Forces.	22: mainly shots in service	0	6: hand holding photo	0	No v/o	Caption narration	RAF Reg. March Holyrood	N

Story No.	Link	Notes
1	https://vimeo.com/206221900	Restricted access:
2	https://vimeo.com/145657116	Silver Stories website
3	https://vimeo.com/142780687	Silver Stories website
4	https://vimeo.com/135666123	Silver Stories website
5	https://vimeo.com/152876977	Silver Stories website
6	https://vimeo.com/206222323	Restricted Access:
7	https://vimeo.com/206222004	Restricted access:

Fig. 31 Summary of stories produced in Essex, links to the stories and stills from story two (left) and story one (centre and right)

5.3 Portugal stories – summaries

Five stories were produced at the two residential care homes in central Portugal, using story circle to initiate story ideas and then working one-to-one with each participant to create their stories, alongside newly trained digital storytelling facilitators who were staff at each of the homes.

5.3.1 Story 1: Vidreios de Palmo e Meio (Glass making and glazing)

'Glass making and Glazing' talks about his lifelong work as a glass-maker which he states, although a difficult profession, if given a chance he would do it all over again. He describes the profession as being artistic and enjoyed most of all making crystal glasses. The story is also about a hard childhood, having been sent to work at the glass factory at nine years of age after just two years of schooling. He also describes working barefoot until his mother bought him some sandals, but to make them last longer, he could not wear them at work and she would check to see if the soles had sand in them to make sure. Carlos describes working his way up from apprentice to manager and his appreciation of team work, summing up his working life as 'good times'.

5.3.2 Story 2: Às vezes acho que já não sou quem era (Sometimes I think I am not who I was any more)

Licínia, begins by describing her early working life selling toys in a shop, which she loved but it proved to be less than profitable, so she moved to France to join her sister. Everything was going well for her until she felt that her body was "acting strangely". She visited the doctor and was hospitalised, the diagnosis being multiple sclerosis. As her condition deteriorated, she returned to her house in Portugal, where she lived alone and was helped by a friend when she needed it. The story concludes with a sad but resigned announcement about needing to go to the nursing home to live when she could no longer care for herself.

5.3.3 Story 3: 25 anos de Felicidade (25 years of happiness)

Lucía tells the story of the church mass and house party to celebrate her silver wedding anniversary. She says that she wanted to show how good it was for a couple to love each other for 25 years through marriage and a happy family. The story describes her three daughters and then goes on to talk about the celebration. She describes how they were not allowed flowers in the Church because it was during Advent, however they were allowed to decorate it and her daughters took charge of this. They waited to cut the anniversary cake until the priest joined the party afterwards and had a very happy day.

5.3.4 Story 4: Teodora a cuidadora (Teodora the care giver)

This is a fragmented story about the importance of music in Teodora's life and her role throughout her life as a care giver in many contexts, from having to take care of her old-fashioned father and her siblings to her husband, who she married late in life knowing that he was very sick. She describes working day and night doing embroidery, on sheets, towels and linens and then caring full-time for her husband. She ends the story returning to how, even as she grows sicker, she still remembers the Turquel band playing.

5.3.5 Story 5: Casa comigo (Marry me)

This is a story of unrequited love. Elisa lived with her family in Alcobaça in central Portugal. She had a 'namorado' – a boyfriend called Raimundo who would visit the family home very often. She dated him for six years and eventually he asked her father if they could marry. She describes how she would communicate with him from the window of the house, using a small slate and chalk, as he stood outside. She describes how he moved to Lisbon but continue to visit regularly. She was reluctant to tie the knot at first, because she did not want to go to Lisbon, as she did not like the capital city and knew nobody there. After a visit by another woman who announces that she would be the one to marry Raimundo, Elisa ended her engagement. Raimundo emigrated and thirty years later he returned and told her that he knew that she had never married, and he had not either. They thought again about a future together, but he became sick, had an operation and she never saw him again. She reflects that she has spent her life thinking about him.

No	Title	Story-teller	Age	Dur.	Topic	No. stills (personal)	No. stills sourced from Internet	No. stills created	Film/ Video	Voice	Text/ captions	Music/SFX	On-line
1	Vidreios de Palmo e Meio (Glass making and glazing)	Carlos	80+	2:13	Childhood poverty, child labour, and working in the glass industry	None	5	0	0	Carlos v/o	Tribute at end	Portuguese guitar traditional music	Y
2	Às vezes acho que já não sou quem era (Sometimes I think I'm not who I was any more)	Licínia	50+	1:34	Living with Multiple Sclerosis	2	4	1	0	Licinia v/o	Enhance v/o with further narrative info.	Melancholic music	Y
3	25 anos de Felicidade (25 years of happiness)	Lúcia	70+	3:33	25th wedding anniversary celebration; importance of family; religion.	7	0	0	0	Lúcia v/o	9 – Info. And questions	Traditional Portuguese accordian music	Y
4.	Teodora a cuidadora (Teodora: caretaker)	Teodora	80+	1:30	Fragmented elements of life story; importance of the philharmonia band; family;	7	1	0	0	Teodora v/o	Life info.	Portuguese philharmonia band music	Y
5	Casa comigo (Marry Me)	Elisa	100	3:35	Unrequited love; family life and attitudes.	4	3	0	0	Elisa v/o	0	Melancholic piano.	Y

Story No.	Link	Notes
1	https://vimeo.com/133992137	Silver Stories website
2	https://vimeo.com/133992136	Silver Stories website
3	https://vimeo.com/133990474	Silver Stories website
4	https://vimeo.com/132518824	Silver Stories website
5	https://vimeo.com/129659891	Silver Stories website

Fig.32: Summaries of stories produced in Portugal, links to stories and stills from story 2 (left) and story three (right)

5.4 The stories: thematic and structural analysis

The digital storytelling process enabled older people in this study to identify, tell and share stories from their lived experiences. This arguably open process placed the onus on the participants to 'come up with' their stories themselves, rather than responding to interview questions, or a story brief (e.g. tell us about your experiences of wartime Britain), or identifying particular "phases" or "stages" of the life course. Rather than asking older people to tell life stories from pre-determined themes, the stories that emerge through digital storytelling enable them to identify meaningful themes for themselves (Baars 2012:186). The themes identified below provide in some cases narrative drivers, whilst in others narrative context. The stories include grand narratives shared by many and unique narratives, belonging only to the storyteller, intertwined and represented in the storytellers' chosen voices.

5.4.1 Family interventions and life-changing events

All except two of the stories refer to family members and in some, particular family members are the main characters whose actions changed the course of the storyteller's life or had a profound influence on their life's trajectory. In the case of Ted's story *Stage-fright*, it is his daughter's intervention, entering him into the talent contest during their cruise holiday, that marks a turning point in his life and a change in his identity since that point. Ted's is not a story reaching far back into childhood, but a relatively recent event that brings his story from past to present, with a sense of looking forward to a continuing future

"Stage-fright" is a tribute to Ted's daughter, acknowledging her role in his shift from shower singer to stage singer. It is also a story of achievement and is linked to his own perception of his identity and his profile in the public domain. This is significant in terms of working with older people, in that this story is another way in which Ted can document his journey to recognition and promote his singing identity to a wider audience, projecting into the future rather than presenting something from the past (Baars 2012:7). He speaks the moment of change in his daughter's words after she had announced her 'surprise' – "You'll be alright Dad" – and this is further emphasised by his use of an animated caption of the same words on screen, as though seeing for the first time, his name in lights. Ted's shift in identity is further illustrated by the use of professionally generated images of him performing at various shows over recent years, that take the story from his identity as 'Dad/Ted' to 'performer/Ted'.

Fig. 33: Professional still from a subsequent performance

Ted makes use of a classic story arc structure, setting the scene, the 'state of being' with his love of music and singing at home, introducing the cruise holiday, using a conversation between him and June at the moment that he discovers his impending public singing engagement to add to the dramatic effect. He builds to the moment of the stage-fright using description to emphasise the size of the theatre, the full orchestra and the sense of intimidation building within him. After his dedication to June, we see him in action through a montage of still images and video clips of public performances, as he sings his favourite song on the soundtrack, a demonstration of a talent now recognised, a new state of being concluding the narrative.

Jan's *The story of the teething ring* is dedicated to her parents and was prompted by the object she brought to the story circle. The decision point in the story is again an intervention by a family member, her grandmother, that was to change the course of the lives of her whole immediate family. Jan also employs a classic story arc, she sets the story at her grandmother's house and provides the wartime context. To mark that moment, like Ted, she quotes the words of her grandmother verbatim to represent that crucial decisive moment, the consequences of which saved their lives: "Don't go home with your hair all wet, stay here". Jan uses the dramatic effect of knocking at the door to introduce the announcement from a neighbour of the bomb that had destroyed the family home around the corner. She concludes the story with a perfect account of the cause-effect sequencing of events that brings us to the conclusion of the narrative introduction of the object – the teething ring - that acquires the status of talisman, a lucky charm, a reminder for ever of the circumstances that together contributed to the family's survival. As she reaches the conclusion, the emotion in her voice can be clearly heard on the audio track:

> *"If Mum hadn't have washed her hair, we wouldn't be here to tell the tale. [Struggling to keep going with emotion in voice].*

We were all safe and sound. And this little figure that was my teething ring survived the blast. [Voice wavering, almost in tears] And I've had it with me ever since".

The story, sparked by the bringing of the teething ring to the story circle, is an individual's memory not of the event itself, given that the storyteller was a baby at the time the story was set. It had elicited a deeply felt story, conveyed the danger, the fear and the subsequent relief (Pahl & Rowsell 2010:49). It is a memory of the telling of that story by a family member, perhaps the mother or the grandmother. The narrator tells the story as if she were consciously able to recall the elements of the story herself, including details like the sight of the bed 'still made up' at the bottom of the bomb crater. It is a survival story that has found its way into family mythology.

In both cases, the considered use of dramatic pacing, the performing of the words of the key characters whose actions represented key moments of change and the conscious use of cause-effect storytelling draw the audience/listener into the centre of the participants' story landscapes, whilst the shape of the story moves the plot forward. In Jan's story, at the moment we hear about the searching in the rubble and the finding of a sailor's hat, the implication that this could have been her father's, is given further dramatic emphasis by the use of a cropped image of the hat he had been seen wearing in an earlier part of the story, when she introduced her parents as characters, using their formal portrait photos, him in uniform, at the beginning of the story. This poignant selection of image at this point represents the climax of the story before revealing that, after all, all was well.

5.4.2 Identity and self-deprecation

In *The Pleated Skirt* Janet sets the scene for a narrative of self-deprecation, having suffered from Diphtheria in the 1943 epidemic, the long hospital stay setting her behind her peers at school. The incident for the turning point in the story comes with the introduction of the much-told pleated skirt incident, which is told using similar words, tone of voice and emphasis to when the story is re-told in countless social situations:

"*We had new blouses and new skirts and I had a box-pleat*ed skirt (slight pause and wry smile can be felt through the way she says the following words) .. *and my sister… being the eldest … had a pleated (emphasised) skirt. And I would have loved to have had a pleated skirt* (chuckling)… *really, really would have loved to have had a pleated skirt…"*

Janet did not create a script for her story, so what follows is more a reflective series of observations in which she compares herself with her sister Dianne, rather than a conclusion to the pleated skirt narrative.

> *"I do think that people with dark eyes make a much better photograph than people with pale grey eyes, because they just look … they're anaemic looking I think in a picture... I'm not going to say I was jealous of her, I think it was all my own fault really."*

It is a story of sibling rivalry within a family, accepted ideas about what constitutes feminine beauty at that time, likely influenced by the impressive portfolio of modelling photographs featuring her sister Diane. Janet is critical of her own physical attributes, as well as being resentful of being a younger sibling in receipt of hand-me-downs, something she had mentioned before in the story circle sessions.

Despite the happy family photographs that form the final montage to accompany her more positive reflections, her use of a closing caption superimposed on an image of her as a child counters this (figure 5.4.2(b), returning to her original presentation of self, as the sister that is lacking, articulating the unsaid feelings that are usually masked and suppressed by the telling and re-telling of a humorous story amongst family and friends, without actually voicing them.

Fig. 34 – Use of caption to reveal true feeling

Even though Janet's sister Diane was not knowingly an influence on Janet's identity or perception of herself, the pleated skirt incident came to symbolise exactly how Janet positioned herself in relationship to her sister. Janet had shared a story in the story circle about her promising career at the House of Worth in haute couture – arguably a much more

skilled occupation, making rather than modelling complex, intricate and expensive gowns. However, she did not want to focus her story on her achievements; she wanted and perhaps needed to turn that running joke into a more thoughtful self-reflection that could be shared with her sister and with her friends.

5.4.3 Loss of identity through illness

Licínia's story, "As vezes acho que já não sou quem era" (Sometimes I think I'm not who I was any more") focuses on losing her identity through the impact of multiple sclerosis. She tells her story using a mix of her own voice, which is quite weak and faltering owing to the stage of her disease, and captions, which reflects in the form of the story her own physical and mental state. "I can remember what I was once and can tell you who I am" she begins the story, using captions and brightly coloured imagery of children's toys to evoke her happiness in her work with children. The point of change in this story comes with her diagnosis, which she both speaks and writes *"My body began to act strangely, I did not understand well, I went to the doctor"*. Continuing to describe through captions the deterioration in her condition until she could no longer do anything for herself at home, her weak and exhausted sounding voice joins her captions again at the point of needing full time care. She speaks and captions:" Maria Licínia Mendes Ferreira, 53 years old. I didn't want to go to a home, but it is better for me". The prominence of announcing her age at the end of the story underlines her despondency of having to live in a home for old people at such a young age, despite concluding the story with some captions of gratitude for how the staff care for her. She does not speak anything after her announcement. It powerfully adds to the feeling of her loss of identity and agency – it is the last time we hear her spoken voice.

Teodora's fragmented story holds on to key moments in her life that she is still able to recall, stimulated by memories of loving music. She presents her identity as having always been a care-giver as a daughter, then a wife, now infirm herself, unable to care for even herself. The story was assembled from the fragments by the facilitator, but its form captures what is left of her voice and represents movingly the gradual erasure of identity that occurs through degenerative disease.

All of these stories use specific incidents – the skirt, the moment of diagnosis, the image of the filarmonia band – to address lingering issues concerning their fragile identities, not as a deliberate choice of story theme, but they trigger such reflections, both consciously and unconsciously.

5.4.4 Rituals and attitudes for life

Both Molly in Essex and Lucía in Portugal knew from the outset that they wanted to use the workshop opportunity to celebrate in Molly's case the wedding of her daughter and the growth of their cross-cultural family, whilst Lucia's story guides us through her happy 25th wedding anniversary celebrations. Each use family albums devoted to these specific events and the story is led by the order of the photographs in the album in both cases. In Molly's film, 'The Wedding', the key decision moment from which the story moves on was her daughter's concern upon announcing her engagement:

> *Annette was worried about how Brian and I would react to having a future son in law from South East Asia. She needn't have worried because as soon as we met Jerry we were won over.*
> *Fig. 5.4.4(a) Transcript from audio The Wedding*

This anxiety reflects some of the social attitudes prevalent in the UK at the time (and, unfortunately, continuing today) towards race and this is further underlined by Molly's choice of words, as having been 'won over'. In talking with Molly informally and about her story, it was clear that they had not literally needed to be persuaded of Jerry's suitability for their daughter, but Annette's anxiety and the use of that particular colloquialism encapsulates some of those national attitudes that are so deeply embedded in UK culture.

From this point onwards, Molly proudly describes the reception party and how she was made to feel by the experience

> *The reception was unlike anything we'd ever experienced. I felt like royalty standing at the end of the line shaking hands of so many of Jerry's family and friends. Jerry's best man said I looked like The Queen greeting her subjects.*
> *Fig. 5.4.4(b) Transcript from audio – The Wedding*

This observation was certainly said in jest, however as a former British colony, there is some sense of irony in this observation again of absorbed history expressed as a popular national trope.

In '25 years of happiness' Lucia firmly identifies her story as a celebration of her silver wedding anniversary at the beginning, and there is a strong presence of the religious importance of the day and of the institution of marriage itself. The priest's presence was so

important that, even after the religious ceremony, they would not cut the cake until he arrived at their home. Lucia also uses the story to communicate a message to her daughters, the centrality of her faith in the building of a happy and successful family life:

> *In joy and depth of the Christian faith, I think that is what I transmitted to my daughters… I had asked God, I wanted to have some children … I was happy, I had four children.*

The end of her story is a message for the audience to take away, which sounds almost like a religious commandment: "*All couples must love and respect as I did with my husband".*

In *Casa Comigo (Marry Me)* Elisa tells the very moving story of the wedding that never happened. She speaks of a six-year courtship before Raimundo finally asked her father for permission to marry, *"because that was how it was supposed to be in those days".*

Fig. 35: The flirting window at Elisa's house

The condition of their union was for her to join him in Lisbon and Elisa recounts how initially she did not want to marry him on those terms, "*Yet I finally said 'Yes' but it was always with great doubt because I knew no-one in Lisbon."* However, the key decision point in the story comes with the knock at the door at her parents' house and a 'certain lady' informs her that she will be the one to marry Raimundo. Elisa uses the dialogue between them at this point as though she has remembered this precise moment for her whole life:

> *"I know that you used to date Raimundo, but I'm the one who will marry him…". I replied: 'You will marry him?' and she said 'Yes, and my employers will be the godparents'. And I believed her. Then she added 'You know, he owes me my honour'... That was when I ended my engagement".*

As Elisa tells her story, the pitch of her voice and its cadence reflects moments of humour (flirting, using the slate), pensiveness (it was how it was supposed to be in those days) and finally sadness, shedding tears as she shares a life of longing, having only a couple of photographs and her unused marriage quilt remaining. The way in which she tells her story shares some characteristics of the classic Portuguese Fado, presenting extreme emotions, taking us through joy and sorrow, major and minor keys before a final dramatic statement:

> *"Ele morreu. Quando me lembro a ver as fotografias dele e foi assim a minha vida". "He died. When I think of him I look at his pictures, and that's how I spent my life". (Voice quavers, tears).*

All three stories focus on the marriage ritual as a given determinant of women's life stories. However, in all three stories, in very different ways, the individual, personal identity of the storyteller is defined by that ritual. Molly's story is neither about her, nor her own wedding, but is more a presentation of her pride in her multicultural family, perhaps defending it and celebrating it to counter critique. In Lucia's story, she narrates what happened, and presents almost a homily to the institution of marriage, as a life lesson to future generations. Her story does not give us any sense of her as an individual beyond the role of wife and mother (although we knew from other conversations with her, that she had been the first female licenced taxi driver in her region). For Elisa, the absence of the ritual of marriage that almost happened twice, dominates her story that spans her whole adult life; even in *not* experiencing the wedding ritual, the institution of marriage has determined how she has lived her life, disappointed and heartbroken for more than eight decades.

5.4.5 Work, achievement and gender

Diane's story, 'Catwalk' also mentions marriage but rather than marking the beginning of a new period of life, it marks the end of a promising career as a model. This story was not crafted through the story circle, as Dianne, like her sister Janet, did not want to write a script, but she had brought a box of photos from her modelling days to show to the group. The story was more of an account of those days, led by the images to prompt each story episode. Diane describes how she was chosen to model in some of the larger Co-operative stores, having worked at the Beckenham store since leaving school at the age of 15. She speaks proudly of having received professional training and working alongside professional models and meeting many famous people whilst using her modelling photographs to illustrate her reminiscences (Figs 36-39). She uses the word 'professional' a number of times

in this sequence and although there is no narrative arc leading to a climax shaping the story, there is clearly pride expressed in the tone of her voice.

Fig. 36 We were sent to London to the Lucy Clayton School of Deportment where the professional models went".

Fig. 37: "I can in my mind visualise that dress 'cos that dress was a lovely apricot colour".

Diane's audio is akin to being shown through her photograph collection rather than listening to a crafted story. Her voice over ends:

> *I enjoyed my time on the catwalk, it was such a lovely experience, very nerve-racking. I was then going out with a young man and it began to get serious so I guess that love took over and we married in 1953.*

A further montage of images lead the story to a close, her 'professional voice' ending with a classic wedding photograph followed by snippets of press clippings anchored by captions that seem to represent wistful thoughts. (Fig 38)

Fig.38: captions and press clippings take the story to its close.

This story characterises dominant narratives pervading particularly working class women's career trajectories during the 1950s, that a woman's place is in the home. Most girls left school at 15 and, if they did train and/or enter employment, they would leave once married (Spencer 2005). The story does not incorporate other family members, nor reveal much about her life before the catwalk days and the abrupt ending of her vocally told story with the classic wedding photograph almost suggests that her identity thereafter does not need a story – there is an implied shared understanding of what married life constituted for women, with no 'story' distinct enough to tell from within that life phase.

John's story, told through written captions and a military music sound track, covers the whole of John's service overseas in the RAF from 1963 to his final days as a police officer before retirement and moving to the housing scheme. The story describes how he and his fellow officers spent their free time, what training they undertook and gives a chronological account of the various postings abroad as a member of 23 (LAA) Squadron BFPO 53 (John was insistent on using exact military terminology throughout). The story journey starts in Nicosia, Cyprus, in May 1963 and moves on to the next post in Borneo in 1963-4. A snippet of detail is provided through captions: "Single rooms with mosquito nets" and "Playing cards with the lads". The story moves on to an image of John dangling from a Whirlwind helicopter,

engaging in winch practice with the caption “Me hanging on for dear life … or grim death” (Fig.39) .As discussed in Chapter Four, capturing exact turns of phrase to incorporate into what is otherwise a fragmented series of moments, almost memory flashes, both vague and detailed simultaneously, was an important mechanism with which to attempt to help John voice his story, albeit through captions and photos.

Details that were more than providing information of locations and dates provided a glimmer of insight into how John lived during those years, a fleeting glimpse of his personality. On ‘R&R’ (rest and relaxation) at Victoria Falls we learn, through a caption: “I gave a khaki shirt to a local in exchange for a drum”, one of the few details not associated with military tasks and a sense that John had a communicative life beyond receiving and carrying out orders.

Figure 5.4.5(e) Voiced through captions

Although this story does not focus on a single moment, and covers many years it does work towards a climax in the charting of a lifetime’s service followed by the campaigning for recognition of that service (Fig. 5.4.5(f))

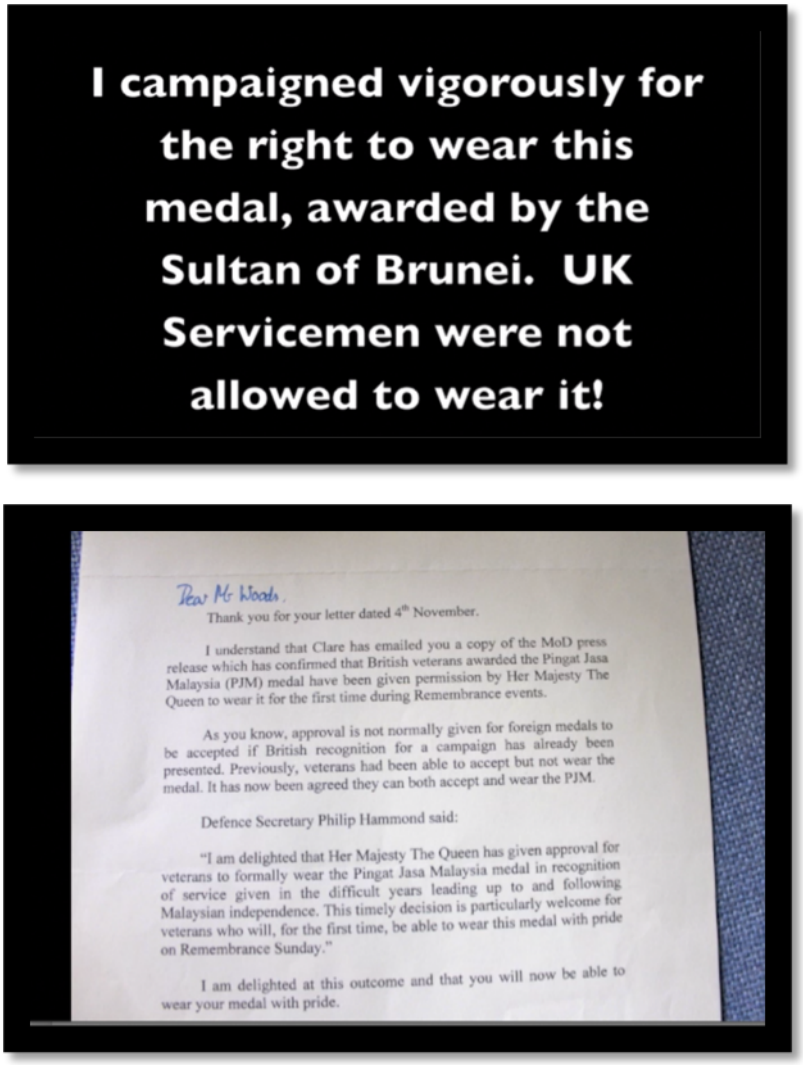


Fig.40: Screen shots showing campaigning for the right to wear the PJM medal and press cutting

Like Diane, John makes use of press clippings and photographs of him in action, underlining the recognition in the wider public sphere they both achieved in their careers, whether short-lived like Diane's or the single event – life in service - that for John represented his whole identity. John's story can also be read as a micro story within the bigger nation story of the dismantlement of the British Empire in the post-Suez period, when Britain divested itself of most colonial holdings and abandoned most power positions in Africa and Asia. His choice of music to drive the narrative forward, images changing in time to the beat like a military march, conjures up the opposite story, of military prowess and empire building.

As Diane's story presents her modelling that in the 1950s would have been seen as exclusively a female career, John's story is firmly located as male territory. Its presentation of exotic locations and 'derring-dos', encapsulated in photographs and captions, are

reminiscent of the popular boys' comics in circulation at that time. Focussing on his career, he barely mentions family, although the story does cover a long period of his lifetime during which he was married. His story is about citizenship rather than kinship; his identity is firmly and persistently located in his career, serving his country.

5.4.6 Glimpses of harsh childhoods

Fred's story 'A Boxing Ring down the Old Kent Road' conveys his brief boxing history as a child and teenage boxer. Boxing, within the social history of the East End of London has often been represented as a product of working class poor communities, reflecting the harsh realities of life on the streets, violence and crime (Sugden 1996: 181). However, Fred's account of his experience would seem to reflect almost a sanctuary from it, where the potential for aggressive tendencies could be channelled to good effect (Wacquant 2004:17). He paints a picture of the atmosphere of the club as a place where hard work and practice, a dedication to training were key to success.

A Boxing Ring down the Old Kent Road

by Fred

You had to be hard to get into that place.
Boys ran, training, fighting.
Some keep to themselves, and
Some chattering, all different languages.
Sounds around the gym.
Click click.
That day I was on the bag.
Click Click. Keep it up!
The more practice you get, the more better you can be.
Started boxing at 5 and retired at 15.
You can't keep on and on.
Skipping! Thwack!
Skipping! Thwack!
34 times.
Moving your feet was important, moving your hands as well.
Sparring, so close you can smell the other man.
Red, white and blue lights above the ring,
White canvas, fine foot work.
Old what's name used to go in the ring up there
but he's dead now.
Henry Cooper, that's it.
His brother used to come by too.
Boxing was a favourite of mine.
Taught me to be tough, not just for boxing but for life.
Keep your head up and let it come to you.

Fig. 41: Fred's poem: A boxing ring down the Old Kent Road

The skills that could only be developed through repetitive regimes are highlighted and the very rhythm of movement in the ring is captured by Fred's use of the senses in his delivery of the story. Not unlike Diane's reference to sharing the catwalk with professional models, Fred ensures that the status of the club is recognised through his mention of boxing legend Henry Cooper. He also suggests that these were life skills developed in the ring, survival strategies, a way in which to fulfil the need to present tough masculinity. The addition of sound effects from professional boxing matches adds atmosphere and context to Fred's spoken audio poem, in which he articulates the sounds of training sessions in the ring (see Fig. 41 above).

Turning to the Portuguese stories, 'Glass making and glazing' is less an account of Carlos's lifelong profession as a glass-maker, a profession of which he was clearly very proud, more a fascinating first-hand account of poverty, childhood, and child labour in Portugal during the mid 1940s. Despite the fact that the legal minimum age for work was twelve, he was made to work at the glass factory at the age of 9 – and his brother even earlier, at 7. This exploitation was clearly an accepted practice at the factory, and the only time when the boys employed at the factory were able to behave as children, as Carlos explains:

> *For three years, when the inspectors came to the factory, I and the other child workers had to hide under the platform. It was at this time that we would play cowboys. Children's things! Life was difficult.*

Carlos tells the story of the new sandals that his mother bought him, having been barefoot until this time. He was not, however, allowed to wear them for the walk to and from the factory, to make them last longer, such was the extent of the family's poverty. Having focused on this aspect, Carlos's story is also another 'achievement' story in that he describes working his way up to a management position and enjoying the teamwork and camaraderie with his colleagues, ending his story *'Bons tempos' (Good times).*

Both stories provide insights into childhood poverty and deprivation in London's East End and in rural Portugal. Carlos set out to present his achievement through his lifelong career as a highly skilled glassmaker, but, perhaps because of having no photographic record of these times, or perhaps because he wanted to show the achievement journey, from humble beginnings to respectable manager, the most animated elements of his story are about childhood exploitation, although they are not presented as such: it is not with anger or regret that he presents his lost childhood, but rather as a given of survival at the time. Fred's story takes us into the physical and emotional environment of the boxing ring through his poetic

representation of the training regime, whilst revealing the harshness of street life in a part of London with multiple deprivation so prevalent.

5.4.7 Nation Stories – Wartime Britain

Of the stories created in Essex two were set during the World War Two and one refers to World War One. War stories were not a feature in the Portuguese setting, which is not particularly surprising, given Portugal's 'neutral' political position during that period. As Meadows (2003:190) observes, family photo archives represent stories that have only been shared with family and friends, but they are also part of the bigger picture of our times and of our country.

Both Jan's and Rene's stories illuminate the macro nation story of World War Two by providing us with the perspective of ordinary families living everyday lives as best they could in extraordinary times. Jan's story shines a light on the personal 'near miss' experience of a family in London, which adds another dimension to the 'big' stories of the London Blitz that are generally to be found in institutional settings such as museums and archives. Jan provides this context through the use of archive photographs of London bombsites alongside her own family album photographs of her parents, grandparents and her as a baby. The sequencing of the family album photographs with stock imagery, anchored by the content of the story and its narration in the storyteller's own voice, at her own pace, using her own words provides insights into families and family relationships at that time and into neighbours and communities (coming to 'break the news', searching the bombed-out site together). It enables us not simply to see the destruction of a community in terms of its physical annihilation, but also to feel the anxiety, the constant fear of losing one's life, or the loss of the life of a loved one. The audible crack in the storyteller's voice as she nears the end of the story, as she attempts to control the tears, tells us something about how such experiences can affect a person for the whole of their life. (Jenkins & Hardy 2020).

Rene's story, also set during the years of World War Two, can be seen as a micro-story that contributes a different perspective to Jan's story and to the perhaps more familiar nation/macro-story of the war. Although the story is set in World War Two, apart from the father's absence and an image of a soldier in uniform within the cine-footage, there is little sense of wartime in the story itself and no other mention of its impact on Rene or on the family or local community as a whole. Unlike in Jan's story, the war barely forms a backdrop and is not a key motivating element of the narrative.

Eve, however, tells of a World War One story that was never told. Her father was taken prisoner of war and worked on a farm in Germany, but that was all that she knew about this time, as he rarely spoke of the experience. She narrates the story clues that she has and the story gaps that can never be filled:

> *But I always wondered what had happened to him during World War One. We know he was at Ypres twice, Wipers he used to call it. We know he had been hurt in his right arm; he used to like to show his war wound when I was a child. We know his regiment – here's the evidence from the war records. But this is all we have and that is where it stops. However hard you try, when you are looking for the history of ordinary soldiers and their experiences as prisoners of war, they just don't seem to exist. These documents tell us everything and nothing.*

Fig. 42: Transcription from audio track 'Who is Bertha? And accompanying image of war record.

Her story introduces her father, "a kind and lovely man" and gives an account of his occupations during and post wars, first and second, and how he met her mother. She uses the two studio portraits of her parents in the narrative, which were printed on glass – these objects were what she had brought to the story circle. She uses repetition of 'we know' to set up the investigation that her story embodies. The imagery accompanying this section of the story are all stock images from the trenches, newspaper headings and official war records, emphasising how little she and her family actually know about her father's life during these times. Her use of stereotypical images in her speculation of who Bertha was, and what was she like, although used humorously, resonates with what was the known phenomena of war children (Bethmann & Kvasnicka 2012) and speculation commonly experienced by women when separated by war, into their partners' faithfulness.

War stories, especially World War Two stories remain a significant element of British national identity and during the campaigning before the 2016 UK Referendum on

membership of the European Union and continuing now that the UK has formally left the EU, right wing British politicians have weaponised the popular mythology of Britain 'winning the war' single-handedly saving Europe (with a bit of help from the Americans). That is not to say that these stories are in the least bit flag-waving – they are not. The wars (both first and second) are a backdrop to living through turbulent times, in which the stories of everyday survival are the antithesis to the populist nation story of victory.

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the stories created at each of the four data collection sites and explored how older people have presented elements of their lives through their digital stories. A thematic analysis drew out some common threads across the stories, however most stories contained elements from several themes. A structural analysis embedded within the thematic analysis enabled a discussion of what was told and how it was told simultaneously in order to explore how different multimodal elements collaborated to lead, illustrate or enhance the narratives. In narrative research that has drawn from interview conversations, it is the job of the researcher to transform 'messy' spoken language to make it readable (Riessman 2008:58). In asking participants to transform the way in which they might tell their stories in a conversation to a tightly crafted script, they undertake that first level of interpretation themselves. In the two Essex stories, Catwalk and The Pleated Skirt, in which sisters Janet and Diane did not want to write a script, the audio recordings captured exactly such 'messy' modes of expression. Facilitation of the edited versions of these stories relied a great deal on the expertise of the researcher/facilitator to make sense of sometimes incoherent lines and somehow stich together an audio storied version of their accounts, arguably more challenging than editing on the page. Although these stories are still enjoyable and do shed light on the lives of the storytellers and their experiences, the story structure does not lead the audience through a story journey in the same way. They lack drama and they lack the key moments of change that effect the impact of the key moment, the rise to the climax, the denouement and the closure on an audience.

Plummer (2011:12) suggests that a life narrative possesses:

- a sense of ordering – usually linear – of events a sense
- A sense of the person behind the text
- A sense of the voice and the perspective belonging to the narrator
- A sense of causality

Most of the stories told by participants – even those which had chosen not to craft a script, or who were not able to create a script – contain these elements in some shape or form. The digital stories produced have brevity, but they have depth. They are not empirical descriptions of what happened (I was born in … I lived in … I grew up in…) (Baars 2012:189), but they are key moments chosen by the participants that span varying timeframes, depending on the theme within the life phase they have decided to portray and share.

Family photographs and albums form the bedrock of many of the stories, both as a means to trigger performances of memory (Kuhn 2007:284) and to draw attention to non-voiced elements of the story. Family albums are organised systems of events that represent significant moments that shape our identity. Two stories focused exclusively on wedding albums including formal (professional) images and family snaps of the event. Albums that mark life events combine the conventions of standard wedding imagery – the bride and groom, bride's family, groom's family, etc. The digital stories drawing on such life events actually reveal sub-stories that are not generally present in the narratives presented by the conventional wedding album.

Participants usually know their own photographic collections – where they were taken, who are the people, who took the photo – but taken into a different setting, an unfamiliar context, such as a story circle, they can take on different meanings and relevances: the familiar is at once unfamiliar and the ordinary can become extraordinary. (Kuhn 2002: 285).

Many storytellers draw upon digital archive images to illustrate their stories (e.g. the wartime blitz images) or to provide cultural reference points, enabling the storytellers to generate a richer cultural context, or to provide missing information. When these interact with family photographs, the layers of meaning become deeper, adding unique, personal or individual perspectives upon great nation stories – the intertwining of the micro story with the macro story.

The digital stories produced by participants offer meaningful, personal narratives that can resonate with audiences, both at the point of constructing them within the story circle and to wider audiences, whether limited to friends and family or shared more widely online or at exhibitions, or events. "Articulation of life stories is the activity through which meaning and purpose are inserted into life" (Bauman 2001:13). The older people who took part in this study would concur with this assertion and the final concluding chapter that follows will discuss the findings of this study in relation to how older people responded to the experience

of making their digital stories and how they felt about the stories they had crafted and shared at the screening events and online.

Chapter Six

The digital storytelling process: data analysis and findings

Introduction

This chapter will now present the findings of this research, drawing upon the data collected in semi-structured interviews at two of the research sites, Essex and Alcobaça (Portugal) as well as returning to observations captured through field notes. For ease of referencing, the semi-structured interviews will be referred to as follows in the subsequent discussions in this section:

Int. 1	Essex Participants
Int. 2	Essex staff
Int. 3	Portugal co-facilitators
Int. 4	Portugal IPL Department of Health academics/Silver Stories partners

6.1 Findings

The findings are organised thematically and focus on how the participants responded to the digital storytelling process and to their completed stories and the sharing of them. They also draw from and enlighten debates discussed in the literature review, from key perspectives pertinent to digital storytelling in terms of the practice, voice and listening, life narratives and agency.

6.1.1 No story to tell

According to Meadows (2003:190) “Anyone can make a Digital Story because everyone has a story to tell”. Yet, in all my years as a practitioner, one of the most oft-voiced concerns at the beginning of a workshop is “I don’t have a story to tell” (Hardy & Jenkins 2020:188). Lambert (2010:6) acknowledges that conceiving an idea for a story is for some an easy process, whilst for others it borders on triggering a crisis. In Essex, participants all agreed that they were not sure that they actually had a story that was worth telling and here, the use of the word ‘worth’ is absolutely telling. Lambert (2013:16) suggests that in asking participants to shift from the casual storytelling experiences that pervade everyday life to authoring a story from their own life experience, their minds will ‘go blank’ because they do not have a ‘good story with high drama’. As Poletti (2011:78) observes, given that the

intention of a workshop is to enable participants to craft a *good* story for sharing with an audience, participants can feel that their own stories do not possess the elements required to meet that standard. The scheme manager in Essex commented on the first session conducted at the site to introduce the project: "one participant remarked: 'you must all have led interesting lives because you've all got stories', and then what seemed to me to be about thirty seconds later she was telling us an incredible story" (Int.2). Another staff member concurred with this, reflecting "I don't think any of the group came believing that they had a story, or knowing what that story would be, or that it had any value, or that anyone would be interested in it… the biggest surprise is that there was a multitude of stories and it was a question of selection". Diane (Int.1) concluded that "I didn't think I'd got anything at all but eventually I did end up with quite a nice film – yeah a very nice one actually." In Portugal, Elisa asked us during the first story circle "What is my story?" and Lucía followed with "What do I have to tell?" whilst Carlos was concerned that he would not be able to tell a story because he had no photographs. Lambert (2013:3) refers to Fuller's (2006) work on rankism and distribution of power in terms of privileging some people's stories over others in our societies, thereby rendering invisible the stories of 'ordinary people'. One participant said in Essex at the introductory session that she was 'just' an 'ordinary person' who has led an ordinary life, giving a value-led judgement of her lived experiences as not being worthy of telling and sharing. The story circle, however, provided the space to trigger stories from different moments of participants' lives.

A life story as a whole – and one that is perhaps devalued as an 'ordinary life' by the storyteller – is not an easy place to start to identify what is worth telling and sharing. However if, in thinking about storying life, we do not think about it as a whole, but as a series of episodes (Bruner 1999:7), then identifying the significance and uniqueness of a particular meaningful moment that is then valued by the mutually mentoring workshop can make older people's stories both valid and possible. Story prompts, photographs, objects all contribute to story finding, but the value of being listened to and supported by the group can move the participant from a state of silence to a present and contributing voice, and we saw this evidenced clearly in the story circle transcripts presented in Chapter 4 (pp. 85 – 105), and in the participants' reflections after the project had ended:

> Janet: Little things come out like Jan's – I mean I think Jan's story is lovely and I think she must be really pleased with it.
> Jan: Yes, I really didn't know when it all started, then this lady in front of me (points at Diane), she's encouraging me all the time. She was reminding me. I will say I was very nervous, but not so bad now.

> Diane: I think that as well you see – it brought us out of ourselves as well, like Jan's saying really, because she did need a little push didn't she to start with but I think we really did achieve something.
> (Int.1).

Digital storytelling places value on every participant's contribution and becomes a way of producing something tangible out of participants' experiences (Gubrium 2009:189). Moreover, the act of placing narrative structure on a fragment of life gives it coherence as a story and fosters agency in the teller (Citron 1999).

6.1.2 Growing confidence and self esteem

A number of studies have demonstrated the positive impact of participatory arts on older people, especially in relation to increasing confidence, self-esteem and social participation (Stenhouse et al 2013; Cutler 2015; Zeilig et al 2017:35; Crossick & Kasynska 2017:111). In this study, the process of creating a digital story was seen to develop confidence in the participants and the creation of a digitised artefact that could be shared on multiple occasions with different audiences amplified the growth of participants' self esteem. At both the Essex and Portuguese sites, participants had developed from a position of thinking that they did not have a story to tell – or at least a story that anyone would be interested in listening to – to sharing their finished digital stories with other residents at the screening event and with their families. "I was very nervous to start with because I'm very shy, but I've come out and done it" (Mollie, Int.1). Moreover, in Essex, two participants had gained the confidence to present their digital stories at other local clubs in the area, such as the Darby and Joan and at a fashion show hosted at the housing association's headquarters in London. "They thoroughly enjoyed that; in fact, we couldn't shut them up!" (Margaret Int.2). They were also thrilled to have their stories featured in the *Silver Stories* travelling exhibition and project website.

6.1.3 Developing empathy

Developing empathy through both participation in the process and watching the stories of other people was a recurring theme across all three sites. The discovery of elements of people's lives that were not known before the digital storytelling workshops was referred to by participants, audiences and staff, and these were often helpful in terms of promoting deeper understanding amongst one another. Margaret, the manager at the Essex site observed that "although they were quite close before, they became closer because they found out things about each other, whether it was family things, personal things that had happened in their lives before". Stuart, another staff member noted that John, who did not

join in the group activities and generally was disregarded by the group, had gained some recognition and acceptance by others through sharing his story. The one-to-one process adapted specifically to enable John to produce his story revealed some of his communication challenges (Chapter 4, pp) that had to be overcome in order to create his story.

> Stuart: It helped the other residents to see him as a more rounded, dare I say it 'normal' human being because they get on well enough with him but they do tend to think that … well, oh it's John, but it's given them and us a chance to see a different side of him hasn't it?
>
> Mark: And acknowledge that and value it – we can all value his life and the contribution he has made. (Int.2)

In Portugal, at the celebratory screening at the care home, Elisa mentioned that, even though their rooms were almost next door to one another and she had known him for many years, she did not know that Carlos was a glass maker and how proud he was of his profession. The facilitators, occupational therapists at the care homes, also noted that although Elisa's fellow residents at the home and some staff members had heard of Raimundo, the lost love who is the focus of her story, neither staff nor peers knew the whole story about him, nor about the reason for her never marrying.

> In a care home, they live in one space together but know little about each other. When someone in a care home sees the movie where another person tells a story, there are pieces that they can identify with. They say 'he or she is like me', or 'we share something'. This is very important in this type of home, developing empathy between them (Nadia Int.3).

Staff, friends at the home and others who attended the screening were moved by her structured recounting of the story and the ghost-like images of her, her family and Raimundo some 83 years before added to the immensity of this story for Elisa – it had dominated her whole adult life, this love that was always out of reach, a dream forever unfulfilled. As Patricia, one of the co-facilitators reflected, "Seeing the stories of even people you don't know … they are touching and make you wonder how you would feel in their place. Digital storytelling is a powerful way of communication, a new way of seeing life and relationships."

One resident in Portugal had a reputation for being argumentative and antisocial amongst both staff and other residents. Although he never completed his story, the interactions he had with the facilitators in the story circle and then in individual one-to-one sessions shed light on the reasons for his discontent and oft-voiced frustration: "…the staff didn't have the information about why he likes to argue and makes a lot of comments and questions and

only after (the story circle) did they understand why he is like that" (Nadia, Int. 3). The importance of understanding more about people's lives before they were a resident at a care home was the most consistently voiced observation in all of the discussions with both the teaching team from IPL and the care home staff digital storytelling facilitators:

> "Sometimes the staff don't know them deeply enough, they just see them as a series of tasks to do – cleaning the room, giving medication, taking them to meals or the bathroom. Yes, they need this, but it is not seeing them as a person. They are not an object (Rute, Int. 3)".

6.1.4 The importance of digital technology

Digital storytelling has been seen to foster greater digital literacy skills through the creative use of ICT to author and share meaningful stories from lives (Lambert 2006, 2010, 2013; Gubrium 2009; Burgess 2006; Dunford & Jenkins 2015; Gubrium et al 2016). The case for digital storytelling as an effective tool for working with older people to improve their knowledge and understanding of digital technology was clearly demonstrated in our earlier EU funded *Extending Creative Practice* project and again within *Silver Stories*, in workshops in Portugal, Finland and Slovenia with active older people (Levy and Slater 2015). An evaluation of a digital storytelling workshop for older adults in Canada (Hausknecht et al 2018:3) also discusses the potential of digital storytelling to encourage older adults to share their stories, improve digital literacy and become digital producers.

In this research study, the absence of access to a computer for each participant in Essex and in Lewisham shifted the focus from the technical side of constructing the stories to participants designing and directing them, with the facilitator/researcher taking on the role of editor. In Portugal, the participants in the care home settings were either physically or cognitively not able to undertake the video editing for themselves. In Essex, one Mac computer had been purchased for people to use, but it was not connected to the internet for security reasons (a policy of the housing association) and it was put away after each session, so it did not become a familiar element of our workshop sessions. Although I offered each participant the opportunity to use my laptop and learn how to edit for themselves, there was a resistance to this, perhaps because they feared damaging my personal equipment. However, at the semi-structured interview before the screening in Essex, Janet did say that she would like the opportunity to develop some skills: "After watching you on the Skype and all of that, I thought to myself, really I think I could do it…I think we ought to try". All of the participants in Essex wanted to continue to make digital stories and bring more people in to the group and most said that they would like to try to

learn the technology, so the process had definitely awoken an interest in digital technology, despite their initial uninterest in anything concerning computers.

In Portugal, facilitators who had also worked with older people in the community in a workshop that took place at the polytechnic, with access to technology for all, commented on how important it was to find methods such as digital storytelling to engage older people in learning about digital technologies, especially in terms of access to information and to public services, which are increasingly being located online. However, in relation to the stories created for this study with participants in residential care homes, the technical side was not seen to be an important element. "Digital tools are nice but not as powerful as I felt the story circle was – you feel as though you are in the skin of the other, almost feeling what they are feeling by telling the story because it is really emotional – something like walking in their shoes" (Ana, Int.4).

6.1.5 The importance of legacy

Clearly in evidence at all three fieldwork locations was the importance of legacy and this is where digital storytelling can provide benefits that transcend participation in other creative activities. Many of the stories were dedicated to family members, either because they had played a leading role in their stories, or because they wanted to leave the legacy of their stories to future generations. At the screening event in Essex, family members were present and commented on how valuable it was for them to have in perpetuity a story told by their relative in their own voice, telling it in the way they wanted to tell it. In the case of the story 'A Tribute to Nan', which included cine film from the late 1930s/early 1940s, without the storyteller's commentary when the family viewed the footage, it would be impossible to decipher who the people were and what they were doing, so this family heirloom would be meaningless without her narrative. Capturing a story, both in the form of the scripted narration and the addition of captions to name people or explain the scene enabled this story to have meaning for generations to come.

In Essex, Eve was reflecting on her hopes for the digital storytelling project to enable her to research her father's World War One prisoner of war story. She said that she felt sad "because I hadn't asked my father so many questions when he was alive and now it's too late and we still can't find anything, but at least I shall leave a little bit about him behind." The scheme manager in Essex reflected on the centrality of legacy for most of the participants. "The sense of importance of telling the story and paying honour to someone who is no longer with us: that is an important duty done".

In Portugal, all of the staff agreed that leaving a legacy in the form of a digital story held great meaning for the families and this was also echoed by family members attending the screenings at the two care homes: “And now we had the family of Dona Teodora and the family is so proud. She has now passed away and the family has asked for the story to show at a family party. (Nadia, Int.3). “When people die, the families have the story, the voice, what she wanted to tell and when she died (Teodora) they can have the story, the voice to listen to. Very important (Maria, Int.4). “(Digital storytelling) can also help the mourning process when you have something that was a legacy, the most important thing is that they realised and they found out a new meaning in life, they could give some new things about themselves and their own existence and share it with others” (Ana, Int.4).

6.1.6 Raising awareness and promoting change

In Portugal, the care home staff saw the potential for digital storytelling to mobilise participants to raise awareness and provoke change, as in the case of César, who did not complete his digital story within the research period of this study, but who has since completed it with the assistance of one of the staff there and presented it to the local authority.

> “I remember when one of the elders was just complaining about the streets, that it was ruining his car that is for disabled people and he was very anxious about it, very angry about it, we realised you could use this as a way to get your voice heard from the ones who have the decisions on that, for instance the mayor, and suddenly he felt very important” (Ana, Int.4)”

The staff facilitators and academics from the Polytechnic also recognised how both the process and the stories created had the potential to change the perspectives of prospective carers working with older people as well as at policy level.

> I really hope that these kinds of stories can help our policy makers and our politicians to understand better what are the real needs in this case of older people and to understand that sometimes the needs of older people are not expensive. They need to be cared for, loved, they need to feel as important as a member of the society (José Int. 4).

Another staff member reflected on what it takes to effect change, to challenge negative narratives and sees digital stories validating older people’s life stories and acknowledging the contributions they have made to society. She sees the stories produced by older people as being a valuable tool for teaching people who want to build their careers working with

older people. As Rute (Int.3) observed, the circulation of older people's life stories is important now, in order to enable younger generations to value their contributions. "It takes time to change something – for many years, our culture puts older persons in a situation that they are a burden to our families, they don't know anything, they take resources". The digital stories produced by older people, shared within communities, in education as well as in the training of people who work with older people could redress such negative narratives.

6.1.7 Enjoyment, satisfaction and pride

Participants enjoyed taking part and expressed how proud they were to have created their stories and shared them with others, especially at the screening events. In Essex, the group reflected on how much fun they had found the process as illustrated in the exchange below:

> Janet: "It was a fun day, that day doing the exercises with the photos"
> Rene: "In fact, to be quite honest, some days when we went home, we wished we hadn't got to go home…"
> Diane:"because it was really enjoyable."
> Rene: "Yes, we really enjoyed it and I said to my children I think it's one of the nicest things that I can put down that I have ever done".
> Diane: "And my children say 'you really liked doing that didn't you Mum and all the people that I talk to about it say 'you're really excited about that aren't you? And we are. It's been really great, really great. I think the whole atmosphere was relaxing with you and Mark and fun and everybody took part – it was just good." (Int.1)

In Portugal, at the care homes the screenings were given great prominence in the schedule of social events and family and friends were also invited. The atmosphere was celebratory and the storytellers were invited to introduce their own stories. They all spoke about how proud they were to have such a positive response to their stories at the home and to have their stories as part of an international project. In reflecting on participants' responses to the screening party, Ana (Int.4) noted "They could see the smiles and the joy. They could be happy at what they have done – focusing on the talents they have shown in making their stories, rather than those they have lost".

6.1.8 Voicing and listening through storying

The importance of the storyteller's voice delivering the narration is, according to Lambert – and to all of us who practice digital storytelling - central to a digital story.

> In digital stories, voice not only tells a vital narrative but it also captures the essence of the narrator, their unique character and their connection to the lived experience. One's voice is a truly great gift as it is a testament to one's fragility and strength … in

> a story we are listening for the shape of an organic, rhythmic quality that allows us to drift into reverie. (Lambert, 2013:64)

Lambert is referring to the unique qualities of the literal human voice of the storyteller in delivering their digital stories, however if this has to be a distinct element to enable a storyteller to participate in digital storytelling, then potentially the stories of those who cannot, through physical or cognitive illness, for instance, speak their stories out loud are denied the opportunity to voice and to be listened to. In the case of John in Essex, he was very clear that he could not – and would not – script his story and record his own voice to tell it. However, through working closely together, listening deeply to John's fragmented snippets from of his life in military service, he was able to share his story and be listened to, as the observations of the staff team there remarked during our discussions around developing empathy. He was also able to demonstrate through his story that he had once had a prominent voice in his successful campaigning for recognition of service by those who had served in Borneo by incorporating press cuttings into his story. The alternative modes he incorporated into his story – photographs, press clippings, captions and the military music track – spoke for John, despite the lack of his physical voice telling the story, mirroring his actual capacity for speaking coherently now. As Couldry (2009:579-580) argues, the act of listening should not be literally dependent on hearing, but the recognition of what others have to say; so the act of voicing, then, should equally not depend literally on speaking, but on using whatever means that a person can to give an account of their lives. "This is an irreducible part of their human agency" (Couldry 2009:580).

Participation and voice in older people are increasingly associated with models of 'active' ageing (Katz 2000), however if having agency is dependent upon health, how can older people with impairments remain involved in society (Grenier and Phillipson 2014:55)? As Lícinia's story demonstrates, voicing having no choice but to live in a nursing home for old people, even when she herself is only 53 years old, not only instils an empathic response from her story listeners, but also tells a much bigger story about the inappropriate and inadequate choices available to a younger person with a degenerative disease. The question here, then, is concerned with listening. Will Lícinia's story have any change-making impact beyond the staff at the care home understanding better her feelings?

In Essex, the opportunity to participate provided a supportive space in which to articulate meaningful moments from life. "Jan found her voice through her story" (Mark, Int.2) refers to the journey that she travelled, from being one of the most shy members of the group, usually quiet and listening to the banter of others rather than contributing to it herself. However as

discussed in Chapter 4, the support provided from within the story circle enabled her to find, craft and tell her story in her own unique way. Similarly, Janet, usually full of banter and jokes in the group, was at first reluctant to join the story circle, but then acknowledged that she found a voice that she usually suppressed. She found herself "bringing things out that you might have kept down and deep" (Int.1), and for the first time articulating how she had felt during her childhood to her sister, who had been unaware of these feelings throughout her whole life, until she watched the completed story at the screening.

As Baars (2012:192) discusses, stories need listeners and listeners need to pay attention to detail and nuance contained within them. In working with older people, particularly in institutional settings, there is a danger that putting together life stories as a way of keeping people busy "even when there are no interested listeners". Digital storytelling, however, with its collaborative and co-creative approach can be seen to elevate the process from merely keeping people occupied to having in the first instance the listening ears of friends and facilitators at their disposal, the appreciation of audiences at the celebratory screenings and the capability of the digital form of reaching wider audiences. As Burgess (2007:207) suggests, digital storytelling provides an opportunity not only to voice a story, but also to "*legitimate it* as a relatively *autonomous* and worthwhile contribution to public culture." As the co-facilitators/staff both in Essex and in Portugal all agreed, having people there to listen gives a point to voicing (Ints. 2 and 3).

6.1.9 Recovering identities: being a person, not an illness

The move to a care home for an older person usually occurs when their cognitive or physical health impairs their ability to care for themselves in their own homes and their relationship with their own identity is at its most fragile (Kingston et al 2017). Personal possessions help with the expression of personal and social identities. They are anchors to important memories – think about the significance of Jan's teething ring, Elisa's never used bed covering – but limited space of having just one room mean that many personal possessions have to be relinquished – (Kingston et al 2017:659). This can lead to a loss of sense of self, depression and poor wellbeing (Paddock et al, 2018).

In the care homes in Portugal, we observed that the digital storytelling interventions provided an opportunity to focus on something beyond their chronic illnesses, which would usually be the sole focus of every conversation, every day. "We were giving different attention, and a different focus on their own experience. We were attending to the people and to their experience. We were not talking about oxygen, or wheelchairs or something like that. We

were just letting them speak. … we were telling them that we are here for you" (Ana Int.4). Digital storytelling helped to raise self-esteem and recover their identities as people, with a life before the care home existence. Key to this was the role of the care home staff facilitating the digital storytelling process. Their relationship with the people for whom they cared shifted through the opportunity for different topics about which to speak and through a creative approach. They found a way in which to interact in a meaningful way with the residents. Rather than seeing each resident as a list of tasks that needed to be done throughout the day, they could see them as people with experiences and feelings and that could enable them to understand better, for example "why she is so stubborn, or why he is so angry in some situations … it makes the professional relationship a more human relationship" (José, Int.4). "Their stories can act as a reminder that it is a person you are taking care of, who needs more than being moved around from hall, to bedroom, to bathroom (Rute, Int.3)."

> People feel as people again and when we are talking about nursing homes, this is very important because some of these older people when they go to a nursing home, they sometimes lose their identity and they re-find their identity through digital storytelling. They are able to look at themselves again as a person with feelings, with qualities, with a life, with expectations, with good moments, with bad moments, whatever. So, this humanisation of these older people is a very important part of the process (José, Int.4).

Stories can support and strengthen ageing identities (Baars 2012:173). By creating a "narrative self" (Birren and Schroots 2006), "they can reinvent their story and in their stories they are the heroes" (Patricia, Int.3). Not only do storytellers tell others who they are through their storying, but they also tell themselves (Holland et al 1998:3). Their stories can become a way to rediscover and repurpose their identities and the digitising of the stories and celebrations that accompany the screenings both honour and affirm the storytellers' lives.

6.1.10 Enabling understanding of those for whom they care

Creative expression using life histories and digitising family photo albums have been shown to improve communication between older institutionalised people and caregivers (Abrahão et al 2018:3). A number of studies have demonstrated how DS can promote reflective practice in various fields, such as pre-service teachers (Ribeiro 2016; Gachago et al 2014) and health workers (Jamissen 2010; Stacey & Hardy 2011; Hardy & Sumner 2015, 2017).
A study in Brazil which used a version of digital storytelling within a care home setting demonstrated that the process enabled residents, their families and care givers to feel more involved in the life of the older person in the care home (Abrahão 2018:17).

In this study, in both Essex and in Portugal, the staff and co-facilitators, and the Silver Stories partners agreed that digital storytelling provided a valuable insight into the lives of the older people who participated, which contributed greatly to developing a deeper understanding of those for whom they care. They also valued the use of the stories themselves as potential teaching resources in degree and post-graduate programmes, or in the case of Essex, in the professional development of staff. Although the training of professionals working with older people was the driver for *Silver Stories*, this fieldwork project enabled those trained to test the method in the workplace with me, thus generating evidence of the challenges and benefits of undertaking digital storytelling with older people. "Staff try to work well, but sometimes they are disconnected from the person; they value the person more after seeing their story" (Nadia Int.3). "In the case of one of our storytellers, staff did not have any information about his academic past, but now they understand why he likes to have deep discussions and have more meaningful conversations" (Rute, Int.3).

Studies show that narrative has been found to be an effective and positive, non-pharmacological intervention for people with dementia (Abrahão et al 2018:3). Stenhouse, Tait, Hardy & Sumner (2013) observe through their study, working with adults with dementia, that the act of creating digital stories supported a sense of self and of identity. When caring for people with complex needs, the facilitation team in Portugal commented on the positive responses to their stories as they developed them together. Dona Teodora told us "I'm not Dona Teodora now, I am one part of Teodora", demonstrating her understanding of the loss of part of herself to her dementia and Parkinson's. When she listened to her recorded voice it helped her find the next part of her story and it provided the facilitator with a valuable insight into Teodora's understanding of her own condition.

The Polytechnic in Portugal (IPL) continues to offer a digital storytelling module in its nursing and occupational therapy degree programme, with a specific focus on older people and one of the nursing homes has embedded digital storytelling as a regular activity and is still producing new stories with residents.

Chapter Seven
Conclusions

This chapter will present some concluding discussions, summarising the research process and assessing its impact and value, exploring the implications of the key findings in the light of existing studies and literature and considering theory and practice associated with digital storytelling in order to discuss the contribution to knowledge that this study has generated. The final section will examine any limitations of the study and propose recommendations for further research.

7.2.1 Summary

This study aimed to explore the relationship between the practice of digital storytelling, its use with older people and the digital stories that were produced by older people in three research settings. It addressed the research questions:

1. What are the opportunities and challenges of participation in the digital storytelling process for older people?
2. In what ways can older people's lives be reframed through their digital stories?

The aims of the study were:

1. To gain an understanding of how older people choose to represent their lives through digital storytelling;
2. To gain an understanding of what effect the processes involved with digital storytelling have on older people participating;
3. To examine how the digital storytelling process with older people influenced their choice of stories they wished to tell and share, and how they wanted to tell them.

The study employed an ethnographic approach, with some autoethnographic dimensions, underpinned by a Freirian philosophical stance on collaborative knowledge production. The methodology was also influenced by the principles of Participatory Action Research, particularly the active participation of participants and researcher/facilitator in the co-construction of knowledge. This multi-method approach enabled the use of a broad range of tools in the data gathering process, enabling the research to draw upon scheduled data collection activities (digital storytelling workshops and semi-structured interviews) as well as the informal spaces in between, including chats over lunch, banter in the story circle sessions and observations from the field captured in field notes. Drawing on narrative theory

(Riessman 1993:2008; Josselson 2011) to enable an exploration of how older people choose to tell their stories as well as what they want to say, the study also explored the ways in which multimodality (Hull & Nelson 2005) can add depth and richness to stories and further insights into the storytellers' worlds (Glaw et al 2017).

This research gathered data from three research sites, with active older people in community-based settings in Lewisham and Essex, UK and with older people in residential care homes in Portugal. The study was augmented by its relationship with the EU funded *Silver Stories* project, which ran in parallel to the fieldwork. *Silver Stories* facilitated access to participants in care homes in Portugal and to a parallel action research study examining the efficacy of digital storytelling as a tool for health professionals working with older people in community and care settings. This provided insightful additional perspectives from which to address the research questions and triangulate the data.

It was important to discuss in detail the process of digital storytelling in relation to the classic model, codified by Storycenter (formerly the Center for Digital Storytelling), through a clearly published curriculum guiding facilitating digital storytelling workshops and delineating the formal qualities of digital stories. The entirety of Chapter Four assessed the possibilities and limitations of the classic model when working with active older people in a community setting and with older people with complex health conditions, in residential care homes. This addressed the first of the two research questions, using thick descriptions of the process at each of the settings, drawn from field notes, photographic records, and transcriptions from the workshop processes, which varied between settings. The detailed presentation of the adapted processes that were undertaken in the field were warranted to enable discussions of both accessibility and availability of the process to older people in different circumstances. Similarly, the entirety of Chapter Five focused on the stories that participants made about their lives, the moments they chose to story and the ways in which they constructed their stories, presented through thematic and structural analysis. The findings, in the first part of this chapter, draw out participants' responses to their participation in the project with observations from health and social care professionals who had participated in co-facilitation of the workshops or who had contributed their assessment as partners in the *Silver Stories* project.

7.2.2 Implications of key findings

Whilst the classic model of digital storytelling has definite advantages in terms of the intensity of the atmosphere and the consistency of results, it does pose some barriers to

participation for older people. It is resource-heavy, requiring a high ratio of facilitator to participant and, as was evident from the Lewisham and Essex projects, without a dedicated computer for each participant with sufficient technical support, the 'digital' element of this practice is problematic to achieve. If working with older people who are not familiar with using computers, or who have no desire to engage with ICT, it is more difficult to get them engaged with the technical side of the process. The level of resource required to run a classic model requires significant funding for sufficient facilitators and access to equipment. This limits access to participation to those who are engaged with community-based organisations, or education establishments or research institutions who can generate the level of funds required to support a classic workshop. Moreover, the classic model prioritises script development as the most important creative element of the process. As the results in Essex demonstrated, one participant was not able to generate a scripted story owing to his communication challenges. Similarly in Portugal, physical impairments and dementia meant that two participants were literally and knowingly losing their voices; writing a script was not an option for them.

Adapting the method according to the daily living routines of the participants, the possibilities and constraints of where and how they live and the availability of resources (technical and otherwise) can provide opportunities for older people who are hardest to reach to create and contribute their stories. Whilst there is no doubt that the 'classic' methodology works well and does result in thoughtful, elegant pieces, there are issues that would seem to be contradictory to the philosophical and ethical basis for the practice. Adopting the philosophical and epistemological positioning of digital storytelling as a creative, enjoyable and inclusive means to foster the co-creation of knowledge is, based on my assessment through undertaking this study, more important than adhering rigidly to pedagogic and production methodology resulting in stories that must conform to formal conventions. To do the former may achieve a more eloquent video that can be categorised as a digital story, what Meadows (2011) describes as a multimedia sonnet from the people. To do the latter extends the possibilities of inclusion to those for whom being given the opportunity to speak about their lives to their own agenda becomes an increasingly remote possibility with ageing.

In discussing voice, debates about listening have challenged the role and purpose of digital storytelling as a means for a 'vernacular creativity' (Burgess 2006) to find a space for expression, but one which is lacking audiences. Hartley (2009; 2013) has criticised the inability of digital storytelling to reach wider audiences by more thoroughly exploiting the myriad of opportunities afforded by digital platforms, whilst Matthews & Sunderland 2017) questions the privileging of the means to speak over the means of engaging with audiences,

if policy makers are to be engaged to foster change. Dreher (2012) suggests that voice is only partially achieved if the means to committed and attentive listening are not in place whilst Couldry (2009) concurs that without any practice of listening, the power of voice is lost, or at best weakened. However, in undertaking this study, when working with older people, we can see that listening at many different levels, great and small, is a key and important feature of the digital storytelling process. Grenier & Phillipson (2014) discuss older people and agency in relation to claiming voice; agency is associated with the 'third age' (Baltes 1997; Laslett 1991) – those who are active in older ageing and have capacity to participate and take decisions. However, in the 'fourth age'(ibid), a category into which Teodora and Lícinia in Portugal (despite Lícinia being only 53 years old) and John in Essex could be placed, because of their complex physical and cognitive impairments, agency is removed by assumption, thereby cancelling the possibility for voice and, as a consequence, any prospect of being listened to – on any level. In this study, it is evident that the story circle process outweighs all other elements of the digital storytelling process, precisely because it is a space in which people focus on both speaking with and listening to each other. In Essex, although the individuals in the participant group knew each other well, it was clear that in their usual social gatherings, some members did most of the voicing whilst others listened, or perhaps just heard. Two of the most reticent and unconfident members of the group, through the story circle process, were afforded the space to voice and the active encouragement of other participants demonstrated that they were actively listening. Even where story circle was not possible, in the individual co-creation of participants' stories, the creation of that space beyond the usual illness-focused conversations formed an opportunity in which facilitators could attend to them as collaborators in that creative process, providing perhaps a long-lost chance to be listened to, to be people rather than a list of tasks to be done, or symptoms to treat. The balance between individual autonomy, which may decline for some older people as they age, and connectedness is essential for wellbeing (Machielse and Hortulanus 2014:119). Voicing and listening are vital components for both.

The sharing of stories at public screening events elevates the experience of being listened to yet further, even if audiences are limited to family, friends, care givers and other stakeholders, but this is a significant stage in the journey from participants feeling that they have no story, or that their story has no value and is of no interest to others. In the case of César in Portugal, he did take his story to another level, to decision-makers in order to make himself visible and his voice heard in his local campaign to enable disabled people greater access to daily life through improvements in the infrastructure of the town.

These examples may not be voicing and listening upon the scale that Hartley or Matthews and Sunderland, or Couldry or Dreher would require of digital storytelling as a 'movement'. But as a means to reclaiming lost voices, to retrieving diminishing identities, they are all steps towards creating the circumstances through which change can happen, even if that change is at an individual or family or very local community level.

7.2.3 Digital storytelling meets humanistic gerontology

Although the study's purpose, was to explore the process of digital storytelling in terms of how older people experienced it and how it helped them find and tell a story from their lived experience, rather than studying older people, or ageing per se, as the research progressed, it became apparent that digital storytelling as a data gathering method had a clear affinity with humanistic gerontology within the context of ageing studies. According to Baars (2012:143) micro-narratives are key because of their focus on human experience and thereby provide valuable insights into the 'inside' of ageing (Kenyon & Randall 1999:1). How rich those micro-narratives can be, if a digital storytelling method is employed in the gathering of data concerning ageing. How much more nuanced can that data be, through the multimodal elements at play, revealing emotions, adding context through the choice of images, layering information through use of captions to anchor or subvert the scripted story meanings?

Moreover, how much agency do older people have through the co-creation of knowledge, in which they have chosen how to craft their stories to create the impact or effect that they desire, rather than to have their stories generated or interpreted to fulfil a pre-determined research agenda? Over the last twenty years or so, there has been a growing interest in narrative approaches to research into ageing (Baars 2012), shifting from the dominant modes of tests and questionnaires, to the encouragement of older people to speak about their lives (Birren & Cochran 2001; Birren & Deutchmann 1999; Kenyon, Clark & De Vries (2001); Randall & Kenyon 2001). Stories are a means by which to express identity and, utilised within the study of ageing, enable the pluriformities of older people's lives to be foregrounded, in contrast to approaches such as the life course approach (Ben-Schlomo & Kuh 2002:286), which analyses different life stages according to biological development, stability or decline in relation to chronometric age. As this study has demonstrated, in creating stories, participants have created a narrative identity which contributes to the understanding of each participant's individuality and the uniqueness of their lives (Baars 2012:173).

The digital stories produced by participants in this study generated themes and that were common within each research site and across all research sites, but within these similarities lie distinctive and unique versions of experiences, attitudes, and opinions not just in terms of what specific narrative they chose to tell, but all of the elements that they brought to bear in the expression of these events, as unique to them as a fingerprint. For instance, although most stories talk about the centrality of family and the influence of key family members on their lives, as well as sharing some emotional connection, each story is unique in their articulation of those key characters, how they represent them, whether their story is about them, or about themselves in relation to them. There are similarities between image choices, reflecting typical photographic styles of the time, from the typical wedding photo (formal and generic, the groupings of people the same, but with different faces and back stories), to family album snapshots of holidays, to the formalised studio portraits in identical poses, they eyes positioned with identical gazes.

As Kuhn (2007:284) points out, personal and family photographs are important to our understanding of cultural memory. The images provide context and layers of unspoken information that is not available through the told story alone. The images can convey clues about social class, location, relationships between family members, economic status. How the participant felt about the story, or its impact upon them becomes visible – or rather audible – through the pitch of voice, its cadence, an audible 'crack' as the storyteller attempts to control their tears. Stories "move persistently through history and structure" (Plummer 1983:69) and the articulation of older people's lived experiences, the episodes they chose to tell, to be illustrated by their images and augmented by captions, or music, or, as in the case of one participant, film clips, contributes to the representation (or self-representation) of each storyteller's unique identity, as well as bonding them thematically as a group with common cultural reference points.

The key findings revealed that both the participation in creating digital stories and the watching of them by themselves and others promoted humanistic responses linked to empathy, greater understanding, recovering identity, and facilitating voice and listening. These are all commensurate with the underpinning philosophical determinants of humanistic gerontology, which calls for methods of studying age and ageing that takes us beyond the identification of chronologically determined life phases usually linked to economic and social participation (the numerical age of retirement, for instance) or to (usually) declining health and increasing dependence, mirroring simultaneously an imposed diminuendo in identity and agency.

Studies and funded projects that have connected older people and digital storytelling to date have largely posed a problem or topic and explored the efficacy of digital storytelling in solving that problem. Returning to my own funded projects, *Extending Creative Practice* was designed to explore whether older people could be persuaded to engage with ICT through the creative practice of digital storytelling; *Silver Stories* tested the digital storytelling method as a tool for professionals working with older people in communities and residential care and access to that study and its actors has provided affirming insights from other perspectives to contribute to this study. Stenhouse et al (2012) used digital storytelling with a group with onset dementia to produce stories that would contribute to compassionate education of student nurses. Hausknecht et al (2018) road tested a digital storytelling course with older people in Vancouver to explore the potential of the method to enable older people to become digital producers.

In this research the effect of *all* of the elements of the digital storytelling method were explored to ascertain the impact it would have on older participants in terms of how they engaged with and experienced the process, what stories they chose to tell and how they chose to tell them, without having a specific 'problem' to test. The findings have demonstrated the potential that digital storytelling has as a methodology for meaningful collaborative research into ageing with older people. Key to the success of the study has been the agility and adaptability of the facilitator role. Whilst embracing the ethical and philosophical stance of digital storytelling as a practice and as a movement, adapted approaches to the elements and stages of the practice enabled the collaborative production of knowledge to be accessible to the widest groups of older people, whose cognitive, physical, social or emotional circumstances may otherwise prevent their participation. Because stories do not have to be focused on ageing to be *about* ageing, the practice of digital storytelling could be a powerful visual method to use within the discipline of ageing studies, through a humanistic gerontology approach. Moreover, the enjoyment for older people in taking part in digital storytelling, the impact on wellbeing, developing confidence and skills, affirming identity are all positive outcomes for the individual participants, who become collaborators in knowledge production rather than research subjects. Almost all participants in this study cited the importance of legacy in the creation of their stories and the digitised and creatively crafted tangible products that participants can keep and distribute online if they wish adds to their sense of agency and enables their stories to have after lives (Matthews & Sunderland 2013) other than becoming the researcher's data.

Hartley & McWilliam (2009), in the first published academic book solely focused on digital storytelling, assert that to date, digital storytelling had been under theorised, and that this

publication was a first attempt to address this lack by situating and analysing the practice within the context of new media studies, with a stance towards debates concerning democratisation of media practices and the position of digital storytelling as a means to produce user generated content. There is a growing body of literature in the use of digital storytelling within the context of health and the education of health professionals, notably the work of Gubrium (2009); Gubrium et al (2010; 2011;2014;2016;2019), Hardy (2016; Hardy & Sumner (2014). Likewise in studies concerning migration, notably Alexandra (2008; 2015;2017), Darwin & Norton (2014); Vacchelli & Peyrefitte (2018) and Lenette et al (2019). My own co-edited book (Dunford & Jenkins 2017) brought the worlds of practice and academic theory making together from an international perspective, across disciplines. The same year saw the publication of an international volume focused on digital storytelling within higher education (Jamissen et al. 2017), with each contribution underpinned by Ernest Boyer's (1990) model of the four scholarships rooting each contribution to a schematic theoretical framework.

This study has demonstrated the possibilities of digital storytelling as an effective means of undertaking research with older people into the experience of ageing through the mechanism of stimulating life stories. Not only does it provide opportunities for older people to participate in the co-creation of knowledge, but also, the effect of experiencing human life stories through the engaging and accessible form of stories potentially widens the potential audiences for studies into ageing. This could be an effective means by which to stimulate inclusive debate with a greater and more diverse range of people who could contribute to how we perceive and care for older people – and the voices of older people themselves should be at the helm of such debate. One-off projects are not enough. Generating a significant body of work to reflect the reality of the increasing ageing population, developing the practice and the theorisation of that practice, using digital storytelling, applied through the lens of humanistic gerontology could make a real difference to our understanding of ageing and becoming old. Including older people themselves, through their stories, as contributors to that body of work is essential if we are to foster a truly inclusive approach to research into ageing. Digital storytelling has proved to be, as demonstrated in this study, an effective mechanism through which to engage older people, so that we can move beyond isolated projects and develop a sustainable, accessible and human model of studying ageing, placing older people at the centre.

7.3 Key issues for future research

This study has explored in detail the use of digital storytelling with fourteen older people across three research sites. The original ambition of the study was to carry out a longitudinal study at one of the sites, introducing digital storytelling as a regular weekly offering over an eighteen-month period, not only to provide the opportunity of broadening the participant base, but also to explore how the process would enable participants to both hone and develop their skills, but also to explore what a second, third and fourth story might be. The study also revealed the need to develop the methodology through considered academic and theoretical discipline, so that in studying ageing through digital storytelling, a consistent body of work could be developed. Another question that the study revealed for me was the relationship between digital storytelling and effecting change. Individual stories are powerful but, even if presented as a group of stories, are they sufficient to constitute a collective movement for change – something that has been the consistent ambition and claim for digital storytelling since its inception. How could digital storytelling lead to other forms of digital production, as a simple means by which to develop storytelling and digital skills before proceeding to a more collective form, such as participatory video? Where do the two meet, what is the interface, is one more effective than the other in terms of voice in the context of change?

The next steps to this research, as discussed in the conclusions, though, is to develop an interdisciplinary partnership to include academic expertise in ageing studies, who are sympathetic or experienced in using the narrative turn, with community groups and residential care homes and digital storytelling facilitator/researchers to design a study concerned with ageing that is thoroughly rooted in a robust theoretical methodology, whilst systematically using digital storytelling (or adapted digital storytelling) with older people to generate inclusive data that is both meaningful for research participants and accessible, and enjoyable to wider audiences beyond the academy. The ESRC has recently released a pre-announcement for a call for Inclusive Ageing Projects. This proposition would be a perfect fit for this call.

7.4 Future research

Having discussed some of the implications for follow-on research from this study, the outlines of potential future research projects presented below are drawn from conclusions that emerged through the research process, which sit both within and beyond the ageing studies agenda aligned with humanistic gerontology and digital storytelling proposed as a direct ‘next steps’ project above.

7.4.1 Longitudinal and intergenerational study

At the time this research began, there had been no longitudinal studies into using digital storytelling over a longer period of time than a 'one off' intervention with older people and that gap remains. Stigmatising narratives about old age and older people have been gaining traction over the last twenty years or so. The World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2000 observed that older people are viewed as a costly burden; Boorman's (2010) Manifesto *It's all their fault* clearly lays the economic failings of the political system at the feet of the 'boomers', whilst Segal (2013) spends an entire book discussing the state of generational warfare. Since the 2016 UK referendum and the 2019 UK general election, these narratives have become even more prevalent, what Karpf in her opinion piece in *The Guardian* (2018) describes as 'the old people screwing Millennials trope'. *The Theft of a Decade* (Sternberg 2019) sets out empirical evidence to support the argument that the young are paying an unfair price for the financial crisis, whilst *Stop Mugging Grandma* (Bristow 2019) puts forward a cultural critique to explore how we might counter 'boomer bashing'.

Exploring older people's narratives through intergenerational collaboration could draw on the findings that emerged from this research, focusing on for example, finding different representations of age and ageing to challenge ageism and stereotypes. Exploring and discussing policy around ageing and the ageing society through intergenerational dialogue. Digital Storytelling has been used in the context of peace-making projects (Higgins 2011 ; Lau et al 2017). An intergenerational longer-term digital storytelling project could propose ways in which to address the divide between generations in present-day Britain. This could be both timely and is potentially fundable given that intergenerational warfare is such a strong and striking current narrative in circulation.

7.4.2 Improving the discoverability, visibility and accessibility of digital stories

As discussed in the conclusions, a longstanding criticism of digital storytelling is that the stories do not circulate beyond the projects and project stakeholders, therefore they remain largely invisible and are not delivering on 'giving voice' or contributing to wider discourses on, for example, cultural history or policy change. A collaborative research project, bringing together digital storytelling practitioners, archivists, curators, and coding to develop metadata schema to be used with future (and possibly, with past) digital stories would test this premise. Could this then become an element of digital storytelling practice, to facilitate data sharing as well as data creation. The museum sector would be a logical partner, for example

a special exhibition on World War Two could be enhanced by the inclusion of lived experiences, such as Jan's story, or Rene's story, or Eve's story. It these stories were discoverable, they could be identified by curators and have a life beyond the project for which they were constructed. A small pilot to test this proposition could be followed up by a metadata project to catalogue digital stories produced across Europe. This would be of interest to Europeana (https://www.europeana.eu/en) and could attract EU funding for a transnational project, although inevitably the UK may not be eligible for this type of funding in a post-Brexit landscape, unless as a third country. This type of project could also draw on the work that is currently being undertaken by the Museu da Pessoa in Brazil (https://museudapessoa.org/) to catalogue its collections to enable this virtual museum of life stories to transform from a repository to a fully searchable virtual museum.

7.4.3 Humanistic gerontology and life course research

Discovering humanistic gerontology and its focus on micro narratives has sparked my interest in developing further research around the storying of ageing. There are pockets of work in which digital storytelling is beginning to be used with older people, such as the Elders' digital storytelling research project (2014-2016) that has been carried out by Simon Fraser University, as part of the ongoing Ageing Well Project (2015-2020) in Canada. The Age and Generations Network, which sits within the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) held a virtual international conference in 2020 in Lisbon: *Illuminating Futures of the Life Course through Visual and Digital Media* specifically to explore new subjectivities created with visual and digital technologies and the impact of visual/digital methods on ethnographic fieldwork projects. A cross disciplinary project using digital storytelling to generate ethnographic and anthropological focused data on ageing from a humanistic gerontology perspective would also build from the research carried out to produce this thesis.

7.4.4 Digital storytelling meets participatory video

In the conclusions, I raised some questions concerning the viability of digital stories as individually styled personal narratives as a driver for change at policy level. Digital storytelling produces personal stories created by individuals. It employs the simplest approach to creating a multimedia text: still images (on the whole), voice over, and music or other sounds, lasting two or three minutes. Participatory video is a collective approach to the production of videos, often around 15 minutes long in visual methods research, as a community engagement and development tool that involves a range of story creation, video

production and screening activities to drive an evolving process of exploration and dialogue on shared issues. Like digital storytelling, it is a co-creative process and an accessible way for a group to take action on their own concerns by producing videos and disseminating them to decision makers and the wider public. It has a strong presence in the field of international development. A project to bring the two practices together, to explore the differences between the narratives generated by individuals and those generated by groups would be interesting as another element of testing the use of both methods within distinct research spaces, including working with older people. Working with older people, starting with digital storytelling as an introduction to story making and then moving on to group production of a video, the subject of which has been agreed collectively by the group, would also be a means to shift the focus from 'past' stories to present and future narratives about issues facing older people.

7.5 Closing thoughts

I have kept the focus on future potential research developing from this thesis on age, ageing and older people; however, the development of the 'visibility' project and the 'digital storytelling meets participatory video' project is applicable across disciplines and research topics, as it proposes the re-design of digital storytelling specifically as a research method.

Digital storytelling has great potential as a research method if we understand and define what data can be produced from its use, the best companion methods to use alongside it, and how we make the data that the stories generate visible and discoverable as part of the research methodology. The process of undertaking this research has developed me exponentially as a researcher and, learning from the experience of undertaking this doctorate, I look forward to developing new projects that can make the best use of digital storytelling within a research context. From my perspective as a researcher, using digital storytelling with older people has been incredibly engaging and worthwhile. It has been a total joy to practice digital storytelling, with these participants and with colleagues who joined me in the *Silver Stories* element of the study, who all took part in the process with so much enthusiasm, and so wholeheartedly. One thing we can all agree on, which is often not acknowledged as a valid benefit when evaluating digital storytelling, in this case with older people, is that it is, for everyone involved, not only enlightening and rewarding, but, put plain and simply, it is great fun.

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