

# Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression

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*A Master's Research Project by Evelyn Thorne*

Presented to the Arts Administration program of the University of Oregon in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master's of Science in Arts Management

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## Resume

# Evelyn Thorne



CONVERSATION  
CONNECTS  
COMMUNITIES

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## Mission

I wish to provide space for a diversity of voices by facilitating opportunities for creative engagement.

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Creative Arts, Art History Minor  
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## Conscientious Storyteller

Center for Digital Storytelling, 2013  
Trauma Healing Project, 2013-Present  
Fred Crafts' Radio Redux, 2013-Present  
Story Catchers LLC, 2013-Present  
Groundswell: Oral History for Social Change, 2013-Present  
Oregon Folklife Network, 2013  
Portlandia of the Free, 2012

- Trained in leading workshops and designed educational material on the impact of digital storytelling for human rights.
- Co-facilitated ongoing digital storytelling workshop series with trauma survivors and wrote grant for sustaining program.
- Edited and indexed oral history project celebrating Eugene's 150th birthday for broadcast and public usage.
- Promoted awareness of rural Oregon artists on interactive online map through research and presentation.
- Applied networking, urban exploring and design skills to create events blog about affordable activities.

## Community Arts Organizer

Emerging Leaders in the Arts Network, 2013-Present  
Arts & Administration Department, 2013  
Oregon Bach Festival, 2012  
San Jose Public Art, 2009-2011  
ZERO1: The Art & Technology Network, 2010  
San Jose Museum of Art, 2008  
Benicia Historical Museum, 2007

- Led nationally recognized professional development organization to develop community partnership events.
- Assisted in teaching curriculum on arts & visual literacy and conducted research on participation in college classrooms.
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- Collaborated with team to promote Benicia, CA's historical significance through archival research and interviews.

## Creative Leader

PODS: Professional Outreach & Development for Students, 2013-Present  
Arts & Business Alliance of Eugene, 2013  
Fund for the Public Interest, 2011  
San Jose State Environmental Club, 2008-2011  
Students for Quality Education, 2008-2011  
Queers Thoughtfully Interrupting Prejudice, 2007-2011

- Designed outreach materials for events connecting students with professionals and maintained contact database.
- Led video production crew to create promotional videos of community events and student interviews.
- Successfully put together a pilot lecture series on environmental issues nominated for education program award.
- Educated and organized more than 300 students and faculty to advocate for funding of higher education.
- Planned and advertised record breaking fundraisers for social justice and community arts initiatives.

The **EARTH** without **ART** is just **EH**

## **Abstract**

This research project examines how digital storytelling provides safe space for creative expression. The foundation for this argument is established through a literature review that describes how the process, facilitation, and ethics of digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression. This rationale is examined through interviews with expert digital storytelling facilitators and experienced digital storytelling participants to construct a conceptual framework for this argument based on perspectives in the field. The goal of this research project is to evince how digital storytelling methods are a model for adult arts education programs that engage adults who have little creative confidence in creative expression.

## **Keywords**

Digital storytelling, safe space, creative expression, creativity, creative agency, creative confidence, creative self-efficacy, facilitation, process, ethics, adult arts education

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“A SUCCESSFUL POEM IS ONE THAT CHANGES YOU HALF-WAY THROUGH WRITING IT.”  
– DOC LUBEN*

### 1.1 Problem Statement

The National Endowment for the Arts’ strategic plan states that their research has “identified arts education as the single best predictor of a person’s arts participation patterns throughout life” (p.8, 2010). The plan goes on to say that while the NEA has made arts education a priority, states have had difficulty keeping arts education in the curriculum (p.20, 2010). This creates inconsistent arts education across the United States and thus also a range of arts participation. The effects of this problem on arts engagement are captured in this quote from a WolfBrown study on participatory arts (Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride, 2011):

With the decline in arts education, fewer young adults are arriving on the professional arts scene with the knowledge and experience that their parents had. The arts education system is not replenishing the pool of arts-educated adults who visit arts museums and buy theater tickets....In this challenging environment, flexibility and creativity in programming will become paramount to the survival of art organizations. Artists, curators and administrators must quickly embrace the diversity of preferences, settings and formats that will engage the next generation, and the one after that. (p.12).

Arts organizations can no longer rely on traditional audiences with traditional arts backgrounds. There is a need to develop programming that embraces a larger audience and especially those with little arts education who are less likely to feel comfortable engaging in the arts. This is even more important for adults who not only grew up with declining arts education, but have little opportunity for pursuing arts learning outside academics (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Without exposure and training in the arts, adults are less likely to have the confidence to seek out and participate in creative activities (Robinson, 2011).

Arts organizations need to offer programs that provide a safe space for adults with low creative confidence so they can feel comfortable participating in creative expression. This study addresses this issue by examining how digital storytelling methods provide adults a safe space for creative expression, thus allowing them to build their creative confidence.

Furthermore, this research addresses a gap in the current body of research on digital storytelling. There have been many studies on the benefits of digital storytelling in regards to self-efficacy, agency, media literacy, civic engagement or trauma healing (Stellavato, 2013; Hull & Katz, 2006; Dreon, Kerper, & Landis, 2011; Stephens, 2008; Tolly, 2007; Smith, 2013; Valle, 2010; Hill, 2010; Herman, 1992), but little attention to creative expression. Moreover, there is a plethora of research on building creativity skills within business and educational settings (Kelly & Kelly, 2011; Chambers, 1973; Holloy, 2005; Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, 2007; Murdock, 2003; Robinson, 2011, Toraiwa, 2009), but surprisingly little research on cultivating creative confidence within adult arts education and especially in connection to safe space for those with little background in the arts (Esslinger, 2011; Brazil, 2003; Jongeward, 1995). This research project addresses these gaps by analyzing the effects of digital storytelling on safe space for creative expression, thus connecting the dots between safe space, creative confidence and adult arts education for those with little arts exposure.

## **1.2 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research project is to examine how digital storytelling can establish safe space for creative expression, specifically for adults. Digital storytelling is unique to addressing adult arts education because digital storytelling workshops are designed to engage a wide range of adults through the same process, regardless of artistic background (Lambert, 2013), thus focused on providing a safe space for a variety of creative confidence levels. This research project looks at how elements of the digital storytelling methods including process, facilitation and ethics affect safe space.

While digital storytelling, as taught by the Center for Digital Storytelling, has a specific methodology and practice, the elements that affect safe space can be extrapolated to other fields. It is the hope of this researcher that practitioners interested in engaging adults in creativity, regardless of previous exposure to the arts, can learn from the digital storytelling methods on how better to build safe space for creative expression into their programs.

## **1.3 Research Methodology**

### **1.3a Research Questions**

*Primary Research Question:*

How does digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?

*Sub Questions:*

1. How do facilitation practices used for digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?
2. How does the process of digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?
3. How do ethical guidelines for digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?

The main research question guides the principal line of analysis into how digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression, while the sub questions look at three broad categories of influence on the main question.

### **1.3b Methodological Paradigm**

This research project follows a social constructivist worldview since it is built upon a conceptual framework based on data from multiple perspectives. As Creswall (2014) states in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, social constructivist “look for complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p.8). While the literature

review of this research project examines three specific areas of digital storytelling, interviews were structured to influence this analysis so as to revise the initial conceptual framework. The project was approached with the expectation that new elements of influence would emerge from the research design and the resulting conceptual framework could be entirely different from the original design. This is not seen as a negative aspect of the research methodology, but as an opportunity for discovery.

As a respected poet named Doc Luben once said, “A successful poem is one that changes you half-way through writing it” (personal communication, June 2012). This research project uses that quote as a guiding principle for data analysis and determining success of inquiry.

#### **1.4c Role of the Researcher**

This research project is based on an assumption of the researcher that digital storytelling does affect safe space for creative expression. This assumption is due to prolonged engagement with digital storytelling and extensive observation that includes an internship with the Center for Digital Storytelling, training in facilitation of digital storytelling workshops and experience leading digital storytelling workshops with the Trauma Healing Project. Rather than using this research to prove a hypothesis that digital storytelling does in fact affect safe space, the questions look at how digital storytelling affects safe space. Though, by showing how digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression, this research also posits why. Thus, while the research questions are based on an assumption, their examination provides critical inquiry into that assumption.

#### **1.3d Delimitations**

As discussed further in the literature review, there is a difference between creativity, creative confidence and creative expression. This project looks at creative expression, since the goal of the research is to examine how digital storytelling helps participants feel safe to express themselves creatively, not if their creative confidence or creativity skills increased. A more thorough quantitative

analysis would have to be conducted in order to establish an actual increase in creative confidence or creativity, but this research puts forth a qualitative investigation of the basis for building creative confidence, namely safe space.

Since the topics of safe space and creative confidence are very broad, this research project does not claim to be exhaustive. Rather, the literature review does provide an overview of how safe space and creative confidence relate to adult arts education and particularly for those with little arts background.

Moreover, while this study is specific to the field of digital storytelling, results can be applicable to other fields interested in public participation in the arts since safe space for creative expression is necessary for creative engagement.

### **1.3e Limitations**

This research is focused primarily on the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS)'s methods since, as CDS is a flagship organization in the field and an international training center for the digital storytelling process. Thus, interviews will only be conducted with facilitators and participants of CDS workshops. While variations of their process are practiced in the field, this research project will only focus on the methods taught by CDS.

## **1.4 Research Design**

### **1.4a Strategy of Inquiry**

A qualitative research strategy has been designed in order to examine the main research question of how digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression. According to Creswell, "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p.4, 2014). Since this research takes a social constructivist view in examining a problem statement, it is best suited for a qualitative design.

The qualitative research design is based on an analysis of literature and interviews with expert facilitators and experienced participants of digital storytelling workshops. This design presents a foundation for the argument that digital storytelling builds safe space for creative expression in the literature review and then examines that rationale in practice through opinions of those in the field. This is a type of grounded theory in which a “constant comparative method [is used] to explore each data source in relation to those previously analyzed” and the goal is to “let the data tell the story” (O’Leary, 2010, pp.270-271). While the literature review lays the groundwork for the argument, the strategy of inquiry allows for ample critique of this reasoning through assessing perspectives on both the facilitation and participation of digital storytelling workshops. Thus, this research not only looks at multiple perspectives, but at perspectives from opposite sides of an experience. The data collected from these interviews is then compared with the original conceptual framework in order to see where opinions emerged, diverged or converged and used to make a revised conceptual framework (see 4.1a). See Appendix [X.3](#) and [X.6](#) for Research Design Schematic and Research Instruments.

### **1.4b Data Collection & Analysis**

In order to examine how digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression, an extensive literature review was conducted to establish how safe space relates to creative expression and then to explain why the three areas of influence – process, facilitation, and ethics – are important factors to building safe space for creative expression within a digital storytelling workshop. This literature review serves as a comparative study to the interviews that converged, emerged or diverged from the proposed argument.

Recruitment and consent for interviews were done through official letters and forms (see [X.4](#) and [X.5](#)) and interview subjects were selected through the Center for Digital Storytelling. So as to ensure that the interviews with facilitators represented expert opinions, only facilitators with 5 plus years of experience in the field were chosen. Selection of digital storytelling participants was based on the

suggestions of facilitators at CDS. The requirements were that the participant is an adult, has taken a CDS workshop (preferably multiple) and is not a professional in the arts field. These criteria helped establish a basis for examining how digital storytelling impacts safe space for creative expression for adults with little arts background, thus serving as indicators of safe space for low creative confidence. Two interviews with two female participants who fit these criteria were conducted. More detailed interview profiles can be found in section [3.3](#). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed as to provide accurate data. Quotes from all of these interviews were member checked by each individual.

The literature review was coded through the three main areas of influence: process, facilitation and ethics. There were also codes for defining safe space and creative confidence, and their relation to each other. For the interviews, the same codes were applied and then main themes within those topic areas emerged from reviewing the interview responses.

#### **1.4c Validation Strategies**

The validity of this project is based on several research tools. First, construct validity is used by testing whether the argument set in the literature review is experienced in the field through interviews. Second, comparing the interviews with each other and to the literature review acts as a method of triangulation. Third, the prolonged engagement of the researcher with digital storytelling lends to persistent observation and the credibility of the researcher. Fourth, all quotes are member checked and peer debriefing was an ongoing part of the research process. Lastly, negative case analysis is built into the interview process through questioning practices that have a negative impact on safe space for creative expression.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*“THE FIRST TASK IN TEACHING FOR CREATIVITY IN ANY FIELD IS TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN THEIR CREATIVE POTENTIAL AND THEN NURTURE THE CONFIDENCE TO TRY.”*  
- *KEN ROBINSON*

### 2.1 Overview

This literature review will provide a basis for the argument that digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression. It will cover definitions of safe space and creative confidence, the existing research on the connection between safe space and creative expression for those with little arts background, the reason why safe space is important for adult arts education, an overview of the digital storytelling field and finally an argument for why the Center for Digital Storytelling’s methods including process, facilitation and ethics support safe space for creative expression.

### 2.2 Definitions

The definitions of safe space and creative confidence are explored in this literature review, because as shown below, their definitions are not simple explanations but complicated ideas with a multitude of influencing factors. Furthermore, considering that there is a gap in research connecting safe space, creative confidence and arts education for adults with little exposure to the arts, this literature review will draw from adjacent fields to define these concepts.

#### 2.2a Safe Space

This quote directly addresses the need for a thorough discussion of safe space: “It may seem that the meaning of ‘safe space’ is so obvious that to explain the phrase would be unnecessary but the meaning is not as clear-cut as might be supposed” (Boostrom, 1998, p.398). In fact, the definition of safe space is different depending on the field and even contested within one field. For example, from a study of higher education student’s perspectives on safe space within the classroom environment, safe space is defined as “a classroom climate that allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly

express their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Safety in this sense does not refer to physical safety. Instead, classroom safe space refers to protection from psychological or emotional harm” (Holley & Steiner, 2005, p.50). Yet, Boostrom (1998) questions the contradictions in this definition by observing that if safe space is “understood as the avoidance of stress, the ‘safe space’ metaphor drains from classroom life every impulse toward critical reflection. It’s one thing to say that students should not be laughed at for posing a question or for offering a wrong answer. It’s another to say that students must never be conscious of their ignorance” (Boostrom, p.406). However, Holley & Steiner (2005) clearly disagree with Boostrom’s claim that safe space means avoiding conflict: “Being safe is not the same as being comfortable. To grow and learn, students often must confront issues that make them uncomfortable and force them to struggle...” (p.50). They argue that safe space actually gives students the ability to struggle with conflict through providing space to take risks and self-disclose: “...if students are to risk self-disclosure, the rewards...must outweigh the penalties....Creating a safe classroom space can reduce the negative outcomes experienced by students willing to risk disclosure” (Holley & Steiner, 2005, p.50). Thus, it is only through safe space that students are able to critically reflect. Since engaging in creative expression requires a high level of risk for adults with low creative confidence, Holley & Steiner’s (2005) definition of safe space is best suited for this research.<sup>1</sup>

### *Dialogical Safe Space*

Digital storytelling is based on sharing stories and self-disclosure, thus it makes sense to apply Holley & Steiner’s (2005) definition of safe space. Furthermore, Bohm (1991) describes dialogue as “a way of exploring the roots of the many crises that face humanity today. It enables inquiry into, and

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<sup>1</sup> This research project focuses on a psychological safe space instead of the physical environment. Creative confidence is a psychological state, thus a psychological safe space is needed for increasing creative confidence. While elements of the physical surroundings can affect safe space it is not the main concern of this research project.

understanding of, the sorts of processes that fragment and interfere with real communication between individuals..." (Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991). He further states that "Dialogue is concerned with providing a space within such attention can be given". Thus, similar to Holley & Steiner (2005), dialogue is entirely concerned with creating a safe space for critical inquiry. One of the main tenants for accomplishing safe space is a suspension of judgment, which is described as a "suspension of thoughts, impulses, and judgments" (Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991). The purpose of dialogue is not to come to a group consensus, but an understanding of each other and oneself through examination of thought: "If you are able to give attention to, say, the strong feelings that might accompany the expression of a particular thought – either your own or anothers – and to sustain that attention, the activity of the thought process will tend to slow you down. This may permit you to begin to see the deeper meanings underlying your thought process..." (Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991). By suspending judgment one can analyze judgments before casting them and come to a greater understanding of differing perspectives within a group. This type of suspension is difficult to do in practice, but the idea is that individuals will feel more comfortable to self-disclose if everyone is working towards suspending judgment. This idea is also supported by Holley & Steiner's (2005) research that found that students view being nonjudgmental or unbiased as the most important factor for a teacher of a safe classroom environment.

Suspension of judgment is further emphasized by highlighting the difference between dialogue and debate. In a dialogue vs. debate chart provided through a Dialogue Across Difference class at the University of Oregon (B. Tint, personal communication [class handout], February 1, 2014) dialogue develops "awareness and suspension of assumptions and judgments" while "debate defends assumptions and judgments as truth". It further describes the differences as encouraging "open-mindedness and a willingness to listen" versus reinforcing "a positional attitude that is closed to others". Thus, with a suspension of judgment also comes an increased emphasis on listening. As the Center for Digital Storytelling's motto is "Listen Deeply. Tell Stories" (storycenter.org), it makes sense that digital

storytelling falls within the realm of dialogical practices. Though digital storytelling doesn't follow true Bohmian dialogue since the pure form has no goal beyond general critical inquiry, while digital storytelling workshops have a specific goal, many elements of dialogical practices are present in digital storytelling methods, namely providing a space for dialogue. In conclusion, this paper also examines safe space through the lens of dialogical principles that are known to provide a container for a variety of perspectives and experiences to exist in the same space (Senge, 1994).

## 2.2b Creative Confidence

Creative confidence can be described as the confidence someone has in his or her ability to create, though oddly this definition does not come from the arts field. For instance, while this research project is focused on creativity within the realm of artistic expression and arts education, creative confidence is rarely addressed by these fields (Esslinger, 2011; Brazil, 2003). Confidence in one's ability to create is often a topic brought up by business innovators. In fact, the foremost book on creative confidence is *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential within Us All* (2013) by Tom Kelley and David Kelley of IDEO, a leading innovation and design firm in the U.S. Kelley & Kelley (2013) describe creative confidence as "believing in your ability to create change in the world around you. It is the conviction that you can achieve what you set out to do. We think this self-assurance, this belief in your creative capacity, lies at the heart of innovation" (p.2). To Kelley & Kelley, creative confidence is more than just having confidence to create; it is about believing in your ability to "create change" and in your potential to innovate. This potential is linked to economic value since Kelley & Kelley (2013) cite an Adobe Systems poll to back up their definition: "80 percent of people see unlocking creative potential as key to economic growth. Yet only 25 percent of these individuals feel that they're living up to their creative potential in their own lives and careers" (p.4). While Kelley & Kelley's definition for creative confidence is applicable to someone who is building their confidence in artistic expression, considering that innovation and creativity are very similar processes, their definition is more concerned with the

competitive environment of the business field rather than the psychological space needed for individuals to express themselves creatively.

### *Creative Self-Efficacy*

A more apt definition of creative confidence compares creative confidence to creative self-efficacy.

Creative self-efficacy is “the belief one has the ability to produce creative outcomes” (Tierney & Farmer as cited in Runco, 2007, p.313). Those with creative self-efficacy are seen to have higher confidence in their abilities and are more willing to take risks: “They believe in themselves, which is important given how often creative ideas are original and unconventional and how often there is a risk involved” (Rubenson & Runco as cited in Runco, 2007, p.313). This definition of creative self-efficacy connects to the ability to take risks, as reflected in Holley & Steiner’s (2005) definition of safe space. Kelley & Kelley (2013) support this claim by citing Albert Bandura’s definition of people with self-efficacy as those who “show more resilience in the face of failure” (p.10). However, to get to the point in which someone can show such reliance to failure, one must first being given the space to fail.

### *Creativity vs. Creative Confidence*

In education, creativity is generally looked at in terms of building creative skills rather than confidence (Chambers, 1973; Kaufman, 2014; Robinson, 2012; Runco, 2007; Zahn, 1996). Robinson (2012) defines creativity as “the process of developing original ideas that have value” (p.3). In a recent webinar for the National Endowment for the Arts, Kaufman (2014, February 19) described how creativity is not just novel but also appropriate and useful. This focus on the application of creative ideas relates creativity to a measurable skill set rather than the immeasurable psychological benefit of creative expression. For instance, Kaufman (2014, February 19) also described the many ways to measure creativity including divergent thinking and association theory tests, which measure creativity by output of creative ideas rather than development of creative process. Another way to measure creativity is through judgment of

artistic products that do connect to creative process, but these products are measured by how creative they are, not by the confidence level or emotional benefit of the creator. This focus on skills and application explains why most educational studies address creative ability rather than creative confidence in artistic expression and why this research project is not arguing that digital storytelling actually increases participants' creativity or even their creative confidence. To prove that digital storytelling has an effect on creativity would require a quantitative research design that would follow one of the tests suggested by Kaufman. Moreover, since there is no established way to measure the creative confidence of individuals, it would be difficult to posit that participants experience a real increase through digital storytelling. However, as will be discussed in the next section, safe space has a significant effect on one's willingness to express oneself and thus one's creative confidence. In conclusion, this research project looks at digital storytelling's effects on safe space for creative expression in hopes that a methodology can be formed for helping individuals build their creative confidence.

## **2.3 Safe Space for Creative Expression**

There is limited existing research connecting safe space to creative expression considering that creativity is often associated with innovation and creative problem-solving rather than confidence in artistic expression. Moreover, few resources address creative confidence within the context of adult arts education for those with minor arts exposure. However, there are significant research studies that connect the dots between safe space, creative confidence and adult arts education and demonstrate why safe space is important for creative expression (Esslinger, 2011; Brazil, 2003; Jongeward, 1995; Anderson, 2008; Paull, 2002). The key findings of these studies are discussed below.

### **2.3a Existing Research**

***Esslinger (2011): Encouraging Women's Creative Confidence: A Case Study of Women's Insights into Their Own Creativity***

One significant research study on creative confidence for adults is a dissertation by Deborah S. Esslinger (2011). Esslinger (2011) designed a qualitative study to investigate “the insights of a small group of women concerning factors and specific activities that contributed to the growth of personal creative confidence” (p.2) with the goal of crafting a creative confidence workshop curriculum. Esslinger’s study revealed that one difficulty in improving creative confidence is defining it. For instance, the women studied had confidence in their creative abilities but not their creativity because they distinguished between creative skills and artistic expression, as seen in this quote from a participant: “I am not creative in the sense that I am not an artist” (Esslinger, 2011, p.67). Furthermore, many of the women associated being creative with completing artistic products rather than participating in a creative process. This study shows that while participants recognized many of their creative skills, they were unwilling to call themselves creative without producing fine art.

While many of the participants did not believe they were creative, they did have many suggestions for encouraging their creative confidence. Their biggest complaint was a lack of time (Esslinger, 2011, p.77). They said they were too busy in their day-to-day lives to be creative; they need not just time set aside but time to get away. In fact, Esslinger found that the women were specific in the type of space they needed for building creative confidence: they wanted a space to feel safe in both a physical and emotional sense (p.85). Psychologically, they wanted to be surrounded by people who were invested and who encouraged them, which meant safe space was partly determined by the intention and support of the group. Another major factor was how comfortable they felt to take risks or self-disclose. One participant described safe space as, “A place people can be themselves. They don’t have to worry about spilling something on a rug or spilling their guts about something when they talk” (Esslinger, 2011, p.83). Therefore, like Holley & Steiner’s (2005) definition of safe space, these women felt the need for a space that allows risk taking, and as reflected in dialogical principles, a place where there would be a suspension of judgment.

*Brazil (2003): A Long and Winding Road: Mature Students' Responses to Creative Experience*

Another study that looked at safe space for creative expression among adults is a report by Jon Brazil (2003) on the experiences of post-graduate Israeli students who attended an intensive studio art module. This module served as a first creative experience for several of the adults and many of the participants made similar statements to Esslinger's study in regards to their creative confidence: "I was terrified and did not believe in my capability to create something meaningful and believed I was not blessed with the creative abilities and skills needed to make an original work" (Brazil, 2003, p.344). Brazil deems this attitude as the myth of the "exclusive nature of creativity" (p.342) and he considers safe space to be one of the key ways to breakdown this myth. He describes safe space as a personal (physical and mental) space that allows non-experienced students to work creatively and confront their assumptions about their creativity. Brazil's study addressed the difficulty in providing such a space since many of the students had a high sense of anxiety and were intimidated by the differing levels of skill between participants. However, Brazil also stated that throughout the module, participants felt less intimidated as demonstrated in this quote: "I was really nervous using visual art close to professionals. I have changed my way of thinking during the module. I know now that art is available for everyone" (Brazil, 2003, p.344).

Brazil found that one key factor to building this kind of creative confidence is again encouragement. Brazil saw encouragement as a way to give students permission to be creative, as seen in his response to one student's praise of the module structure: "It would seem that this student needed someone else to provide the necessary conditions for her to unleash her own creativity" (Brazil, 2011, p.345). Brazil felt that this permission was needed because of the strong divide between artists and non-artists and that such support was the first step in encouraging non-artists to build their creative confidence. This support was not only encouraged by the instructor but also by the participants in the group, which established an atmosphere of mutual support. One participant stated "The process of

creativity...could not have happened without the interaction with other people in the group. The atmosphere of openness and support that was dominant in the group...changed my initial line of thinking” (Brazil, 2003, p.346). Thus, as with Esslinger (2011), the intent of the fellow participants was important to creating a space that encouraged creativity.

Brazil further defined safe space as a sense of exile, meaning “being removed from one’s usual setting, and therefore from its demands” (2003, p.345). This is similar to the call for a separate time to be creative from the participants in Esslinger’s (2011) study. Brazil described this exile as a foundation for his module so that participants could examine their assumptions and cultural influences. This space allowed students to re-examine their creative confidence and participate in an intensive creative process. This kind of space is similar to Bohmian dialogue in that the goal of dialogue is to examine thought processes and come to a greater understanding of a group’s beliefs (Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991). Thus, Brazil’s module emphasized a space that is safe enough for students to enter this kind of metacognitive state and emerge more confident in their creativity. As one student said in reflection of the module process, “A window was opened to the world of Art and it is wide enough for me to pass through it” (Brazil, 2011, p.346).

***Jongeward (1995): Connecting with Creativity: Adult Learning through Art Making within a Supportive Group.***

Like Esslinger (2011) and Brazil (2003), Jongeward’s (1995) in-depth qualitative study on how adults connect with creativity within an adult arts education course, also revealed that group support is key. She states: “In order for people in the class to feel comfortable and unthreatened in relating, I tried to create a climate of trust. By asking for everyone to listen to each others’ experience and speak from their own experience as openly as possible, I hoped to make the class a safe place for connecting between people” (1995, p.130). This climate of trust is again structured through dialogue where people speak from personal experience and listen to others without casting judgment (Bohm, Factor & Garret,

1991). Jongeward goes on to say that the group support helped encourage each person's creative process, self-worth and agency as "The group functioned as an enclave of support which validated each person's impulse to learn more about creating" (Jongeward, 1995, p.133). In fact, she found the draw of being a part of the group process outweighed the discomfort of participating for many of the students. Thus, to Jongeward, the key to safe space is fostering an atmosphere of connection with others, but also with the self. She sees self-reflection as central to building creative confidence: "Taking a look within, and paying attention to an inner voice, makes possible the claiming of inner authority" (Jongeward, 1995, p.155). Through group support, individuals can feel capable of inner-reflection and start to build agency in their creative decisions.

Like Brazil (2003), Jongeward also saw that reflection helped students give themselves permission to be creative. This was evident in participants' statements like "I realized that it didn't matter 'where' I was in my process, just that I reflect on it and try to learn" (Lillian as cited in Jongeward, 1995, p.165) or "I decided that no matter how stupid it seemed to myself or other people I was going to do it...Then I decided, well it doesn't really matter what anybody else thinks..." (Marion as cited in Jongeward, 1995, p.165). Through personal reflection, students were able to overcome hindrances to their creative confidence such as comparison to others or fear of failure. Jongeward stresses that it is the facilitator's responsibility to support this reflective process through building an atmosphere of connection: "A teacher cannot make specific learning happen. Instead, a facilitator can try to provide conditions that help people move away from alienation and fragmentation and towards relating, engaging, and reflecting" (Jongeward, 1995, p.186). To Jongeward, creative confidence is best built within a supportive group.

### ***Other Studies***

Two other studies do not directly address creative confidence and safe space, but they do highlight some key practices that support creative expression for adult arts education. An extensive

phenomenological study by Anderson (2008) on graduate students' perspectives of hindrances to their creativity and a dissertation by Paull (2002) on empowerment through digital storytelling in adult education reveal some key best practices for adults arts education, including designing student-centered curriculum based in life experiences, fostering a sense of shared authority between teachers and students, supporting the freedom to fail and experiment, and providing a second chance at education through reflection. Many of these practices are discussed below (2.5) in relation to how digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression.

### **2.3b State of Adult Arts Education**

Most arts education is focused on youth, while the limited amount of arts education for adults usually only reaches a small audience of strong arts supporters (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Seldom are adult arts education programs designed to reach those with little arts background, thus rarely enlarging the audience of adults who participate in the arts. This research project aims to address this issue by examining the elements that build safe space for creative expression among a wide range of adults with differing creative confidence levels.

#### ***Need for Adult Arts Education***

The National Endowment for the Arts has long known that arts education is an important predictor for life-long arts participation. A 1996 study by Bergonzi & Smith found that “Those who had more arts education were more likely to attend arts performances – a relationship which was about four times stronger than that of any other factors considered” (p.4), which means that those who receive little arts education are highly unlikely to become arts supporters. This is a pressing issue for arts organizations who depend on an audience. As Bafle & Heine (1988) stated in their review of adult arts education: “The perpetuation of the arts is dependent upon enriching existing audiences and educating the widest population possible” (p.3). However, the current arts education system does not educate the

widest population possible. Exposure to arts education is often linked to socio-economic status, with cuts to arts education hitting low-income neighborhoods the hardest (O'Hagan, 1996). This creates unequal arts education opportunities, which in turn discourages arts participation for a huge section of society: "...millions of contemporary adults...have grown up with little or no grounding in the arts, and do not even consider participating in an artistic discipline or attending an arts event when choosing among their leisure and entertainment options" (Kerka, 2002, p.1). As Bafle & Heine (1988) said, arts organizations need to start widening their audiences in order to survive, which includes reaching out to adults with little background in the arts.

This call to action is even more important considering that the declining state of arts education is not only caused by cuts to programs, but by the educational system itself. Leading expert on education's effect on creativity, Ken Robinson, states: "Most children think they're highly creative; most adults think they're not. This is a bigger issue than it may seem" (Robinson, 2011, p.1). This is because developing a population of artists and arts supporters is not just about the quantity of arts education, but the quality: "Current approaches to education and training are hobbled by assumptions about intelligence and creativity that have squandered the talents and stifled the creative confidence of untold numbers of people" (Robinson, 2011, p.8). These practices are based in societal pressures that squelch interest in the arts, such as the belief that art is not fiscally viable: "Generations of young people have been steered away from arts with benign advice about poor job prospects" (Robinson, 2011, p.63). Children or young adults are often told not to study art because it won't make money, while ignoring the fact that art can be made for other purposes. This discouragement begins at an early age and is highly connected to the educator's ability to teach the arts: "Without good teaching, their drawing reaches a plateau, usually at about the age of twelve or thirteen. Many people give up drawing altogether at this point, often through frustration....As a result, most adults have the graphic skills of a young adolescent" (Robinson, 2011, p.160). These practices lead to a strong divide between artists and non-artists making

it even more difficult for those without a strong arts education to participate in the arts. Moreover, this divide is encouraged within higher education that separates the study of art from the making of art: “If you wanted a degree in art, you had to go to university and study the history of art. You didn’t create art at a university; you wrote about it” (Robinson, 2011, p.106). Thus, even those interested in the arts often grow up with little experience creating art. All of these reasons show that many educational practices are not designed for encouraging life-long arts learning and participation. In fact, the foundation of our educational system is based on a linear approach that rarely supports adult education at all: “Embedded in this principle of linearity is the idea that education is essentially a preparation for something that happens later on. It is for this reason that education is still mainly focused on children and young people” (Robinson, 2011, p.58) and why there is little adult arts education. However, it is apparent that such programs need to exist to correct the wrongs done by our educational system.

### *Lack of Adult Arts Education*

With such a paramount need for quality adult arts education, one would think arts organizations would be placing a high priority on educating adults, but this does not seem to be the case: “Data collected by [arts] organizations suggest that the education programs of arts nonprofits are primarily aimed at children, not adults” (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.62). In fact, many arts organizations have specific funding and staff for their youth arts learning programs, while they “lump together adult learning, audience development, community outreach, and, occasionally, marketing” (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.62). Thus, even though there is a huge adult population of potential arts supporters, arts organizations are rarely trying to reach out to them. Most adult arts programs are geared towards those who already support the arts: “Strategies such as high-profile marketing campaigns, free performances, extended operating hours, and the establishment of satellite venues may increase the participation of people already inclined to participate— by promoting access—but they will not entice those not already inclined” (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.63). This kind of marketing is usually built around enhancing the

organization's programming, rather than attracting and educating new audiences. For example, performing arts organizations' "adult learning programs typically take place on their own premises and are centered on whatever performance or exhibit is ongoing. Accordingly, they tend to attract people who have already decided to attend the performance or exhibit and typically do not reach those not already interested in or familiar with the art form" (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.63). The programs that do exist are often not designed with the needs of first-time arts participants. For instance, "qualities of a museum most highly valued by frequent visitors are not the same ones most highly valued by occasional or infrequent visitors. But because the interests of museum professionals tend to correspond to those of frequent visitors, museums tend to emphasize those qualities in their exhibits, thereby deterring occasional and infrequent visitors from visiting more often" (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.64). While it is understandable that arts organizations are conducting targeted marketing and designing programs for frequent visitors in order to bolster their supporters, they are doing little to gain new audiences and are even deterring them.

### ***Existing Adult Arts Education***

If arts organizations are doing little to educate adults, where do adults learn about the arts? One answer is higher education. Higher education not only provides opportunities for students to major in the arts field, but the chance for non-arts majors to be exposed to the arts: "...many non-majors take courses in the literary, visual, and performing arts purely out of interest, others do so as part of their college or university's general education requirements (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.58). University general education requirements are key to expanding arts audiences, since they provide arts learning to those who are not already inclined towards the arts. However, colleges have been devaluing general education over the years and especially arts education classes (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). This is partly due to a focus on training professional artists rather than fostering holistic learning: "...college and university arts departments tend to focus their resources on the minority of students who have the

potential to become professional artists” (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008, p.60). While it is understandable that art departments would use their limited resources to support their art students, this approach also lessens opportunities for non-art students to be exposed to the arts. Furthermore, it makes it more difficult for those who are not art majors to develop their interest and understanding of the arts. Zakaras & Lowell (2008) compare this approach to offering a supply of arts experiences but not increasing the demand for them through extended arts learning. Therefore, just like arts organizations, much of higher education is not focused on fostering a new arts audience.

One problem with depending on higher education to teach arts to adults is that many adults cannot attend college. As Zakaras & Lowell (2008) state:

There is no formal, compulsory system of education for adults. In contrast to elementary school children, who are required to participate in arts education programs provided by their schools, adults participate in arts learning programs voluntarily. In fact, adults usually have to pay to participate. Consequently, these programs typically attract adults who are interested in learning more about a particular art form, and typically do not attract adults who have decided they are not interested—or who have never thought about the matter either way” (p.55).

Again we are confronted with the fact that those from low socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to obtain arts education, let alone higher education. Therefore, those with the least exposure to the arts are often the ones with the least opportunities to be exposed. Arts organizations cannot depend on K-12 or higher education to provide arts education to all; they need to step up and create programming that reaches those left out of the system.

## **2.4 Field of Digital Storytelling**

### ***Definition of Digital Storytelling***

The field of digital storytelling<sup>2</sup> encompasses “the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources” (Couldry as cited in Lundby, 2009, p.3). Digital storytelling can generally be described as storytelling through digital media, though Lundby (2009) specifically defines digital storytelling as small-scale media as in short, inexpensive production that is focused on “the narrator’s own, personal life and experiences and usually told in his or her own voice” (Lundby, 2009, p.2). This definition for digital storytelling is a practice that emerged from the Center for Digital Storytelling: “This [small-scale media] is the case with the now classic model of Digital Storytelling developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling in California” (Lundby, 2009, p.2). Moreover, in a review of digital storytelling around the world (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009), one of the opening chapters is titled “Where it All Started: The Center for Digital Storytelling in California.” Thus, while digital storytelling can mean any form of small-scale media produced digitally, the specific field of digital storytelling began at the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS).

### *The Center for Digital Storytelling*

CDS<sup>3</sup> has “worked with nearly 1,000 organizations around the world” and helped “15,000 individuals to complete films” (Lambert, 2013, p.1). They have become a known as “a trainer of the trainers in the U.S. and internationally” (Stephens, 2008) with a headquarters in Berkeley, CA but also branches in Denver, Los Angeles, Washington D.C. and Toronto, Canada. Their mission is: To promote the value of story as a means for compassionate community action ([storycenter.org/about-us](http://storycenter.org/about-us)). They do this through offering digital storytelling workshops to the general public and customized groups. Their public workshops include a standard 3 day workshop where participants learn to create a digital story, an educator’s workshop that show teachers how to integrate digital storytelling into the classroom, a facilitation

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<sup>2</sup> Some sources capitalize digital storytelling as to differentiate the Field of Digital Storytelling from other kinds of storytelling with digital production. Since the Center for Digital Storytelling does not capitalize the practice, this paper will not capitalize the term.

<sup>3</sup> The Center for Digital Storytelling is in the process of changing their name to Story Center and moving away from the CDS acronym. Since they are not yet known by this name, CDS will be used in this paper.

training series that leads to a Digital Storytelling Facilitation Certificate, and many new workshops including an iPhone workshop, a webinar workshop and snapshot story workshop that challenges participants to make a digital story with one image. While CDS offers these workshops to the public for a fee on a consistent basis, a large amount of their work is crafting customized workshops with partner organizations. CDS has partnered with 100s of national and international organizations<sup>4</sup> to design workshops that address needs of a specific community such as HIV and AIDS stigma in Asian-Pacific Islander communities, LGBT youth in the juvenile justice system or human rights abuses to women abroad. CDS offers their clients an extensive partnership that includes “end-to-end planning, teaching, post-production, media distribution, materials/curriculum development, and evaluation services” (<http://storycenter.org/overview-organizations>). Through planning with partners, they determine the client’s goals, which can include personal reflection and growth, education, outreach and awareness, movement and community building, policy advocacy, and research and evaluation. In order to achieve these goals, they have set ethical standards for all workshops and partnerships (these ethics will be discussed in detail in [2.5d](#)).<sup>5</sup> The Center for Digital Storytelling has crafted their methods for 20 years so that they can offer the best support in helping partners and individuals create digital stories.

### ***The Center for Digital Storytelling’s Methods***

In order to become a training center, CDS established a specific methodology for digital storytelling and produced a *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (Lambert, 2007) for trainers to utilize in workshops. As Lundby (2008) expressed, CDS’s “principles have proved their adaptability, as they are followed almost slavishly in similar storytelling project throughout the globe” (p.366). As noted in Lundby’s tone, he does not advocate following CDS’s methods exactly, but he also mentions the biggest strength of the CDS

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<sup>4</sup> See a list of CDS’s partners at <http://storycenter.org/clients-funders>.

<sup>5</sup> A list of CDS’s ethical standards can be found at <http://storycenter.org/ethical-practice/>.

method: its adaptability. Hence why this research project posits that CDS's methods can be applied outside the digital storytelling field and specifically for building safe space for creative expression.

The Center for Digital Storytelling's methods are meticulously described in the book *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (2013), written by the founder of CDS Joe Lambert. Lambert describes their methods specifically as "having to do with a short video made in a workshop environment emphasizing existing still imagery over the moving image in the visual treatment" (p.46). For a more general definition, news reports on CDS workshops describe them as places "where people learn how to create a 3- to 5-minute video about a turning point in their lives" (Martin, 2009) or make stories "on the computer, incorporating a first-person narrative, a simple soundtrack and a handful of still images" (Stephens, 2008). The process for making a digital story is not that complicated and yet it is difficult to facilitate considering a digital storytelling workshop involves facilitators helping a range of adults share their personal stories, craft them into short 250-375 word documents, record those stories, learn how to use video editing software, collect media for supplementing the story and weave this all together into a 3 minute video over what is usually a 3 day workshop (Lambert, 2013). This is quite a lot to accomplish in one workshop and hence why CDS has created a *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (Lambert, 2007) explaining their seven step process for building a digital storytelling. The seven steps for CDS's digital storytelling methods<sup>6</sup> teach participants the basics for crafting a digital story and the fundamentals of good storytelling. These steps are presented at the beginning of each workshop along with examples of past digital stories that demonstrate the principles. A more detailed description and analysis of how these steps affect safe space for creative expression can be found in [2.5b](#).

After presentation of the 7 steps, CDS workshops move into the "story circle", which has been described as "the hallowed CDS ritual of the story circle—a lengthy but gentle group critique of each

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<sup>6</sup> A full list of CDS's 7 Steps to Digital Storytelling can be found in any of their publications, but is not posted online.

participant's seed idea" (Stephens, 2008). In fact, the CDS method could be referred to as story circle-based<sup>7</sup> digital storytelling as to differentiate from other forms of digital storytelling. Lambert (2013) describes the story circle as "the heart of the entire process" (p.77) and states "We believe that the connections made between people in the story circle help to focus and inspire each individual throughout the process" (p.69). Thus, the story circle is the basis for success for the rest of the workshop and is also a main facet of discussion throughout the facilitation, process and ethics sections ([2.5b-2.5d](#)).

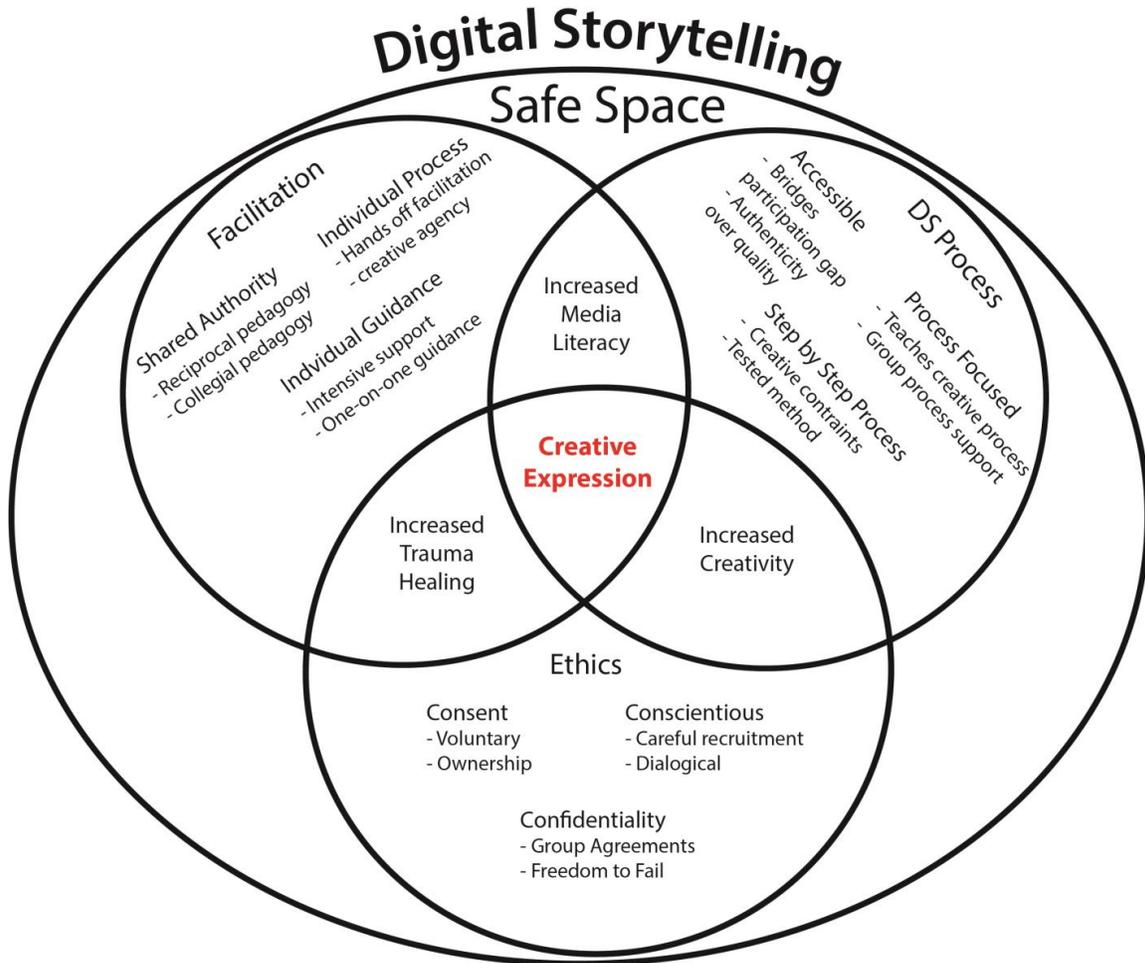
The rest of the workshop involves building the actual digital story, creating a script, recording a voiceover, collecting media such as images, sounds and music, and pulling all these elements together into a short video. Facilitators help participants throughout this process since "every workshop has storytellers with a range of experience in computing and media production" (Lambert, 2013, p.80) and that in "many of our workshops there is a significant spectrum of skills and talents related to the task" (p.42) with some people entering workshops with the expectation that they'll be making "a television mini-series instead of [a] two-three minute digital story" (p.15). With such a wide range of participants, this is why digital storytelling workshops serve as a great study for how safe space can be provided for adults with different levels of creative confidence to express themselves creatively. The rest of this literature review will address how digital storytelling manages to achieve this kind of safe space.

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<sup>7</sup> The Center for Digital Storytelling is not the pioneer of story circles, as they were developed in the community arts and theater fields, but CDS's adapted story circle process has been replicated world-wide.

## 2.5 Digital Storytelling: Safe for Creative Expression

### 2.5a Conceptual Framework



This conceptual framework visualizes the argument for why the Center for Digital Storytelling’s methods affect safe space for creative expression. This section of the literature review covers how and why each area of influence – process, facilitation, and ethics – affects safe space. These areas of influence were selected first based on prolonged observation of digital storytelling workshops and then backed up through an extensive literature review of the field. While there are many other areas of influence on safe space, this literature review argues that facilitation, process and ethics are the core tenants to building safe space within a digital storytelling workshop.

Each area of influence is demonstrated through three different factors of the Center for Digital Storytelling's methods. Each of these factors will be described in detail and supported by related literature to show how they affect safe space for creative expression. As this is the preliminary conceptual framework, this literature review provides a foundation for the argument that digital storytelling positively affects safe space for creative expression, while the revised conceptual framework (5.1a) represents the actual experiences of those in the field both from a facilitator's and participant's perspective.

As can be seen by the intersection of circles containing areas of influence, there are many different effects of providing safe space within a digital storytelling workshop including but not limited to increased media literacy, trauma healing and creativity. As described in the definitions section, the goal of this research project is not to prove that digital storytelling actually increases creativity but to show how digital storytelling methods can provide a safe space for creative expression, thus allowing a range of adults with different creative confidence levels to express themselves. Therefore, the center of this conceptual framework is focused on creative expression, which is supported by all three areas of influence that affect safe space.

### **2.5b Digital Storytelling Process**

The Center for Digital Storytelling has a specific process for their digital storytelling workshops. A more detailed description can be found in their *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (Lambert, 2007) or Lambert's other book *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (2013), though the basic process involves a presentation of the 7 Steps to Digital Storytelling, a story circle for sharing and giving feedback to participants' stories, a period of individual work where participants write their script, audio record their story, collect media, and put together their digital video after being led in a tutorial training, and finally a showing of the final digital stories. This process is flexible but in general, their workshops follow this pattern. This research project discusses elements of the process that builds safe space for

creative expression; namely that it is accessible, focused on process over product and is a coherent method.

### *Digital Storytelling Process: Accessibility*

Jenkins and fellow scholars describe the participation gap as “The unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youths for full participation in the world of tomorrow” (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton & Robinson, 2009, xii). While Jenkins et al. focus on youth of tomorrow, this participation gap is seen heavily among the adults of today. In fact, the participation gap gets worse over time as seen in this quote: “Increasingly, as computer use is ever less a lifestyle option, ever more an everyday necessity, inability to use computers or find information on the web is a matter of stigma, of social exclusion, revealing not only changing social norms but also the growing centrality of computers to work, education and politics” (Castells as cited in Jenkins et al., 2009, p.19). Thus, it is not surprising that many adults come into digital storytelling workshops worried about their technological skills. However, there have been many studies that show that digital storytelling actually teaches media literacy and thus decreases this participation gap (Dreon, Kerper, & Landis, 2011; Stephens, 2008; Tolly, 2007). This is partly due to the fact that digital stories are small-scale media that are focused on authenticity of personal stories over the quality of film. In a study of a CDS workshop in South Africa this attention to authenticity over quality was seen as an asset to the process: “The amateur nature of digital stories could thus be seen as a strength – while they might not win any video-making awards, their level of production does not provide a ‘mask’, and reinforces the fact that the stories are people’s personal experiences” (Tolly, 2007, p.32). Lambert of CDS agrees that the amateur quality of digital stories is what makes them more effective: “We have found in our process...that often what is finished, polished, and refined becomes over-polished and over-refined” (2013, p.116). At CDS, they are looking for stories that are true to the storyteller, which can be seen in the language of the 7 Steps that ask participants to own their insights and emotions (Lambert, 2007). As Lambert has said “The

point of coming to the workshop is not to make a film that will make you famous....As long as you've got a life...you've got a movie" (as cited in Stephens, 2008). This focus on authenticity over quality makes the digital storytelling process more accessible and allows participants with differing levels of media literacy to work side by side and not feel as intimidated. This kind of space that supports a range of skills is reflective of Brazil's (2003) module, which allowed space for non-artists to feel comfortable around professional artists through inward reflection on preconceived notions of creativity. By changing the focus from comparing quality to representing the authentic self, CDS's workshops also achieve this kind of metacognition, which helps level the playing field. Amy Hill, Director of CDS's Silence Speaks project, recognizes that CDS workshops are different from other forms of media-making because they provide this space: "And to be honest, many of the stories created in our workshops would absolutely not have been made in other community production environments which are still quite often excessively focused on technology tools and skills rather than on offering a safe and open space for reflection" (2011, p.147). Thus, it is through offering a space for reflection that those with less confidence in their technical abilities are able to feel comfortable expressing themselves creatively.

### ***Digital Storytelling Process: Process over Product***

Closely related to emphasizing authenticity over quality is stressing process over product. By focusing on authenticity, one is inherently concentrating on the process for how the product is made. This not only makes the product feel less intimidating but also allows the participant to focus on their creative process. As Robinson (2011) states "Creativity is a process more often than it is an event" (p.152). Thus, participants of digital storytelling workshops are given the space to rethink their creativity as a process instead of a product, which as shown in Esslinger's (2011) study was an issue. Furthermore, focusing on process over product allows participants to work on their personal creativity. James Kaufman (2014), a respected creativity scholar, splits creativity into 4 levels: Mini-C, Little-C, Pro-C and Big-C. Mini-C is personal creativity that does not require presentation of a product; Little-C is creativity acknowledged

by others; Pro-C is professional creativity; and Big-C is legendary creativity. It makes sense that those with low creative confidence would start at Mini-C and Little-C. Digital storytelling workshops offer a space for participants to build their Mini-C by focusing on their personal creative process. Workshops also develop participants' Little-C through the story circle, which provides a supportive group process for recognizing individual's creativity. The story circle is a safe time for the storytellers and the facilitators to listen to each other's stories and it requires full participation: "That safety includes that everyone is in this together, they have an oar in the water, and the resourcefulness and courage of one storyteller inspires the resourcefulness and courage of the next" (Lambert, 2013, p.77). The story circle creates a sense of group commitment, which as shown in Esslinger (2011), Brazil (2003) and Jongeward (1995) was important for establishing safe space. The purpose of the story circle is to get feedback from everyone, not just the facilitators. Thus, the story circle focuses the intent of the workshop on helping each other tell stories, which makes the success of the workshop a group effort. This kind of intensive group support lifts the pressure off the individual and allow for participants with differing levels of creative confidence to learn from each other. By the time the workshop reaches the final showing of the digital stories, the sense of group cohesion is palpable: "The catharsis, the pride, the sense of awe at what others in the room have accomplished, and the resulting camaraderie are all wonderfully satisfying outcomes of a successful workshop" (Lambert, 2013, p.83). Therefore, a successful digital storytelling workshop is one that provides a safe space for focusing on personal creative process and group reinforcement.

### ***Digital Storytelling Process: Coherency***

The last element of the digital storytelling process that affects safe space for creative expression is the process itself. The step-by-step practice of digital storytelling is a precisely refined model. For instance CDS has planned the timing of each step specifically. In the introduction they only allow each participant to say a sentence about their story because they know that people "may commit to ideas in the

introduction process if allowed to expand upon them before the formal process of the story circle” (Lambert, 2013, p.75). They want to give people time to absorb the Seven Steps lecture and then experience the story circle before committing to an idea: “We feel that people enter into processes slowly....By waiting for them to expand on their ideas until after the lecture, and within the story circle, it allows them to drop into their emotions, and reshape their workshop goals and story ideas with a fresh, and centered perspective (Lambert, 2013, p.75). The digital storytelling process is methodically thought out in order to give each participant the best opportunity for crafting a creative story. This process has been tested by over 15,000 participants, which creates a sense of security and trust as participants enter the workshop. Even if a participant is not aware of CDS’s reputation, the coherent process is reassuring. In fact, the women from Esslinger’s (2011) study highly requested a syllabus be provided at the beginning of a creative confidence workshop. Esslinger connected this to the idea that an explicit process can help build a sense of safe space. Therefore, when digital storytelling participants are asked to tell their life story in no more than 350 words, they can trust that this is an essential step in a methodical process.

Having participants boil down their story to 350 words also helps with another aspect of the process: creative constraints. Creative constraints are limitations that actually spur creativity. As Robinson states, “Being creative isn’t all about chaos and risk. Creativity in any domain is a balance of freedom and control” (2011, p.240). Creative constraints work because if someone gives you the task to make a film, any film at any length on any subject, it can be much harder to think of a creative idea than if someone asks you to make a 3 minute film about a personal story focused on a turning point in your life. Using creative constraints is an idea often spouted in the business field in regards to innovation. Kelley & Kelley (2013) discuss creative constraints in their book *Creative Confidence*: “Although ‘creative constraint’ sounds like an oxymoron, one way to spark creative action is to constrain it....When we talk to executives about implementing new innovation processes in their organizations, they often don’t

seem to know where to start. But if we ask them what they could do in a week with a shoestring budget, you'd be amazed at the great ideas they come up with" (pp.126-127). CDS offers these same kinds of constraints, which help the participant through the creative process: "This type of creative limitation helps the storyteller figure out what's most important in his or her story while also helping to organize their time in the production process" (Lambert, 2013, p.67). However, Kelley & Kelley (2013) do caution "constraints can spur creativity and incite action, as long as you have the confidence to embrace them" (p.126). In conclusion, digital storytelling must offer space that allows participants to have the confidence to turn these constraints into creativity. If the process itself isn't enough to provide such a safe space, then the facilitation and ethics of digital storytelling are needed.

### **2.5c Digital Storytelling Facilitation**

Some would say that facilitation is the most important factor to creating a safe space. In fact, a study of safe space within women's studies classrooms revealed "the role of instructors' authority and power in the construction of safe space is in this case fundamental to students' empowerment" and that safe space needs to be maintained from 'above' (Toraiwa, 2009, p.67). To CDS, "facilitated approaches describe any environment where the storytellers understand that they are making the story with support, not completely do-it-yourself, but as close as possible" (Lambert, 2013, p.42). This kind of facilitation is less like leadership from above as Toraiwa suggests, but a focus on assisted learning that emphasizes shared authority, individual process and individual guidance. This section discusses how each of these three factors is important to facilitating safe space for creative expression.

#### ***Digital Storytelling Facilitation: Shared Authority***

The quote above underlines CDS's approach towards authority in a digital storytelling workshop. The facilitator provides support, but the participant is not relying on the facilitator. This kind of facilitation fosters a sense of shared authority within the workshop in which both the knowledge of the facilitator

and the storyteller is appreciated. For instance, in the story circle, facilitators encourage others to give feedback before they do: “Facilitators do not need to feel that they are the ultimate authority in giving feedback....we want to listen to the entire group process, with our focus on supporting the storyteller” (Lambert, 2013, p.78). Thus, again the group support is given emphasis as a way to mitigate authority. As Anderson’s (2008) study on hindrances to graduate students’ creativity shows, this is even more important considering the diversity of an adult education classroom in which communication is vital: “...facilitators need to understand how to communicate more effectively to learners from very diverse backgrounds....this type of safe environment to exist, it must be co-created between both learners and facilitators” (p.69).

This kind of facilitation method is based in Frierean pedagogy that emphasizes reciprocal learning and critical conscientiousness.<sup>8</sup> A key point to facilitating critical conscientiousness is fostering an atmosphere of reciprocal learning, where there is an exchange of knowledge between teacher and student. Or as facilitators at the organization *Youth Radio* describe it: “Freire’s legacy has pushed progressive educators to frame the student-teacher dialectic as a relationship of mutual humanization (a potential rarely achieved under the dominant ‘banking model’ of education, which treats learning as a commodity exchange)” (Soep & Chavez, 2010, p.55). Soep and Chavez have adapted the Frierean concept of reciprocal learning to form their own pedagogical style called “collegial pedagogy”, in which education is treated like a relationship between colleagues. Collegial pedagogy helps create an expectation of mutual responsibility, which they consider to be very important for a good learning environment: “Despite never-ending cycles of innovation in teaching methodology, traditional education tends not to foster collegiality between students and their teachers. ‘Expert’ knowledge unilaterally handed down to learners reproduces existing power relationships through its methods and context” (Soep & Chavez, 2010, p.6). Thus, both reciprocal learning and collegial pedagogy are connected to the

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<sup>8</sup> Brazilian educator Pablo Freire popularized critical pedagogy: the idea that individuals can shift from being objects of history to subjects through gaining critical inquiry skills (Freire, 1970; 1974).

idea of shared authority, which CDS works to foster in their facilitation practices. It is through this kind of facilitation that participants can come to have a sense of ownership over their creative process and feel supported, but not overburdened in how they express themselves.

### *Digital Storytelling Facilitation: Individual Process*

This importance on shared authority is closely connected to CDS's focus on facilitating individual process. Lambert prefers to refer to this type of facilitation as hands-off, which is captured in this quote from another facilitator: "I felt the weight as a facilitator of walking the sacred line between helping someone through a difficult story, and having my fingers in it. Our handprints are inextricably on the stories, by the questions we ask, the way we respond, and the choices we help the storytellers make" (Allison Meyers as cited in Lambert, 2013, p.124). This quote highlights a key motto to CDS's facilitation style: don't leave your fingerprints on the story. Through urging a hands-off facilitation method, the storytellers will have more agency over their process. Lundby's (2009) description of digital storytelling as small-scale media follows this approach. In fact, he refers to digital storytelling as a "bottom-up activity" or a "'user-generated' media-practice" (p.4). This relates digital storytelling to the field of community cultural development, where the goal is to develop culture from the bottom up as in with the community rather than for a community (Golbard, 2006). A leading organization in community cultural development, Voluntary Service Overseas, states: "People cannot 'be empowered' by others. People can only empower themselves. The facilitator's role is to create an environment in which this can take place" (2004, p.25). In their facilitators' guide they describe two methods for achieving this kind of environment: asking questions and being flexible. Both of these qualities are also emphasized in digital storytelling facilitation. By asking questions, the facilitator encourages the participant to come to their own decisions instead of giving them instructions. For example: "To help storytellers identify the emotions in their story, we as a series of questions regarding their process: 'As you shared your story, or story idea, what emotions did you experience? Can you identify at what points in sharing your story your

felt certain emotions?” (Lambert, 2013, p.57). These kinds of questions guide the storyteller towards a more authentic story without imposing judgment. This approach follows the dialogical principle of suspending judgment, thus creating a space where participants feel safe to express themselves without anxiety of critique. This attitude is also fostered in the story circle by asking participants to start their feedback by saying “If it were my story...”, thus making sure that they don’t tell each other what to do but speak from a place of personal perspective. Just like in dialogue, this approach allows multiple perspectives to exist in the same space without there being a right or wrong way. Therefore, storytellers are able to pursue their individual process with the help of others and build agency in their creativity.

### *Digital Storytelling Facilitation: Individual Guidance*

Since many participants need individual guidance throughout the process, digital storytelling workshops are designed to offer intensive one-on-one support, which becomes all the more important when working with those who have low creative confidence. Lambert has experienced this first-hand: “As adults, time spent in these creative endeavors is generally considered frivolous and marginal by our society, and so few pursue them. Those of us who have assisted people trying to reclaim their voice know that it requires a tremendous sensitivity to successfully bring people to a point where they trust that the stories they do tell are vital, emotionally powerful, and unique (2013, p.18). While digital storytelling facilitators try to follow a hands-off policy, there are some who need more encouragement to tap into their own creativity. This is how digital storytelling allows for a flexible facilitation approach. Each storyteller is treated as an individual with their own set of skills, expectations, issues and stories to tell. Lambert continues, “In many of our workshops there is a significant spectrum of skills and talents related to the task. That people feel inadequate is assumed, but a successful co-collaborative student-centered process is predicated on having everyone set an individual achievable goal” (2013, p.42). While the digital storytelling process is a step-by-step method, it does allow for great flexibility depending on the participants’ needs. It is up to the facilitator to recognize those needs and guide them through an

individual approach that builds their creative confidence. As this section demonstrates, good facilitation is a balancing act, but if done right can provide a sense of safe space for all to express themselves creatively.

### 2.5d Digital Storytelling Ethics

The final element of influence on safe space for creative expression within a digital storytelling workshop is ethics. CDS has developed extensive ethical guidelines with the help of Amy Hill, Director of CDS's *Silence Speaks* initiative, which is digital storytelling focused on human rights issues. Though, CDS feels that ethics are important for any digital story regardless of topic, especially in the age of social media sharing: "Whether or not this this current social media frenzy will last is open to debate, but what is true is that it has greatly complicated and magnified the ethical challenges inherent to bringing highly sensitive personal narratives and images into public spheres" (Amy Hill as cited in Lambert, 2013, p.143). Thus, CDS is not only concerned with safe space within the workshop but how the stories can be safely shared outside of the workshop. In fact, CDS has a *Digital Storyteller's Bill of Rights*<sup>9</sup> that includes a section on *Sharing Your Digital Story After the Workshop* (Lambert, 2013). It is this kind of focus on the rights of participants that establishes a space where safety is a high priority. A full list of their ethical guidelines can be found in *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (2013, pp.191-198)<sup>10</sup>, though this research project will focus on three aspects of the ethical guidelines that affect safe space for creative expression: consent, conscientiousness and confidentiality.

#### *Digital Storytelling Ethics: Consent*

Consent is usually the basis for any ethical guideline. At CDS, they define consent in their *Core Principles* as participants making informed choices about "the content, production, and use of their work"

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<sup>9</sup> CDS's Digital Storyteller's Bill of Rights is a part of their ethical standards and can be found at <http://silencespeaks.org/ethics/> or <http://storycenter.org/ethical-practice/>.

<sup>10</sup> This research project refers to the full list of ethical standards designed specifically for CDS's *Silence Speaks* initiative that focuses on human rights issues.

(Lambert, 2013, p.192). CDS is “committed to providing storytellers with the information they need to make their choices, and we understand that storytellers have the right to withdraw their stories from public circulation at any time” (Lambert, 2013, p.192). Storytellers are made aware that not only is there participation voluntary, but that they have full ownership over their stories. This standard of ethics is not just a line on a list of guidelines but a practice within the workshop as demonstrated in this quote: “the workshop process belonged to the storyteller, how they choose to use it was in their control, and that meant that any public presentation of the story, including sharing within the group, was left to the storyteller” (Lambert, 2013, p.119). CDS puts high emphasis on caring these ethics into the workshop process and facilitation. A study of other ethical guidelines from comparable storytelling organizations shows a similar focus on consent. In the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling’s ethics guide (2008), the second item is obtaining informed consent, while PhotoVoice’s Statement of Ethical Practice (2009) sets choice as their number one core principle, stating “PhotoVoice always provides participants with clear choices about the content of their work including the right to withdraw from part or all of project activities, at all times” (2009). Thus, just like CDS, there is a right to withdraw, which sets trust in the participants’ decisions. This trust also manifests in a sense of agency for the storytellers, which is different than a traditional documentary approach as shown in this quote: “The distinction perhaps is that as practitioners based in the CDS model, we will always strive for the highest degree of agency for the storyteller that is possible” (Lambert, 2013, p.41). In fact, in a study of how digital storytelling affects agency, Hull & Katz (2006) describe digital stories as “‘acts of control,’ agentive and constructive performative moments” (p.70). Thus, what sets digital storytelling apart is the storyteller’s sense of control and ownership over their story. By holding to these ethics, storytellers are able to have full control over how they represent themselves, therefore providing a space for maximum agency for creative expression. As Michelle Citron states in Lambert (2013): “To narrate one’s life is to have agency” (p.86).

### *Digital Storytelling Ethics: Conscientiousness*

While CDS's ethical guidelines do give participants the right to withdraw at any time, they also focus on conscientious recruitment in hopes of preventing this from happening. For instance, CDS cautions against participants entering a workshop who have recently experienced a trauma or have severe PTSD, as described in Silence Speaks recruitment policy: "we make sure from the outset of outreach strategies that potential storytellers understand the workshop is not appropriate for someone currently in crisis or coming out of a crisis situation" (Amy Hill as cited in Lambert, 2013, p.144). The reason for this requirement is that digital storytelling is meant to be a method of counseling or therapy, though if the workshop is dealing with issues of trauma, CDS makes sure a "support worker well-versed in trauma intervention [is] available to storytellers throughout the workshop process" (Lambert, 2013, p.193). However, again the purpose of a digital storytelling workshop is not to receive counseling for a traumatic event but to reflect on a life experience. For digital storytelling to affect trauma healing, storytellers must be ready to share and reflect on their stories. Amy Hill emphasizes this in her *Silence Speaks* work "It's really important to stress, though, that before any of the above benefits can be realized, people must feel ready and able to share their stories. Most people will come to the digital storytelling process when they are emotionally and physically strong enough to do so, but some may not be able to assess their own readiness." (Hill as cited in Valle, 2010). It is in her last point where a need for conscientious recruitment and an option for opting out are necessary. Moreover, her statement also reveals another element of conscientious recruitment: a focus on reflective process or the Frierean idea of "conscientization": "the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection" (Lambert, 2013, p.118). By looking for participants who are ready to reflect on their experiences, CDS is ensuring that storytellers are able to enter "conscientization". This kind of reflective process is similar to dialogical practices that encourage metacognition (Bohm et al., 1991) and the educational idea of "transformative unlearning". This idea states that in order to learn new concepts you

must first unlearn old ones (MacDonald, 2002). However, to go through such a transformative learning experience is to enter a state of vulnerability, which makes safe space all the more important. In fact, a main question Lambert asks of digital storytelling facilitators is: “Even in our public workshops, people are willing to take risks with emotional material, and ordinarily they are prepared for the emotional impact of this work, but sometimes they are not. How do you address people’s potential for going into crisis as part of the workshop experience?” (Lambert, 2013, p.169) and the response from facilitators Pip Hardy and Tony Sumner begins with “Our primary concern is to ensure a place of safety for storytellers” (p.169). Thus, safe space is of the utmost important in a digital storytelling workshop because of focus on conscientiousness with the hope that storytellers “go deeper, farther, [and] be more complexly nuanced than they may have before in their creative process” (Lambert, 2013, p.73).

### *Digital Storytelling Ethics: Confidentiality*

The last and possibly most important aspect of the ethical guidelines that affects safe space for creative expression is confidentiality. Again, confidentiality is another common component of ethical guidelines, but this guideline is more complicated because it depends on the ethics of the entire group. If the group discusses at the beginning of the workshop what ground rules are needed for each of them to feel safe, then a safe space can be established for all. Furthermore, deciding these group agreements sets the intent for the group, which as found in Esslinger (2011) and Brazil (2003) was important for establishing safe space. Group agreements are most important for the story circle during digital storytelling workshops, where people are in a vulnerable state as they share their full stories for the first time. Group agreements for the story circle usually include: “confidentiality, do not interrupt each other, keep feedback positive and constructive, stay on topic, couch feedback in the conditional not the declarative, or use questions rather than statements, and be aware of one’s tendency to dominate or conversely shy from group dialogue” (Lambert, 2013, p.77). While there are many elements to creating a safe space within the story circle, confidentiality is the first. This is because participants are often sharing very

emotional and personal stories that they may not want discussed outside of the workshop. On the other hand, the goal of a digital storytelling workshop is to create a digital story that is usually shared with the public. CDS states that they are “transparent about its inability to guarantee anonymity to storytellers, given that we cannot control what they reveal outside of a workshop”; However, they do “discuss with storytellers whether names, details, or images need to be removed from a story in order to uphold this agreement” (Lambert, 2013, p.193). Thus, in addition to a group agreement of confidentiality there is also the option to make a story anonymous. While CDS can’t guarantee full confidentiality, they do everything they can in order to ensure it. This commitment establishes a space where participants can feel safe to express themselves by setting a container for holding their story.

The container set by confidentiality also has another effect on safe space for creative expression: encouraging a freedom to fail. As one can find in almost any book on creativity, the ability to fail is a necessary step to building creative confidence. As Albert Einstein put it, “Anyone who has never made a mistake, has never tried anything new” (as cited in Robinson, 2011, p.154). In fact Kelley & Kelley (2013) encourage innovators to have a “failure resume” to highlight “their biggest defeats and screw-ups” (p.52). However, they also state that “Permission to fail comes more easily in some setting than others” (p.49). Therefore, a certain kind of space must be established for those with low creative confidence to feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. However, this kind of space is rarely found within an educational setting, as described in Paull’s (2002) study of empowerment in adult education : “...our education system gives us one chance to succeed, at a particular time, in a particular way” (p.35). He describes the philosophy of second chance education as an anecdote this problem: “[second chance education] proposes that it is the schools which have failed student by having limited definitions for success and a lack of recognition of students’ resources” (2002, p.35). Adult arts education programs can fit within this second chance framework since they are attempting to address the failures of K-12 arts education.

In order to allow for a second chance in arts education, safe space must be established. All of the factors previously discussed in this literature review build this sense of safe space in a digital storytelling workshop, but confidentiality gives participants the reassurance that if they were to fail, it would be held within the safe container. Moreover, the entire point of a digital storytelling workshop is to give participants the space to tell their stories in a creative way. Storytellers don't leave the workshop with the same story they came in with because they are given the space to experiment with their ideas. As facilitator Amy Hill states, "I take special care to ensure a safe container, during the workshops, in which the participant can unravel her/his narrative and then piece it back together into a coherent story" (as cited in Lambert, 2013, p.142). Through a strong focus on ethics, including consent, conscientiousness and confidentiality, participants can feel safe going through such a creative process.

### **2.5e Summary**

This literature review discussed the definitions of safe space and creative confidence that best fit this research study. Safe space is defined as a space where individuals feel safe enough to take risks and self-disclose by Holley & Steiner (2005) and through Bohmian dialogical principles (Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991). The most apt definition for creative confidence is related to creative self-efficacy, meaning: "the belief one has the ability to produce creative outcomes" (Tierney & Farmer as cited in Runco, 2007, p.313). These concepts were then addressed in a presentation of the existing literature (Esslinger, 2011; Brazil, 2003; Jongeward, 1995; Anderson, 2008; Paull, 2002), which connect safe space, creative expression and adult arts education for those with little background in the arts. These studies highlighted the need for group support, time set aside for creativity, examination of one's creative confidence and past educational experiences, facilitator encouragement, student-centered curriculum, shared authority between facilitators and students, and the freedom to experiment and fail.

The need for adult arts education programs that use these kinds of practices was discussed in detail including a justification for why arts education matters to arts participation, how education policy

is hindering creativity in schools, why arts organizations are not focused on adult arts education and why they cannot depend on higher education to educate the entire adult populace in the arts. This section concluded that arts organizations need to design programs that engage adults who don't normally participate in the arts in order makes arts more accessible to a wider audience.

The final section of the literature review covered digital storytelling in detail, including defining the field and describing the Center for Digital Storytelling and their methods. These methods were then thoroughly examined through a conceptual framework and related literature. The digital storytelling practices that affect safe space for creative expression were split into three areas of influence: process, facilitation, and ethics. Three specific practices were discussed for each area of influence including a digital storytelling process that is accessible, focused on process over product and is a coherent; digital storytelling facilitation that emphasizes shared authority, individual process and individual guidance; and digital storytelling ethics that provide consent, conscientiousness and confidentiality. These practices will be compared with perspectives in the field by conducting interviews with facilitators and participants of digital storytelling workshops in order to revise the original conceptual framework to reveal the best digital storytelling practices that build safe space for creative expression among adults with differing creative confidence levels.

## Chapter 3: Data Collection & Presentation

**“ALWAYS THE PROFOUND IS LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE IT’S ESSENTIALLY UN-EXPRESSIBLE.”  
– JOE LAMBERT**

### 3.1 Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to examine the elements of digital storytelling that build safe space for creative expression among a wide range of adults with differing creative confidence levels. The goal is to design a conceptual framework of digital storytelling practices that build safe space for creative expression as a model for adult arts education programs. This framework will address the need for arts education that engages adults with little arts background and low creative confidence.

### 3.2 Data Collection Strategy

The foundation for this argument is established through a conceptual framework and a literature review that describes how process, facilitation and ethics of digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression. Following a qualitative grounded theory research design (Appendix X.2), this literature review is further analyzed through perspectives in the field by conducting interviews with expert facilitators and experienced participants of digital storytelling workshops. The data collected from these interviews is then compared with the original conceptual framework in order to see where opinions emerged, diverged or converged and used to make a revised conceptual framework of digital storytelling best practices that build safe space for creative expression.

Five hour-long interviews were conducted: three with expert facilitators and two with experienced participants. Interview subjects were selected through the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, CA. So as to ensure that the interviews with facilitators represented expert opinions, only facilitators with five plus years of experience in the field were chosen. Selection of digital storytelling participants was based on the suggestions of facilitators at the Center for Digital Storytelling. The requirements for participants included that the participant is an adult, has taken a CDS workshop

(preferably multiple) and is not a professional in the arts field. These criteria helped establish a basis for examining how digital storytelling impacts safe space for creative expression for adults with little arts background, thus serving as indicators of safe space for low creative confidence. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed as to provide accurate data and quotes were member checked by each individual.

### 3.3 Interview Profiles

#### 3.3a Expert Facilitators of Digital Storytelling Workshops

As to represent the Center for Digital Storytelling's facilitators properly, the interviewees' profiles are taken from CDS's website<sup>11</sup>, and presented here with minor revisions. These revisions focus the profiles on the facilitators' expertise within the organization and their experience facilitating digital storytelling workshops.

##### *Joe Lambert*

Joe Lambert founded the Center for Digital Storytelling (formerly the San Francisco Digital Media Center) in 1994, with wife Nina Mullen and colleague Dana Atchley. Together they developed a unique computer training and arts program that today is known as the Standard Digital Storytelling Workshop. This process grew out of Lambert's long running collaboration with Dana on the solo theatrical multimedia work, *Next Exit*. Since then, Lambert has traveled the world to spread the practice of digital storytelling and has authored and produced curricula in many contexts, including the *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (2007), the principle manual for the workshop process, and *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (2013).

##### *Amy Hill*

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<sup>11</sup> Full bios can be found at <http://storycenter.org/staff-board/>.

Hill is a storyteller, documentary filmmaker, and public health consultant. Her ten-year involvement in coordinating community-based public health and community development projects in California and nationally led her in 1999 to co-found Silence Speaks, an international digital storytelling initiative offering a safe, supportive environment for telling and sharing stories that all too often remain unspoken. Hill played a large role in developing CDS's ethical guidelines as she continues to lead Silence Speaks and other global health and human rights-related projects.

### ***Andrea Spagat***

Before joining the Center for Digital Storytelling in 2006, Spagat worked for twelve years as an educator in a variety of settings, including a jail GED project in Wisconsin, a training program for rural schoolteachers in Bolivia, and, most recently, a substance abuse prevention initiative for youth in San Francisco. In addition to leading numerous bilingual (English-Spanish) digital storytelling workshops with youth and members of immigrant communities, Spagat developed the Workshop for Educators, which tailors digital storytelling for K-12 classroom use. She has a MS in Adult Education.

### **3.3b Experienced Participants of Digital Storytelling Workshops**

In order to protect the confidentiality of digital storytelling workshop participants and allow them to speak openly about their experiences, pseudonyms are used and information regarding personal story content is omitted. Biographical information about participants' connection with the Center for Digital Storytelling was collected during the interview process.

### ***Susanna Clarke***

Susanna Clarke is a woman living in Canada who participated in two digital storytelling workshops with CDS. She was exposed to digital storytelling as a Master's student in Visual Anthropology and took her

first standard workshop with CDS in 2011. She participated in another standard workshop as part of a grant to learn how to facilitate digital storytelling workshops for aboriginal communities in Toronto. She describes herself as having no formal arts background, but has dabbled in writing and some visual arts. Writing is her biggest creative activity as she is currently working on a novel. She does have some video editing skills but says they are self-taught.

### ***Jennifer Egan***

Jennifer Egan is a woman in the San Francisco Bay Area who has taken a digital storytelling workshop and has helped provide emotional support for a custom workshop with CDS. She is a clinical psychologist working with veterans who suffer from brain injuries and PTSD. She participated in CDS's standard workshop to learn the process in order to assist emotional needs in a custom workshop designed in partnership with her work and CDS. She says she has no formal arts background, but has taken some arts-related electives and piano classes. She also regularly crochets, knits, writes and attends museums. However, she states that she has not had much time for creativity in recent years because of having to focus on "other forms of education".

## **3.4 Results of Study**

### **3.4a Research Questions**

Research questions were designed to analyze the elements of digital storytelling that affect safe space for creative expression, looking at three main areas of influence: process, facilitation and ethics. These questions were expanded upon to design interview questions for expert facilitators and experienced participants of digital storytelling workshops.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Primary Research Question:*

How does digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?

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<sup>12</sup> A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix X.5.

#### *Sub Questions:*

1. How do facilitation practices used for digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?
2. How does the process of digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?
3. How do ethical guidelines for digital storytelling affect safe space for creative expression?

### **3.4b Presentation of Results**

The following section summarizes the responses to the interview questions by facilitators and participants. Interview data was sorted according to the research question topics of safe space for creative expression, digital storytelling process, facilitation and ethics. Interview data was then reviewed to find predominant themes that emerged from the interview responses within those topics. Each theme presented below begins with a direct quote from the interviews that highlights the meaning of that theme and is followed by a summary of all responses to the theme. This section aims to present all interviews responses in regards to each thematic topic, while Chapter 4 will analyze these results by determining what data converged, emerged and diverged from the literature review.

### **3.4c Results Relating to Safe Space for Creative Expression**

#### ***Safe Space for Range of Creative Confidence***

*“...most of the people we work with come in with very little idea of themselves as a creative person....we’re working with a group of people that are relatively intimidated by the idea of quote-on-quote needing to be creative. They don’t feel up to the task. They don’t identify. They’ve never imagined themselves as creative people and so the emotional journey for folks is one of needing to... [overcome] their anxieties about their own abilities, but I think we try to help people understand that at least in this very small space, we will help them be creative” – Andrea Spagat (personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

All facilitators interviewed described participants entering Center for Digital Storytelling workshops with little artistic backgrounds or little idea of themselves as creative. When facilitators were asked how they viewed the relationship between safe space and creative expression, all of them saw a

positive correlation, with safe space being necessary for encouraging creativity among adults with disparate backgrounds, as demonstrated in the quote above.

Participants Clarke and Egan also spoke of the diversity of people who take CDS workshops. Egan marveled that safe space was established between such different participants by stating: “We were all totally different coming from totally different areas, taking the workshop for completely different reasons and yet we were all able to still really feel safe to write a story about something that mattered” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). However, even in a supposedly accepting environment, participant Clarke did express feeling intimidated by those in the workshop who are professional filmmakers – “It was like oh, he’s probably going to think mine is a piece of crap.” Though, she also said, “But you try to push that out of your mind and not really let it permeate what you’re doing because that’s not why you’re there” (personal communication, March 11, 2014), meaning to tell a story.

This refocus from art-making to storytelling as a means for lessening intimidation is also seen in a quote from facilitator Hill: “It’s ironic if facilitators are too invested in [digital storytelling] as an art form....that can stifle the creativity because they might intimidate people” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). This sentiment was echoed by facilitator Spagat who stated “we’re creative every day and we’re celebrating life every day and this workshop is an extension of something that each person already does” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). These quotes show how both Hill and Spagat expressed that focusing digital storytelling on the everyday activity of storytelling versus filmmaking can help a greater range of participants feel comfortable to engage in a creative process.

### ***Safe Space & Emotional Capacity***

*“You know sharing your creative process with others is in itself vulnerable and then you’re also sharing your creative process about something that’s very intimate. It’s doubly so I don’t think you can do work or provide a place like this, a situation where people can create such really lovely works of art without being very, very competent about making other people feel safe” – Participant Jennifer Egan (personal communication, March 27, 2014).*

Facilitators emphasized that digital stories are based on personal, often highly emotional content, which increases the need for the storyteller to be ready or have the emotional capacity to process that content. Hill said “I think you can establish parameters for creating safety and then invite people into that. It doesn’t necessarily mean everyone is going to feel safe and comfortable. So I think it’s like a combination of having that space available and then people being at a place of readiness” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Lambert echoed how emotional the story content can be by stating “We know that style of work we asked for, of deeply personal stories coming out of the family album meant that we couldn’t help but be in lots of situations where we were dealing with highly emotional environments” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Spagat described how a participant who can’t process his or her story can feel too inadequate to express themselves creatively: “they aren’t emotionally ready to tell [their story] and so they’re sense of inadequacy around the story also hinges on their creativity, they can’t even really get to the creativity because they’re feeling so inadequate around their story” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). All the facilitators reiterated the idea that safe space becomes more paramount the greater the emotional stakes, though Spagat explained that emotional safety does not necessarily mean feeling comfortable but being able to be uncomfortable.

Participants Clarke and Egan recognized a high sense of vulnerability in the workshops and that combining this with a demanding creative process is an intense experience, as demonstrated in the quote above. Clarke mentioned that strong emotional connection to the digital story made it difficult to be satisfied with the final product, saying “I think the stories themselves usually hold so much meaning for people that I don’t know if you’d walk away feeling completely satisfied” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Furthermore as expressed by participant Egan, engaging creatively in emotional material while also exposing your creative process to a group can increase vulnerability, but that this highly vulnerable atmosphere heightens the need for safe space. Thus, all of the interviews conveyed

that the intensely intimate atmosphere of digital storytelling necessitates an extreme focus on safe space.

### ***Agency & Creative Confidence***

*“...we start from assuring folks that they are the best ones to tell their story and giving them a lot of authority in that way over the process, so at least they feel like, even if they don’t see themselves as creative people, they do see themselves as the people... who has authority over their story” – Andrea Spagat (personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

All three interviews with facilitators mentioned a connection between agency and creative confidence. Lambert defined not having agency as “...this story...is still writing you instead of you writing the story” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). He expressed that if storytellers don’t have agency, then the expectations for their creative process needs to be re-calibrated to ensure safety. Spagat described how those who don’t have creative confidence often hold little agency in making creative decisions: “I think for someone who thinks of themselves as creative, they feel like they have a lot of authority over [their decisions, such as] I choose this metaphor because it speaks to me and I don’t have to be able to articulate why it speaks to me. For those who don’t think of themselves as creative, they second guess every single one of those design decisions” (personal communication, March 3, 2014).

However, while both participants Clarke and Egan said they have little arts education background, they voiced confidence in creating their stories. Clarke told a story about diverging from facilitators’ advice, saying “I knew the story I wanted to tell and I just went for it” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). While Egan did not describe herself as confident, she did say “I really liked the story that I created. I felt like it was very representative of my story and I felt like it was exactly what I wanted it to be” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). She also stated that her professional background in psychology made it easier for her to discuss emotional material and move through the

process. Thus, both participants expressed confidence in making decisions and satisfaction with their agency over the process.

### 3.4d Results Relating to Digital Storytelling Process

#### *Group Process*

*“A big part of what we do hinges on the storytellers in the workshop feeling that they’ve found kindred spirits in the workshop and that they’re connecting at some kind of heart level with participants in the workshop...They understand that the people that are around them that are at the workshop are kind of one in the struggle with them” – Andrea Spagat (personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

Group process was the most mentioned topic in all of the interviews. It was described as creating intimacy, comradery, connection, community and warmth. Lambert resonated with Spagat’s description of group process as “kindred spirits”, discussing the importance of silent understanding in groups of people with similar background and emphasized the importance of allowing for silence within a group. All of the facilitators stressed the significance of group connection in establishing buy-in to the digital storytelling process. Hill described how a sense of solidarity affects confidence: “...with digital storytelling you have this group of peers that everyone is doing it so there’s that sense of solidarity and comradery. And I’ve seen how that story circle as it unfolds, people maybe that are very redescent at first, when they see and hear other people go, then they get their confidence up. It’s kind of like a chain reaction or a domino effect...” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Spagat said that if the story circle is done right, “...the facilitator has a lot more latitude moving forward to have things that don’t work exactly to plan, because you have people bought into the process and also a relationship with you and willing to be much patient with you because there’s this sense of trust and knowledge of you as a person who’s supportive” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Lambert also emphasized the importance of building trust in the group: “so the building [of] trust is a critical part of allowing a free and comfortable exchange between the participant, the other participants and the facilitator” (personal

communication, March 4, 2014). Thus, all of the facilitators saw how trust can shape a sense of shared authority and agency in the group, where participants are helping and learning from each other.

Both participants Clarke and Egan expressed that the facilitators in their workshops supported the group process, by setting and maintaining ground rules for the workshop. Clarke describe how the facilitators helped establish a habit of attentive listening in the group: “Everyone in the two [workshops] that I participated in listens deeply and really respects the air time of the participant telling the story, respects the stories that they’re hearing and really listens with their heart I think....And the facilitators, they have a role in laying down those ground rules, laying down that space” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Egan also expressed that the facilitators maintained this atmosphere of trust: “I really enjoyed the feeling of trust and comradery that was developed over the weekend. I think that was directly related to the way that CDS conducted the workshop and their expectations and what they put forth and what they generally do in terms of interactions with other people” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). Thus, both participants felt that the success of the group process was directly connected to the facilitation.

### **Coherent Process**

*“I think they were really good at making people feel competent and being encouraging even though it may be the first time they’ve ever used any software remotely like this. They’re very good at normalizing the difficulty and steep learning curve” – Participant Jennifer Egan (personal communication, March 27, 2014).*

All of the interviewed facilitators emphasized that the digital storytelling process must be coherent from start to finish, including the recruitment and aftermath of a workshop. Lambert described the coherency of CDS’s process by stating, “As we describe the process...it treats the engagement from the first mention of do you want to be in a digital storytelling workshop to what happens well after the workshop is over” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill described the importance of showing the completed videos at the end of the workshop as providing closure: “I think the fact that we always

work in a way that assumes everyone will complete a story and that we have that group screening at the end, sometimes that can be intimidating but I think ultimately in most cases it provides a sense of closure” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Spagat defined coherent process as clarifying what storytellers are expected to engage in: “...creating a system that’s coherent is really important so that the people who are taking part in your workshop feel like they can predict what’s going to happen and what’s not going to happen” (personal communication, March 3, 2014).

On the other hand, participant Clarke mentioned that being too knowledgeable of the process lowered her enjoyment of the workshop, contrasting to participant Egan’s assertion her little knowledge of the process beforehand helped her be more open-minded: “I just sort of tried to be flexible and open-minded and not have a lot of pre-conceived ideas heading into the weekend” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). Like facilitator Hill, participant Egan also mentioned a need for closure, but she expressed a wish for more group connection at the end of the workshop, similar to the story circle. Clarke thought that going through the process step-by-step with facilitator support reassured the participants and made the steep learning curve more accessible. She stated, “...going into that workshop for the first time you’re like there’s no way I’m ever going to be able to do this....Maybe it’s just working through the process and having the facilitators there as cheer leaders saying yeah you’re going to do this like don’t freak out, you’re going to get this done” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Egan also acknowledged the workshop facilitator’s role in assisting them through the process by saying that facilitators “[normalized] the difficulty and steep learning curve” (personal communication, March 27, 2014).

### ***Storyteller-Centered Process***

*“Rather than focusing on teaching people how to do digital editing; we’re really zeroing in on supporting people in making a story” – Amy Hill (personal communication, March 5, 2014).*

The facilitators stressed that digital storytelling workshops follow a storyteller-centered process because they saw their primary goal as helping the participants have a positive experience rather than create a high quality product, as highlighted in the quote above. Spagat emphasized the significance of a storyteller-centered process: "...the idea of keeping the storyteller central to the process, which as you expand out, it impacts every single piece of the process" (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Joe connected CDS's storytelling centered process to his background in the theater and being aware of the emotional capacity of the participant: "In my old theater, we would always say that life trumps art, meaning if you're in the middle of some creative process and somebody's suddenly really upset, you stop the process. You don't go, well it's more important to get the story done than it is for you to cry" (personal communication, March 4, 2014), thus supporting the storyteller before the story.

Participants echoed the facilitators' emphasis on story rather than production. Participant Egan recognized that storytellers were able to focus on process through the 7 Steps lecture, with the step of 'Finding the Moment': "I mean one of the things that they really stress was the moment... and to get down into the meat of the experience. And so I found that really helpful because I think that's what makes the videos so good is that they encourage you to get really, really, really real with yourself" (personal communication, March 27, 2014). This appreciation of self-reflection in the process was further echoed by her claim that time in the workshop spent teaching technology took away from the intimacy of the space. Thus, she voiced a preference for reflection over learning the steps of the workshop. Participant Clarke, on the other hand, expressed frustration over an imperfect product, which lessened her satisfaction with the process: "You're always going to walk away feeling I wish I had done it differently or I wish I had been able to do xyz" (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Though, she also stated that knowing that the product was not going to be perfect helped her get through the process. Thus, the participant interviews described how a storyteller-centered process can both lower satisfaction and intimidation.

### ***Flexible Process***

*“You are essentially saying to the person you will have choice in all aspects of this creative endeavor about how you want to do and what you want to do. Again, immediately contradicting that is that we’re generally saying you agree to work in a creative constriction” – Joe Lambert (personal communication, March 4, 2014).*

The interview data demonstrated that the process for digital storytelling workshops is flexible. Facilitator Hill stated that the process often changes based on the workshop and facilitator, but the product is always consistent: “...we have this template for the workshop but the way that it plays out with different groups is pretty different and the way that it plays out with different facilitators is frankly pretty different.... And it is also true that even though there is this wide range of approaches to that template, what comes out of the workshop is remarkably consistent in terms of the stories” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Though, she also expressed that the length of the workshop can affect the quality of the stories, by describing longer workshops that resulted in extremely creative work. As Lambert explained in the quote above, this flexibility allows participants to play with the creative constraints of digital storytelling.

Participant Egan enjoyed the creative constraints as she felt that they increased the poignancy of the workshop. She described digital storytelling as “multi-media poetry... because I was saying a lot with very few words and letting the pictures speak for me and letting the music make it more poignant” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). Participant Clarke appreciated the time set aside for individual exploration of the process, but also felt very rushed through the workshop. Thus, both participant and facilitator interviews show how creative constraints can sometimes hinder flexibility and creativity.

## **3.4e Results Relating to Digital Storytelling Facilitation**

### ***Facilitating Creative Options***

*“It feels like we have a big responsibility to listen to the story so that the creative options that we are presenting help someone articulate the vision that they have” – Andrea Spagat (personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

Interview data emphasized that facilitators play a large role in expanding creative options for participants. Facilitator Lambert explained the facilitator’s role in guiding creative options in relation to emotional capacity. He described how facilitators should present different options so that the storytellers can pursue the path that is most safe for them: “So, even in that first presentation we’re making a change in how we’re trying to have people hear what the task should be, so that to move forward, to get into the story circle, the safety is there as an out” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill illustrated how she provided creative options through the presentation of digital story examples. She explained how she rarely presents stories that are directly related to the topic of custom workshops, so that participants will feel free to express their stories in new ways rather than following past examples. As Spagat described above, she felt it was her responsibility to offer creative options that fit the needs of the storyteller. These responses demonstrate a few of the ways that a facilitator can affect the creativity of participants.

Participant Egan felt that she received a lot of individual guidance, and participant Clarke said facilitators helped show her what’s possible. She described them as having “sneaky little tactics that you would not think of if you’re just doing this first time” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Clarke also connected coherency to clarifying creative options: “...knowing what you’re setting out to do and having someone walk you through it...and show you that piece where you go through the 7 elements,...where you’re being shown digital stories that have been made and you’re being asked to sort of think about the way that this 2-3 minute piece is put together. I think that for some participants it opens up possibilities for them....Even doing the tutorials in the video editing program, showing participants what’s possible” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Therefore, the interviews

revealed that part of the facilitator's responsibility is to clarify and expand the creative options for participants.

### ***Dialogical Facilitation***

*"Probably the most important quality in terms of the positive side that I've seen is the facilitator's own ability to stay present in the midst of whatever may be happening" – Amy Hill (personal communication, March 5, 2014).*

All of the facilitators talked about different dialogical principles, such as facilitating through questions, suspending judgment and being present. Spagat used dialogical questions to figure out how the participants wanted to present their stories: "...listening to what the storyteller wants to do with their story and asking questions about what is the purpose of the project and what is the pre-creative vision and what's the impact you want to have with your story" (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Lambert spoke specifically of suspending judgment in order to validate everyone's experience. He stated "everyone's experience is essentially theirs to judge; it's nobody else's to judge" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill saw being present as incredibly important, especially for participants who have difficulty throughout the workshop: "I've definitely had several experiences where I've had to sit with people for long periods of time to help them get through certain parts of the process and then I've seen them come out the other end, feeling good and feeling happy" (personal communication, March 5, 2014).

Participant Clarke also mentioned the strong presence of facilitators in her workshops: "I found all of the facilitators to be very present and with you when they were working with you, even in the sound booth like sort of directing you to put more intonation into a sentence or pauses or whatever, like working with you to really get the best out of you they can" (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Participant Egan spoke in general about being supported by the facilitators and group through dialogue, but did not mention any specific dialogical practices.

### *Shared Authority as Balancing Act*

*“You’re looking to those facilitators as the expert in the room to help you shape the best story you can shape with what you’re working with” – Participant Susanna Clarke (personal communication, March 11, 2014).*

Many of the comments made in the interviews demonstrated how the authority of a facilitator is a balancing act. Hill described the ideal facilitator as someone who has the humility to understand that he or she is not an expert in anyone’s story: “I would say humility and an attitude of I maybe have some knowledge and skills in technology ...but I’m not the expert on your story or how you want to tell it...” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Spagat explained that while she wants participants to know that she is available for support, she also wants storytellers to be in charge of their projects: “It’s not as if I want to disappear as a facilitator always. I think it’s really helpful for people to know that I’m ready to help them or support them in whatever they need to be supported, but I also want to be very clear that I want each person to be in charge of, as much as possible, their own project. It is a balancing act and often times different people want different things” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). She also stated that facilitators need to be sufficiently experienced, so that storytellers can trust them to “handle and absorb” any difficulties that might arise in the workshop. Lambert recognized that people want advice especially from those they see as creative, but that a facilitator should always present the suggestion as conditional, so that the participants can decide whether or not to follow it: “That it’s always conditional meant that you might make suggestions but you’re really trying to remind the person that they want to have agency throughout the process and that don’t take my or anyone else’s feedback as a kind of judgment, take it as an option” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill saw transparency as a way to balance authority through being aware of the power dynamics in the room, including between participants, so that space can be created for authority to be shared by all.

As participant Clarke mentions in the quote above, storytellers are looking to the facilitators as experts, which can make it hard to take their advice as conditional. She indicated that the confidence of

the facilitator has a huge effect on the confidence of the participants: "...if you've got a facilitator who's kind of like "Oh god I don't know", that's not going to give you much confidence in their ability or yours really cause you're going to walk out going "Oh good lord, what the hell just happened" (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Egan also saw that the confidence of the facilitator affected the quality of the stories: "I really think it comes back to the facilitators and their ability to...I mean I really believe you can't encourage people or expect people to go places in themselves that you're not willing to go yourself" (personal communication, March 27, 2014). Thus, both sets of interviews showed that sharing authority between participants and facilitators is a delicate balance.

### ***Individual Guidance as Balancing Act***

*"It was a really nice balance of keeping our eye on the goals and encouraging me to process my material" – Participant Susanna Clarke (personal communication, March 11, 2014).*

Closely related to shared authority is individual guidance, which was also seen to be a balancing act in the interviews. Lambert defined individual guidance as offering appropriate support: "You don't generalize that everybody needs kid gloves. Nobody needs judgment, but not everyone needs kid gloves" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill echoed this sentiment to tailor guidance to each participant's needs: "We're very gentle with how we teach the technology and we kind of meet each person where they're at with their skill level and their interests and their openness to feedback and support or not. We let them decide on the extent to which they want or need our support or and guidance" (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Though, Spagat described how sometimes facilitators can put their agenda before the storyteller's needs, "as a facilitator sometimes you can get too attached to making stories more beautiful according to your criteria of what a beautiful story is" (personal communication, March 3, 2014). These quotes show how facilitators stressed the importance of treating each participant as an individual with specific needs.

Participant Egan saw individual guidance as being “boundaried”. She felt that the facilitators encouraged participants to go deeper into their story in order to be poignant, but not too far into their emotions that it became overwhelming. However, she also stated there was a strong “go for it attitude” in the workshop that led participants to create more affecting stories: “all of us really started out more on the surface and got a little deeper” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). Participant Clarke found difficulty with balancing conflicting individual guidance she got from different facilitators, and especially advice that was in contrast to her own desires. She described how she was encouraged to develop a less emotionally intensive story with her safety in mind, but felt she was ready to process the story and diverged from their advice. Thus, all of the interviews indicated that individual guidance is a delicate and complicated matter.

### **3.4f Results Relating to Digital Storytelling Ethics**

#### ***Transparency***

*“...if you are asking people to share something that you do hope will be shown publicly, what is your responsibility as a facilitator to make sure they feel safe and comfortable in what they’re sharing and what knowledge and insight do you need to bring to the table so you can help them make decisions about what they do or don’t share or show?” – Amy Hill (personal communication, March 5, 2014)*

When asked how ethics affected safe space in digital storytelling workshops, Hill responded: “...probably the biggest one for me that I would come back to is just the need for transparency throughout the whole life a project” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). She thinks that there needs to be transparency not only with participants, but with partners, funders and facilitators in order to clarify the objectives and implications of consent to participate in the workshop and show these videos. As in the opening quote to this section, she talked of having frank conversations with participants about what it will mean for the public to see their videos, and what content should or shouldn’t be included. She feels that these discussions have become more important with the advent of social media, as videos can be shared publicly more easily. Facilitators Lambert and Spagat echoed this

concern in the need to clarify ownership of the stories. Spagat stated that when CDS is working with partner organizations, “It’s really important to be very clear about how the stories are going to be used and who will have ownership over the stories, which is very often not the storytellers themselves” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Lambert also emphasized transparency in ownership, by explaining how knowing that one is not required to share his or her story can increase the freedom of the workshop. He related incidents where participants destroyed their story at the end of the workshop as examples of total control over consent.

Participant Egan felt that all the ethical guidelines were clearly laid out at the workshop: “I think that they very explicitly and competently laid out rules and made sure that everyone understood them and that it was clear to everyone” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). On the other hand, participant Clarke was not entirely aware that CDS has official ethical guidelines. This lack of transparency in participant Clarke’s workshop caused her to worry about how her story might be used or shared, though she acknowledged that confidentiality can’t be controlled outside of the workshop: “I don’t know what people told their partners or kids or whatever when they came home.... maybe the whole thing was divulged, but you don’t have any control over that” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Clarke and Egan’s responses show how transparency of ethics can be dependent on the workshop itself.

### ***Conscientious Recruitment***

“It’s not like we view ourselves as the experts in creating a safe environment for every community that might come to us. We really emphasize the need to work closely with the local community partners that can identify people who will be ready and able to share stories, to help design activities and approaches to establishing safety” – Amy Hill (personal communication, March 5, 2014).

The second most mentioned topic during the interviews was conscientious recruitment of both participants and partners, but mostly of partners. Every facilitator brought up how important forming ethical community partnerships are to the success of the workshops, and felt that the ethical guidelines

had the biggest impact on how they recruited partners. As shown in Hill's quote, she feels that working with the right partner can create better safe space in different communities. However, she also noted that facilitators must be aware of "instances when community partners have biases or attitudes that may negatively impact their ability to function as effective ambassadors in a local community" (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Spagat spoke of a successful partnership as one where the partner is just as committed to safe space as CDS, citing their partnership with the Banyan Tree Project as an example, a project to reduce stigma around HIV in the Asian & Pacific Islander community: "they've prioritized making sure that the elements that create safe space are there, which is really important, because the stories almost exclusively, 75-85% of stories have been done by people who are HIV positive and who live in or come from environments in which there's a lot of stigma attached to HIV" (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Lambert described CDS's policy of including counseling support in workshops dealing specifically with traumatic events. Participant Egan was a counselor at a CDS workshop working with female veterans with PTSD and mentioned during the interview how conscientious CDS was in planning that partnership.

Facilitators also discussed conscientious recruitment of the participants, specifically ensuring that the participant is ready to take the workshop. Lambert described how most people opt-out of the workshop when they realize the emotional intensity is too much for them, but facilitators still need to gauge the emotional capacity of each storyteller: "...[from] the point that they walk in the room, we are literally trying to assess their emotional health" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). He said that if he feels that someone does not have the emotional capacity to tell a story, then he suggests doing the "dog story", meaning "any story but the story that you're not really ready to tell" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Spagat explained how she encourages participants to be conscientious of their emotional capacity: "...the story needs to be a true story but it doesn't need to be your deepest darkest secret true story. It needs to be a true story that you can tell as a true story and be emotionally

present to that true story” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Though as described above in the section on balancing individual guidance, participant Clarke’s conflict regarding a facilitator’s advice not to do a highly emotional story is an example of a participant’s self-knowledge being better than the facilitator’s assessment.

### **Cultural Humility**

*“I think that’s a really important part of helping people feel connected to their roots and connected to who they are and feeling like they can bring those cultural elements, that those cultural elements are part of their creativity” – Andrea Spagat (personal communication, March 3, 2014).*

Interview data connected cultural humility to conscientious community partnerships. As mentioned above, Hill deferred to the expertise of partners on how to work in different communities. She sees this as having cultural humility when entering a new community and recognizing their practices, for example, designing a culturally appropriate closing ceremony. She also saw political conscientiousness as a component of cultural humility, because facilitating dialogue between people of different backgrounds means “recognizing that when we come together that even though we’re trying to create this kind of supportive egalitarian environment that some people do hold more power than others” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). Spagat also emphasized cultural humility and political conscientiousness by acknowledging the need to listen to marginalized voices: “...we try to help people understand that we are capable of listening to their stories because people who have marginalized stories or stories that haven’t been or are not heard or not recognized or not honored, they need to know that we have a way of honoring those stories” (personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Moreover, facilitators framed the process of digital storytelling as based in cultural humility. Lambert defined digital storytelling as “stories out of the family album” (personal communication, March 4, 2014), where participants are asked to bring materials from their personal history that are often highly sensitive. Spagat encouraged tying the participants' culture(s) to the storytelling process, so

that participants felt more comfortable using cultural materials in the creative expression of their stories.

### *Ethics from Experience*

*“...a lot of good teaching about ethics is in story ironically....all good books about ethics have cases about all the gray areas, and they teach through case study about ‘well that’s true until that’s not true right?’”*  
– Joe Lambert (personal communication, March 4, 2014)

One viewpoint that was expressed by all the facilitators was that the ethical guidelines came more from their experiences than influencing their experiences, meaning that the ethics had been crafted during the workshops long before they wrote them down. As in the quote above, Lambert suggested that the more experience in the field a facilitator has, the more mature they are, which in turn helps them navigate ethical issues. Hill stated that facilitators need to be aware of ethical issues in order to not accidentally harm participants. Lambert emphasized that because facilitators have to be so vulnerable, they need to do a lot of self-care. He explained how the emotional state of the facilitator can have a huge effect on the safe space of the workshop from his own experiences: “When I’m in a great space coming into a workshop environment, it’s always a better environment. Then there’s a kind of knowing ...what’s your main role to keep safety? It’s to feel safe and healthy and balanced yourself” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Additionally, Participant Egan mentioned that the maturity of the facilitator enhanced the overall quality of the workshop, including the quality of the stories, as in the quote described in the section on sharing authority, where she described a mature facilitator as someone who is able to be vulnerable along with the participants.

Some of the interviews defined ethics from experience as “ethics as process”<sup>13</sup>. Lambert described this concept as not being dogmatic with ethics, but recognizing that ethics will change based on the context: “ethical guidelines should not be applied in some sort of catechism of like therefore I’m going to say exactly this to this person at this time, because it just may not be true and actually you’re

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<sup>13</sup> “Ethics as process” is one of CDS’s core ethical principles: <http://storycenter.org/ethical-practice/>

not doing them any favors by being dogmatic on an ethical framework that you had” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill explains “ethics as process” as “not just a matter of signing a consent form” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). She emphasized that a discussion of ethics does not end when the participant signs the consent form, but is a continual conversation throughout the workshop. Thus, CDS is continually developing their ethical guidelines from their experiences.

### **3.5 Summary**

The results of these interviews present a snap-shot of perspectives on how digital storytelling can affect safe space for creative expression. Main themes that emerged were: safe space for a range of creative confidence, safe space and emotional capacity, agency & creative confidence, group process, coherent process, storyteller-centered process, flexible process, creative options, dialogical facilitation, shared authority and shared authority as balancing acts, transparency, conscientious recruitment, cultural humility and ethics from experience. There is still so much more that could be said about safe space, creative expression and digital storytelling, but as Lambert said “...always the profound is left behind because it’s essentially un-expressible” (personal communication, March 4, 2014).

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis

*“...THE TRICK IS GETTING THE EMOTIONAL SAFETY HIGH ENOUGH SO THAT PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE CREATIVELY.”*  
*- ANDREA SPAGAT*

### 4.1 Data Analysis Strategy

After reviewing the interview data and sorting the results into themes within the research question topics of safe space for creative expression, digital storytelling process, facilitation and ethics, the results were then coded according to what data converged, emerged or diverged from the arguments presented in the literature review. The results of this comparison will be used to make a revised conceptual framework of digital storytelling best practices that build safe space for creative expression.

### 4.2 Analysis of Results

Analysis of the results is presented through the research question categories as different aspects of the same categories converged, emerged and diverged. Topics discussed are from the original conceptual framework described in the literature review in comparison to the interview data.

#### 4.2a Safe Space for Creative Expression

##### *Convergent Results*

The foundational argument of the literature review is that digital storytelling workshops affect safe space for creative expression among a wide range of adult participants with differing creative confidence levels. Responses to the interview questions affirmed this argument by recognizing a connection between safe space and creative expression, that safe space is necessary for conducting digital storytelling workshops and that a range of adults take CDS workshops, many of whom do not identify as creative. These results are exemplified in this quote by participant Egan: “We were all totally different coming from totally different areas, taking the workshop for completely different reasons and

yet we were all able to still really feel safe to write a story about something that mattered” (personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Interviewees described safe space in accordance to the literature review’s definition of a space for critical reflection, self-disclosure and risk-taking (Holley & Steiner, 2005), as demonstrated in this quote by Spagat: “...the trick is getting the emotional safety high enough so that people are willing to feel uncomfortable creatively” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Data also related creative confidence to agency, which connects to the literature review’s discussion of creative confidence as self-efficacy (Tierney & Farmer as cited in Runco, 2007). The fact that interviewees spoke often of the need to have agency over creative decisions demonstrates the connection between confidence and creative expression.

Two of the facilitators expressed the idea that storytelling is an everyday activity that acts as an understated art form, thus lessening the intimidation of engagement. While the literature review addressed this issue under the topic of digital storytelling process in relation to a focus on authenticity over quality – “The amateur nature of digital stories could thus be seen as a strength – while they might not win any video-making awards, their level of production does not provide a ‘mask’, and reinforces the fact that the stories are people’s personal experiences” (Tolly, 2007, p.32) – this data still shows how digital storytelling provides safe space for a wide range of participants. However, participant Clarke did express feeling intimidated by other participants in the workshop who are creative professionals. On the other hand, she also stated that focusing on the process of storytelling helped her not concentrate on comparing herself to other participants. These results demonstrate that it is possible to establish safe space among a wide range of adults with different creative backgrounds, if the creative process is emphasized.

### ***Emergent Results***

The main emergent theme of the interview data in regards to safe space for creative expression is the close relationship between safe space and emotional capacity. Digital storytelling was described by many of the facilitators as an expressive art and thus requiring the capacity to process and express one's emotions, as demonstrated in this quote: "We know that style of work we asked for, of deeply personal stories coming out of the family album meant that we couldn't help but be in lots of situations where we were dealing with highly emotional environments" (J. Lambert, personal communication, March 4, 2014). These results connect emotional capacity to having agency, since participants need to feel in control of their stories before they can feel safe to reflect on them. As Lambert said, "...this story...is still writing you instead of you writing the story, so you need to re-calibrate your expectations of the entire creative process you're in to keep yourself safe" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). The literature review spoke of emotional capacity with respect to CDS's ethical guideline of conscientious recruitment, stressed in this quote from Hill: "we make sure from the outset of outreach strategies that potential storytellers understand the workshop is not appropriate for someone currently in crisis or coming out of a crisis situation" (as cited in Lambert, 2013, p.144). While the interview data also connected recruitment to assessing the emotional capacity of participants, the idea that not being ready to process emotional content could hinder a participants' creativity is emergent, as best captured in this quote by Spagat: "[if]they aren't emotionally ready to tell [their story] and so they're sense of inadequacy around the story also hinges on their creativity, they can't even really get to the creativity because they're feeling so inadequate around their story" (personal communication, March 3, 2014).

This focus on emotional capacity is also supported by the interviewed participants' frequent mention of vulnerability within the workshop. For example, participant Egan stated, "On the one level, you have this emotional intensity and on another level you have this really steep learning curve and those two things together create a very intense atmosphere" (personal communication, March 27, 2014). The interviews revealed that not only does digital storytelling require participants to share

emotionally-charged material, but they must also engage and process that material in order to express it creatively. While this high sense of vulnerability may seem to diverge from the argument that digital storytelling provides safe space for creative expression, it is actually because of the intensely emotional atmosphere of digital storytelling that safe space is so necessary, which participant Egan recognized as vital to supporting vulnerable participants: “You know sharing your creative process with others is in itself vulnerable and then you’re also sharing your creative process about something that’s very intimate....I don’t think you can do work or provide a place like this, a situation where people can create such really lovely works of art without being very, very competent about making other people feel safe” (personal communication , March 27, 2014). Thus, support for processing emotions through creative expression is integral to digital storytelling.

### ***Divergent Results***

While the interview data indicated that safe space is essential for creative expression of emotional content, there is some divergent data. For instance, facilitators recognized that just because a safe space is established does not mean that participants will engage in the process. Spagat described this as “opening the door and telling people that they’re free to step through that door, but not requiring people to step through the door” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). This means that a safe space doesn’t necessitate engagement, it just provides the opportunity. Furthermore, Hill questioned the creative capacity of participants entering the workshop by stating “For the most part when somebody just organically comes up with something that is just over-the-top phenomenal, we don’t have much to do with it. They came in with that capacity” (personal communication, March 5, 2014). These statements put into question the impact of safe space on creative expression and how much safe space can actually affect a participant.

Data from the participant interviews also diverged from the literature review’s definition of creative confidence, as directly connected to an arts background. Both of the participants described

having confidence from academic or professional experiences instead of from arts backgrounds.

Participant Clarke said that while she has no formal artistic training, her Masters in Visual Anthropology prepared her for using the video editing software, which boosted her confidence: “I think that I was pretty confident in my participation in the process cause I came with those skills” (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Participant Egan explained how her background in psychology made it easier for her process the emotional content of the stories. Furthermore, she stated that while she wouldn’t describe herself as confident, she greatly enjoyed the workshop, as shown in this quote: “I really liked the story that I created. I felt like it was very representative of my story and I felt like it was exactly what I wanted it to be” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). This data illustrates that participants can have confidence in themselves outside of a sense of creativity and that they can still enjoy the process regardless of feeling confident.

## **4.2b Digital Storytelling Process**

### ***Convergent Results***

As group process was the most mentioned subject in the interviews, this certainly confirmed the literature review’s assertion that group support is integral to safe space (Esslinger, 2011; Brazil, 2003; Jongeward, 1995). Statements of how group process resulted in solidarity, buy-in and reciprocal learning among participants tied directly to the literature review’s discussion. The interviews also indicated that facilitation shaped group process through establishing ground rules, allowing room for intense listening, and building agency through deferring to the group’s expertise. This approach is highlighted in this quote from Spagat: “It [the story circle] helps us start the workshop in a space where we’re recognizing everybody’s capacity to support each other and the strength that everyone in the room has to help everyone tell the story” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). While these practices were discussed under the topic of facilitation in the literature review, they still assert the importance of group process for establishing safe space.

The data regarding a storyteller-centered process connects to the literature review's discussion of process over product: "Fear of failure develops through emphasis on product rather than process" (Jongeward, 1995, p.152). The interviewed facilitators reflected this statement by describing a storyteller-centered process as an emphasis on the story rather than production, which allowed space for critical reflection and creative engagement of emotional content, as demonstrated in participant Egan's appreciation of the reflective process. The interviews also stressed the importance of a coherent process, which was described in the literature review as methodical process that reassures participants and provides creative constraints (Kelley & Kelley, 2013; Lambert, 2013). The data agreed with this assertion by highlighting that coherency clarifies the creative options and constraints of the workshop. For example, creative constraints were positively described by Lambert as being flexible and by participant Egan as increasing the poignancy of the workshop. Participant Clarke also said the step-by-step process lessened intimidation and increased confidence through accomplishing each step. Thus, the digital storytelling process is seen as both coherent and flexible. While flexibility was addressed in the literature review under the facilitation of individual process and guidance, the interviews supported the idea that a methodical process can both reassure participants of expectations and allow space for creative exploration through flexibility.

### ***Emergent Results***

There were no dominant emergent themes of the digital storytelling process, but there were a few sporadic results. The need for facilitators to guide the process was again mentioned in regards to supporting participants through the steep learning curve as can be seen by participant Clarke's reference to the facilitators as "cheerleaders" (personal communication, March 11, 2014). This overlap between process and facilitation was also revealed in the way shared authority and agency was emphasized by facilitators prioritizing balanced group dialogue: "recognizing that when we come together that even though we're trying to create this kind of supportive egalitarian environment that

some people do hold more power than others” (A.Hill, personal communication, March 5, 2014). While the literature recognized the need for shared authority between facilitators and participants (Anderson, 2008; Freire, 1974; Lambert, 2013; Soep & Chavez, 2010), it did not discuss the balance of power or reciprocal learning among participants. Interview data also extended the literature review’s definition of coherent process from a step-by-step guide to a process encompassing the entire arc of the workshop, as underlined in this quote from Spagat, “The whole process, from the planning to the facilitation to how things get distributed at the end needs to have a coherency” (personal communication, March 3, 2014).

### ***Divergent Results***

While the digital storytelling process was described as bridging the technological participation gap in the literature review (Dreon, Kerper, & Landis, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2009; Stephens, 2008; Tolly, 2007), the interviews expressed that the learning curve is extremely steep, which would suggest that the process is not as accessible as argued in the literature review. However, as the convergent and emergent results show, participants were able to accomplish this steep learning curve through step-by-step with support.

The focus on process over product also had some negative effects on the participants.

Participant Egan said the time spent teaching the process took away from the intimacy of the space and participant Clarke found that while the emphasis on process lessened the intimidation, it also lowered her satisfaction of the product. Thus, by focusing on process over product, the quality of the digital stories may be lower.

Lastly, participant Clarke and facilitator Hill wished for more time in the digital storytelling process, with Clarke expressing frustration over limited time to work on her story and Hill describing a longer workshop that resulted in more creative products, which indicates that there is a limit to the flexibility of the process.

## 4.2c Digital Storytelling Facilitation

### *Convergent Results*

Interview results addressed all of the areas of facilitation (shared authority, individual process and individual guidance) discussed in the literature review. Shared authority and individual guidance were described by interviewees as balancing acts. Facilitators acknowledged that they are not the ultimate authority in the workshops, especially in regards to the participants' story, but also recognizing that participants want expert advice, as exemplified in this quote from Spagat "It's not as if I want to disappear as a facilitator always. I think it's really helpful for people to know that I'm ready to help them or support them in whatever they need to be supported, but I also want to be very clear that I want each person to be in charge of, as much as possible, their own project. It is a balancing act and often times different people want different things" (personal communication, March 3, 2014). This balance of authority is reflective of reciprocal and collegial pedagogy principles (Freire, 1974; Soep & Chavez, 2010). Facilitators also expressed that shared authority increases the agency of participants and is best managed through transparency, which while not expressly stated in the literature review, are also values of reciprocal and collegial pedagogy. Facilitators defined individual guidance as meeting each participant "where they are at" and not inserting the facilitator's agenda into the storyteller's individual process (A. Hill, personal communication, March 5, 2014). While these practices were addressed under the topic of individual process in the literature review in regards to "hands-off facilitation" (Allison Meyers as cited in Lambert, 2013), these statements did confirm that digital storytelling emphasizes a student-centered process through conditional facilitation of guidance.

Dialogical facilitation is a theme from the data that was discussed in the definitions section of the literature review and connected to individual guidance (Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991). The interviews affirmed that dialogical principles are key to establishing safe space within the workshops. For example, facilitators spoke of guiding participants through dialogical questions, suspending

judgment and being present throughout the process: “Probably the most important quality in terms of the positive side that I’ve seen is the facilitator’s own ability to stay present in the midst of whatever may be happening” (A. Hill, personal communication, May 5, 2014). These statements accentuated that digital storytelling is a process based in dialogue, where listening is just as important as speaking.

### ***Emergent Results***

The prevailing emergent theme for digital storytelling facilitation is the facilitator’s role in providing creative options to participants. Since digital storytelling follows a student-centered approach where each person is “met where they are at”, the creative options are different for each participant. The interviews revealed that it is the responsibility of the facilitators to judge what creative options each participant should be encouraged to take. According to the interview data, this judgment is based on best supporting the story and the storyteller by offering creative options that fit the story and emotional capacity of the participant. For instance, this quote from Lambert demonstrates how facilitators tailor the process to the safety of each participant: “So, even in that first presentation we’re making a change in how we’re trying to have people hear what the task should be, so that to move forward, to get into the story circle, the safety is there as an out” (personal communication, March 4, 2014). While the literature review described the facilitator’s role in providing one-on-one guidance, it did not discuss tailoring creative options as a specific responsibility of the facilitator.

Another emergent theme was that the confidence of the participants was largely reflective of the confidence of the facilitators. Interview data showed that while facilitators should share authority with the participants, they should also exhibit some expertise so that participants can trust their decisions and guidance. For example, Spagat described good facilitators as “...sufficiently experienced to take care of the folks that are in your workshop, so that they can take risks because they feel that the facilitation is sufficiently competent to handle it and to absorb difficulties” (personal communication,

March 3, 2014). Thus, as reflected in the convergent data, shared authority is not deferring all authority to the participants, but balancing it.

### ***Divergent Results***

Divergent data highlighted how difficult it is to facilitate individual guidance and process. For example, participant Egan described a “go for it” attitude in her workshop, stating “all of us really started out more on the surface and got a little deeper” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). While she described this attitude as “boundaried”, meaning “not encouraging people to get too deep in the material so that their emotional affect becomes too big”, the phrase “go for it” does bring into question how pressured the participants felt to create more emotional stories. Participant Clarke spoke of how individual guidance sometimes meant getting conflicting advice from different facilitators or other participants. Her story about deviating from advice not to engage in a highly emotional story shows that there can sometimes be a conflict between individual process and guidance. Egan expressed that too much individual guidance can take away from the group process and facilitator Hill mentioned that not all participants connect to every facilitator, making offering individual guidance difficult. Spagat talked of trying to help participants move beyond clichéd creative expression – such as representing a sad emotion with a picture of someone crying – but pushing the participants too far and shutting down their creative process. These are examples of how challenging it is for facilitators to offer individual guidance without inserting their own agendas.

## **4.2d Digital Storytelling Ethics**

### ***Convergent Results***

The three areas of ethics described in the literature review – consent, confidentiality and conscientiousness – were all mentioned by interviewees, though consent and confidentiality were talked about in connection to transparency. While the literature review didn’t expressly state transparency as an important ethical guideline for safe space, it did address the need to have frank

conversations with participants about consent and confidentiality (Lambert, 2013; Photovoice, 2009). The literature review suggested that confidentiality is the most important ethical guideline by demonstrating that it is the first group agreement set for the story circle – “confidentiality, do not interrupt each other, keep feedback positive and constructive...” (Lambert, 2013, p.77). However, the interview data emphasized transparency as the overarching guideline for all ethics (A. Hill, personal communication, May 5, 2014). Transparency was discussed by interviewees in relation to clarifying ownership, which is extremely important for workshops with partner organizations, as stressed in this quote from Spagat in reference to partner workshops: “It’s really important to be very clear about how the stories are going to be used and who will have ownership over the stories, which is very often not the storytellers themselves” (personal communication, March 3, 2014). Facilitators emphasized the need to get participants’ consent to present their digital stories and openly discussing what video content could break confidentiality. Lambert described how ownership is increased in standard workshops since participants have total control over what happens to their stories, including the option to delete it. This statement highlights that transparent consent and confidentiality can heighten participants’ agency and freedom over their creative expression.

Conscientious recruitment of participants was also addressed in the interviews. This ethic is in connection to the previous discussion of the facilitator’s responsibility to assess the emotional capacity of participants and guide them through a process that does not endanger their safety. Though as expressed in the interviews, if a participant isn’t ready to process his or her story, then he or she shouldn’t be taking the workshop in the first place (J. Lambert, personal communication, March 4, 2014). Facilitators expressed that while they carefully recruit participants, usually participants self-select and self-regulate themselves. This was certainly true of participant Clarke who felt she understood her own emotional capacity better than the facilitators as seen this quote from her: “And I think that I was given that advice with the best of intentions. And with my own safety in mind as well really right? Like

the story I was choosing to tell was a little raw, but it was okay. Like I know myself well enough, that's the thing. I know myself well enough to know what I am capable, what I can do, how far I can push" (personal communication, March 11, 2014). Thus, conscientious participation in digital storytelling workshops is both the responsibility of the facilitators and the participants.

### ***Emergent Results***

Digital storytelling ethics has the most emergent themes, probably because the literature review only covered three general areas of CDS's extremely detailed ethical guidelines. For instance, while the literature review addressed conscientious recruitment of participants, it didn't mention conscientious recruitment of partner organizations, even though CDS's ethical guidelines are used specifically for communicating their ethics to partners. This omission in the literature review was underlined by how often interviewees mentioned conscientious recruitment of partners and forming community collaborations. All of the facilitators saw the biggest value of the ethical guidelines in clarifying CDS's methods to partners and recruiting organizations that would uphold an emphasis on safe space.

Another emergent theme is the ethic of cultural humility. While the literature review did highlight that each participant enters the workshop with a different background (Lambert, 2013), the focus was on creative confidence rather than culture. The interviews revealed that cultural humility has a significant impact on safe space and creative expression. For instance, Lambert described how the digital storytelling process is based on cultural backgrounds by defining the videos as "deeply personal stories coming out of the family album" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). This connection to culture was echoed by Spagat's emphasis on providing creative options that helped participants feel connected to their "roots", such as using culturally significant images or music. Hill talked of cultural humility in relation to community partners by relying on their expertise in a community to address ethical issues or design elements of the workshop to reflect the participants' culture, such as the closing ceremony. Thus,

cultural humility guides the process, facilitation and ethical standards of CDS's digital storytelling workshops.

The last emergent theme is that the formation of CDS's ethical guidelines comes from the experience of the facilitators. Facilitators challenged the phrasing of the interview question, "What role do you think CDS's ethical guidelines play in establishing safe space for creative expression?" since they felt that the ethical guidelines came from the workshop experiences rather than affecting the workshop experiences. The question was adjusted to ask how CDS's ethical guidelines played out in the workshop, but the facilitators continued to emphasize that ethics are something that is learned through experience. Lambert stressed that a facilitator needed to be mature enough to handle the emotional content and ethical quandaries of the workshop. He also expressed that facilitators need to be able to understand their own emotional capacity and conduct self-care in order to maintain the safety of the space. Participant Egan also recognized the importance of the maturity of the facilitator by stating, "I really think it comes back to the facilitators and their ability to...I mean I really believe you can't encourage people or expect people to go places in themselves that you're not willing to go yourself" (personal communication, March 27, 2024). She also stated that the maturity of the facilitator increased the overall experience of the workshop including the sense of safe space and the quality of the digital stories.

Ethics from experience can also be defined as "ethics as process", which is an ethical guideline left out of the literature review but is a core principle of CDS's ethical practice. Facilitators explained that ethics should not be applied dogmatically, but based on experience and thus should be adapted to the situation, as shown in this quote from Lambert: "And ethical guidelines should not be applied in some sort of catechism of like therefore I'm going to say exactly this to this person at this time, because it just may not be true and actually you're not doing them any favors by being dogmatic on an ethical framework that you had" (personal communication, March 4, 2014). Hill defined ethics as process as

more than a consent form, meaning that a discussion of ethics should not end with a signature of consent. Thus, ethical practices are seen to be a part of the whole digital storytelling process.

### ***Divergent Results***

The most significant divergent result is that CDS's ethical guidelines were not as transparent to every participant. While participant Egan praised CDS for how clearly they laid out their ethical standards, participant Clarke was not aware that there are written ethical guidelines and expressed confusion over confidentiality issues, though this is partly from her concern over control of confidentiality outside the workshop as seen in this quote: "So signing a little form, I know that if I sign a form that says 'no don't show my story, you cannot use it' then that will be respected but there's always this little tinge of like 'ooh they've got a copy of it and what are they going to do with it'" (personal communication, March 11, 2014). This disparity is possibly the result of the difference in the workshop experiences between Clarke and Egan, since Egan took the standard workshop in order to provide emotional support for a partner workshop. Thus, she was not only focusing on learning ethical standards in the standard workshop, but also experienced working with CDS as a partner, where the importance of ethics are heightened. Regardless of the reason, this does data show that the transparency of the ethical guidelines can vary between workshops.

### **4.3 Summary**

A comparison of the results from the interviews to the literature review affirms that digital storytelling does provide safe space for creative expression. Many of the practices converged with the original conceptual framework, addressing all of the topics discussed in the literature review. Many new themes emerged and will be added to the adapted conceptual framework. While there is divergent data, it is in relation to the negative effects of certain practices, rather than negating the overall argument. There are many other themes that could converge, emerge or diverge if more interviews were conducted and

especially with digital storytelling participants. However, based on these results, a conceptual framework of digital storytelling best practices that build safe space for creative expression is presented in the Ch.5 Conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

*“YOUR VOICE IS YOUR CREATIVITY.”  
- ANDREA SPAGAT*

### 5.1 Conclusion

The goal of this research project is to establish how digital storytelling affects safe space for creative expression. By conducting an extensive literature review and garnering perspectives in the field through interviews of digital storytelling facilitators and participants, best practices that build safe space for creative expression in digital storytelling workshops were determined. A comparison of the literature review to interviews affirms that digital storytelling does provide safe space for creative expression among a wide range of adults with different creative confidence levels, as best capture in this quote from facilitator Spagat (personal communication, March 3, 2014):

...most of the people we work with come in with very little idea of themselves as a creative person....They don't feel up to the task. They don't identify. They've never imagined themselves as creative people and so the emotional journey for folks is one of needing to... [overcome] their anxieties about their own abilities, but I think we try to help people understand that at least in this very small space, we will help them be creative.

An examination of the results revealed that the Center for Digital Storytelling's workshops provide this “very small space”, where people can be creative, through a range of practices that build the confidence and agency of the storyteller. These best practices are presented below in a revised conceptual framework, along with a discussion of the design, why each practice was chosen, and suggestions for further research. This framework serves as the final results of a grounded theory research strategy by triangulating all data to present an overview of how digital storytelling practices affect safe space for creative expression. This framework attempts to highlight all essential practices to building safe space for creative expression, but recognizes that there are many minor or nuanced practices not included.

The goal of summarizing key findings of this study into one visual image is to provide a basic framework that can be referenced and applied in adult arts education settings. While these practices come from digital storytelling workshops, they have proven effective in helping adults with disparate backgrounds feel safe to express themselves, as demonstrated in this quote from participant Egan: “We were all totally different coming from totally different areas, taking the workshop for completely different reasons and yet we were all able to still really feel safe to write a story about something that mattered” (personal communication, March 27, 2014). Thus, for practitioners hoping to creatively engage adults who have varying experiences with the arts, digital storytelling practices can be valuable. It is the hope of this researcher that application of these practices will increase opportunities for adults with low creative confidence to engage in the arts. As Spagat says, “Your voice is your creativity”, so arts practitioners need to work to make sure all voices are heard no matter their background in the arts. Establishing a safe space for creative expression is the just the first step. Creativity is not a single spark; it must be nurtured, supported and challenged to grow, but first we have to open the door wide enough for all to feel safe to express themselves.

## 5.1a Revised Conceptual Framework



## 5.1b Discussion & Summary

### *The Design*

When coding and analyzing the data, it became clear that many of the practices for the three areas of influence – ethics, facilitation and process – overlapped or influenced each other. Thus, the conceptual framework was redesigned without silos to emphasize the interplay between all practices throughout

the entirety of digital storytelling workshops. However, being that the three areas of influence do play a major part in affecting safe space for creative expression, they are still included in the design. By placing them at the middle of the framework, they are shown to be central to digital storytelling practices. Furthermore, they build on one another, with ethics forming the foundation for good facilitation and a successful process depending on effective facilitation. The only way to establish safe space for creative expression is to focus on all three of these areas as they rely upon and support each other.

A circular shape was chosen for the framework to represent safe space and a cyclical process. In dialogue, people often sit in a circle as to allow for all to be seen and heard, signifying a kind of safe space. Furthermore, the “story circle” is crucial to establishing safe space in the Center for Digital Storytelling’s workshops because of its dialogical nature. This interchange between voices is highlighted by the speech bubbles describing each best practice with a quote. In CDS workshops, participants are encouraged to give feedback by starting their sentences with “If it were my story”, thus the best practices are expressed through “I will...” statements that emphasize personal responsibility for upholding the group’s safe space. The best practices are also placed in a clock-like formation, with each one building off of each other until they reach the final “Continual” practice that leads back into the rotation, highlighting the cyclical process of learning best practices from experience. The four corners of the clock-face represent the practices most mentioned in the interviews and described as pillars to establishing safe space. The encompassing purple bar is the container for safe space that can only be established if all best practices are followed.

### *The Practices*

The twelve best practices presented in the conceptual framework are based on correlating the literature review to the interview data. These practices are positioned from the point of view of the facilitator as they are intended to be implemented by practitioners. Some of the practices are convergent with the literature review – conscientious, coherency, process over product, group process, individual, and

agency – while some are emergent from the interviews – transparency, humility, collaboration, presence, opportunity, and continual. These best practices were chosen based on how often they were mentioned during the interviews and literature review, and how integral they are to establishing safe space. The four most significant best practices – transparency, collaboration, group process and agency – are stressed in the conceptual framework because they are seen as a foundation for building safe space in the literature and interviews.

The framework starts with transparency because it was described by facilitators as the most important ethic that pervades the entire process. Transparency should be upheld throughout the workshop because deciding to share one’s personal story can have substantial implications, thus all choices must be frankly discussed with participants.

The next best practice is being conscientious since facilitators expressed that not all participants or facilitators are prepared to engage creatively in highly emotional content. Hence, facilitators must ensure that all, including themselves, have the emotional capacity to participate.

Following a pattern of ethically based practices, a predisposition of humility should be adopted in order to create an atmosphere where all backgrounds are respected. Facilitators expressed having both cultural humility and an understanding that they are not the experts of participants’ stories. This recognition allows for shared authority and students to connect their creativity to their cultural background.

Cultural humility can be supported by forming strong community collaborations. Collaboration with community partners was one of the most mentioned topics in the interviews. Effective community partnerships are seen to be integral to establishing safe space since the partners have the knowledge to adapt workshops for different communities. Safe space can best be established by working closely with partners to clarify expectations and needs.

Expectations should be clarified not just with partners, but with participants. Coherency is related to transparency, but emphasizes that the steps to the process need to be laid out for the participants so that they know what is expected of them. The data showed that knowing the step-by-step process helped participants overcome the steep learning curve with guidance from the facilitators.

An expectation for a high quality product can inhibit creativity. Process over product was described in the interviews and literature as a student or storyteller-centered focus. The facilitators stress that their role is to support the storyteller, not the production of the digital story. By focusing on the person's needs, their safety is put first, which establishes a space where participants can feel comfortable to make a creative product without judgment of quality.

A storyteller-centered approach also means stressing group process support. Group process was the most mentioned aspect in all the interviews, thus it serves as a main pillar. Group process was seen to encourage buy-in to the workshop through establishing intimacy, warmth and solidarity. Facilitators emphasized that the success of a workshop was often dependent on the interconnection of the group.

A group's intimacy is dependent on how present each person is in listening to each other. Presence is used to represent both the intensive individual guidance described in the literature review and the dialogical principle of being present discussed in the interviews. By offering unconditional support and remaining present to all participants regardless of how difficult the process is for them, adults with different backgrounds and abilities can feel supported and safe.

Once group and one-on-one support is established, participants can explore on their own. Having an individual process is related to process over product, because only a student-centered focus would allow each individual to adapt the process to his or her own needs, thus highlighting that while the process should be coherent, it is also flexible. Interviewees emphasized that while group process is necessary for forming an intimate space, participants also need separate time to explore their own creativity.

Having time to explore one's creativity can increase one's agency. Agency is a theme that runs through the literature review and interviews, as someone's creative confidence is dependent on their agency. Facilitators discussed the importance of providing conditional supportive advice to participants that builds their agency over their creative decisions. This practice was recognized as a balancing act that can be improved by adopting an attitude of humility.

Agency affects how willing participants are to take advantage of creative opportunities. Opportunity signifies the facilitator's role in presenting creative options to participants. All of the interviews emphasized that the facilitators helped participants increase their creative potential by presenting different possibilities for expression to each participant. Facilitators recognized that those options may vary between participants based on emotional capacity and creative confidence.

If a facilitator manages to expand the creative potential of a participant, then he or she must reflect on that experience. The last best practice is based on the facilitators' assertion that good facilitation comes from experience. Ethics are not just a set of guidelines, but the ability to live by them, which can only come from experience. The final best practice advises that it takes a mature facilitator to implement these practices successfully, thus one must continually learn from one's mistakes so as to better ensure safe space for all.

## **5.2 Suggestions for Further Research**

This study presents best practices for establishing safe space for creative expression among a range of adults with different creative confidence levels, but it does not measure how participants' creativity or creative confidence is affected. A more extensive quantitative study should be conducted to determine if digital storytelling workshops actually improve participants' creativity or confidence levels.

Furthermore, this study was limited in its scope by time and resources, but results could be expanded by conducting more interviews, especially with participants of digital storytelling workshops as their opinions may vary widely. Lastly, while the results of this research can be applied in other fields such as

adult arts education, research should be conducted to determine their effectiveness beyond digital storytelling and what variations are needed for different disciplines. With these goals in mind, a more universal set of best practices could be established for providing safe space for creative expression to all.

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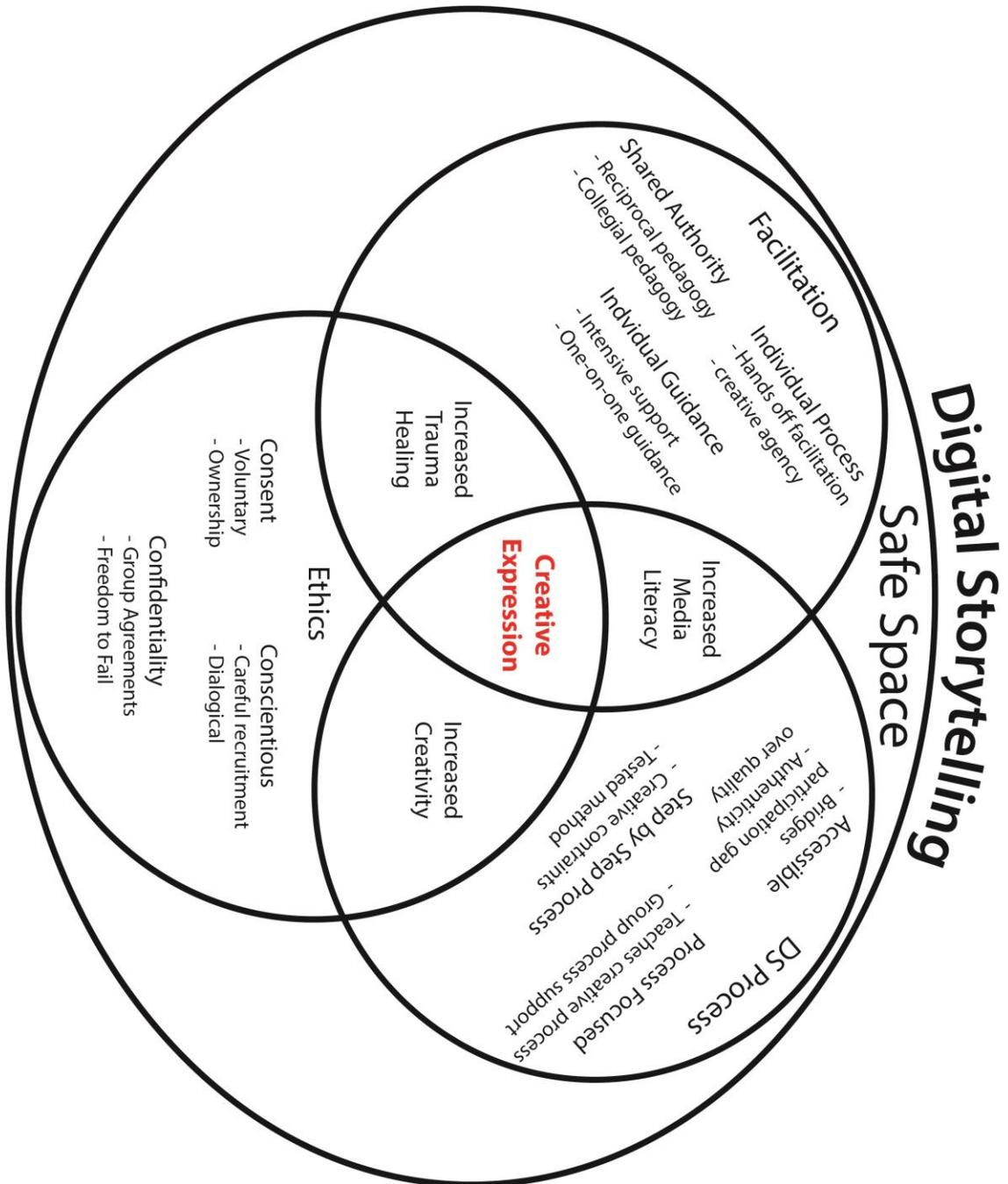
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## Appendix

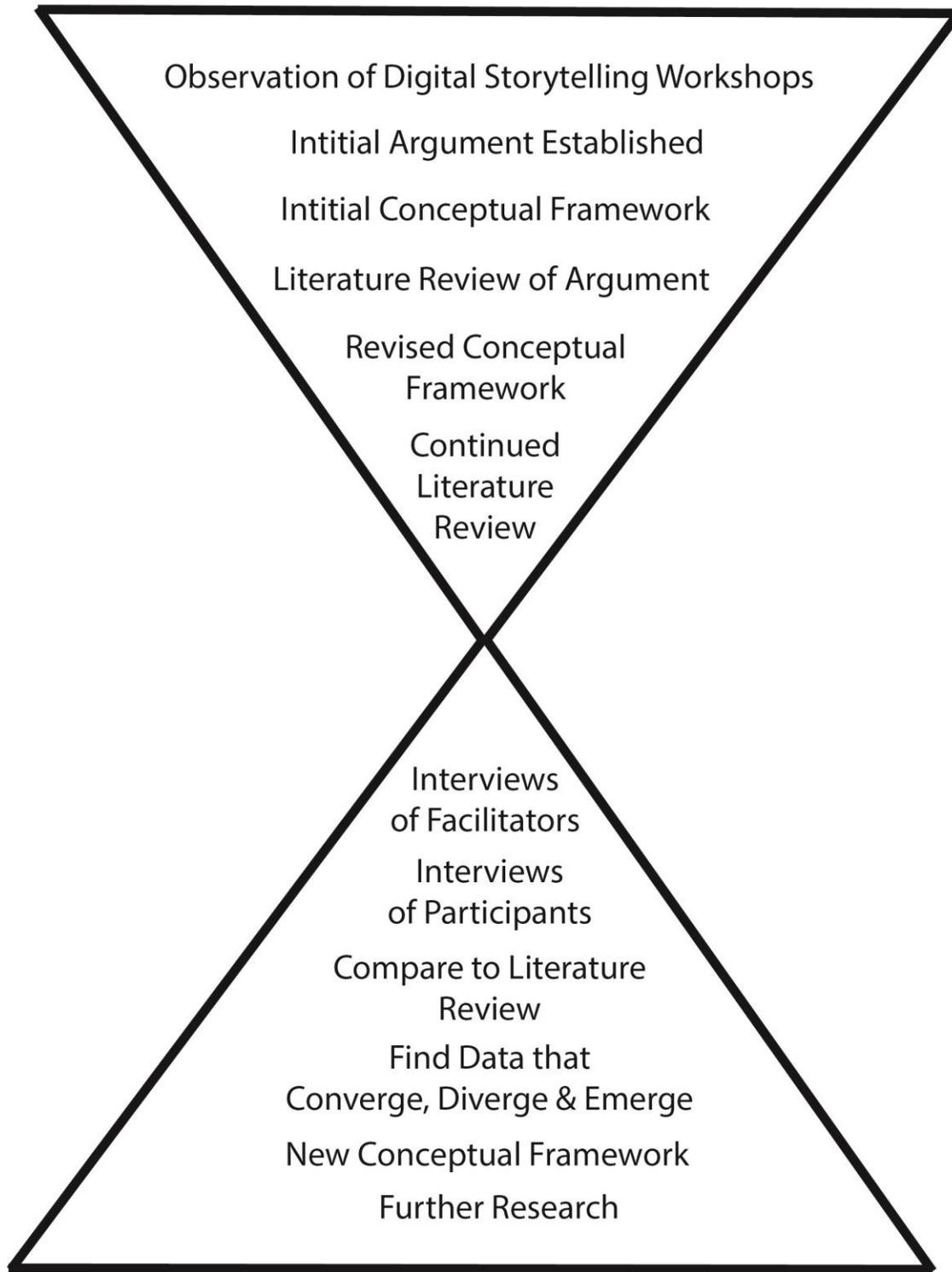
### X.1 Original Conceptual Framework



## X.2 Revised Conceptual Framework



## Grounded Theory Research Schematic



## X.4 Recruitment Letters

### Recruitment Letter for Expert Facilitator

Date

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear <POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEE>:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression*, conducted by Evelyn Thorne from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to examine how digital storytelling can provide safe space for creative expression.

While there is existing research on digital storytelling's effect on topics such as media literacy, self-efficacy or trauma healing, there is a significant gap on analyzing how digital storytelling affects creativity. This research project will address this gap by examining how digital storytelling can cultivate safe space for creative expression. Furthermore, there is an increased interest in participatory design and media within the arts administration field, but few methods for engaging adults with a wide range of creative agencies. Thus, the goal of this project is to evince how digital storytelling can be effective in helping adults express themselves creatively. The first phase of the study (January 2014-March 2014) involves a literature review on the aspects of digital storytelling that affect safe space for creative expression, which will be followed by interviews (February 2014-March 2014) of expert facilitators and experienced participants of digital storytelling workshops. Data from these interviews will be compared with the literature review to form a conceptual framework that explains how digital storytelling can build safe space for creative expression.

You were selected to participate in this study because of your extensive experience facilitating digital storytelling workshops with the Center for Digital Storytelling. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to provide relevant organizational materials and participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during February or March 2014. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at the Center for Digital Storytelling, or at a more conveniently located site. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (707) 980-0007 or ethorne@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-2469. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Thorne

1635 Ferry St. #2 Eugene, OR 97401

## Recruitment Letter for Experienced Participant

Date

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear <POTENTIAL INTERVIEWEE>:

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression*, conducted by Evelyn Thorne from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to examine how digital storytelling can provide safe space for creative expression.

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You were selected to participate in this study because you have experienced multiple digital storytelling workshops at the Center for Digital Storytelling. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during February or March 2014. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at a location of your convenience or over Skype if necessary. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (707) 980-0007 or ethorne@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-2469. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Thank you in advance for your interest and consideration. I will contact you shortly to speak about your potential involvement in this study.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Thorne

1635 Ferry St. #2 Eugene, OR 97401

## X.5 Consent Forms

### Consent Form for Expert Facilitator

Research Protocol Number: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression**

Evelyn Thorne, Principal Investigator

University of Oregon Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression*, conducted by Evelyn Thorne from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to examine how digital storytelling can provide safe space for creative expression.

While there is existing research on digital storytelling's effect on topics such as media literacy, self-efficacy or trauma healing, there is a significant gap on analyzing how digital storytelling affects creativity. This research project will address this gap by examining how digital storytelling can cultivate safe space for creative expression. Furthermore, there is an increased interest in participatory design and media within the arts administration field, but few methods for engaging adults with a wide range of creative agencies. Thus, the goal of this project is to evince how digital storytelling can be effective in helping adults express themselves creatively. The first phase of the study (January 2014-March 2014) involves a literature review on the aspects of digital storytelling that affect safe space for creative expression, which will be followed by interviews (February 2014-March 2014) of expert facilitators and experienced participants of digital storytelling workshops. Data from these interviews will be compared with the literature review to form a conceptual framework that explains how digital storytelling can build safe space for creative expression.

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Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be carefully and securely maintained. Your consent to participate in this interview, as indicated below, demonstrates your willingness to have your name used in any resulting documents and publications and to relinquish confidentiality. It may be advisable to obtain permission to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or economic risks related to speaking as a representative of your institution. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

I anticipate that the results of this research project will be of value to the digital storytelling field, especially the Center for Digital Storytelling. This research can also be of value to arts practitioners interested in facilitation participatory media and creative engagement. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (707) 980-0007 or ethorne@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-2469. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the use of audiotapes and note taking during my interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to my identification as a participant in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to have the opportunity to review and possibly revise my comments and the information that I provide prior to these data appearing in the final version of any publications that may result from this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Thorne  
1635 Ferry St. #2 Eugene, OR 97401  
(707) 980-0007  
ethorne@uoregon.edu

## Consent Form for Experienced Participant

Research Protocol Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression

Evelyn Thorne, Principal Investigator

University of Oregon Arts and Administration Program

You are invited to participate in a research project titled *Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression*, conducted by Evelyn Thorne from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to examine how digital storytelling can provide safe space for creative expression.

While there is existing research on digital storytelling's effect on topics such as media literacy, self-efficacy or trauma healing, there is a significant gap on analyzing how digital storytelling affects creativity. This research project will address this gap by examining how digital storytelling can cultivate safe space for creative expression. Furthermore, there is an increased interest in participatory design and media within the arts administration field, but few methods for engaging adults with a wide range of creative agencies. Thus, the goal of this project is to evince how digital storytelling can be effective in helping adults express themselves creatively. The first phase of the study (January 2014-March 2014) involves a literature review on the aspects of digital storytelling that affect safe space for creative expression, which will be followed by interviews (February 2014-March 2014) of expert facilitators and experienced participants of digital storytelling workshops. Data from these interviews will be compared with the literature review to form a conceptual framework that explains how digital storytelling can build safe space for creative expression.

You were selected to participate in this study because you have experienced multiple digital storytelling workshops at the Center for Digital Storytelling. If you decide to take part in this research project, you will be asked to participate in an in-person interview, lasting approximately one hour, during February or March 2014. If you wish, interview questions will be provided beforehand for your consideration. Interviews will take place at a location of your convenience or over Skype if necessary. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. In addition to taking handwritten notes, with your permission, I will use an audio tape recorder for transcription and validation purposes. You may also be asked to provide follow-up information through phone calls or email. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, particularly since this phase of research is exploratory in nature.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be carefully and securely maintained. Your consent to participate in this interview, as indicated below, demonstrates your willingness to allow a pseudonym to be used with all identifiable data that you provide. It may be advisable to obtain permission to participate in this interview to avoid potential social or psychological risk of discussing your digital storytelling experience. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

I anticipate that the results of this research project will be of value to the digital storytelling field, especially the Center for Digital Storytelling. This research will also benefit participants of digital storytelling workshops by clarifying practices that cultivate safe space for creative expression. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (707) 980-0007 or ethorne@uoregon.edu, or Dr. Lori Hager at 541-346-2469. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510.

Please read and initial each of the following statements to indicate your consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the use of audiotapes and note taking during my interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to maintain my confidentiality in this study through the use of a pseudonym.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the potential use of quotations from the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the use of information I provide regarding the organization with which I am associated.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to have the opportunity to review and possibly revise my comments and the information that I provide prior to these data appearing in the final version of any publications that may result from this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You have been given a copy of this letter to keep.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Thorne  
1635 Ferry St. #2 Eugene, OR 97401  
(707) 980-0007  
ethorne@uoregon.edu

## X.6 Research Instruments

### *Data Collection Tool: Interview of Digital Storytelling Facilitator*

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*Key Descriptor:* The purpose of this interview is to garner the perspective from an expert facilitator in the field of digital storytelling on their experience of how digital storytelling can cultivate safe space for creative expression.

*Date:* February or March 2014

*Interview Location:* Center for Digital Storytelling, Berkeley, CA

*Interviewee Details:* Interviewee has 5 or more years' experience facilitating digital storytelling workshops with the Center for Digital Storytelling.

*Consent:* \_\_\_ Oral \_\_\_ Written (form) \_\_\_ Audio Recording \_\_\_ OK to Quote \_\_\_

#### *CODING*

#### *INFORMATION*

#### *NOTES*

- *Safe Space for creative expression*

*Data regarding overall theory*

- *Facilitation*

*Data regarding how facilitation affects theory*

- *Process*

*Data regarding how process affects theory*

- *Ethics*

*Data regarding how ethics affect theory*

- *Emergent*

*Positive data outside three areas of influence*

- *Divergent*

*Negative data*

---

#### *Semi-Structured Interview Questions:*

1. Can you describe your background in facilitating digital storytelling workshops with the Center for Digital Storytelling? And your particular area of focus within the organization?
2. From your experience as a facilitator, what is the relation between safe space and creative expression? Please explain.
3. In your opinion, do you think digital storytelling builds safe space for creative expression? Why?
4. How do you think the digital storytelling process affects safe space for creative expression? What specific aspects of the process?
5. What facilitation practices do you think have a positive effect on safe space for creative expression? How so?
6. What facilitation practices do you think have a negative effect on safe space for creative expression? How so?
7. What role do you think CDS's ethical guidelines play in establishing safe space for creative expression? Are there specific ethical guidelines that have an effect?
8. Can you provide examples of experiences in the field as a facilitator that negatively affected safe space for creative expression? Please describe them.
9. Can you provide examples of experiences in the field as a facilitator that positively affected safe space for creative expression? Please describe them.
10. Are there other factors outside of process, facilitation or ethics that you think affects safe space for creative expression? Please describe them.

*Data Collection Tool: Interview of Participant in Digital Storytelling Workshops*

---

*Key Descriptor:* The purpose of this interview is to garner the perspective from a participant of digital storytelling workshops to see if and how they experienced a feeling safe space for creative expression.

*Date:* March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014

*Interview Location:* Center for Digital Storytelling, Berkeley, CA

*Interviewee Details:*

Interviewee is an adult who have taken multiple workshops and is not a professional in the arts field.

*Consent:* \_\_\_ Oral \_\_\_ Written (form) \_\_\_ Audio Recording \_\_\_ OK to Quote\_\_\_

*CODING*

*INFORMATION*

*NOTES*

• <i>Safe Space for creative expression</i>	<i>Data regarding overall theory</i>	
• <i>Facilitation</i>	<i>Data regarding how facilitation affects theory</i>	
• <i>Process</i>	<i>Data regarding how process affects theory</i>	
• <i>Ethics</i>	<i>Data regarding how ethics affect theory</i>	
• <i>Emergent</i>	<i>Positive data outside three areas of influence</i>	
• <i>Divergent</i>	<i>Negative data</i>	

*Semi-Structured Interview Questions:*

1. How would you describe your artistic background? Do you have any training in the arts or formal education? Do you have an arts related hobby? How often do you attend arts events?
2. What led you to take workshops with the Center for Digital Storytelling?
3. How would you describe your experience of creating digital stories? Why do feel that way?
4. In the digital storytelling workshops, did you feel safe to express yourself creatively? Why did you feel that way?
5. How confident did you feel in creating your digital stories? Why did you feel that way?
6. Did a feeling of safe space affect how confident you felt in expressing yourself creatively? How so?
7. Based on your experience as a participant in the digital storytelling workshops, do feel the process allowed you to express yourself creatively? What aspects of the process?
8. Would you change any aspects of the digital storytelling process to allow you to feel more comfortable expressing yourself creatively? Why?
9. Did the facilitators help you feel safe to express yourself creatively? How so?
10. Did any of the facilitators hurt your feeling of safe space? How so? Can you provide an example(s)?
11. As you know, the story circle starts with a discussion of group agreements such as confidentiality and consent. Do you feel that these kinds of ethical guidelines affected your feeling of safe space? How so?
12. Are there any missing ethical guidelines that would help you feel more comfortable expressing yourself creatively? How so?
13. Can you provide examples of a workshop experiences that positively or negatively affected your feeling of safe space in regards to creative expression?

## X.7 CITI Certification

### COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)

#### HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT

Printed on 11/07/2013

**LEARNER** Evelyn Thorne (ID: 3860521)  
**DEPARTMENT** Arts Administration  
**EMAIL** ethorne@uoregon.edu  
**INSTITUTION** University of Oregon  
**EXPIRATION DATE** 11/07/2015

#### STUDENT RESEARCHERS

**COURSE/STAGE** Basic Course/1  
**PASSED ON** 11/07/2013  
**REFERENCE ID** 11714992

#### REQUIRED MODULES

	<b>DATE COMPLETED</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Students in Research	11/07/13	10/10 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research	11/07/13	3/3 (100%)
University of Oregon	11/07/13	No Quiz

#### ELECTIVE MODULES

	<b>DATE COMPLETED</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
History and Ethical Principles - SBE	11/07/13	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE	11/07/13	5/5 (100%)

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.**

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Miami  
Director Office of Research Education  
CITI Program Course Coordinator

## X.8 IRB Approval



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

DATE: February 05, 2014 IRB Protocol Number: 12112013.011  
TO: Evelyn Thorne, Principal Investigator  
Department of Arts & Administration  
RE: Protocol entitled, "Digital Storytelling: A Safe Space for Creative Expression"

Notice of IRB Review and Exempt Determination  
as per Title 45 CFR Part 46.101 (b)(2)

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The above protocol has been reviewed by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board and Research Compliance Services. This is a minimal risk research protocol that qualifies for an exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) for research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

Please note that you will not be required to submit continuing reviews for this protocol, however, you must submit any changes to the protocol to Research Compliance Services for assessment to verify that the protocol continues to qualify for exemption. This exempt determination will expire February 04, 2019. Should your research continue beyond expiration date, you will need to submit a new protocol application.

Your responsibility as a Principal Investigator also includes:

- Obtaining written documentation of the appropriate permissions from public school districts, institutions, agencies, or other organizations, etc., prior to conducting your research
- Notifying Research Compliance Services of any change in Principal Investigator
- Notifying Research Compliance Services of any changes to or supplemental funding
- Retaining copies of this determination, any signed consent forms, and related research materials for five years after conclusion of your study or the closure of your sponsored research, whichever comes last.

As with all Human Subject Research, exempt research is subject to periodic Post Approval Monitoring review.

If you have any questions regarding your protocol or the review process, please contact Research Compliance Services at [ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu](mailto:ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu) or (541)346-2510.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Johnson, BS, CHES, CIP  
Associate Director  
Research Compliance Services  
University of Oregon

CC: Lori Hager, Faculty Advisor

COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS • RESEARCH COMPLIANCE SERVICES  
677 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 500, 5237 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97401-5237  
T 541-346-2510 F 541-346-5138 <http://humansubjects.uoregon.edu>

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