Just stories?
Epistemic (in)justice and everyday resistance in the digital stories of family literacy practices by Grade 1-5 workers at a South African University.

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to establish in what ways digital storytelling (DST) revealed instances of epistemic (in)justices inherent in the family literacy intervention experiences of four Black, working-class parents employed at a South African University[1]. Additionally, it explores how DST might be used by the participants (self-labelled the Storytelling Family Literacy - SFL Advocates) to correct any harm done. The context for the research is based on the deep-rooted harms of Bantu education in which Black South Africans were denied equal access to resources such as literacy practices.

I investigated these aims by using the theories of DST, Communication for Social Change (C4SC) and epistemic (in)justice. As a participatory media practice supporting communications in marginalised communities, DST's broad purpose is to assist these communities in telling stories of their lived experiences in ways that change dominant and, therefore, unchallenged views about them (Servaes & Malikhao 2014). In facilitating DST workshops with the SFL Advocates, I searched for evidence of epistemic (in)justice to enhance our (all stakeholders) understanding of their literacy experiences in ways that addressed their credibility status as 'knowers' (Fricker, 2007). Viewed through this lens, utilising DST provided a mechanism for understanding the impact of social interventions in a university setting that aimed to correct past injustices.

The process involved online and face-to-face workshops with the participants during the Covid-19 Lockdown. The online format hampered data collection processes, and I resorted to face-to-face interactions for the workshops and interviews. These interactions were distinctly different from those I had experienced with participants in previous workshops, and they became a key focus in my analysis. Using narrative inquiry with critical realist and interpretive analysis techniques to interrogate the data, I discovered DST has both weaknesses and strengths as a C4SC communication tool.

My findings revealed participants who, in the moment of leading their children and communities through the family literacy intervention, could claim to have redressed epistemic harms from the legacy of Apartheid education. However, by reflecting on this

[1] The name of the University is withheld for reasons of confidentiality.

moment, the participants brought to light an epistemic harm that had been previously left unspoken: their sense of restored credibility as knowledge-bearers during the intervention was deeply shaken when the programme ended because they felt abandoned by the university. Therefore, the epistemic (in)justice lens unveiled hidden injustices that curtailed the participants' ability to participate fully in the DST workshops. They described suffering the effects of pernicious and arbitrary acts of epistemic injustice at the hands of the University. Their participation in my workshops was erratic, and their stories were incomplete. As a result, I experienced difficulty analysing what I perceived as a lack of data. Moreover, despite my independent researcher status, my positionality as participant-observer was problematic as the participants may have perceived me as representative of the University and its institutional power.

I responded to the problematic data by including a new theoretical framework in my analysis: the theory of everyday resistance (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). Combined with epistemic (in)justice theory and Vivienne's ideas of using DST for everyday activism, I theorised how the participants negotiated their expressions of identity in epistemically unjust spaces. To put institutional epistemic injustice in perspective in the context of the University, I drew on Fricker's three models of epistemic justice that enable fair and free conditions for marginalised workers to communicate for social change.

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My sincere thanks go to the research participants, [2] **Storyteller 1, Storyteller 2, Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 4.* I hope this research does some justice to your stories and profound testimony.

Thanks to the University's Community Engagement Office director (name withheld) for supporting this study as well as the DST facilitator (name withheld) for her insightful and kind contributions as a co-facilitator. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Family Literacy Project (FLP) Researcher (name withheld) whose passion and original research informed much of this study.

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[2] The researcher chose to protect the participants' identities due to the sensitive nature of information they imparted.

Acronyms

SFL - Storytelling Family Literacy

FLP - Family Literacy Project

DST - digital storytelling

C4SC - Communication for Social Change

C4D - Communication for Development

EJ - epistemic justice

UCE - University Community Engagement

PV - Participatory Video

PIRLS - Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey

ECDOE - Eastern Cape Department of Education

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Origins and context of the research

The research this thesis presents took place in a South African University. It involves a family literacy intervention - the Storytelling Family Literacy Project[3]‘ - hereafter ‘SFL Project’ - designed and implemented in 2015 by the University’s Community Engagement (UCE) centre. The intervention supported Black, working-class university employees (Grade 1-5) whose young children attended non-fee-paying township schools. The project responded to South Africa’s national literacy crisis in which statistics indicate that up to eighty per cent of Grade 4 South African children cannot read for meaning (Howie *et al.* 2016). Significantly, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) reports from 2011 and 2016 reveal that the parents of most of these affected children, who are primarily Black and working-class, do not believe they can or should feature in their children’s literacy development (Howie et al. 2016).

Dozens of the University's workers volunteered their time and resources, including collecting weekly book bags from the University’s library to take home to engage in reading-for-meaning practices with their children. The parents attended literacy and parenting skills workshops which assisted them in bonding with their children and helping their children improve their reading-for-meaning abilities. The SFL Project also gave the parents the confidence to engage with teachers.

Seven of these worker-parents volunteered to work with *FLP Researcher*[4] in a literacy project which aimed to develop their SFL participation.They did this by creating media and social marketing to spread the word about the project to their fellow workers and in the wider community. The seven named themselves the ‘SFL Advocates’. They spoke in schools, participated in radio programmes, and worked with television journalism students who created videos about them. In their narrative interviews with the *FLP Researcher,* they indicated enthusiasm for continuing in these roles in the future. However, once the group had completed their phases of the intervention, they did not pursue their Advocarial roles in the ways they had done before. In personal communications with this researcher, FLP Researcher outlined how she documented the participants’ reflections on their experiences and

[3] The project’s name has been changed to convey a generic meaning to protect the participants.

[4] The name of the researcher has been withheld.

recommended that they could generate additional insights by reflecting more deeply upon them.

Five of the seven SFLAdvocates became participants in this study, which stemmed from my interest in and facilitation experience of digital storytelling workshops. Digital storytelling (DST) is a social intervention that primarily aims to contribute to social change in development contexts by connecting people in an interactive workshop setting (Vivienne & Burgess, 2013; Rauch, 2015; de Jager *et al.* 2017). Participants from marginalised populations form small groups, or 'story circles', which serve as safe spaces for sharing, and evaluating personal experiences, enabling a 'recognition of voice' (Fraser, 2012; Doan, 2018). Shared ideas are developed through group feedback loops and transitioning from story concepts to fully fledged personal digital stories that are (ideally) unmediated and unfiltered by mainstream influences (Pillow, 2003). When complete, the participants view their stories together and choose whether to publish them online for public consumption (Lambert 2013; Robin & McNeil, 2012; Hartley & Mcwilliam 2009) After reading *FLP Researcher's* recent study, I was inspired to explore how DST might assist the SFL Advocates in reflecting more deeply on their experiences and how these new insights might be expressed in their digital stories. The potential for the public sharing of their stories was an exciting prospect, although the scope of my study precluded this aspect of research.

My experience of DST facilitation was shaped by working with the University's Community Engagement centre (UCE), which responds to the University's mandate to address Apartheid-era socio-economic injustices and divides by developing and implementing socially responsive programmes. With my background in television journalism, it was a natural fit to work with UCE when they approached me in 2017 to design and start facilitating digital storytelling workshops on campus with a range of community stakeholders. The workshops were piloted as part of a global partnership involving the Common Good First (CGF) consortium, comprised of universities from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Scotland, Spain and South Africa, and the global network, the Social Innovation Exchange. The objective was to seed a social network and a repository of digital stories and research on social innovation frameworks and methods for universities and communities worldwide to access and, in doing so, encourage a transformative cross-fertilisation of ideas and resources. UCE participated in the first phase of workshops with its community engagement partners. The *FLP Researcher's* findings and my own global DST project

experience inspired me to explore DST's capacity for social transformation in our hyper-local context.

2. Historical context and the role of Epistemic (In)Justice

The PIRLS findings suggest that many Black, working-class parents do not believe they have a role to play in their children's education. This is also a key finding in research by FLP Researcher, where she describes that for some black parents reading is regarded as anti-social behaviour with no link to improved school results or lifelong learning. The parents' beliefs indicate they have discredited their own situated knowledge of literacy practices based, in part, on their own experience of being denied access to literacy resources (Lessing and Mahabeer 2007; (Hammett 2014), a key feature of Apartheid's social engineering. The result is a reported lack of reading culture in Black working-class homes (Banda, 2003; Prinsloo and Town, 2017; Spaull et al. 2018), the social significance of which the parents find hard to communicate or protest due to their lack of literacy knowledge (Lessing & Mahabeer 2007; Hammett 2014; Fricker 2007). Given that a reading culture at home is a critical foundation for educational achievement, life-long learning, and social mobility, a lack of access to literacy resources and knowledge of literacy practices is unjust.

In 2018, UCE's engaged scholarship programme investigated how epistemic (in)justice theories might be applied in cross-disciplinary research throughout the university. I had an interest in DST's capacity as a means for marginalised communities to reflect on and challenge dominant narratives and social ills, but I discovered there was a dearth of literature linking DST to theories of epistemic (in)justice and was thus inspired to explore this link. The SFL Advocates' experience bore the hallmarks of aspects of epistemic justice.

Black South Africans were subjected to epistemic (knowledge-based) injustices through Apartheid policies and practices of Bantu education in which they were denied equal access to quality literacy materials and resources as a means of oppressing them (Banda 2003). The SFL programme addressed these harms by equipping the parents with literacy skills to pass on to their children.

An epistemic injustice is a wrong done to a person and their knowledge of the world by dismissing them and their situated understandings due to arbitrary characteristics such as race and gender (Fricker 2007). Fricker identifies two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice, when a speaker 'receives a deficit of credibility' due to an inherent prejudice towards the speaker by the hearer, and hermeneutical injustice, whereby a speaker is unable

to make sense of a significant social experience to him, or herself, or to another person. Instances of hermeneutical injustice are often located systemically, when the speaker is part of a community which does not have access to 'equal participation in the generation of social meanings '(Fricker 2013:1319). A hermeneutical gap affects the whole community and makes signalling or protesting shared experiences of epistemic injustice very challenging, especially in institutional contexts plagued by unequal and contested power relations (Elzinga, 2018). For the SFLAdvocates and their peers at work, the lack of access to reading culture and lifelong learning qualifies as knowledge-based harm predicated on race and class discrimination in the Apartheid era.

3. Research goals

The SFLAdvocates' historical and social contexts and my interest in testing DST's potential for social transformation through theories of epistemic (in)justice provided the frameworks to situate my research. The research question thus aimed to investigate the ways in which digital storytelling might represent, capture or facilitate instances of epistemic justice experienced by the SFLAdvocates in the literacy intervention. The absence of epistemic injustice cannot be assumed, but my epistemological orientation was framed by possibilities of epistemic justice*, an orientation which was informed by the nature of the FLP Researcher's findings.*

While the SFLAdvocates had expressed their enthusiasm for continuing the intervention's media and social marketing objectives, there had not been much activity around these aims. As the data collection progressed, the original research questions broadened to investigate whether the SFLAdvocates had ongoing access to the programme's support and resources and to understand whether they felt empowered to communicate for social change, particularly given their status as low-paid workers at the university.

4. Theory frameworks and orientations

Chapter 2 explains the significance of DST as a C4SC tool for the participants to articulate the significance of their social experience as parents before, during, and after the literacy intervention. C4SC is a recent evolution of the Communication for Development model (C4D), first developed in the 1960s (Baepler and Reynolds, 2014). Both of these media-based social development interventions aim to address the uneven power relations

inherent in traditional mass media communication structures (Tufte 2014). These media structures adopted exclusionary approaches to developing nations' needs and cultures and instead disseminated information and Western-promulgated agendas in a 'top-down' manner for developing communities to absorb (Deane 2014). C4D media structures aimed to remedy the imbalance by adopting an inclusive approach to developing nations and opening up spaces for local communities to contribute to communications agendas through problem identification, consensus building and taking action (Servaes & Malikhao 2014; Sosale 2008)

These actions were manifest in media such as journalistic reporting on public deliberations, and participatory video (PV) (Askanius 2014) where professional media producers gave non-professional locals access to their video cameras to themselves record footage that served as more authentic representations and narratives from within their communities, to contribute meaningfully to a development agenda (Plush, 2016). C4SC embraces the Freirean practice of 'conscientisation', achieved through shared reflection by individuals in groups (Servaes 2008). Group conscientisation is said to become visible after such engagement when coherent ideas or themes are related to lived experiences, including problems and possible solutions that emerge within the group (uq.edu.au/ccsc).

The literature on DST identifies it as a form of C4SC in that it is participatory, inclusive of marginalised voices, and capable of being used to communicate for change (Tacchi and Lennie 2014; Alexandra 2008; Winskell & Enger 2014). Such representations transform 'everyday experiences into shared public culture' (Burgess 2006) which, for my research, suggests the possibilities for the SFLAdvocates to open up public spaces for other marginalised communities to experience epistemic justice. DST literature indicates the dearth of evidence of long-term sustainable change through DST (Robin & McNeil 2012; Rauch 2015) and suggests a more rigorous analysis of the story content and public consumption processes (Dunford and Jenkins, 2017). Analysis of story circle data and final digital stories was within the research scope; analysis of external and public sharing of the stories beyond the workshop was beyond it.

In terms of the C4SC approach, what is significant is what happens during the workshops, specifically the opportunities for conscientisation because of how story circles encourage participants to interrogate their lived experiences through reflexive sharing (Watkins & Russo 2009). From personal accounts of struggle, story circle dialogue ideally transitions to participants seeking systemic descriptions and explanations of their marginalisation (Vivienne 2016; Mnisi 2015). The co-creative approach is theorised as a

'multiplicity' of creative interventions from institutions, facilitators and other participants (Spurgeon *et al.* 2009)).

Literature on evaluating epistemic justice through DST is sparse, and the connection between these approaches under-researched. The SFLAdvocates provided an opportunity to evaluate hermeneutical EJ specifically within a DST process. Through a C4SC lens, it is acknowledged that while it is true marginalised communities may lack knowledge, skills and access to public resources such as education, the specific practice of DST promotes the crafting of an agentive self through their stories, addressing questions of 'who we are, have been, want to be' (Hull and Katz 2006:3) . These representations work to reframe mainstream narratives about a culture of deficiency (Hull & Katz 2006). If one applies an epistemic justice lens, the process can be described as providing space for everyone's experiences to be represented (hermeneutical justice) (Schmidt 2019).

5. Methodology and research methods

Chapter 3 describes the epistemological and ontological orientation of the research and the methods and approaches of data collection and analysis. The qualitative and narrative nature of the research required an interpretive and critical realist analytical approach to serve the theoretical questions on epistemic (in)justice and C4SC. Because of the dearth of literature on the intersection of DST and epistemic (in)justice, I designed a 'philosophical toolkit' to assist my analysis of the story circle and digital stories data. I contextualise and theorise my role as researcher and participant-observer (co-facilitator). I describe in detail the elements and structure of digital storytelling processes, highlighting the normative approach followed by many DST practitioners and researchers globally. I utilise UCE's guidebook on DST practices I co-developed during the Common Good First pilot project on DST at the University. I describe the significance of co-creating (Mnisi 2015; DePalma & Alexander 2015) stories and explain how I tested the data for indications of epistemic (in)justice.

6. Presentation of the research findings

Chapter 4 presents the findings in three parts. **Part One** is a thematic analysis of the story circle discussions, activities and final digital stories. I describe these in phenomenological interpretive terms. **Part 2** reveals an unexpected disruption to my data analysis, which I interrogate using epistemic (in)justice theories and reflecting on my role as

participant-observer. **Part 3** reveals my findings using a critical realist approach to the data. Overall, Chapter 4 is a reflexive narrative of the research process, in which I address the central question of how the participants used DST to reflect on their literacy experiences. The findings describe a complex contextual problem which has implications for how tertiary institutions approach working with marginalised participants in contested spaces.

Chapter 5 discusses the research's most significant findings and, using Fricker's (2013) theories of epistemic justice, posit recommendations that will contribute to the University's understanding of its role in creating the conditions for what I term 'just storytelling'.

Chapter 2: Context and Theory

Introduction

This chapter explicates the contextual and theoretical components that undergird the research question. The context of South Africa's literacy crisis resonates throughout the story of the SFLAdvocates' journey of reflecting on their own family literacy experiences. In reading-for-meaning with their young children and participating in parenting support programmes in the SFL Project, the participants sought to correct past injustices in which they were denied access to the literacy practices they were learning as adults with their children. As the section on Bantu education policies illustrates, cultural instantiations of historical structural disadvantages are reproduced through poor literacy practices in classrooms in most South African schools, resulting in the country's literacy crisis. The SFLAdvocates broke through the cycle of poor literacy practices by improving their children's literacy capabilities in their home environment. In so doing, the participants reclaimed space as beneficiaries of new knowledge of reading practices and parenting. By agreeing to a participatory media intervention designed to assist them in reflecting on their literacy journey, the participants opened up a rich space for investigation. Given the social justice impact of the literacy intervention, it was significant that these participants would be provided with a communication tool to reflect and express their thoughts and ideas. Situated in the participants' socio-economically disadvantaged context, the DST experience was entangled with ideas of epistemic (in)justice, reflecting a non-linear process with sometimes contradictory data.

The origins and context of the research are bound up with the theoretical frameworks for interpreting the participants' complex process of reflecting and communicating about their experiences. The context of the literacy crisis provides the background for the hyper-local interventions, which are investigated using theories of epistemic (in)justice and communicating for social change (C4SC). The theoretical frameworks inform the interpretive and critical realist methodological orientation, explained in Chapter 3, and a more nuanced account of the theory is presented in the findings in Chapter 4 (Parts 1,2 and 3). Chapter 5 combines some theoretical concepts with the findings to recommend reforms in DST practices at UCE.

1. Context: the problem of literacy attainment for Black South Africans

Literacy attainment of Grade Four Foundation Phase learners has been a keen concern for education sector stakeholders since 2016. The re-calibrated PIRLS 2016 results showed that 78% of South African Grade Four could not read for meaning in any language, a slight improvement on 2011 results. Nonetheless, South African learners were still the least competent among all participating countries. Analysts responsible for re-calculating the PIRLS 2016 data pinpointed slight improvements in teacher training, policy directives, curriculum resource materials and, most notably, a factor external to the classroom, improved levels of parent education (Gustafsson and Taylor 2022: 2). To this end, Gustafsson and Taylor highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to literacy attainment in South Africa. Interventions were championed at the highest level of government with renewed policies around teacher training and resources structured around reading plans (Gustafsson & Taylor 2022; EDCOE, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic interrupted these small advances. The national lockdown in 2020 and 2021 extensively damaged fragile education gains in many poor South African schools. The latest reading competency test results in the 2023 Reading Panel Background Report show a sharp rise to 82% of Grade Four learners who cannot read for meaning. The report's authors claim that "the pandemic has wiped out a decade of progress in reading outcomes" (Spaull, 2023:1) and that preceding state-led interventions were too weak to shield schools and learners from the pandemic fallout. They criticise the absence of funding for school reading programmes which renders other initiatives like increased teacher training fruitless. The authors warn that unless radical policy changes are implemented to support reading programmes and address the systemic teaching crisis, it will take 86 years until every Grade Four can read for meaning (Spaull 2023:1).

South Africa's reading crisis is rooted in racialised Bantu education policies designed to provide Black South Africans with inferior learning and literacy attainment during Apartheid (Howie et al. 2016). The systemic lack of infrastructure, libraries, teaching resources and adequately trained teachers made it nearly 'impossible' for Black South Africans to develop a reading and writing culture (Banda 2003:109). As Apartheid was dismantled, some Black children were assimilated into previously white-only schools. In his 2003 study on the attitudes of Black people towards languages and literacies, Banda found that post-1994, Black parents favoured sending their children to former model C schools with

English as the language of instruction instead of under-resourced township schools (Banda 2003:124).

In South Africa, the spatial dimension of poverty incorporates a clustering in rural areas that were previously segregated along ethnic lines during Apartheid (Mathebula, 2019; Sulla and Zikhali, 2018). Today, rural communities account for over 60% of the poverty burden (Mathebula 2019:1). The provinces with the most significant poverty concentrations are KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, and the Eastern Cape. In 2019 these three provinces accounted for the lowest Grade 12 and the highest dropout rates (Davids, 2019). PIRLS and other reading survey results for poorer countries track poverty lines, reinforcing research findings that children immersed in literature at home and school are better readers (Howie et al. 2016). A critical framing shows that the PIRLS data reveals that the complex socio-economic and political dynamics are not limited to learners in schools but inhabit most of South Africa's cultural spaces. A PIRLS 2016 sub-survey revealed that eighty-two per cent of South African parents were 'very satisfied' with their children's literacy attainment at the time (PIRLS 2016). The 82% satisfaction figure appears paradoxical against the 82% of children who cannot read for meaning in 2023 (Spaull, 2023).

However, it is important to note that not all educationists believe PIRLS is a fair measure of language and literacy attainment, particularly for children of colour in South Africa. My research scope cannot contain the full extent of the debate over PIRLS, which I use simply to provide a broad orientation to the literacy crisis. However, a central critique is that the design of the PIRLS survey is too limited to fairly capture and reflect the meaning-making abilities by children everywhere. While PIRLS is intended to be universally accessible for decoding language for comprehension, Prinsloo (2021) asserts that the tests subvert the good intentions of South African education policy-makers and educators by reinforcing notions of literacy that perpetuate 'unequal outcomes'. Prinsloo argues that this occurs through the faulty assumption that all South African children should be proficient and comfortable enough in their mother tongue language to respond to the test on an equal basis. Local test administrators translate American questionnaires into the different national languages; however, researchers are prohibited from examining the local texts and, therefore, cannot determine whether they translate into situationally relevant texts for multicultural and multilingual learning spaces in South African classrooms (Prinsloo 2021). He states:

> "What counts as literacy and 'meaning-making' is not a generalised competence (e.g., being able to 'speak English' or 'code and decode letters' or 'make meaning') but a situated, communicative competence embedded in acquired cultural knowledge and learnt models of using situated language in specific ways, drawing on varying

> histories and different rules for socially interacting, for sharing knowledge and opinions, and for reading and writing" (Prinsloo 2021:12-13).

Prinsloo's critical articulation of South African learners' literacy challenges helps understand the participants' literacy experiences in a hyper-local context. The SFL home-based reading-for-meaning intervention to improve young children's literacy skills acknowledged the need to build a family literacy culture and export it to their children's classrooms. The SFLprogramme resembled Prinsloo's notion of literacy attainment as 'situated, communicative competence embedded in acquired cultural knowledge and learnt models' (Prinsloo, 2021).

2. Theory: New Literacy Studies and the potential for life-long learning through a culture of reading

Much educational research supports the notion that literacy attainment should be a holistic undertaking where cultural and other factors beyond the classroom influence learning. This section outlines the motivations and rationale behind this focus. It contextualises the socio-economic background of Black South African parents in general, including the research participants who experienced a family literacy intervention in a hyper-local context. In recent decades, global studies have increasingly shown children learn through making meaning from their lived experiences in their world(s), a process of co-construction through cultural activities guided by significant others, such as their parents (Breier & Prinsloo 1996). Accordingly, a culture of reading and writing is also viewed as a social practice of literacy and not limited to the technical attainment of literacy knowledge, such as how to read and decode books in the classroom (Breir & Prinsloo 1996)).

The distinction between the two is important and is explained through theories of New Literacy Studies (NLS), which takes a constructivist approach to learning. From this perspective, children bring both social and cultural lived experiences to bear on what they learn in the classroom (Street, 2003). NLS presents a shift in thinking from a traditional, modernist approach to classroom literacy where educators 'transferred' curricula knowledge to children, regardless of their social, cultural, class, political or economic backgrounds. In impoverished communities, outdated Western forms of transferred knowledge were often at odds with the learning outcomes expected of local children ((Purcell-Gates et al. 2006:168-170). NLS includes newer forms of literacy, such as multimodal media, where

educators aim to engage aural and visual capacities for comprehension (Street 2003). Reading-for-meaning (RFM) is an NLS approach to literacy as it locates the reading practice in the child's home with a parent or guardian who reads with the child. This practice has several benefits: emotional bonding, increased comprehension skills, empathy development and improved reading culture are foregrounded, extending literacy attainment beyond functionalist practices of decoding texts (Pretorius & Machet, 2004). NLS theory suggests such adult-child interactions are critical to life-long learning (Wells Rowe, 2010; Wolf, 2017) and inform family literacy research designs and programmes.

The importance of a solid literacy culture is supported by neuroscientific research which lends urgency to campaigns in impoverished communities with few to no resources. Young children need to be immersed in a world of words from a very young age to have an equal chance of developing cognitive and emotional abilities to succeed in today's communication-driven society later in life. According to Wolf (2017:10-16), children from homes promoting a literacy culture are many millions of words ahead of those from homes that do not. Instrumental to the aims of literacy interventions is that reading is not a naturally occurring ability in the human brain but is the result of a complex series of neurolinguistic events responding to the task of trying to make sense of texts. The earlier the brain is exposed to written language, the better chance it has of sophisticated comprehension (Wolf 2017). Furthermore, Wolf maintains that in early childhood, children should be provided with the social, cognitive and emotional skills to learn to acknowledge and engage with the perspectives of others to live successfully in society. This is acquired through exposure to written language - a culture of literacy (Wolf 2017).

The scientific data supported the conclusions of earlier researchers who championed the dual importance of school and the home to boost literacy levels in impoverished communities (Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin, 2019). The researchers shook the foundations of modernist educational approaches, which had placed the locus of literacy attainment in the classroom. The New Literacy Studies scholars recognised that culture is imported into the classroom through children; family plays a decisive role in literacy attainment (Street 2003). This non-linear framework for developing literacy skills demanded a holistic, dynamic approach and created the conceptual blueprints for early literacy intervention programmes, including adult-child literacy learning interactions in the home (Desmond 2010). These go hand in hand with education sector corrections that include better resourcing of school libraries, intensifying teachers' pedagogical knowledge, making ICTs accessible to primary schools and increasing reading time in the classroom (Howie et al. 2016: 174). Responding to

these needs, the South African government's Department of Basic Education has carried out pilot programmes in schools and communities; however, these interventions have been criticised for a severe lack of funding and inability to scale up on successful initiatives (Spaull 2023). Given the worsening statistics for Grade Four children's literacy, literacy interventions in schools and communities are essential responses. To engage with the reading crisis, researchers must understand the origins in the historical context of Apartheid education policies.

3. Historical injustice of Bantu literacy education

The SFL parents are the unfortunate inheritors of the legacy of Bantu education. In this key project of the Apartheid state, which aimed to produce a subservient black population, particular notions of cultural identity (for individuals and communities) were formed through experiences of literacy development (Banda, 2003). At the time, a Western and Enlightenment approach was taken for White learners, who had access to, and were encouraged to engage with, a wide range of literature and public literacy resources which supported ideals of individual and community agency. In contrast, for Black learners, Bantu education was very poorly resourced, and very few public facilities such as libraries were provided in black residential areas. In addition, informed by imperialist assumptions, the curriculum was deliberately designed to provide a basic education that limited personal and community agency and development (Prinsloo and Janks, 2002). This pedagogy continues to inform many Black parents almost three decades post-Apartheid, specifically in attitudes towards literacy development, reflected primarily in how they do not think of themselves as capable of playing a role in their children's education. The lack of focus on or exposure to, reading for meaning within a family unit meant that many recipients of Bantu education did not experience the rich relationship-building that is a by-product of this interactive process with their children (Desmond 2001;Desmond 2004). Moreover, while post-Apartheid schooling is no longer segregated along racial lines, young Black learners continue to inherit a legacy of literacy development that still lacks the pro-social support that a culture of reading-for-meaning requires, according to NLS theory (observed by *FLP Researcher)*. It is for these reasons that the intervention's focus on family literacy had such a profound effect on the six SFLparents.

4. The legacy of Bantu education: an epistemic justice framing for resisting oppression

The nature of knowing - epistemology - is relevant to understanding how the research participants were affected by the historical injustices of Bantu education. As established above, specific ways of knowing and relating that were embedded in historic school curricula are repeated in the lives of Black South Africans today. To understand how this is located in the context of this research, de Gialdino's (2009) description on the Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung website is helpful:

> Epistemology raises many questions, including: 1. how reality can be known, 2. the relationship between the knower and what is known, 3. the characteristics, the principles, the assumptions that guide the process of knowing and the achievement of findings, and 4. the possibility of that process being shared and repeated by others in order to assess the quality of the research and the reliability of those findings.

As outlined briefly in Chapter 1, an epistemic injustice is when a knower is discredited based on arbitrary characteristics such as race, gender or socio-economic status (Fricker 2007). Accordingly, epistemic (in)justices are indicated when our:

> "…collective knowledge resources do not prepare us for the world as it is (Frank, 2013). This type of injustice includes lack of access to accurate material and intellectual resources about our societies as well as denial of personal resources we share with others through testimony. We experience epistemic justice when both conditions hold: we have access to collective resources that reflect our social experiences (hermeneutical justice) and we feel confident our voices will be heard (testimonial justice)" (Skrlac Lo 2016:148).

Fricker's original conception of a testimonial injustice features a speaker who 'receives a deficit of credibility' (Fricker 2007) due to an inherent prejudice towards the speaker by a hearer. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when the speaker cannot make themselves intelligible to a hearer because of the injustice of not having had equal to particular kinds of 'accurate material' and 'intellectual resources'. The lack of access to knowledge results in the speaker being unable to make sense of significant social experiences (Lo, 2016; Fricker 2007). In this way, hermeneutical epistemic injustice is perpetuated as neither discredited speakers nor hearers can find common ground for understanding social experiences, leading to a widening gap in knowledge systems and, ultimately, inequality. Through this lens, it is clear that the SFL Advocates were deprived of equal access to learning materials and educational resources through Bantu education curricula designed to subjugate them.

Reflexive researchers working with marginalised groups need to be cognizant of not perpetuating instances of epistemic injustices by making assumptions about knowledge, particularly in our attempts to understand why speakers have been discredited. For example, is it unjust to claim that in virtue of an inferior Bantu education system in which Black South Africans did not have equal access to instruments of literacy acquisition, then their knowledge of literacy is inferior? It might be more virtuous to interrogate the original epistemology by asking: whose and which measure of literacy is in question? Similarly, Code 2017:95 citing (Medina, 2013) questions the wisdom of interpreting particular views and resources inside hermeneutical gaps:

> But whose "collective understanding"? And whose "collective hermeneutical resource"? If the collectivity in question has multiple publics, which in turn contain heterogeneous subgroups, it is not clear that we can (or should) talk about the "collective understanding" of an experience without qualification.

Fricker (2007) urges hearers to be guided by epistemic virtues such as humility when assessing a speaker's testimony and to set aside judgement until they have established that their thinking stems from an implicit bias or a more conscious prejudice. Central to this thesis is exploring not only whether epistemic justice has been achieved and reflected through the DST process but also the nature (how and what form) of the achievement. There are many facets to understanding epistemic justice. Since Fricker introduced the concepts in 2007, many philosophers and social scientists have responded with their particular interpretations, critiques and expansions of her original ideas. Because the nature of the theory applies to almost every aspect of life in which knowledge is shared and grown in social settings, I engage with a handful of theories that address core characteristics of the research, namely: how epistemic communities can provide testimony to redress past epistemic wrongs; understanding silencing of marginalised groups; forms of resistance and the political nature of institutional justice.

Fricker's approach to epistemic justice through a virtuous mindset was a springboard for social philosophers to offer and debate alternative approaches. Dotson, for instance, argued for a much more radical adoption of epistemic interventions by hearers/institutions using a 'degree of change lens' (Pohlhaus 2017 citing Dotson 2014a: 123–133). On how marginalised epistemic agents respond to being discredited, McHugh (2017: 274) writes: 'One critique…is that [Fricker's] account of epistemic injustice silences the agency and resistance of marginalised communities', meaning that Fricker does not specify potential 'non-dominant hermeneutical resources' that marginalised epistemic communities might use

to make their 'social experiences communicatively intelligible'. McHugh refers to Medina's idea of 'positive epistemic resistance' (McHugh 2017: 274 citing Medina 2013:50) whereby marginalised epistemic communities resourcefully develop a practice of critical self-reflection based on the virtues of 'humility, diligence/curiosity, and open-mindedness' (McHugh 2017:274). Through this lens, marginalised groups can actively resist systemic epistemic injustices and, in so doing, hold spaces for dominant and non-dominant groups to generate 'meaning, knowledge, and change' (McHugh 2017:277) together. This notion of epistemic justice correlates with agitating for social change through reflexive communications practices. It aligns with the choice of digital storytelling as a resource for the SFLAdvocates to reflect on their literacy experiences and new knowledge, and to gauge how they feel about themselves as epistemic agents.

In this way, DST represents a resource for marginalised communities to engage with the following properties of epistemic justice: make meaning of shared social experiences of injustice and justice, use it as a form of testimony, and share it widely into hermeneutically unjust spaces. However, it is also relevant to this research to incorporate other notions of epistemic injustice to describe how paths to epistemic justice can be blocked, particularly in what Medina terms communicative spaces (Medina 2013). He initially agrees with Fricker's explanations for testimonial silencing, where certain groups can be preemptively disregarded for their testimonies before they've spoken, which can increasingly lead to their exclusions from communicative practices. Medina writes that over time, the quality of epistemic participation deteriorates:

> In other words, even when people are not entirely excluded from participation, their communicative agency may be constrained or compromised in important ways; and the appreciation of their contributions may not be on a par with that of others (Medina 2013: 91).

The implications are significant for how marginalised participants are heard in story circles by facilitators and co-participants and how their personal stories in digital format are received. Medina's expanded explanations on epistemic silencing became increasingly important in the data analysis, as will be seen in the findings in Chapter 4. Medina's idea that epistemic injustices are 'detected only in temporally and socially extended contexts where patterns of communicative interaction unfold' (Medina 2013:92) is relevant to the unfolding of this research. DST provided a participatory means of communication between the participants and myself, and the data collection occurred over many months. Vital to understanding the broader process of the research was Medina's notion of 'hermeneutical

insensitivities' affecting communicative practices, making it difficult for marginalised speakers to testify. As will be explained in Chapter 4, difficulties emerged in the research process regarding how the participants engaged with the DST process, particularly around sharing their testimonies. Medina writes that insensitivities result in the inability of hearers to listen to speakers regardless of articulation, and hermeneutical gaps remain in place as 'certain meanings can remain systematically unattended' (Medina 2013: 97). The institutional context and participants' subaltern socio-economic status invoked the need to theorise aspects of sharing their testimonies, including ideas of epistemic silencing.

Medina argues that it is vital to think critically about the problem of silencing before making assumptions about why marginalised and oppressed people do not share their testimonies. Because we live in complex worlds with 'heterogeneous interpretive resources and practices', we should not think that the only reason for 'public silences' is that non-dominant groups have been interpretively incapacitated (Medina 2013: 97). He argues that these groups may have become increasingly vulnerable over time through consistently not being heard and therefore choose to be selective about when and with whom they share their testimonies. This can be symptomatic when oppressive groups practise 'wilful resistance against the kinds of knowledge that threaten one's unfair privileges,' which correlates with why particular ideas remain 'systematically unattended' (Medina 2013). Oppressed groups remain prejudicially and hermeneutically harmed.

5. The role of epistemic justice in securing political freedom

In parallel with critically exploring epistemic silencing for its capacity to reveal latent truths in systemic structures, the research incorporated Fricker's expanded notions of epistemic justice as a condition for political freedom, given the context of the participants' backgrounds. Fricker's original ideas were critiqued for not being robust enough to support the critical analysis of epistemic injustices in political systems. In response, Fricker (2013: 1319) positions epistemic justice as a necessary condition of political freedom. Drawing from republican and libertarian theories of freedom, Fricker maintains that in contesting interference that impinges on their freedoms, citizens (in many cases marginalised people) should be heard in ways that promote epistemic justice. Fricker argues that despite the best intentions of democracies that enable deliberative channels, fair representation and neutral spaces, such as in a court of law, there is still the likelihood that through social conditioning, hearers will bring their prejudices and implicit biases to bear in their advocacy (such as a

lawyer who mis-hears a marginalised client), prosecution or judgements (juries and judges). Therefore, to ensure citizens receive a fair hearing in the true sense, it is incumbent on those in positions of power to adopt a virtuous approach to listening and judging (Fricker 2013). Fricker does not believe it is necessary to radically challenge social conditioning such that an entire order of change is effected, but that if epistemic agents are invested in true liberty, it is logical that they would behave in ways to ensure it. Once educated in such virtues, they would invest in pursuing epistemic justice.

Fricker's theory is that for institutions and other dominant agents to claim they provide everyone with 'secured non-interference', they must commit to pursuing values that support epistemic justice (Fricker 2013:1321). This would require remedial action and/or ongoing, inwards-looking and reflecting processes. The implications of this theory for the research relate to the context of the literacy problem which is systemically rooted in how the majority of Black South Africans were marginalised into hermeneutically unjust spaces through Bantu education policies and practices. Prinsloo and Janks's research on apartheid era matric exam paper texts revealed the nature of the Western literacy model prescribed for Black learners that was foreign and alienating and which forced them to make social meanings from these texts in a manner that denigrated Black culture (Prinsloo & Janks 2002). These practices were epistemically unjust because they denied Black learners equal access to learning materials and literacy models inclusive of Black languages and cultures. The hermeneutical injustice that resulted was characterised by Black learners being prejudicially assessed and judged incapable of communicating meaning intelligibly. The SFL parents' internalisation of ideas that they possess an inferior literacy culture and are epistemically weak contributors to their children's educational spaces are situated within these hermeneutical spaces.

Both kinds of epistemic injustices can reveal complex, uncomfortable and latent problems in institutional settings where certain groups are oppressed. In the context of my research, it is important to understand that as a public university, the University at which this research took place is committed to social justice, but also employs a large body of low-wage staff from the local townships (Black peri-urban residential areas, historically under-serviced and with a high number of unemployed residents). In (dates witheld) the University decentralised its cleaning services, resulting in instances of unfair labour practices, in which

female cleaners especially, experienced a form of 'silencing' [5](Author name and publication withheld):

> The centralisation process for workers was characterised by the silencing of workers through hierarchal power dynamics, whereby the CCS management used its power to 'coerce' the cleaners. (Author name and publication witheld)

This scenario invokes Freirean notions of systemic oppression:

> It is a rare peasant who, once "promoted" to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself. This is because the context of the peasant's situation, that is, oppression, remains unchanged. In this example, the overseer, in order to make sure of his job, must be as tough as the owner—and more so. (Freire, 1970:46)

Freirean ideas of the reproduction of tyranny are reflected in some epistemic justice theories on oppressed groups resisting oppressors (or dominant groups), who practise wilful ignorance of alternative ideas and testimonies that might threaten their privileges (Medina 2013) The SFLparticipants represented a non-dominant group in an institutional setting with managers who were also 'oppressed overseers'.

6. A response to the historical legacy of epistemic injustice through a local family literacy intervention

The University's Community Engagement (UCE) division's SFL Project tackled the literacy crisis in a hyper-local context by responding to the PIRLS 2016 report findings, such as the 'lack of reading resources in homes' and the need for home-school partnerships with parents becoming 'co-educators' (*FLP Researcher's* notes). The project espoused ideas of improving children's literacy levels by strengthening the home as a source of reading culture. As described in point 2 in this chapter, reading-for-meaning improves children's exposure to a world of words, with the additional benefit of improving parent-child relationships through bonding over books. Over a hundred parents who were employed by the University as unskilled or semi-skilled workers signed up for the initiative. This project was run through UCE, provided the parents with weekly reading material and educational games for their primary and pre-primary children, as well as workshops on the use of these materials and how they might benefit the children.

[5] The author has been anonymised to protect the participants in this research study. This researcher can be contacted for further information.

The previous lack of literacy resources in the parents' lives indicates a hermeneutical epistemic injustice in which they, as a marginalised group, could not make meaning of the significance of the culture of reading as a social practice. This point was made very clear when, as the FLP Researcher noted, the SFL parents were introduced to the books and support materials, and they expressed surprise and anger at having been excluded from knowing about them in the first place. So motivated were they to cross the hermeneutical divide that a group of parents volunteered to work closely with *FLP Researcher* and to become 'vanguards' for the project. The self-titled SFLAdvocates 'developed their role as literacy activists, becoming co-creators of media messages' with *FLP Researcher*, who researched their work within a development communications framing. The project results were evidenced in the vanguard group's children's improved reading and comprehension marks at school and improvement in other subject areas. FLP Researcher reports that the vanguard parents felt proud and empowered.

From starting as participants who identified themselves as second-class citizens and as parents who lacked the knowledge resources required to help their children become more literate, the participants perceived themselves differently by the end of the project. They viewed themselves as capable of co-educating their young children, engaging with teachers and influencing other parents in their communities to start reading with their children, according to *FLP Researcher's p*ersonal communication notes. Epistemic justice theory would frame the participants as epistemic agents with experience in developing a literacy culture in their homes, having utilised available resources, and providing testimonies which were heard by FLP Researcher and documented through her research. These developments appeared to constitute epistemic justice in that they corrected for the Bantu education harms of the past.

7. A communications response to the family literacy intervention: using digital storytelling to measure epistemic (in)justice in a contested space

A full description of the digital storytelling process (story circle workshops) and product (personal digital story created by participants) is provided in Chapter 3 on methodology. This section discusses extracts from the literature that support the context of the research and which serve to situate DST within theories of epistemic (in)justice and communicating for social change. The literature on DST as an arts-based intervention spans many sectors and is

too vast to review for the purpose of this thesis. Instead, I focus on select extracts as they pertain to the research.

Digital storytelling is agnostic and multidisciplinary in origin. It can be traced to simple hypertext-driven narratives co-created by pre-Web computer gamers, to web-shared videos, memoirs, journaling, blogs and vlogs, and participatory theatre's social practices (Alexander 2011). DST features in family literacy projects (not parent-led RFM) in the global North (Prins, 2017); it is couched as a transformative tool for use by marginalised communities (Frohlich *et al.*, 2009); and as a reflexive tool in pedagogy (Kocaman-Karoglu, 2016). Through sharing their stories through story circles, social media and other fora, DST participants feel a sense of 'being human' in connecting and sharing stories, transcending geographical and cultural borders (Stewart and Gachago, 2016). Another character-forming influence on DST was participatory video, so named for its potential to drive social change. The most famous example was the 'Fogo Island Project' for Canada's 'Challenge for Change' television series that encouraged socio-economically beleaguered Fogo Island inhabitants to record their own stories and play back the recordings in community venues to facilitate conversations about social change. The 27 films were credited with successfully engaging the Canadian government in reversing its plans to relocate the island's population en-masse and instead investing anew in the local island economy (Wiesner, 1992). As (Rauch, 2015) describes it, this act of communicating for social change through equal participation served to subvert the 'outside-in gaze'. This act won visibility and action from state policymakers.

Nowadays, the extent to which participatory video producers cede editorial and technical control, such as handing over cameras to non-professionals, depends on the extent to which unmediated participant representations are needed (Schoon, 2013). At a hyper-local level, the particular embodiment of digital storytelling used in UCE's Common Good First project ceded all control to the participants (including marginalised groups) who, with the help of the group (story circle), aimed to produce unmediated personal digital stories (Robin 2008; Lambert 2010; Hartley and McWilliam, 2009). Participation as a method draws on the co-creation (by story circle participants and facilitator) of stories as self-representations, where facilitators create specific opportunities for marginalised voices to be heard (Tacchi 2012). Because of its agnostic applications in different fields, it has been widely adopted in studies featuring qualitative research (Davey and Benjaminsen 2017; de Jager et al. 2017).

(Couldry 2009) signalled the need for a deeper understanding of DST's theoretical possibilities, focusing on its potential to address a 'crisis of voice' in neoliberal, democratic

societies. With the growing marginalisation of voices in areas such as the market where 'market logic' overrides the personal concerns of workers who feel increasingly exploited, DST could offer the kind of narrative that can mediate institutional relations (Couldry 2009). Couldry's explications of DST's narrative properties are helpful in understanding its potential for transformation in societies where communications are non-linear. Compared to oral storytelling, the digital format allows for greater penetration of different distribution channels. It is also characteristic of online narrative formats that operate under the 'pressure' to mix visuals, voice and text, to limit the duration of the story to cater for shorter online attention spans and a format that is easily accessed, and that takes into account the risks of reaching 'undesirable audiences' (Couldry 2009). On this last point, Couldry echoes what others have said about not knowing enough about the sustainable, long-term social effects due to a dearth of research into the content of the digital stories (Dunford & Jenkins 2017) and not enough focus on the public life of the stories nor how the participants are impacted over time (Robin 2012; Couldry et al. 2015).

Concerning the UCE DST workshops, which are continuously offered, participants submit qualitative data when the workshops are completed. In my experience as a facilitator, immediately post-workshop, participants have reported positive experiences, often characterised by profound and empathetic insights, garnered through an interconnectedness of the story circle participants. To establish a deeper understanding of DST's transformative abilities, UCE will have to qualitatively assess workshop data over the longer term for indications of social change.

The SFLAdvocates' experience of empowerment through the literacy intervention offered an ideal opportunity to explore intersections of epistemic justice and communications for social change vis-à-vie digital storytelling. In this framing, participants utilised – and tested – DST to contribute to a pool of knowledge on family literacy projects by reflecting on their new identities regarding new literacy skills, attitudes and beliefs. The nature of such knowledge contributions through digital storytelling appear to fit Fricker's notions of epistemic justice virtues of 'accuracy, sincerity and testimonial justice' (Sullivan, 2017); core to producing meaningful personal digital stories is an authentic point of view, often made more so through the use of emotion, and truth-telling (Lambert, 2010)

The emphasis on authenticity is an ethical orientation that connects DST and pursuits of epistemic justice. In the latter, inauthentic or false testimony can harm the greater knowledge-gathering and storing process. Still, if authentic and true, it has the opposite effect of giving equal access to resources that help participants (including marginalised groups)

understand their sociality (Sullivan 2017). The Common Good First DST project piloted ways for DST to promote social innovation by creating and sharing personal digital stories that conveyed ideas and case studies of ways of overcoming a variety of social ills. The process produced testimony that became shared epistemic resources for greater use through story circle discussions and final stories that were uploaded to participating project websites. A helpful catchphrase for such activities could be 'epistemically just digital storytelling' to capture the common purpose at the intersection of DST and epistemic justice. As Fricker states, when a hearer feels that someone is telling the truth, they are motivated and justified to believe the speaker's word. As a result, 'the feeling of trust in the virtuous hearer is a sophisticated emotional radar for detecting trustworthiness in speakers" (Fricker 2007: 80; (Carmona, 2022).

The inverse of authenticity in digital storytelling is the harm that can be done if story circle participants are less attentive to the truth or provide false testimonies. In my experience, story circle interactions are often characterised by heartfelt, emotional conversations arising from the courageous sharing of personal experiences, with some committing to courses of action. The possibility of causing another distress is heightened if someone breaks this trust connection by fabricating parts of, or a whole, narrative. Facilitators should be trained to encourage epistemically just contributions by participants, although they are currently framed as ethical guidelines governing feedback processes in story circle sessions (UCE DST Guide 2020). In this research, authentic storytelling (testimony) became an increasingly important area of investigation. A dissonance was observed in the signals emitted by the participants at the intersection of DST and epistemic (in)justice concerning the nature and purpose of their testimonies. This data became a critical focus, as is explained in the findings chapter.

8. DST as C4SC

Thus far, DST has been discussed as a form of communication, including its origins, purpose and processes, narrative form and characteristics. With its multidisciplinary and participatory roots in non-professional storytelling activities for the social good, it is necessary to unpack the theoretical underpinnings of its classification as a mode of communicating for social change (C4SC). C4SC is an evolution of development media communications in the post-WWII era of developed nations transferring knowledge and technical support systems to developing nations. Organs of state utilised the mass

dissemination capabilities of traditional media institutions to support their development agendas. However, in the 1960s, researchers became more interested in participatory forms of communicating for social change, having witnessed the effects of participatory video interventions. In recent years, ideas of communicating for change increasingly encompassed dynamic practices of post-modernist mentalities supporting engaged grassroots social constructivism (Tacchi 2012). Alongside this ideology were mobile and other digital media developments, enabling horizontal communications between marginalised groups, as opposed to the 'trickle-down' approach associated with development economics. With the advent of democracy and digital media such as cell phones, marginalised communities worldwide have theoretically much more power over their messaging formats (Tacchi 2012).

Moreover, C4SC has emerged as the 'sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that considers the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned' (Servaes 2007). These actions were manifest in media such as journalistic reporting on public deliberations and participatory video (PV) (Askanius 2014), where professional media producers gave non-professional locals access to their video cameras to independently record footage that served as more authentic representations and narratives from within their communities, to contribute meaningfully to a development agenda (Plush 2016). C4SC is constructivist in orientation and embraces the Freirean practice of 'conscientisation', achieved through shared reflection by individuals in groups (Servaes 2007). Group conscientisation is visible after such engagement when there are a coherent set of ideas or themes related to interrogating their lived experiences (Spurgeon et al. 2009) in a deeply reflexive way (Watkins & Russo 2009), including problems and possible solutions which emerges within the group (uq.edu.au/ccsc). From personal accounts of struggle, story circle dialogue ideally transitions to participants seeking systemic descriptions and explanations of their marginalisation (Vivienne 2016; Mnisi 2015).

DST provides 'bottom-up and lateral flows of networked communication…as distinct from the top-down, panoptic control architectures of broadcast media' (Spurgeon et al. 2009). It is, therefore, participatory, inclusive of marginalised voices, and capable of being used to communicate for change (Tacchi & Lennie 2014; Alexandra 2008; Winskell & Enger 2014). Such representations transform 'everyday experiences into shared public culture' (Burgess 2006), which has overtones of how knowledge, through testimony, can contribute to a shared 'knowledge pool' (Fricker 2007).

In her research on the media and communications possibilities for the SFL Advocates, FLP Researcherdescribes how they co-created media messages for the bigger group. The

intention was to explore how principles of ‘development support communication’ might enhance qualitative changes in their home experiences of literacy but also appeal as ‘endogenous messages that resonate with people in similar circumstances’ … to ‘stimulate debate around the issue’ (FLP Researcher2018). FLP Researcher utilises C4SC theory to expand on her findings. One of the media activities undertaken in her research was the production of social marketing video inserts profiling the SFL Advocates by journalism students at the University. Through the interviews and depiction of reading-for-meaning scenes with their children, the SFLAdvocates provided testimonies about their positive experiences. As a co-learning exercise with the students practising professional broadcasting production methods, the videos succeeded in capturing the SFL Project and the vanguards’ successes (FLP Researcher notes). Still, they were not participatory, as the SFLAdvocates did not play an editorial role. Viewed from the politics of representation (Vivienne & Burgess 2013), we could liken the student producers to third-person documentary makers, who mediated the storytelling of the SFLs by reserving editorial control over the production process (involving visual aspects of setting up shots, framing, editing and placing of shots, plus the story construction of the narrative).

Interestingly, the SFLAdvocates did not play a role in making the TV student-produced videos ‘go viral’. Communications for social change theory would suggest that marginalised groups who become empowered through development interventions would seek to share communications, whether through public fora or more private channels (Vivienne 2016; Sosale, 2008)). During this research process, it became evident that some of the participants were not even aware that the videos existed on YouTube. From the perspective of theories of epistemic justice and communication for social change, this presented an opportunity to explore the participants’ access to epistemic resources and their epistemic agency. DST presents, among other opportunities, gaining or re-gaining editorial and digital agency over the representations of their own experiences.

However, as with epistemic justice notions of not always being heard, there are obstacles to communicating for social change. As Vivienne observes, alternative, identity-based fiction and television are still mediated by the normative arbiters of funders and broadcasters. At the same time, non-professional production (video) has existed for many years and can struggle under the ideological, technical and social constraints which largely block it from extending beyond big corporations ‘into the hands of everyday people’ (Vivienne 2016 citing Zimmerman, 1995). There is also a current community engagement scholarship debate about how C4SC should be practised, suggesting that we allow for

distinctions within participation, such as power imbalances perpetuated through charity drives or corporate social responsibility projects (Thomas 2014). This echoes what some community engagement scholars say about the disempowering effect of 'doing' project work *for* communities and not *with* them (Preece 2016).

9. The politics of representations through DST

Key to understanding the interrelatedness of epistemic justice theory, C4SC and DST is to understand issues of identity and representation by the participants. These are concerned with how we make sense of the shared meanings of our culture through language, with resulting representations of our ideas and concepts that contribute to our understanding of our place and identity in this world (Hall, 1997; Howarth, 2016)). It considers the participative role of communities in creating media, with a view to democratising access to information and creating more accurate, egalitarian representations of the world we live in (Servaes & Malikhao 2014; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009). This research explores how the participants see themselves as knowledge agents, identify with their role in promoting change, and use the DST method to represent those ideas of themselves and other matters of importance.

In matters of representation, authenticity is once again a factor. Examining it within DST and epistemic justice frameworks yields what the blurb on Vivienne's book (2016) terms the 'tangled connections between identity, intimacy, activism and social change'. Her book, 'Digital Identity and Everyday Activism: Sharing Private Stories with Networked Publics' contains key ideas on how representations of identity relate to social change, incorporating ideas of intimacy (through personal storytelling) and communicating to a networked public (activism) (Vivienne 2016). Vivienne notes Stuart Hall's assertion that the meaning an audience makes of a specific text is not always something the producer of the text can control. Similarly, with digital storytellers, there is a preference for authenticity, which comes from participants not being professional producers. Their very awkwardness in delivery is more coherent and congruous with an audience's idea of what is true (Vivienne 2016). Thus Vivienne's ideas on 'self-awareness and self-expression when it comes to articulating a coherent identity' are critical to my interpretation of the SFLAdvocates' expressions of self and group identity.

Vivienne draws on Giddens' (1991) work on identity to point out that self-identity forms through the 'biography' an individual 'supplies'. In other words, identities are perceived not through what the person does but how they 'keep a particular narrative going'. It is vital that to maintain the narrative, and therefore the identity, the person must continually

‘integrate events which occur in the external world…into the ongoing ‘story’ about the ‘self’’ (Vivienne 2016:64)

Vivienne’s analysis on the dualities of identity is relevant to understanding the participants’ behaviours and attitudes during the data collection process, as she describes the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ aspects of identity, as per Goffman’s work on identity in the 1950s (Vivienne 2016: 64-65). Duality is at play, where how we behave (perform) differs depending on whether we are with a public audience or a more private, intimate audience. Either way, we strive to perform in a manner that is coherent with how the given audience defines a particular moment and disrupting that coherence is likely to cause embarrassment or ostracisation (Vivienne 2016). She cites Goffman’s example of actors performing on stage and off stage to draw an analogy between ‘structure versus agency’ where while one has a degree of autonomy and control over our performance, it is ‘nevertheless influenced by the social context in which it is delivered’ (Vivienne 2016: 64). These ideas are central to what is described in Chapter 4 as dissonance in the coherence of the participants’ narratives. An attempt is made to make meaning from it by examining what forms the narrative takes place, for when and for whom, and what is significant about it.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The main method of the research design is digital storytelling (DST). As explicated in the Introduction and Chapter 2, DST is a form of participatory communication rooted in a development context. As a process, it enables data collection and analysis through discussions, digital stories and interviews with participant storytellers. As a method, it is itself an object of theoretical focus situated within the Communication for Social Change framework. The impetus for the research idea was borne from my experience facilitating digital storytelling workshops for the University's Community Engagement Office (UCE) since 2017. The workshops were piloted as part of a global partnership involving the Common Good First (CGF) consortium, comprised of universities from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Scotland, Spain and South Africa, and the global network, the Social Innovation Exchange. The objective was to seed a social network and an online repository of digital stories and research on social innovation frameworks and methods for universities and communities worldwide to access and, in doing so, encourage a transformative cross-fertilisation of ideas and resources.

UCE piloted the first phase of workshops with its community engagement partners residing in the local township. The second phase involved participating academics who travelled to the university's campus to test DST's potential for social innovation in their pedagogical specialisations, from science and environmental studies to early childhood education issues. Given my background in television production and broadcasting, and involvement in teaching television journalism, I was approached by UCE to research, design and facilitate the digital storytelling workshops for the pilot project, which took place incrementally over three years. I was inspired by the experience of the global DST project and wanted to get a deeper understanding of DST's capacity for social transformation in our hyper-local context.

This chapter explains my research design in support of using DST to achieve my research goals through a process of qualitative inquiry. It provides a summary of the research objectives that are aligned to the methodology (1.), followed by a description of my understanding of the nature of qualitative inquiry (2.) with regards to the ontological (how we view reality) and epistemological (how our knowledge shapes our beliefs) orientations of my research (3.) The explication of how my research participants and I made sense of reality and

knowledge is framed by comparing the interpretivist and critical realist paradigms. I set out the research methods (4.); describe my role as participant-observer and introduce the participants (5.); present my research strategy as a 'philosophical toolkit' (6.); describe my data collection methods (7.) and my data analysis framework and process, including a description of the tool I designed to guide my findings on epistemic justice (8).

1. Research objectives to accommodate in research design

My research question addressed how instances of epistemic justice might be facilitated through digital storytelling in a hyper-local context. The participants were Black, working-class parents of young children who had previously engaged in a family literacy intervention of reading-for-meaning with their children several years before this research. The intervention was facilitated by the University, the parents' employer. The parents named themselves the 'SFLAdvocates' after their roles in the literacy intervention. They then agreed to participate in DST workshops to reflect on their parenting experiences through the literacy programme.

DST facilitates marginalised communities, whose own stories and experiences have been represented by other dominant narratives, to present storied representations of themselves. In DST, participants write in the first person, narrate their stories, take or choose photographs and videos and select their soundtracks, making the stories authentic representations of themselves and their communities.

My research goals were to establish how DST might facilitate epistemic justice for the SFLAdvocates. To do this, I had to unpack how the parents engaged in DST, using the lenses of Communication for Social Change and Epistemic Justice theory, and critically evaluate whether their practices met the normative criteria of these theories.

2. Qualitative inquiry considerations

The research is located within a qualitative analysis framework focusing on human relations, sociality and rich data quality (Riessman, 2008; Schutt 2018). (Levitt *et al.*, 2013) argue that a singular framework for qualitative analysis can be achieved albeit through several different analytical approaches, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research and intuitive inquiry. As I began my inquiry, I considered all the different approaches to qualitative inquiry due to their commonalities, such as 'open reading,

empathic immersion, differentiating data units, distinguishing implicit meanings in context, identifying emergent structural patterns, modifying findings in view of counter-instances, reflexivity, and the critical evaluation of limitations' (Levitt et al. 2017: 8). The explication of the ontological and epistemological considerations of my research described in the next section grounds the decision for my research strategies. I outline the specific approaches in the section on strategies below.

DST researchers employ various data collection methods and analysis methods, depending on their aims (Gubrium, Aline & Turner, 2011; (Brushwood Rose and Granger, 2012; de Jager et al. 2017). Examples include narrative inquiry, textual analysis, content and thematic analysis. My research approach needed to serve the storied, context-driven, participative and multimedia-laden traits of the DST method (Riessman 2008; Gubrium 2014; Kim 2016; Brushwood Rose et al 2016). Because of the multi-faceted nature of my study, I rigorously reviewed qualitative inquiry literature looking for descriptions of mixed paradigms and strategies to support my research questions, data collection and analysis processes.

I found Cresswell's holistic description of the salient features of qualitative inquiry resonant with my study needs:

> 'Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change' (Cresswell, 2013:44).

Brennan provides a helpful set of comparative features between qualitative and quantitative research, highlighting the subjective, relational and interpretive nature of qualitative research. She highlights, for example, an engaged researcher versus a neutral observer; being subjective in social contexts versus objective in controlled environments; interpreting, critiquing and providing insights instead of predicting findings with a bias (Brennen, 2017). She cites Postman (1988):

> … the purpose of research is "to rediscover the truths of social life; to comment on and criticise the moral behaviour of people; and finally to put forward metaphors, images, and ideas that can help people live with some measure of understanding and dignity" (p. 18) (Brennen 2017:14).

Brennan's use of the word 'criticise' speaks to social, political and economic systemic inequalities and injustices assumed to be present in participants' lives. While the theories of C4SC and epistemic (in)justice incorporate notions of social, economic, class and racial divisions, I was careful to emphasise evaluating and critiquing the data about participants' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in my research, as opposed to criticising them. I believe there is a distinction between the acts of being critical and providing a critique, with the latter informed by insights gleaned through evaluative processes. Therefore, I intended to balance an evaluative-interpretive approach and a critical approach to my inquiry.

Another facet of the qualitative nature of my research revolved around the DST method of participative practice that required cooperation between myself and the participants. Thus, I was a participant-observer, both researcher and facilitator of the workshops. In this sense, I undertook a cooperative inquiry to investigate how a homogenous group of people with similar ways of being purposefully work together to reflect on issues of concern, look at ways to change things and improve their lives (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014)

My research objectives were thus met by a qualitative inquiry that involved working with participants in specific socially and historically constructed realities and using epistemically 'just' methods that allowed all stakeholders to make sense and meaning of their experiences intentionally.

Key features of my qualitative inquiry were thus:

- orientated towards narrativised representations of identity and agency (including what epistemic corrections might look like and social transformation);
- participatory;
- situated in a specific local historically and socially constructed context.

3. Ontological and epistemological paradigm considerations

I investigated several possible paradigms, including critical realism and interpretive approaches, with a social justice framing to allow for insights into representations of power. Much debate exists about how different normative philosophical paradigms influence researchers' approaches to their research questions. For example, the critical realists' ontological stance is what we believe to be real is construed through our experiences of what is observable. However, there is a distinction between our perceptions of reality and what *is* reality. Unobservable phenomena can affect our constructions of reality and if we seek to know more about these phenomena (our epistemology), our ontological framing may change.

Making meaning of social science matters is determined by what we understand to be real, undergirded by our acknowledgement of unobservable and, therefore, unknown forces at play that may alter our beliefs. Interpretivism, conversely, holds that reality is entirely construed through our subjective experiences of life (Archer 1998; Makombe 2017).

In comparing different paradigms that would support my research question and aims, it became increasingly apparent that a single paradigm with its delimitations would impinge on working with certain vital theoretical concepts that form the basis of my research. Given the theory, aims, and method of the research question and method employed, I explored ways of applying both interpretive and critical realist paradigms for my study.

In considering a critical realism approach, the ontological orientation upholds that while participants' consciousness is subjectively formed, it is framed by the objective reality of an unequal socio-economic system. Participants, therefore, cannot make meaning of experiences outside of these socio-economic and political realities. Critical realist research participants are often drawn from social groups marginalised from mainstream society, and researchers thus employ collaborative methods that engage participants in democratic and socially just ways (Makombe, 2017). It was clear that my method of DST possessed characteristics of a critical realism paradigm in that it is widely used in social settings characterised by inequality. DST's participatory and interventionist epistemology is premised on notions of marginalised communities whose realities are shaped by social, political, class and economic subjugation (Beckett 2018). In this scenario, critical realist theory supports the idea that all stakeholders can commit to searching for meaning beyond what is already apparent. For researchers, this is the quest to know more about unknown and unobserved mechanisms that shape participants' observed realities. For participants, the quest to reflect deeply on their experiences might yield new knowledge of unobserved phenomena that shaped their realities.

However, an interpretivist framework also made sense. In this methodological orientation, the knowledge interest is founded on developing a 'deeper understanding of a situation, person, community or other case' (REEU 2001: 17), premised on the Hegelian idea that reality is a construction of the human mind, forged from living in a particular time and social context (Jaccard et al. 2010). From this perspective we make meaning from our sociality; as researchers, we focus our interpretations of individuals' experiences holistically, and make explicit where notions of self, identity and knowledge are formed through societal connections and systems that shape our lives (Allen 2004). Researchers and participants can work together in meaning-making practices in research designed to revolve around human relationships (Jaccard et al. 2010). From this might emerge what Habermas termed a

'practical knowledge interest', wherein participants utilise new knowledge to understand their lived situations better. To this end, we work with smaller groups, conduct in-depth qualitative interviews and create dialogic opportunities for rich textual analysis purposes (REEU 2001).

However, like many social science researchers (Makombe 2017; Cresswell 2013), I found descriptions of mutually exclusive paradigms in methodological literature challenging to align with all the elements of my study. I searched instead for descriptions of blended paradigms that allowed for a more open philosophical approach (Maxwell 2015) and discovered several references that illuminated my paradigm selection process.

For instance, (Maxwell, 2011: 27) claims that '…philosophical positions look less like the traditional view of paradigms, and more like tools in a toolkit' refers to the idea that critical realists should not need to take an opposing stance towards constructivist thought, but can instead apply critical theory to open up debate and deepen researchers' understandings of reality and knowledge, instead of always 'debunking the opposition'. On blending world views, Denzin and Giardina posit: 'Are paradigms commensurable?...the answer is a cautious yes' (2018: 231).

Given its ontological and epistemological origins rooted in the rejection of positivist thinking and its constructivist orientation towards the social, it is clear that the digital storytelling method provides rich, interpretivist analysis. Gubrium & Turner (2011: 474-475) argue that DST's methodological underpinnings stem from the Mass Observation Movement of the 1960s and 1980s. The central idea of this movement was that anyone could be an observer of society, which cumulatively and ideally would lead to a 'mass science of everyday life'. The 'anthropology of ourselves' encourages a sense of understanding ordinary and everyday life as experienced by the ordinary person – an ethos that belongs to the terrain of digital storytelling Gubrium & Turner (2011: 474-475). Several features of the DST process offer interpretivist opportunities: for example, small groups of people can reflect together and try to make meaning of experiences from shared but specific social, cultural, political and economic contexts (Hartley 2008; Lambert 2009; Tacchi 2009); in addition, and key to the social constructionist's idea of how we understand reality, DST participants take ownership of meaning-making, without the imposition of mainstream hegemonic interpretations (Vivienne 2016; Burgess et al. 2009). Then the conversations held in story circles and the production of the actual stories provide rich data for interpretation. Furthermore, if the constructivist view whereby 'knowledge is experience that is acquired through interaction with the world, people and things' (Ackermann 2000), then we could say

that DST participants' knowledge was experience shaped through the sociality of their story circle interactions. And by eliciting, exchanging and discussing stories, ideas and histories, participants construct new knowledge for themselves, which is inseparable from their subjective personal experiences. Moreover, if one views these actions in terms of the 'practical knowledge interest', there is an element of publicness wherein the researcher also both learns from and aids participants to make sense of, and thereby hopefully improve, the material conditions of their lives (Gubrium & Turner 2011). This perspective reveals how DST bridges to activist-orientated social research.

In summary, I wanted to give my participants the tools to tell their stories authentically, create their knowledge experiences through their story circle and critically reflect on their parenting and literacy experiences. My review of the ontological and epistemological aspects of interpretivist and critical realist paradigms revealed participatory elements in both: an interpretivist participatory epistemology, and a critical realism participatory method for which the ideal outcomes are social reconstructions and shifting the balance of power in favour of marginalised communities (Makombe 2017).

4. Research Methods

a). Digital Storytelling as Method

i. Workshop design

A digital story is a three- to five-minute multimedia video created by a non-professional in a workshop setting. Participants are frequently drawn from marginalised communities: they agree to participate in a DST workshop for many possible reasons (Lambert 2010). The storyteller is in charge of choosing or taking photographs and/or video, and scripting and narrating their story and editing it. Storytellers gather in 'story circles' to move through the different steps in creating their stories, from brainstorming topics, presenting their rough drafts and narrations to the circle for feedback and further idea building, and sharing their final versions with the group.

ii. Locating Digital Storytelling as a participatory research method

As described in the first point under epistemological considerations, DST is regarded as a participatory research method with its roots in 'community arts and oral history traditions' (Gubrium & Turner 2011:474-475) and strongly associated with community-building and

alternative literacy practices (Meadows 2003). In my facilitation experience, I have witnessed community participants being motivated to seek computer and multimedia literacy skills; use alternative forms of communicating important issues that affect them individually and as a way to explore social innovation as illustrated by the UCE project.

DST stories serve as counter-narratives, create spaces for knowledge translation, help to preserve cultural heritage and assist in educational, community and professional development initiatives (De Jager et al. 2017). The method increasingly carries theoretical weight as academics grapple with its conceptual and practicable components. In this sense, DST has an interesting duality, being both a focus *of* research, and method *for* research, and I at times grappled with separating and integrating notions of DST to serve the dual purposes of focus and method.

Many social scientists adopt a qualitative analysis framework when using DST, given its characteristics of story-building, use of visual media, and community-building focus. From here, DST is sometimes used as a narrative inquiry and analysis method. When used for analysis, the participants' dialogic or performative creations are regarded as 'sites for identity production' (Hull et al. 2006; Gubrium et al 2014).

As a multimedia format, it might be helpful to compare and contrast it to participatory video, a social science practice employed to communicate for social change. DST and participatory video work with marginalised communities. Both methods centre participants as editorial producers with the power to select content, script and control the narrative, which can aid them in communicating about themselves in the vernacular and produce counter-narratives (Burgess, 2006).

The essential difference stems from their respective ancestries – participatory video is rooted in film and documentary production. It maintains its lineage of professionalism, where professionals assume control of the video production process in edit suites. They ensure the content produced by local communities is packaged using broadcast criteria, such as ensuring frames are not dropped; the final video is in a specific format; or audio is professionally mixed down. For these reasons, this approach ultimately decentres editorial (and therefore narrative) control away from participants, vesting it instead with mainstream outsiders (Flicker et al. 2020; Mistry et al. 2015; Shaw 2017; Mitchell and de Lange 2020).

On the other hand, DST proponents such as the CDS claim that while various technical criteria are still important in the production and evaluation phases of DST (for example, sound balancing and the use of good quality images are suggested), the process removes the need for professional technical production, and instead actively promotes a flat structure to

enable participants' total ownership of their narratives and the final product (de Jager et al. 2017). If participants request help, especially in the technical production phase of editing video and audio, facilitators assist according to the degree of support needed. The technical production aspect is, however, still aligned with the ideals of creating digital literacy among participants, who are encouraged to practise and learn as much as is feasible, by themselves, for themselves (Lambert 2010).

Regardless of their differences, both DST and other visual participatory methods share features in keeping with ideas of epistemic justice. These include giving participants creative free rein but also providing more structure if facilitators sense that certain participants need more guidance right from the start. Importantly for data analysis, participants' own interpretations of the multimedia they produce and that other story circle participants create should be interpreted (Richards 2011).

The notion of DST offering flat meaning-making spaces is not unassailable, however. This is because the process is susceptible to hierarchical 'disruptors', such as participants being influenced by the example videos they are shown or the extent to which the facilitator is professionally skilled and assists participants (Shaw 2015; Flicker et al 2020). In this research project, meaning-making spaces were compromised by the disrupting influence of Covid-19.

Participants who are already familiar with social media technology find that DST production processes enhance the ways in which they engage with different kinds of knowledge and social concerns (Flicker et al. 2020). In participatory video, dialogic opportunities are limited to the filming phase before editing takes place. As I have observed, the self-editing aspect of DST allows participants to 'play' with their narratives by interacting with multimedia formats in their group settings, which encourages dialogic interaction.

The DST process's material outcomes are markedly different from those of participatory video. With DST, it is usual for a batch of personal digital stories to emanate from workshops, which may or may not be uploaded on social media platforms, including institutional research websites or participants' own social media accounts. Their individual stories are meant to convey the owners' authentic selves, often transparently lacking in the flourishes and finishing touches of professional post-production that feature in participatory video projects (Askanius 2014; Schoon 2013; Plush 2016; Roberts & Muniz 2018).

iii. The UCE Digital Storytelling Process: Story Circles

The normative DST method involves three-day workshops, with five to ten participants forming story circles (Lambert 2013). Joe Lambert emphasised the idea of a 'story circle' when he introduced digital storytelling for marginalised communities at the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in the United States in the mid-1990s. Participants sat in a circle, hearkening back to sitting around a fire and telling stories in the oral tradition. Facilitators asked participants to share their story ideas and aspects of its progress, much like people would do if they were all taking turns telling their stories around a fire. As the circular pattern of sharing progressed, the stories grew in circular layers, thick with meaning imbued through the sharing of ideas.

Lambert (2013:55) comments that a story circle "invites us to see how our stories are connected…as you process out loud with others, the heart of the story may come to light, elucidating new layers of meaning". Such a process illustrates Freirean notions of group meaning-making and conscientisation through dialogic sharing, and as the type of exchange necessary to communicate for social change (Servaes 2014). This approach is synonymous with the critical realist paradigm.

UCE workshops applied the CDS process but also utilised a Common Good First DST guidebook that incorporated global DST practices, and from specific knowledge gleaned from conducting local community-based workshops in the city where the University is situated.[6] Like most DST workshops worldwide, the central features are the use of story circles and the 'seven-steps' of digital storytelling, and are the foundations for the participatory framework within which DST is situated.

iv. 'Seven Steps' in action

Lambert's seven steps are widely deployed (or adapted) by community-based digital storytelling workshops around the world (Lambert 2013; Vivienne 2016). In the following paragraphs, the steps are outlined and then discussed in a more holistic and interpretive manner to elucidate links to theoretical frameworks of communication for social change and epistemic justice. The CDS's seven steps (Lambert 2002; 2013; 2018) are as follows:

1. Owning Your Insights (finding and clarifying what the story is about)
2. Owning Your Emotions (identifying emotional responses of storyteller and audience)
3. Finding the Moment (identifying a single moment to illustrate the storyteller's insights)

[6] See appendices of examples of workshop programme as presented to participants by UCE facilitators

4. Seeing Your Story (considering how images convey meaning explicitly or implicitly)
5. Hearing Your Story (considering how voiceover, music, natural sound or effects create meaning)
6. Assembling Your Story (processing feedback into script, recording and editing)
7. Sharing Your Story (formatting and uploading for chosen viewing audiences)

Facilitators are usually alert to the possibility that participants might also want to tell stories about an object, person, event, or practice shared by a group or community (Lambert 2009; 2010). To assist the storyteller in conveying authentic narratives from both individual and group perspectives, facilitators might ask questions such as *'What makes it your version of the story'? 'How does this story show who you are'; 'And how does this story show why you are who you are*?' (Lambert 2010:10). Researchers can utilise these questions to elicit responses from participants for interpretive analysis (research designs are detailed in the section on data analysis).

I have observed that when a participant from a homogenous group wishes to share something, the group engages on points of verification and clarity, such as double-checking they have remembered and conveyed a particular shared event accurately. This serves to triangulate stories, or as Lambert describes in his books, activates the circular pattern of story-building.

In his 2010 'Digital Storytelling Cookbook', Lambert's explanations of the steps could be viewed as communicating for social change, illustrated by he describes 'Owning Your Insights':

> …When we hear stories, we listen for answers that we can relate to our own lives. Honouring self-narratives through creative expression with an audience in mind, even an audience of one, offers the opportunity to not only record and string together your insights but change how others think and feel. The way you tell a story depends on the audience. What you are trying to say, and how you say it, depends on who is listening, what they already know and don't know, and what you want them to know. What may be a story intended solely for you may end up being a story that changes someone else's thoughts or feelings. And conversely, what may be a story for someone else may end up changing the way you think or feel. (Lambert 2010: 10)

Due to the widespread adoption of the CDS's method, the phrasing of the StoryCentre's seven steps has been adapted to include 'Economy' and 'Pacing', which offer participants useful footholds in providing critical feedback about stories their peers are sharing with them out loud. These adapted steps are (Lowenthal 2009):

1. Point (of View) (Owning Your Insights)

2. Dramatic Question (Finding the Moment)
3. Emotional Content (Owning Your Emotions)
4. The Gift of Your Voice (Hearing Your Story)
5. The Power of the Soundtrack (Hearing Your Story)
6. Economy
7. Pacing

My experience facilitating digital storytelling workshops has made me highly familiar with the workshop process described in this section, which is aligned with the digital storytelling guide. The examples below illustrate a 'normal' three-day workshop held at UCE. While my workshops could not take place over three consecutive days, the descriptions capture the process we followed. It is important to state what the typical workshop approach is, as the disruptions caused by Covid restrictions were pertinent to the data analysis and findings. The difference between the typical workshop process and the disrupted one generated some unexpected theorising, which is explained in the chapter on findings.

v. A Typical Workshop Day

Example: Typical Day 1

A DST facilitator might begin the first day's programme with a 'warm-up' exercise during which participants introduce themselves, before sharing brief stories or anecdotes about 'objects of significance' they have been asked to bring with them. It does not matter what they bring as long as they can verbally convey the object's significance. Mothers sometimes show cell phone snaps of their children; students might bring a soft toy from home or a bank card to signify financial independence – the options are unlimited. Participants are brought into a self-representation space by sharing their thoughts and feelings about their chosen objects (Lambert 2013). The facilitator widens this space by encouraging them to ask follow-up questions of their story circle peers about their objects, which can affect broader discussions on lived experiences. I have observed this juncture as a departure point for forging story circle bonds, setting the tone for the ebb and flow of ideas and creativity that undergirds this circular building of stories.

Participants then view examples of personal digital stories appropriate to their context (academics view stories made by other scholars; community members view stories about social innovation; students view other students' productions, and so forth). It is often the first time a participant has seen a personal digital story, and the facilitator will use key prompts to

elicit responses to the viewed story. Prompts include '*how did you feel during the story?'; 'was there a dramatic moment in this story you observed?'; 'do you feel or think differently after having watched this story?*'. In the brief interaction that follows, the facilitator guides participants to think about the purpose, structure and execution of the story. Subjective opinions are welcomed and set the tone for forthcoming constructive feedback sessions.

Once everyone has had a chance to speak (purposeful signalling of equitable participation), the facilitator explains forthcoming processes and activities. Before any story-building activities take place, facilitators reference ethical considerations contained in the guidebook and ask participants to sign consent forms. The forms are pro-participant, allowing them the freedom to choose what happens to their digital story and providing them with a full understanding of what the workshop aims are. Day 1 activities can be summed up by the captions of the top row of descriptors in Diagram 1 (Bonding by forming a story circle; Finding a story idea and Exploring the idea).

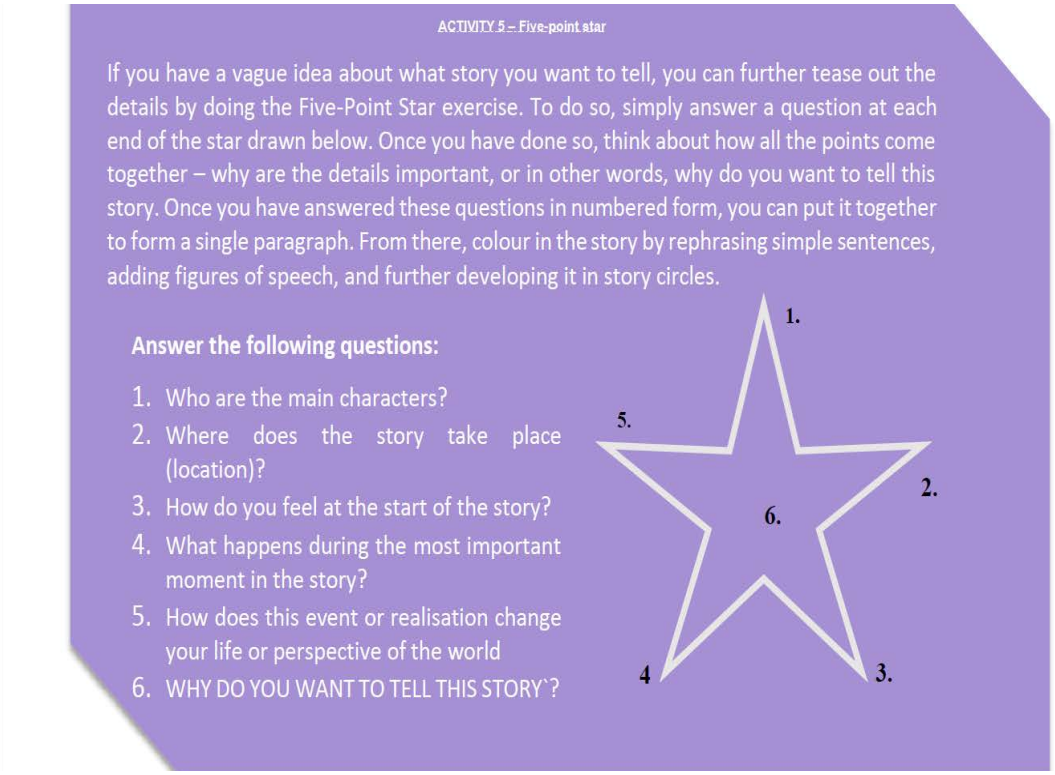
In my experience, some participants are initially hesitant about finding stories, often citing 'there's nothing special about me', which I usually address with narrative exercises designed to shed some light on the storytelling process. These include a free-writing exercise; an interactive exercise in which they list and share a few 'things' they like and dislike about themselves, which they read aloud to the story circle and receive friendly feedback on which 'thing' the others find most interesting; and the Five-Pointed Star exercise (See Diagram 2). I have found the five-pointed star exercise to be particularly useful in helping participants separate ideas into story strands.

Diagram 1. DST process shown to participants

Source: The University's Community Engagement Guidebook for social innovation: digital storytelling, page iv

The five-pointed star exercise ends with the first paragraph of a story being written, which is read aloud to the story circle. At this point, if not mentioned before, the facilitator asks the participants to read from the section in the guidebook about providing feedback. Participants are asked to adhere to these tips that include first offering praise about something they like about what they have just heard a co-participant narrate, and then to offer honest feedback on aspects of clarity, pace, point of view, whether they could detect a dramatic moment, and to identify emotional responses to the story. Participants then begin the process of writing their scripts, incorporating feedback provided, and if there is time on the first day, they share their progress in the circle for further feedback. At the end of the first day, participants either have completed a full script or go home to complete it.

Diagram 2. Five-Pointed Star exercise



Source: The University's Community Engagement Guidebook for social innovation: digital storytelling, page iv

Example: Typical Day 2

The second day of the workshop focuses on preparing and initiating participants in the production phase of their stories, with an emphasis on the utilisation of visuals and audio. The storyboard exercise is useful if there is time, but it is often consumed by participants completing their scripts. Once achieved, they are shared in the story circle, during which the facilitator encourages the group to thoughtfully choose their visuals ('seeing your story').

Participants search their phones and social media channels for photos and video footage, either their own or their friends' or free stock images. The facilitator, along with UCE Innovation Lab assistants, will use an overhead projector to demonstrate the use of basic laptop editing software called *WeVideo*, which UCE has licensed for this purpose. If participants choose to use their mobile phones instead, facilitators work with them to download an appropriate mobile 'app', such as *Vlogit* or *WeVideo*. This section of the day needs some breathing room, as participants have different aptitude levels or knowledge of editing software. Younger participants are often quick to master the techniques, and

facilitators encourage those with skills to help their fellow story circle members. In doing so, participants become ever more aware and possibly invested in the progression of one another's stories, deepening the social connections circulating through the DST process.

The SFL parents had no prior knowledge of video software editing. In the first series of workshops, Storyteller 1 mastered the software easily, although I could not see what he had achieved via Zoom. The third day of the first workshop did not transpire as the participants communicated in the morning that they had to address problems at home.

Example: Typical Day 3

The third day is the last workshop day. Ideally, everyone completes their stories in time for viewing and further feedback sessions with a discussion about sharing and distributing their stories; however, participants often complete their edits in time for a final viewing with no time for discussion. I have observed participants being very engaged while viewing one another's final stories, often sharing the excitement and pride of the person who produced them, which I view as evidence of emotional connections forged through the story circle.

vi. DST disrupted: a digital response to Lockdown under Covid-19

The research design was challenged by Covid-19 restrictions on face-to-face meetings, which prompted the researcher to explore emerging literature on the impact of Covid-19 on social sciences qualitative research approaches. There were reports of researchers suspending projects or turning (with varying degrees of success) to digital methods as traditional qualitative data collection methods were threatened (Ravitch, 2020; Paphitis 2020). Ravitch (2020) helpfully suggests researchers should consider "emergent design" and "researcher and design responsiveness" under Covid-19 conditions and allow participants to lead the research process. I had to navigate disruptions in participants' lives, including home-schooling children, changes in working hours, recurring hospitalisations due to co-morbidities, and time spent caring for sick family members.

The first workshop attempt with three of the four parents (Storyteller 2 was not available at that time) was held in October 2020. The University's policy of working virtually was in place. Thus the researcher used WhatsApp for informal communications and semi-structured interviews with the participants and Zoom with video for the first workshop. I Zoomed from my house with UCE's digital laboratory where the parents and the co-facilitator sat (socially distant, with masks and a metre and a half spacing between them)

with laptops connected to the University's free wifi, Eduroam. At this point, the co-facilitator assisted the parents with the technological aspects of setting up Zoom connections, handed out consent forms, and projected videos for the parents to view.

The data collection was complicated by technical problems which beset the workshop, namely poor sound and speaking delays. Mindful of Ravitch's recommendations (2020) to be more flexible to strengthen the participant base, I recruited a fourth SFL Advocate parent, Storyteller 2, who was previously unavailable. A further change was the move back to face-to-face meetings in early 2021, after a delay whilst seeking approval from the Ethics Committee. I analysed both virtual and face-to-face data, which with all the visual imagery, provides a thicker site for narrative inquiry as what Reissman (in Cresswell 2013: 256) terms the 'context of production'.

b). Interviews

Semi-structured:

I conducted two sets of semi-structured interviews with the SFL parents and one semi-structured interview with the co-facilitator. The purpose of the first interviews with the participants was to introduce them to the notions of the research question and to get a measure of how the participants' situated their identities and experiences with regard to the phenomena of the family literacy experience. I was interested in establishing from the outset the kinds of knowledges and beliefs they held with regards to bonding with their children, the reading-for-meaning process, and the sense of empowerment they reported to FLP Researcher, and what they felt about reflecting on these experiences further with DST.

Due to Covid restrictions on face-to-face meetings and for expedience, I typed out questions to each parent individually on WhatsApp and they responded via voice notes. The questions were designed to engage the SFLs in reflecting on their literacy acquisition experiences with their children.

The second set of semi-structured interviews was completed after the workshop in face-to-face settings and adhered to Covid social distancing protocols. The questions were more in-depth and required the SFLss to reflect on the different aspects of the digital storytelling process. Questions were premised on exploring the SFLs' attitudes and beliefs concerning their DST experience, their sense of identity and agency in contexts of parenting and as workers employed by the University.

Unstructured interview:

Before our semi-structured exit interview commenced, Storyteller 1 offered an unprompted account of why he had been uncontactable and had not completed his story. His

account is characterised by an emotional 'outpouring' of underlying issues that affected his health, which he signalled was an important background for the upcoming semi-structured interview with pre-set questions. Such an interview is on a continuum between unstructured and semi-structured interviews because the data that is spontaneously offered is 'key to understanding the interviewee's answers to pre-structured questions' (Brinkmann, 2018: 1000).

c). Observations

I used observation as a method in my research project to buttress the 'concrete' data I received in the form of interviews and visual texts from the SFLs. Observation has evolved from practices which saw a clear separation between researcher and participant to a more inclusive approach (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2018)). The Frankfurt School thinkers, in particular, pushed for a move away from what they perceived as a scientific gaze at 'subjects' and towards where participants no longer felt they were mere data producers or social science experiments.

The inclusive approach I adopted resonated with how observation is carried out in participatory action research, rooted in the critical realist paradigm. Given the paradigm's orientation to social justice that includes ethical concerns around how researchers relate and work with participants, I analysed these observations using known epistemic justice 'markers' which I utilised in the epistemic justice matrix tool.

Observations included making notes about phenomena that correlated to the phenomenological approach in my interviews, specifically actions, emotions and interactions between participants that were not answers to questions. For instance, to understand performative aspects of their attitudes towards the DST process, I was sensitive to body language and other emotional cues that revealed what I thought might be their true (but unspoken) beliefs and attitudes towards the DST processes. These observations assisted me in interpreting hermeneutical questions I had.

5. Researcher role: participants and researcher as participant-observer: a critical perspective on knowledge production and positionality

I was the primary facilitator and was assisted by UCE's digital storytelling workshop co-facilitator, to provide me with the flexibility to move between observing proceedings and facilitating them. Thus as a participant-observer, I wrote reflexively about the research

methodology and findings, to align the investigation with the subjective quality inherent in such narrative inquiries (Reissman 2008; Kim 2016; Rose 2016). An important aspect of subjectivity is the issue of the researcher's positionality. I am white, female, have an honours degree and extensive experience working in the media industry. Hall (2014: 378-384) suggests all researchers should acknowledge binaries created in 'Euro-Western' research paradigms involving Indigenous people previously colonised[7]. This consideration echoes ideas of epistemic injustice in Chapter 2 about 'imagined communities' and 'communities of resistance', formed through the experiential and epistemic legacies of the social heritage of oppression (McHugh, 2017).

Hall argues it is essential for qualitative researchers, who work with Indigenous, marginalised communities, and whose theoretical and praxis approaches are grounded in western paradigms, to adopt specific, self-reflexive and principled stances (Hall 2014: 378-384). Such principles were originally formulated by Indigenous academics and were captured by several scholars, whose accounts Hall describes. Examples she cites include 'showing respect…present yourself to people face to face…be generous…be cautious' (Hall 2014:378-384). Being clear about who benefits, identifying outcomes and confidentiality agreements are important features of this working relationship.

These notions feature in UCE's digital storytelling facilitations. I was able to draw from my experience researching and constructing ethical approaches that feature in the guidebook. In the chapter on research findings, there is further reference to the idea that Indigenous knowledge lies in 'relationships, not in separate ideas, outcomes or findings' (Hall 2014:383 citing Pawu-Kurlpurlurnu et al. 2008).

Hall (2014:383) furthermore references Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009) who describe the Indigenous ontological approach to knowledge as being malleable, something which cannot be completely understood or possessed; rather it is meant to be revealed and shared, and an Indigenous researcher is 'always the observer' who seeks to reveal knowledge and practices reciprocity (Hall 2014:383-384). It is thus an interpretivist or subjectivist approach to investigating epistemic-related questions and suitable for working with the SFLSFLparents, who embody much of how Hall characterises Indigenous research participants.

This understanding was vital to the entire context and setup of the research. The University is a South African academy with knowledge-learning systems entrenched in

[7] While Hall (2014) refers primarily to Indigenous people in Australia, I inferred a wider application of this description from Hall's article.

classical Euro-Western epistemologies (Mungwini 2018). I did not want to create further instances of epistemic injustice. I also acknowledged that reflexive spaces are opening up at the University created through ongoing research into decolonising curricula intending to bridge hermeneutical knowledge gaps between Black students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and academic staff. This move is in keeping with similar such attempts at other South African Universities (Jansen & Walters 2018). A hermeneutical gap is the space of disconnection between institutional knowledge and knowledge from the margins of society. Academic researchers have higher levels of education, typically associated with access to and participation in a mainstream society characterised by higher standards of living and well-being. In academic research, which requires a meeting of researchers and participants, the hermeneutical knowledge gap automatically assigns greater power to the researcher, which, if not acknowledged by him/her/them, can deepen epistemic injustices.

If academic research intends to discover epistemic truths, then it is both logical and virtuous for researchers to first acknowledge the imbalance of power, and if needs be, create the conditions for those participating to do so in a way that does not perpetuate or worsen the hermeneutic epistemic injustices inherent in an academic environment. As a researcher focusing on epistemic (in)justice, I felt highly conscious of how my ways of knowing might affect the research space in terms of relating to the participants, data collection and analytical interpretations.

The literature on Euro-Western vs Indigenous paradigms thus aided my understanding of theories of epistemic (in)justices in terms of my role as the participant-observer. Given the crux of the research question - how DST might facilitate epistemic justice - as the facilitator, I had to be mindful of how I facilitated the workshops. I acknowledged the differences between myself and the SFLs (I represented mainstream society, educated, white, privileged and institutionalised knowledge). I attempted to implement the suggestions made by Hall regarding my relationship with the SFLs.[8]

The four SFLAdvocate parent-participants from the University were **Storyteller 1, Storyteller 2, Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 4*, all employees of the University from the cleaning, grounds and catering departments. Due to the Covid-19 led interruptions to the workshop flow (face-to-face), it became increasingly important to the researcher for the facilitation process to remain subservient to the needs of the participants. This entailed accommodating disruptions such as postponing workshop meetings and 'catching'

[8] I detail the axiological implications of my facilitation process in section 6 on research strategies.

individuals up who did not arrive at the agreed times. By accommodating the needs of the participants and being part facilitator/participant, and part observer, I executed an approach typical of a qualitative, interpretive study in participant research (Kim 2016; Ravitch 2020; Reissman 2008; Rose 2016).

6. Research strategies: creating a philosophical toolkit

In section 3 of this chapter, I explained my research's ontological and epistemological orientations. Epistemic (in)justice and C4SC theories call for a measure of critical realism and interpretivist reasoning. The following consideration is given to how I approached data collection and analysis within these paradigms.

In the interpretivist tradition, phenomenology became popular as a philosophical 'push-back' against empiricism in the social sciences, built on the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in the twentieth century. Phenomenology's approach is to 'suspend all judgments about what is real – the "natural attitude" – until they are founded on a more certain basis, a process termed 'epoche' (Cresswell 2013: 77-78). Cresswell further describes the features of phenomenology as having an 'intentionality of consciousness', whereby consciousness is directed towards an object, with the result that reality is both subject and object, as they 'appear in consciousness' (Cresswell 2013: 77-78).

As described in Chapter 2, at the very core of the DST method is the idea that content created by the participants is elicited, not solicited, to enable participants to 'own' their insights, ideas, views and representations of themselves and their experiences in the world around them. Data in this form could provide a rich source of analysis for understanding participants' beliefs about themselves, the world around them, and how they operate in the world. Here a phenomenological and narrative interpretive process might be useful as opposed to a critical realist approach in that it 'protects' the data from possible critical realism assumptions superimposed by the researcher.

As a method, phenomenologists collect data by interviewing individuals about their experiences of or with a phenomenon and the analysis involves 'systematic procedures...units of analysis…and detailed descriptions that summarise two elements' (Cresswell 2013:79) of the 'what' and the 'how' of the experience. Researchers must conclude with a description of an 'essence' which represents what and how the individuals' experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Researchers interview individuals deeply, and often there is a group who have engaged with the same phenomenon, allowing the researcher to compile a thick

description of the group consciousness regarding their internal selves and how they see and feel about the outside world they engage in (Cresswell 2013).

The axiological implications of specific DST data collection and analysis processes with the SFL parents meant that as a participant-observer, I was both subjectively working with the parents and actively acknowledging my judgements, biases and preconceived ideas that might colour how I represent the data. This was important as I aimed to provide thick descriptions of their individual *and* collective thoughts, emotions and reflections on their parenting and DST experiences (phenomena). I worked towards creating a space for 'intentionality of consciousness' as they reflected on the 'what' and 'how' of parenting and their experience of DST.

The above approach laid the foundations for how I structured and worded the facilitation process, observed the participants, documented memos and asked interview questions. The suspension of my beliefs and attitudes was premised on my concern that if I analysed these particular data with pre-determined beliefs such as "I know this participant has been marginalised, did not matriculate, and is being exploited as a worker,' I might overlook descriptions by the SFLs that did not reinforce my existing beliefs. I did not want to increase the risk of confirmation bias of my own making.

Thus, in the manner of a qualitative researcher, I was careful to constantly assess how I framed my interactions with my participants. Whilst certain realities for the parents were undoubtedly historically shaped, I did not want to 'put words in their mouths', and I, therefore, preferred a more balanced approach whereby I elicited information from the parents by asking ontologically neutral questions, which made it easier to search for instances of epistemic (in)justices in their responses.[9] By constructing my approach in this manner, I positioned myself in alignment with Fricker's conception of a hearer who credits speakers as knowers, an important condition for epistemic justice (Fricker 2007). Epistemic justice in participatory research requires parity of participation where participants are co-creators and co-investigators, and according to Godrie et al. (2020:3), where participants question scientific assumptions and are aided in being reflexive about their 'epistemic, social and political struggles'. These key features, situated in a critical realist framing, were true to my research design.

Another aspect of my approach regards the testimonial element of the SFLs' accounts through the lens of communicating for social change. C4SC is associated with the Frankfurt

[9] This orientation is not a reference to grounded theory as the research is premised on existing theoretical frameworks

School's social critique of Marxist ideas of capitalism and fascism from which the critical realist paradigm arose, with participative action research (PAR) corollaries (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). Critical realists recognise inequalities as subjective-objective truths and aim to overturn existing social and economic power structures that perpetuate inequalities. To this end, C4SC advocates for participants to co-create and co-represent their data (Makombe 2017; Cresswell).

I was, however, careful about framing my interaction with them in a way that did not communicate an ideological agenda of social transformation. The parents' data needed to be liberated from possible distortions of their true thoughts and feelings about their literacy and DST experiences. I did not want them to feel obliged to prop up agendas held by the University regarding its social transformation initiatives, specifically the SFL family literacy intervention and the DST intervention.

Whilst I facilitated the SFLs' co-production of ideas and stories in line with the C4SC approach, I guarded against facilitating an overly interventionist practice. I explored the data as it revealed itself during the process of DST and did not focus on what the SFLs did (or might not do) with their stories once completed. Thus I aimed to create a space where the SFLs could speak for themselves without fear or favour as they engaged in story-building, idea-sharing, scriptwriting, editing and interviewing. I believed this was my duty to carry out as a participant observer in the context of evaluating DST for its potential for epistemic justice.

In summary, I adopted Maxwell's idea that different philosophies should be used as 'tools in a toolkit'. My 'toolkit' comprised both interpretive and participatory approaches to accommodate the varying ontological and epistemological features of theories of C4SC and Epistemic (In)Justice: while communication for social change is participatory and rooted in critical theory with an interventionist agenda, epistemic justice champions *both* a corrective, interventionist agenda *and* offers interpretive possibilities through elicited, unfiltered *authentic* reflections by participants. These data were analysed using thematic analysis with a combined inductive (phenomenological approach) and deductive (critical realist approach), and narrative analysis. An additional tool I designed was a matrix to guide an attempt to measure instances of epistemic injustice. I provide precise descriptions of the data and how they were interpreted in the section on Data Analysis.

7. Data collection method

The data consisted of components inherent in the DST process, namely structured and semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations of story circle dialogues and interactions, analysis of informal communications around the project with the participants, and the multimedia texts of video, audio and narration, collected during the creation phase, as well as the completed digital stories.

Texts included copies of narrative exercises (for example, a free writing warm-up exercise as a precursor to story idea formation), visuals in the form of photographs or videos owned by the participants, and all the versions of their narrated scripts.

The digital stories and post-workshop interviews constituted the last half of the data under analysis. The collection of diverse data sources served to form a more holistic picture of the work undertaken by the participants. The process unfolded over months, allowing for follow-up questions to the participants as their journey progressed (Cresswell 2013).

8. Data analysis method

Overview: tabulated representation of my research design 'toolkit'

My qualitative inquiry was situated in both an interpretivist and a critical realist paradigm. To locate the data analysis within the philosophical toolkit approach described in section 6, I provide a table, *Figure* A, which presents the units of data and the corresponding analytical foci and paradigms, followed by a matrix, *Figures B and B.1*, for the measurement of epistemic (in)justice which I incorporated into the data analysis. A more detailed explication of both the table and matrix follows the graphics.

Figure A: Data form and complementary analytical approaches

Data form	**Analytical approach**	**Onto/Epistemic/Axiological Approach**
Interviews (semi-structured and unstructured)	Thematic analysis (the 'what' and 'the how')	• Interpretive (Phenomenological) • Critical Realist
Informal communications on	Thematic analysis	• Interpretive (Phenomenological) • Critical Realist

WhatsApp 'Digital Storytellers' group		
Field notes and observations from story circles	Performative/dialogic analysis (how talk is interactively produced and performed as narrative with researcher as visible presence)	• Critical Realist in the sense of Foucault's 'social contract'
Data from digital stories:	Thematic content analysis	• Interpretive (Phenomenological) • Critical Realist

Figure A was inspired by methodologists Rose (2016) and Riessman (2008) in their descriptions of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is an interpretive qualitative research methodology useful to apply to storied forms of data (Riessman 2008), such as those emerging from DST practices (Gubrium & Turner 2011). The narrative turn in the late 1960s came about as researchers increasingly questioned positivist methodologies as they reacted to emerging storytelling trends such as the proliferation of memoirs in literature, identity politics and the focus on personal lives in therapeutic disciplines (Riessman 2008).

Scholars Labov and Waletzky disrupted traditional research methods by introducing small recording devices to expound on new theories of narrative structure, which created possibilities of focussing on language use and the relationship dynamics of the interview (Riessman 2008). Thus, the method of capturing a personal narrative through digital storytelling exists in the wake of this narrative turn, where reflexivity, interpretivism and representation are 'primary features' (Savin-Baden & van Niekerk 2007:460).

Harnessing scholarly notions of epistemic (in)justice in a practical and participatory manner required much thinking, as most literature reflects a mostly philosophical application of the theory (Dübgen, 2016). *Figure B* is a matrix I designed to bridge to measuring epistemic (in)justice in participatory practice. The matrix is repeated: the first *(B)* sets out criteria and markers commonly discussed in the literature for epistemic (in)justice which I translated to elements of DST in the specific local context of my project. The repeated version *(B.1)* draws out elements of C4SC that were theoretically present in DST. The

transposition of the two matrices illustrates how I attempted to reconcile the epistemologies of participatory media and notions of epistemic (in)justice.

Figure B: epistemic (in)justice measurement matrix

Criteria	**Knowledge of literacy practices**	**Access to literacy practices**	**Parity of participation in the both literacy and DST intervention**	**Corrections of 'hidden injuries' through representations**	**Recognition of voice**
Markers					
Epistemic (in)justice markers	Evaluating the gap in knowledge pre and post the literacy experience	Evaluation of exclusionary practice	To what extent do the participants feel able to participate in both interventions	Evaluating descriptions used in DST processes	How issue of credibility is expressed in DST, especially through seven steps
Testimonial /Affirmative markers	Whether credibility is assigned by a knower to the participant through new	A question of access restored	Equal input from participants in story circle	The capacity for the participant, through DST, to make the listener	Measuring participants abilities

	literacy knowledge			aware of the injuries, and subsequent validation.	to participate in Discussions.
Hermeneutical/ Transformative markers	Whether participant can communicate understanding of significance of new knowledge in a social / systemic context	How do the participants make sense of the issue of access, to them individually and to their community as whole?	How participants make meaning of their newfound sense of empowerment as parents and knowers who are now capable of crossing the literacy divide.	How are these identified and described within the story circle, and what form of conscientisation takes place.	How the participants feel transformed through the DST process and become an agentive self.
Analysis of DST component evaluated for EJ	Meaning made via conscientisation process and via digital stories	To be discovered. Shared experiences in story circle and digital stories.	Observations of participants in guided feedback sessions and extent of co-production of stories.	Story circle dialogue and digital stories capacity to communicate corrections.	Linked to parity in story circle and as featured in digital stories.

			Measure of participants ' editorial control.		

The criteria in *Figure B* are widely regarded as key events, practices and ways of knowing and being that contribute to achieving Epistemic Justice. Negative descriptions of these criteria can indicate Epistemic Injustice. Epistemic (In)Justice markers are constitutive of the *nature* of these (in)justices concerning individuals, groups and systemic issues. The intersections of the criteria and markers are made visible using data from the digital storytelling process, which includes pre- and post-workshop interviews, story circle dialogue, narrative storytelling processes and the final digital stories.

*Figure B.1: Intersections of C4SC (in **bold**) and epistemic (in)justice*

Criteria	Knowledge of literacy practices	Access to literacy practices	Parity of participation in the both literacy and DST intervention	Corrections of 'hidden injuries' through representations	Recognition of voice
Markers					
Epistemic (in)justice markers	Evaluating the gap in knowledge pre and post the literacy experience	Evaluation of exclusionary practice	To what extent do the participants feel able to **participate** in both interventions	Evaluating descriptions used in DST processes	***How issue of credibility is expressed*** in DST, especially through seven steps
Testimonial /Affirmative	Whether credibility is assigned by a	A question of	***Equal input*** from participants	The capacity for the participant,	Measuring

markers	knower to the participant through new ***literacy*** knowledge	access restored	in story circle and ***expressed*** as such.	through DST, to ***make the listener aware*** of the injuries, and subsequent validation.	partici pants abilities to participate in ***discus sions.***
Hermene utical/ Transformativ e markers	Whether ***participant can communicate understanding*** of ***significance of new knowledge in a social / systemic context***	How do the participants make sense of the ***issue of access***, to them individuall y and ***to their community*** as whole?	How ***participants make meaning*** of their newfound sense of empowerme nt as parents and knowers who are now capable of crossing the literacy divide.	How are these ***identified and described*** within the story circle, and what form of conscientisatio n takes place.	How the participants feel ***transformed*** through the DST process and become an ***agentive self.***
Analysis of DST component evaluated for EJ	Meaning made via ***conscientisatio n*** process and via digital stories	***Shared experience s*** in story circle and digital stories.	Observat ions of participants in guided feedback sessions and extent of ***co-productio n of stories. Measure of participants' editorial control.***	Story circle ***dialogue*** and digital stories capacity to communicate corrections.	Linked to ***parity*** in story circle and as featured in ***digital stories***.

The highlighted C4SC signifiers are not exhaustive. For instance, the element of content distribution is not included in this table due to the limited scope of the research question. While parity of participation and access to means and modes of communication were provided and assessed, the participants could not focus on sharing, uploading and distributing the final digital stories. The acts of distributing co-produced content into the public domain require action research cycles for the kind of monitoring and evaluation required that is consistent with C4SC notions of introducing marginalised voices into mainstream media narratives (Vivienne 2016).

Data analysed through the 'toolkit'

My process incorporated the qualitative approach to cycling through different stages of making meaning from the data, from reflecting on salient themes to examining them for explicit and implicit meanings and to returning to the data to link to new data for further analysis (Levitt et al. 2017:8).

Semi-structured Interviews: thematic analysis located in interpretive and critical realist paradigms

My purpose of deep interviews with the SFLs was to 'create new objective knowledge through explanatory descriptions of causal interactions to explain phenomena' (Brönnimann 2021:16). I used thematic analysis to first code the interview content from which developed a set of themes.

A phenomenological account:

I analysed these to gain a sense of the 'essence' of the phenomena of how the Instomis related to their DST and literacy experiences, resonant with the 'what' and the 'how' of the phenomenological approach (Cresswell 2013). I kept in mind the description 'intentionality of consciousness' to aid me in interpreting how the SFLs' made meaning of the phenomena in question and to interpret what they believed about their own knowledge/credibility.

Bridging to a critical realist account:

I then analysed these findings more critically, guided by Gubrium and Turner's argument that a phenomenological approach can support social justice goals traditionally viewed from within a critical realist paradigm. They state:

> [Phenomenology] challenges the idea that there is no one singular universal truth. Instead, it seeks to understand how local knowledge relates to the historical and social

> context from which it arises. Thus, multiple purposes may be realized from the digital storytelling process, as it serves up both empirical data for analysis and may be implemented as a vehicle to challenge social injustices in local and international arenas (Gubrium & Turner 2011:475).

With this in mind, I applied the epistemic (in)justice and C4SC criteria and markers to evaluate, contrast and discuss the significance of the findings from the two different paradigms of critical realism and interpretivism.

Unstructured Interview: thematic analysis

I engaged with one participant in an unstructured interview, as the participant offered spontaneous explanations about his experiences with family troubles and mental health challenges. I first analysed this data interpretively because the conversation was characterised by meaning being made 'in the moment' of connection between participant and researcher (Brönnimann 2021:8). His conversation was complex and emotional and situated in historical and socio-economic contexts. As it became clear that the participant's experiences were ongoing and seemingly intractable from his socio-economic reality, I additionally evaluated the data from a critical realist perspective. In doing so, I was able to bridge to the theoretical framing of epistemic injustice.

Informal WhatsApp communique and story circle observations

I reviewed the WhatsApp group data using interpretive and critical realist approaches. For the performative aspects of the participants interacting with one another and with me in story circles, I tested Foucault's idea of 'social control' whereby people conform to behaviours they think are expected of them. I was interested in how an interpretation of this nature compared to the phenomena under study in the interviews and the digital stories.

Data from digital stories

Thematic Content Analysis

I applied thematic content analysis to the digital stories. Thematic analysis is a flexible method for interpreting data because it is not bound to particular philosophical framings of knowledges and beliefs (Delahunt & Maguire 2017). Given my mixed-methods approach and utilisation of two theoretical lenses, thematic analysis was a suitable means of analysing the digital stories alongside the interviews with and observations of the participants' engagements in the story circle process. I followed a step-by-step approach to the analysis,

beginning with a broad coding process involving viewing the stories and documenting themes. I revisited the stories to consider more nuanced expressions of the broad themes by analysing the multimedia components consisting of scripts (draft and final versions), visuals and audio (use of sound including script narrations, music and sound effects). I incorporated the five-pointed star exercise guidelines and the seven steps of the digital storytelling method to achieve a detailed analysis of the topics and themes. These storytelling devices enabled me to systematically and deeply explore the thematic elements of the stories.

In the following chapter, I describe the results of the thematic content analysis and discuss their significance, using interpretivism and critical realist approaches. I enlarge on the idea that for the parents, the politics of being Black, working-class, lower-grade institutional workers became an increasingly inextricable factor in understanding how it informed and coloured their participation process.

To engage more deeply with these contexts, the structured exit-interview questions were designed to elicit content to understand better the social modalities relevant to the research process and outcomes. As explained in more detail in the following chapter on findings, I intended to compare and evaluate what I perceived to be a 'lack' of sufficient participation in the workshops and poorly executed final digital stories against the individual, face-to-face post-workshop exit-interview data. I furthermore took into account other contextual factors, such as the impact of Covid restrictions on the data collection process and the far-reaching effects of Covid on the lives and well-being of the participants.

The methodological framework thus supports the conceptual work required around notions of Epistemic (In)Justice and Communication for Social Change. Both theories are grounded in human accounts of lived experiences in society at large (Fricker 2007; Vivienne 2016), and both require deep, qualitative interpretation in addition to a critical perspective to enable findings on the central research question of how digital storytelling might facilitate epistemic justice in the case of working-class parents who participated in a family literacy programme.

Chapter 4: Findings

Part one

Introduction:

The research findings have been separated into four distinctive parts to accommodate the breadth and depth of the data and to honour its narrativity. Part One is an interpretive account of story circle discussions and the final stories. I attempt to convey the participants' and my expressions of the significance of the SFLSFLproject and DST experiences. I draw on the data to summarise themes that emerged using theories of epistemic (in)justice and C4SC.

Emerging [epistemic justice] themes from story circle activities, digital stories and semi-structured interviews: a phenomenological interpretation

1. Story circle activities: a narrative interpretive account in chronological order

a. Items of Significance: Day 1 Zoom recording October 2020

Scene-setter: Storyteller 1 and Storyteller 3 are present with me at the beginning of the first Zoom workshop. They wear masks per the University's health regulations and sit alongside one another, facing the lab's laptop camera with space between them. As a result, I can see only the inside halves of their faces, with a gap in the middle. This felt strange, as I was used to making complete eye contact with my participants in face-to-face settings (see screengrab Fig.4.1 below).

Figure 1 – screenshot with participants on the left side with minimal eye contact on the first day of the Zoom workshop

We made some slow progress by talking clearly and slowly over the audio static, which was undoubtedly a barrier, and I was concerned that it might constitute a lack of access to participation, one of the epistemic injustice matrix markers. I initiated the first exercise from the guidebook, where participants produced 'items of significance' to share as a conversation starter. These took the form of photographs of the SFLSFLAdvocate group, which they had posted on our WhatsApp group, which I shared using Zoom's 'share screen' function.

The pictures served to kickstart informal discussions about the parents' experience of the literacy intervention. Interestingly, Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 1 emphasised photos of the Advocates posing outside the University's main gates (Fig.2), followed by photos of themselves reading individually to children. Without referring to the SFL programme or making any comments on it, I purposefully bracketed my own knowledge of the programme and asked both Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 1 what these photos meant to them, cognitively and emotionally, starting with the first photo (Fig. 2). I ask Storyteller 3 what the photograph represents and she responds saying it's the SFLAdvocates, and it is special because of that. She introduces me to the parents standing beside her in the red dress.

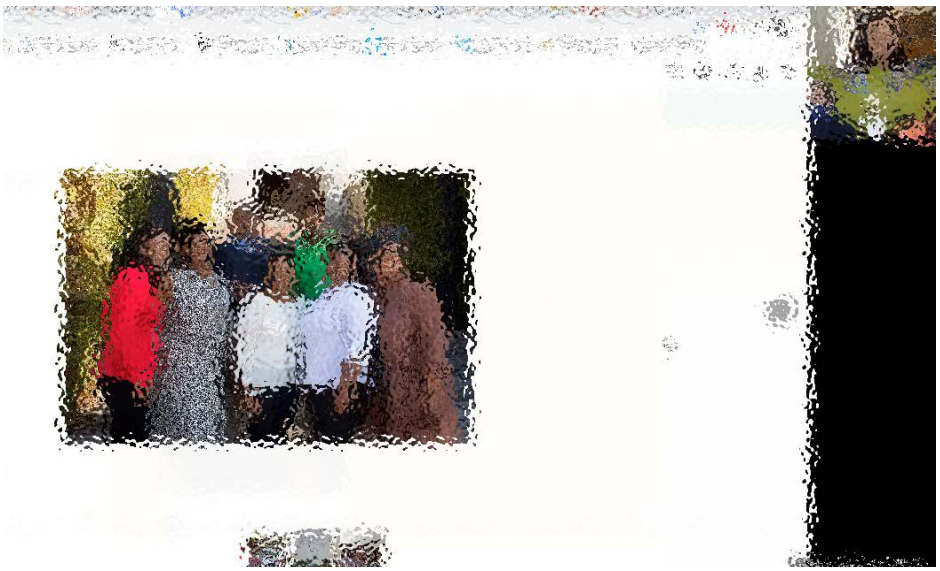


Figure 2 SFLAdvocates pose post-intervention

Jane: When was this photo taken, Storyteller 3?

Storyteller 3: In 2016, Ma'am. (I am immediately aware and uncomfortable that Storyteller 3 referred to me as 'Ma'am' and not 'Jane'. However, I am bracketing the line of questioning and put critical thoughts on hold for later analysis).

Jane: Does it still feel special to you?

Storyteller 3: Yes [chuckles].

Jane: What are your emotions as you look at it?

Storyteller 3: It wasn't easy for the first time because the few, we are the Advocates, only… so we recruited more staff to come and join, starting with this group, then now it's a big group.

Jane: [commenting on the hundred-plus staff who signed up for the course] Did they do the course, do you know, Storyteller 3?

Storyteller 3: No, I don't know.

My phenomenological interpretation of the photo discussion with Storyteller 3 was that, in her eyes, the project was a success and made her feel empowered and proud. By saying 'No, I don't know', Storyteller 3 indicates the extent of her involvement ends after recruiting new parents, as she does not know whether they completed the programme. With this online connection, it is hard to observe how Storyteller 3 feels about this with those few words.

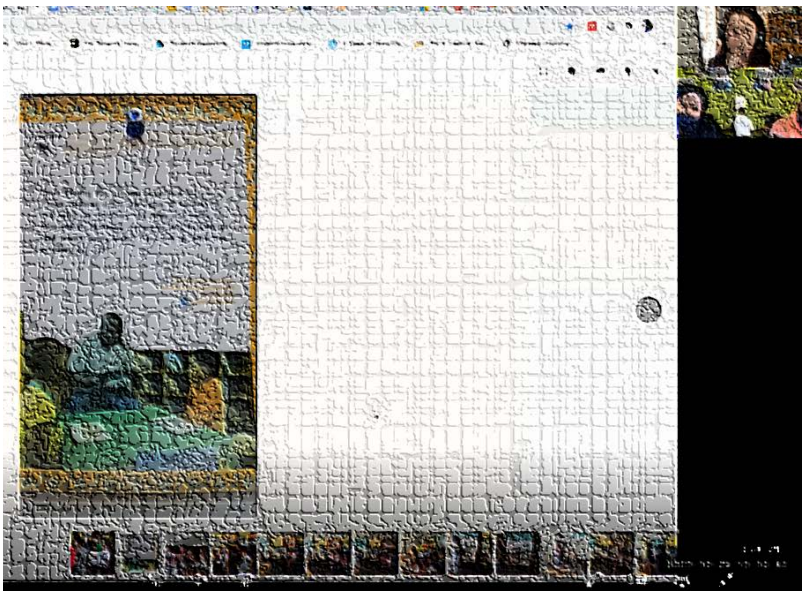


Figure 3:Storyteller 1 poses with his children at an SFLProgram event.

Storyteller 1 describes with pride that he is reading to his children at an SFL event. He needs no prompting to voice his thoughts:

'My grandmother always said, "school does not start at school; it starts at home" and so many parents these days are too happy to send their kids to school so they can have free time. But charity begins at home.'

Storyteller 1 strongly believes that parents should prepare their children mentally and emotionally at home because when at school, there are so many 'problems', and these problems stem from home life. Storyteller 3 affirms: 'that is why they made the workshop with the parents.' There is a powerful sense that Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 1 have been convinced by their experience that parents must take responsibility for their children's future and that they have done so themselves. As I share a picture of Storyteller 3 standing and talking to a small audience at the SFL event, I ask her what she is saying. She tells us that she is informing the parents that they must be a part of their children's education. Storyteller 1 interjects with a reminder of the 'three-legged pot' – parents, teachers and children. Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 1 also shared that the parents they spoke to were interested in what they said and asked the Advocates questions.

A phenomenological interpretation of the above discussion can be thus: Storyteller 1 emphatically conveys self-belief and it feels to me he and Storyteller 3 are not in any new spaces just yet – they are simply re-telling me things they had spoken of before, with other parents and with FLP Researcher, who previously researched the SFL experience. What is

clear to me is that the parents feel motivated to talk about their success in the programme and feel positive about it. The warm-up exercise involving items of significance has revealed that both Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 1 are already narratively 'plugged in' to their SFL experience. However, it is still unclear whether they brought the photos from a deep, authentic space within themselves or felt obliged to show them because they agreed to participate in the DST workshop.

b. List of Likes and Dislikes

At this point in this first workshop, Storyteller 3 left to attend to her young child in the daycare centre. I was unable to clarify why. I asked Storyteller 1 to complete the exercise in the guidebook that asks participants to list three things they like about themselves and three they do not like or fear about themselves. As a participant-observer doing interpretive analysis, it was essential to establish early on the feelings and ideas the participants have about themselves in general, and not regarding their experience of any phenomena. I wanted these self-interpretations as a baseline for any differences that may emerge concerning specific phenomena during the workshops and in the stories.

Storyteller 1 describes himself thus:

Likes:

[There're so many things that I like.]

1. The love that I have for my family.
2. I don't need anyone to tell me I'm a good-hearted person, although I'm soft-hearted.
3. I'm churchgoing.
4. I'm very understanding, and I'm not selfish.
5. I'm also sympathetic.
6. I'm a good public speaker, and I like it.
7. I'm a good motivator – although I don't always get the same reception when it comes to me.

Dislikes:

1. I don't like being taken advantage of because of my kindness.
2. I don't like to be shouted at and don't like to shout.
3. I'm not punctual.
4. Sometimes I'm shy, which means I'm unable to express myself fully, and I don't like that.

5. And not being paid attention to and being ignored - hey, that makes me sick sometimes!

The co-facilitator and I commented on what we thought were the most interesting items on his list: his public speaking and his dislike for being ignored. We asked him what happens if he is ignored while on the radio (Storyteller 1 had a slot on the local radio community station). Storyteller 1 told us that listeners were initially dismissive of him as they did not know him, but because he was always professional, he was gradually accepted. He dedicated the last fifteen minutes of his slot to reading a story and encouraging children to phone in to answer three questions about the story, after which they could win the book as a prize. Storyteller 1 spoke with ease of this experience, conveying confidence in himself and invoking a 'wise uncle' sensibility that can practise patience and impart wisdom. He describes himself in leadership terms here – this is his safe space – he is talking to a community that he can teach. A phenomenological interpretation reveals a man who likes himself, is confident in his storytelling and parenting skills and can communicate for social change using the medium of radio.

The above interpretive description framed within the theory of epistemic (in)justice indicates someone has overcome initial testimonial epistemic injustice but used his knowledge and skills to enable those dismissive listeners to hear him and respect and engage with what he had to share about involving children in storytelling. Storyteller 1 believes that it is true that reading with meaning to children and exposing them to stories and literature has a positive effect on them. By winning his audience over, Storyteller 1 was credited with being a knower of such things, effecting a testimonial epistemic justice correction. The radio station and the audience were part of the same community, and Storyteller 1 negotiated an engagement with people who represented his own lived experience in terms of social, class and educational background.

c. Free-writing exercise

Storyteller 1 engaged with the first free-writing exercise on his SFL experience. It is a helpful extract for comparison with his first story script, discussed in detail afterwards. Out of the group, Storyteller 1 has always seemed the most comfortable telling stories and slipped into descriptive first-person mode without hesitation. His free-writing sample follows the DST 'beginning, middle, and end' structure. Storyteller 1 began with a dramatic moment, which he unfurled throughout the piece:

> "It was 2015 when I received a call that I was needed at UCE, which is [the University's] community engagement. As I was going, my mind was starting to ask questions. Why are they asking to see me? As confused as I was, I thought to myself, fine, go there; you will hear whatever you are called for. The room was full to capacity with my colleagues. I found a nice comfortable spot. Five minutes later, a lady by the name of *FLP Researcher came in and started advising us on why we were called there. She wanted to select six of us as vanguards for the SFL Project. And that was the inception of the SFLparents; after that meeting, we never looked back. We all came up with ideas of how to expand as a group and take it out of campus to other people in places who might need our help. That was when we decided to create a Facebook page and a good working relationship with other preschools.'

The above exercise reveals that Storyteller 1 was initially surprised and possibly hesitant about being 'needed' and asked to meet. The 'rest is history' tone of his writing is characteristic of a surface, semantic version of events and lacks the reflexiveness that going deeper into the DST could elicit. Thus this first exercise gets inexperienced digital storytellers out of the gate and into the field, where they explore alongside one another.

At this point, Storyteller 3, who had resolved the issue at her child's daycare centre (I was unable to establish what the issue was but was encouraged she had returned), reflected that Storyteller 1's story was indicative of his commitment to the SFL Advocates and the community. She admired his 'spirit' for wanting to continue on his family literacy path. Interestingly, Storyteller 3 mentioned she was glad she had provided me with the others' contact numbers because she knew they would do 'as you expect them to'. It indicated Storyteller 3's self-identity as a leader with organisational skills; equally, it revealed to me the hierarchical and unequal nature of the relationship between myself and the participants, and I inferred they regarded me as having more power as a member of the academic system, and possibly a representative of UCE.

Regardless of how they may have felt about the facilitation dynamic, Storyteller 1 and Storyteller 3 made sense of their emotional connection to the story (happy and proud). Storyteller 3 said the writing exercise had helped her reflect on how she can now see she needs to filter her thoughts before committing them to paper. She stated she would need to apply this to isiXhosa as well because it is difficult to write as some words 'need to be translated'. I thought this was a significant point about the difficulties languages present in communications by marginalised participants into mainstream 'knowledge pools' or narratives.

One of the difficulties I experienced during the first Zoom workshop was that Storyteller 3 was stressed emotionally. Since she was partially obscured in the Zoom frame, it

was harder for me to make eye contact with her, a connecting feature of story circles. I sensed that if I was in the same room as Storyteller 3, I could aim to put her at ease through an embodied and empathetic connection. Possibly due to this technical barrier, Storyteller 3's free-writing contribution at the first hearing appeared misguided as it was off the given topic of the SFLexperience.

Storyteller 3 wrote and narrated:

> I am thinking about a lot of things. My daughter is in the workshop [Storyteller 3 had to bring her daughter with her], and I have a lot on my mind. I felt I am tired, ne. I am tired today because there is a lot that's coming. And when I go home, my children will need attention, and I will try to find a daycare centre today for my child; I also have a fever and headache at the same time, but because I promised Jane I had to be here at the workshop today. Also, at the daycare centre of my child, they told us we must go and give them the birth certificate of my child, but they did not tell us early, so I must rush back to the location and come back to the University and bring it back to daycare, so I'm a little bit miserable. Otherwise, now I'm settled. And also, at the workshop, I thought we were going at 3:30 and didn't know we were going at 4:30, but I think it is fate, so I have to go at 3:15 and collect my child.

When I re-read her script, I found it interesting that it reveals her structural disadvantages: she felt obliged to attend despite not feeling well; needing to make two costly trips to town on public transport because her child's daycare centre had provided her with timely instructions on the Birth Certificate; realising she had not been clear about the time needed for the workshop. She paints a picture of herself as someone who is not completely controlling her fate. It would seem as though Storyteller 3 views this as an indication of immaturity in writing as she further reflects:

> **Storyteller 3:** 'Because in my story, I just write what is in my mind, but it's so important, I have to think and also I have to improve on my writing skills. So that also the other person can read your thoughts with understanding.'

In the extract above, it is clear Storyteller 3 would like to self-correct. I, however, experienced some unease about what I perceived might be Storyteller 3's understanding of the purpose of the workshop. I asked myself: '*Why does Storyteller 3 think it is important to attend and not let me down?'* I was concerned that her anxiety about her performance (in writing) might prevent her from engaging authentically with the DST method, which was already compromised by the rough, pixelated Zoom connection. But when I listened and re-read the transcript of Storyteller 3's narration, I reframed the data as a clue to the personal-political dynamic that would become increasingly relevant to my research.

Upon hearing Storyteller 3's narration, I responded that I was sorry to hear she was feeling ill and under pressure. I then asked Storyteller 1 for his feedback on Storyteller 3's story. He applauded Storyteller 3's candidness about the state of her mind and body, and enlarged on her point about parenting stress, saying it could be 'overwhelming' at times. Storyteller 1 conveyed empathy towards his fellow SFL Advocate. Notwithstanding my own sense of disconnect with my participants due to digital disruptions, I interpreted the free-writing exercise to reveal a pre-established bond between Storyteller 1 and Storyteller 3.

d. The Five-Star Exercise

The next step in the DST process was to put their ideas to work using the 5-pointed star narrative device. Storyteller 3 had to leave the workshop to pick her child up from school, but Storyteller 1 continued to work through the exercise and then shared his six key points[10]:

As set out in diagram 2 Storyteller 1 could fairly easily attribute ideas from his free-writing to the six points. I had mentioned to him before he began that the last point (6) was critical and 'goes to the heart' of the story's purpose. When I asked Storyteller 1 to verbally elaborate on how it was 'interesting and exciting at the same time', he did not add anything beyond a semantic re-purposing of the words. I wanted to communicate the device's purpose in support of the social change aims of digital storytelling. The following extract conveys the difficulty I had in providing a critical overview of the workings of narrative structure to support ideas of communicating for social change:

Jane: My question to you, Storyteller 1, is about number six: this is where story circle ideas help because I'll say to you, for example, who will find it interesting, and why is it important that they find it interesting? So perhaps that's something you could keep in mind as you write the story? So, why do I want to tell the story and for whom…you can cater to that question throughout your story. If you're talking to other parents and you want your story to reach those parents, it will probably help to *speak* to those parents, to keep in mind that they are your viewers throughout your story. And sometimes, you can keep them interested by posing more dramatic questions that speak to them directly, for example, anecdotes or things that happened that they would find relatable. So, from beginning to end, the person you are

[10] (1: Who are your characters? 2: Where does the story take place? 3: How do you feel at the start of the story? 4: Dramatic moment 5: How do you feel changed by this event? 6: Why do you want to tell this story?)

targeting is wrapped up in this story because it's something they can relate to. And that's your challenge: to find that thing and then work out how to use detail to engage your viewer.

Storyteller 1: Okay.

Storyteller 1's monosyllabic response was typical of a participant at this juncture of the workshop, where deeper explanations of storytelling devices are offered. I could have probed whether he 'understood' my explanation or had other thoughts to add to it, but I also wanted to see how Storyteller 1 might engage with that information in his own time and space. I did not want to increase the possibility at that moment that he might view me as a gatekeeper of any nascent ideas he had. Concerning how this scenario could be interpreted in terms of epistemic (in)justice, there were two possibilities: the first was that my elaborations about the purpose of point number six might have effectively silenced Storyteller 1; to remedy that epistemic injustice, I could have engaged him further on his ideas to return agency to him as a form of testimonial epistemic justice. The second possibility was that I had not silenced Storyteller 1, and he had opinions or ideas about the information he wished to keep to himself at that moment. I had only seconds to select which possibility was the least harmful.

As an epistemic (in)justice-conscious person who happened to be the hearer at that moment, I faced a conundrum in that I knew either scenario might advance epistemic injustice. Had I silenced Storyteller 1, I would have been duty-bound to correct my actions. If, however, I acted on my belief that Storyteller 1 preferred to keep his thoughts to himself (indicating to Storyteller 1 I recognised his agency), and I chose to wait to see how he might utilise them later in the workshop, I might still be committing an epistemic injustice by not offering him further access to academic knowledge. I decided to respect that Storyteller 1 might be keeping his own counsel at that time, as I did not wish for him to perceive me as a gatekeeper of his ideas about communicating with parents from his community. By discussing the narrative framed by C4SD-characterised ideas together, the participants could create the necessary language resources to address their challenges at work using the platform of DST. They might be able to make intelligible representations to the University through shared ideas and insights that constitute new epistemic resources that act to close the hermeneutical gap between workers and management.

While it was difficult to establish a rapport with the two participants in the first Zoom workshop, there was evidence that the warm-up exercises reactivated the connection between Storyteller 1 and Storyteller 3 regarding their SFLAdvocate experiences and ignited ideas of

storytelling. Due to the erratic attendance and my lack of confidence in the efficacy of the digital (online, Zoom-based) workshop format, I decided to postpone the workshop to a time when we could all meet face-to-face. The participants agreed, and we began the workshop afresh in February 2021 at UCE's media laboratory. The following accounts of the DST method pertain to this second workshop. Another benefit of re-starting the process was that a fourth SFLAdvocate, Storyteller 2, was free to join the workshop, which provided a richer data collection opportunity.

Re-establishing story circle methods: Face-to-Face February 2021

The first step was discussing the research goals with the participants and how I hoped they would assist by reflecting on their experiences through the DST process. I explained that I was particularly interested in concepts of knowledge, specifically, how they regard themselves as knowers and how they listen to others and understand what they say. In a later part of the discussion, I refer to this part of the DST story circle process as a form of 'conscientisation', Paulo Freire's original term for exchanging individual ideas that lead to new group understandings. Conscientisation has its roots in critical realism as, in theory, it contextualises socio-economic, political and oppressive systems inhabited by marginalised groups (Plush 2016; Snooks 2004). Before addressing evidence of conscientisation, I wanted to gain an understanding of the elicited, experiential interpretations of the participants themselves that are central to phenomenological meaning-making. Applying an interpretive phenomenological lens to the observations facilitated my descriptions of the participants' subjectively reported experiences, which became the participants' social construction of the reality (their truth) of the phenomenon of the family literacy intervention. I guarded against inserting preconceived ideas of my own; instead, I asked follow-up questions prompting the participants to, for example, reflect more deeply on why they made certain statements or how they felt about situations they described.

e. Things participants like and dislike about their SFL Advocate parenting experience

In my experience, I have found that the 'likes and dislikes' activity provides participants with the first opportunity to develop a more nuanced understanding of their own identities and how they represent themselves to others. Being encouraged to provide honest and authentic ideas of themselves and the subsequent discussions at a group level provided clues to the internal landscape of attitudes and belief systems held by the participants concerning themselves and society at large. I often sense that when the participants silently

compile their lists, they are weighing up and filtering ideas about themselves that they think will resonate with the group but also serve as authentic and original truths particular to their personal, individual identities. After ten minutes of list-writing, the participants read aloud the descriptions that represented what they liked or feared about themselves in the context of being SFL Advocates. I asked them to respond interactively by subjectively commenting on the most interesting descriptions. I shared that the reason for this approach was that such feedback assists storytellers in deciding what parts of their stories to highlight, as it is often the case that listeners offer surprising insights and, therefore, clues about what an audience finds interesting and is curious about. As the feedback commenced, I noticed the participants tended to agree or enlarge on the likes and dislikes shared aloud in a way that indicated shared experiences and interpretations thereof. They discussed issues such as being open-minded, putting children first and being fully responsible parents. The result was one coherent narrative constructed through the story circle, where individual contributions added details and anecdotes that supported the main points raised.[11]

A summary of the items is listed for ease of reference, followed by my interpretive analysis:

Storyteller 1:

- Likes keywords: ‘always willing’; ‘good listener’; ‘respectful’; ‘go-getter’.
- Elicited feedback keywords: ‘he loves doing things, and he shares it with us and his family’; ‘no one is right and no one is wrong’; ‘we respect each other – learnt this in our capacity-building SFL programme workshop’; ‘feel comfortable when you are being respected’; ‘In the beginning we did not know each other but now we can share if our children are not doing well at school and we are becoming a family now’.

Storyteller 3:

- Likes keywords: ‘Sharing ideas with other parents’; ‘capacity-building’; ‘listening to others’; ‘sharing different cultures and backgrounds’; ‘sharing stories with parents and children’; ‘sharing progress in class’.
- Elicited feedback keywords: ‘Storyteller 3’s an asset, she always goes the extra mile’; ‘We are a team’.

Storyteller 2:

[11] Storyteller 4 was not present at this point in the workshop.

- Likes keywords: ‘Enthusiasm’; ‘meeting parents through children’; ‘knowing myself’; ‘I’ve learnt and gained’; ‘honesty to myself’.
- Elicited feedback keywords: ‘She treated us equally’; ‘she’s my sister’; ‘values everyone’; ‘love of kids’.

During her turn, Storyteller 2 acknowledged the circle’s feedback by emphasising that the community’s children were always welcome in her house. She had noticed increasing confidence levels as they read together over time. She shared an anecdote about a child who was ‘so shy’ but ‘you could see that she was enjoying it’, and reflected that trying to read ‘could be scary’ initially, but the programme helped build confidence. Storyteller 1 picked up this thread and commented that it helped his children overcome boredom by inviting their friends to the reading activities.

Storyteller 1:

- ‘Dislikes and fears’ keywords: ‘My opinion being disrespected’; ‘not being given a chance to prove my worth’; ‘lack of unity with parents’; ‘parents not taking responsibility’; ‘over-commit myself’.

Storyteller 1 illustrated how parents should take responsibility with this comment:

> ‘You will find sometimes they will come back from school, take off clothes, eat, then run away to play. No time for homework…And you will find that’s not the kids’ responsibility, that’s the parents’ responsibility [participants voice approval]. They must ask, is there homework?... And then you can have a good working relationship with the child’s teacher.’

Responding to Storyteller 1’s comment above, I remarked that I had noticed that there is research indicating that many poor, Black South African parents do not have the confidence to engage with their children’s teachers. I described the study conducted by Nelson Mandela University researchers on the associated problem of parents not providing a conducive space for their children to do homework due to difficult home circumstances such as one-parent households, alcohol and drug abuse and so forth. Storyteller 3 illuminated this finding by recounting an incident involving a communication problem between parents and a teacher at her child’s school. She shared that her child had confided in her that she was scared of one of the class teachers because the teacher was harsh towards the children. Storyteller 3 used her agency to approach the teacher directly to ask why she chose to shout at her child, who is ‘soft’. The teacher replied that she could not be soft on Storyteller 3’s children when

most children needed stricter handling. Storyteller 3 shared this knowledge with other parents at a meeting which sparked a conversation about the difficulties they experienced in communicating with the teacher. They praised her for her courage to speak out, 'because we are quiet, but our children are suffering'.

Another point of discussion that arose from the list of dislikes related to a particular event where journalism students from the University were involved in filming the stories of the SFL Advocates. This was done at the behest of the programme's coordinator. Editorial control was maintained throughout the production process by the students. While the parents felt positive about participating for purposes of marketing their efforts, Storyteller 3 reflected that she found the students' need to film after hours burdensome. The participants discussed how tired they usually were after work but still had to do homework with their children and other household activities. They felt a sense of having to acquiesce to the students' scheduling needs. Storyteller 3 commented that she does not like being disorganised, and Storyteller 1 and Storyteller 2 praised her for being flexible and 'saying yes even when she wants to say no'. Succeeding this brief discussion came Storyteller 2's statement that the SFL Programme had '…brought more focus….I'm open-minded and do not look down on anyone's opinion.' I responded by asking whether they agreed that in communicating to other parents how they came to respect their opinions, they found it could be a gateway to making the programme successful. They agreed it did.

f. Reactions to example videos

Two videos by adult UCE DST workshop participants were shown to the SFL Advocate participants. The first was chosen for its resonance with the participants' socio-economic background. It was about an unemployed woman's aim to create social change by establishing a community kitchen in the township during Covid-19. The second video was chosen for its topic on the importance of parenting and preserving a culture of storytelling, which the storyteller contextualised within the seven elements. It was narrated in English and Sepedi by the storyteller, a Black university academic staff member. I aimed to explore the participants' phenomenological responses and thus bracketed my own ideas of socio-economic differences or tensions that might influence their responses.

In her story, the woman harks back to her memories of her grandmother and their close-knit family in the valleys and mountains of Limpopo. She situates her younger self in a rich generational culture of oral storytelling culture and laments what she perceives to be the loss of this tradition in her current fast-paced, modern life. A dramatic moment comes when

she realises she can revive and sustain some of her beloved culture by re-telling these stories to her young son. She shows us photos of Limpopo, where her family lived, and contrasts them with photos of her in an office in business attire (before she became an academic). She then cuts to cell phone video footage of her toddler son laughing and playing, after which he listens intently as his mother patiently teaches him one of the poems, which he repeats back to her, line by line. They are both very joyful.

The participants appeared to have an emotional connection to the story. Storyteller 1 was the first to respond:

> **Storyteller 1**: I liked it. Showing something there, like how did she come about with this storytelling? …chanting the names of her forefathers, and now she's passing it on to her son, which we in future must all do. That's how I see it. At the end of the day, chanting all those forefathers'.
> **Jane**: Do you think she would do that if not for her son?
> **Storyteller 1**: Exactly. I think that's where it comes from. Storytelling, I'd say, is in our blood. Because now and then, especially at sunset, around the fire, the village elder would call everyone and tell them stories, and that's where we get the story and tell it [as our] stories, through the bloodline.

I asked if they thought the digital storyteller was lamenting the loss of the storytelling tradition. Interestingly, the participants did not think she was. They suggested instead that the medium (DST) was useful - indeed, beneficial - for conveying the story. The extract below illustrates their collective ideas on this theme:

> **Storyteller 1**: she shows pictures of the mountains and valleys in Limpopo so that you can have a clear picture of what it's about. Way back, there was nothing like that. You'd gather around the fire and the elder will tell you the story and if you can't imagine…you see…so now she makes it easy with the digital [story].
> **Storyteller 2**: if you don't show them the pictures, the children will just ask and dig and ask us more questions, and say, "can you just tell us", but with *this* they can see, it's working for them.
> **Jane:** do you think it's good for kids to see as opposed to visualise [in their minds?]
> **Storyteller 2:** it's like when you are reading a playbook to a child. They won't understand it. But if you've got pictures, they're happy. It's more interesting for them.

I inferred at this point that the participants' views on the usefulness of pictures in books were derived from their own experiences of reading-for-meaning with their young children using SFL Programme picture books. It indicated to me that they had confidence and knowledge of their own involvement in improving their children's literacy efforts.

g. Draft scripts

In the DST guidebook and other literature, stories are categorised into 'types'. For example, 'people', 'experience', 'place', 'time', 'journey' and 'memorial' stories. Storyteller 1's first narration attempt indicates an 'experience' story highlighting achievement, overcoming a challenge and a moment 'when you understood your power to make a change'. But it is also a 'people' story about his relationship with his children and taking action with a group of people in his community, and a 'journey' story marked by a start, middle and end (UCE guidebook 2018). Storyteller 1 wrote descriptively: his point of view and the 'power' of his voice are very clear and robust. He speaks and writes for the heart, and the emotional register of his script is one of pride and sentiment. His words flow easily along a timeline, and midway his story is punctuated with an anecdote, his dramatic moment. Overall his narrative describes someone who has experienced epistemic testimonial justice. By beginning with enthusiastically embracing the intervention, as he and his children were unused to reading for meaning, he proceeds to remark that his children had been distracted and very energetic, which could have become a barrier to him. However, he decided that he would dedicate his time to, '…assisting them to read by themselves. We have been doing that for the past two years and they seem to enjoy it.'

> **Storyteller 1:** "…As the time goes by, when I'm busy with stuff or social-related stuff, I'll ask them to read on their own, and they will sometimes invite their friends and peers over, and they will read to themselves, and whenever I have time, I would come and assist them and read to them. And I have also realised that over the past few years that I've been helping them with reading they managed to read on their own without any help."

Storyteller 1's dramatic moment perfectly illustrates his feelings and thoughts as a parent who has enabled his child to grow in confidence:

> "I remember very well that one day, they were playing with their friends. And I realised that in this game that they were playing, Khanya was the teacher. And some of her friends were the pupils or students or so, and she was holding a book and leaning by the wall, which was purportedly a backboard with a stick in a hand. I couldn't help, but secretly, I did laugh! Because I could see that through the SFLSFLprogramme, and the reading, she has gained confidence now."

Through remembering and reflecting on this particular scene, Storyteller 1 has used DST to narrativise his feelings about his children's successes; it is clear Storyteller 1 regards the intervention as beneficial to both children and parents. One of the most visibly

empowering elements occurs at the beginning of his story as he describes how he engineered a successful reading and bonding experience with his two children. He engaged them in a literacy practice, learnt new knowledge about the process, and his children listened to him. They listened to him read, but they also listened to him being a parent in other ways, such as asking them to read independently and checking up on their homework. He felt that his children respected his opinions, a significant factor on his list of 'likes' in the workshop's warm-up exercise on Day 1.

Storyteller 1 interprets this aspect of the intervention as a correction of a past injustice in which he was not provided with the same literacy opportunities at a younger age. His descriptions of being heard vis-a-vis parenting his children this way are a form of testimonial epistemic justice. However, ironically, below Storyteller 1's newfound claim of 'credible knower' (Fricker 2008) in the eyes of his children and other community parents lies a deeper testimonial epistemic injustice manifesting 'backstage'. I spotlight this epistemic injustice problem later in Part 1 (3) in my analysis of Storyteller 1's exit interview.

Storyteller 2's first script conveyed her sense of self-empowerment by representing herself as someone (a mother) as capable of being part of a solution to a problem that is larger than herself and her daughter. She narrated her script in isiXhosa and asked Storyteller 1 to translate it into English. It interested me that although Storyteller 1 willingly acceded to her request, he suggested that she could quite easily translate it herself. Storyteller 2 disagreed, saying it would be 'hard for me' and proceeded to read sentence by sentence deliberately, slowly and clearly, with Storyteller 1 translating.

> **Storyteller 2 via Storyteller 1's English translation:**
> "Title: There comes a brighter future for you, the children of the nation.
> Once upon a time…at work, there comes in a certain lady from the community engagement department. All the parents are being called to who wants to join this program of SFL and are welcome to go to the department. Whoever wants to join this SFL parents group is free to do so. I remember that day very well. I was working, self-serving students at a lunchtime. I was very much interested. And I suddenly saw my children's brighter future and my community children's brighter future – bright! Then I joined and started bringing in some books for the children. The urge to read grew day in, and day out. I also invited the community children and it was very fun. Even now the children keep on asking me, 'When are you going to bring back the books again?' And the interest grew drastically. And they also wanted to keep on reading. And they became proud of themselves for being able to read and narrate the story. And really, their future is bright."

I asked Storyteller 1, Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 3 'M' to contribute feedback using the seven steps. Storyteller 1 highlighted Storyteller 2's selflessness in describing her story's

point of view, dramatic moment and emotional content, which undergirds what Storyteller 1 interprets as the purpose of the story:

> **Storyteller 1**: … I did this, not just for me, for my children. Now as a narrator, she didn't think of her [self]. She also thought of her children back at home. And the dramatic [moment], I didn't see (laughs apologetically) and then the emotional content, was that she was excited that there was a beacon of hope for the children.

Storyteller 1 recognises Storyteller 2's signalling of a larger problem and thinks she is being virtuous in her response to it. He thus indicates his own acknowledgement of the structural problems affecting their communities. He illustrates this by reinforcing Storyteller 2's point about children asking her for books and by using the word 'void' to describe the lack of access to libraries at that time due to Covid restrictions. He furthermore exhibits insight into the intervention process by commenting on how the community looks to Storyteller 2 to access books for them to read, but that she would have to start afresh as they were no longer used to reading by themselves. I suggested to Storyteller 2 that this was potentially an aspect of her story that she could expand upon as it seemed significant. I then asked the group to discuss the significance of the book void. Storyteller 3 addressed this through her lens of listening to Storyteller 2's story for power of voice:

> **Storyteller 3:** the voice of the narrator brings hope to the nation. It brings hope to the community and the children as a whole, as she said, as a means a bright future to the children…So, it's not only for her children, it brings hope to the community as a whole. And the country as a whole, because it's not started by her children only. If the community gain something through uStoryteller 2, it means the country gains something. And also the power of the voice, she's so excited and happy about what she's doing.

I interpreted Storyteller 3's comment to mean she had found a way to insert her feedback at an appropriate point in the discussion. Whilst not responding directly to my question about the significance of the void, for example by saying: 'it is significant because it means that we no longer have access to books which is harmful to our children', Storyteller 3's insight addressed what access to books did bring – hope to a nation of children. A latent reading of her insight could be that by providing an analysis of Storyteller 2's 'power of voice', she believes Storyteller 2 embodies hope in a way that whole communities can learn from. If Storyteller 2 had stepped into the void before, perhaps it could be done again with the strength of others.

In terms of how the data addresses questions of epistemic (in)justice, a lack of access to books is a marker for epistemic injustice, and the group's ability (at least semantically) to discuss its significance are markers of parity of participation in the story circle. The story

circle at this point is 'reflection in action'. In the story she narrated, Storyteller 3 chose to revisit her first free-writing topic about the first day of the DST workshop with Storyteller 1 and me in attendance on Zoom. By introducing the concept of needing more balance in her life, Storyteller 3 is being introspective:

> [prefaced by a similar description of needing to find alternative transport for her child on the first day of daycare and being late for the workshop]… "By changing of time in the case and in the transport of my child, it makes my life difficult. I'm trying to balance in life. I feel so exhausted. So I realized that I have to balance life. And now my priorities. And not everything in life is important. I have to balance life equally. I have to be here and the other side – I have to take care of my child. That's the end of my story. Okay".

Storyteller 1 listed 'worried', 'stressed', 'sad' and 'exhausted' as points of emotional connection in Storyteller 3's story, and Storyteller 2 agreed, adding, 'the way she's expressing personally, the power of sound, I'd say it's a sad story. It's touching.' Storyteller 3 (M) contributed a question about a dramatic moment by asking Storyteller 3 what motivating factor enabled her to move past her stress to the point of coming to the workshop. Storyteller 3 did not answer this, but Storyteller 1 proffered that Storyteller 3's stress might be limited to that particular day because it was a 'day of firsts' (daycare for her child and the workshop for Storyteller 3). Storyteller 3 agreed with Storyteller 1 on this point and reiterated that she did not want to disappoint me, the facilitator. Storyteller 1 responded to Storyteller 3's statement by invoking our memories of the list of 'likes' where Storyteller 3 named herself a 'teambuilder.' I found it interesting that Storyteller 1's interpretation was characterised by empathy for and championing Storyteller 3. Whether through the shared reading intervention over which they bonded (empathy is cited as a by-product of a reading culture), or through their common experiences as lower grade University workers, the orientation towards presenting a united front was visible.

I returned to Storyteller 3's point about balance as I felt it was an authentic elicitation brought about through the 'reflection in action' process between the free-writing version and the story draft discussed above. I asked Storyteller 3 whether she could tell a 'story about balance and how frustrating and challenging it can be'. I further suggested incorporating aspects of being an SFL parent who has gained 'capacity' skills through the workshops and specifically what it means to her as a working parent. Storyteller 3 immediately responded, saying:

> "To me, it means you have to be strong every day. Every day you must know your goals, and you also must achieve your goals. So that you can achieve everything in life."

I interpreted Storyteller 3's comment as a clear marker of a sense of achievement by learning to be strong, and setting goals. The intervention provided her with a blueprint for achieving success in other areas of her life, indicating a just experience. Her reflection sparked another exchange of ideas, with Storyteller 2 contributing:

> "It's not necessarily 'achieve' [snaps her fingers to convey instant results] but learning slowly, just slowly, but surely so that you're striving."

Storyteller 3 agreed:

> "Life is not easy. So you must walk slowly, slowly and then at the end, you will achieve something. One day I will tell my child that it wasn't easy. You grow like this. And now God put me – put us – there. See?"

This brief story circle interaction revealed an interesting feature of the group itself. By acknowledging one another's pain and elaborating on hardships, the SFL parents reflect on their identities as people who have achieved personal success despite their shared problems. Parts of this identity include feeling similar parenting stresses and strains, feeling responsible for their children's literacy and welfare, and being committed to community team-building.[12] Through reflections on their identities shaped by their shared intervention experience, the participants represent themselves as a collective through a shared narrative. At this point in their workshop experience, their narrative is coherent and congruent, indicating authenticity (Vivienne 2016).

1. Final Digital Stories

Difficulties

It is essential to share the difficulty with which I came by the participants' final stories. The period between the draft and final stories was unusually long for a DST workshop and characterised the nature of their participation. It was only after numerous attempts to contact the participants via the group WhatsApp and privately that the co-facilitator and I could secure the final stories. The nature of these communications included being 'blue-ticked' where our messages were read but not responded to and 'no-show' instances for times that we agreed to meet to assist the participants with their edits. Storyteller 2, Storyteller 4 and Storyteller 3 submitted theirs; Phumezo did not.

[12] Storyteller 4 and Storyteller 1's draft narrations are excluded as examples as they did not present much data that could contribute to the descriptions and interpretations at that juncture.

At first glance, the stories appeared hastily put together and technically unsound regarding spelling, basic editing techniques, voice-over and music levels. My initial response was one of disappointment. I never had before experienced stories that seemed to convey a lack of personal care or interest by their storytellers. I needed to understand why the participants' story circle reflections on parenting and their individual digital stories were so incongruent. My point of departure was a thematic visual analysis of the stories.

a. Storyteller 2's final digital story: analysis framed by the seven elements

Overview:

In her story titled *'Parent and a child project',* Storyteller 2 tells the story of her SFLSFLAdvocate experience in 2017 with her only child, Zinzi. Her story[13] focuses on the how, why and what of the reading programme, and she foregrounds the bonding that occurred between mother and child throughout the intervention and the radical levels of literacy improvement she observed. A finer analysis of the digital story is discussed in the section below this overview.

Storyteller 2's digital story features the seven elements of storytelling. The most notable shift from her draft version was that she reclaimed her point of view by narrating her story herself, albeit in English. From my participant observer position, I wondered whether she felt constrained by not using isiXhosa. But I also felt the power of her voice in this rendition – perhaps by reading it herself, she gained the confidence to speak in English. I considered that Storyteller 2 possibly fell in with the group's decision to communicate in English because I spoke English, although Storyteller 3 had previously commented on how difficult she found isiXhosa. Regardless, Storyteller 2 read more confidently after spending time working (and playing) with her story and becoming comfortable with the technical production elements. She achieved this by iteratively recording her voice and learning how to manipulate the recordings to match her visuals on her editing timeline. She thus engaged with Lambert's idea of the efficacy of the power of voice with its concomitant action of 'owning her insights'. I felt she succeeded in communicating these elements successfully in English. Another significant change to the story's 'point of view' element was her inclusion of her daughter, Zinzi, as co-narrator, and at the end of her own story, the inclusion of the

[13] See Appendix A 'Storyteller 2's Story' for the full narrated text.

fourth-year journalism students' video about Storyteller 2 and Zinzi, which Storyteller 2 accessed via YouTube. Storyteller 2 asked me to film her watching the video online and send her the footage (a few seconds) to include in her story. A C4SC framing suggests Storyteller 2 is creating messaging at the grassroots level to share horizontally. By personally selecting the parts that appeal to her and showing the viewer that she is watching herself in the video, she is inserting herself into the public space the video occupies. She effectively acknowledges her current privately networked space in the form of the story circle, with a nod to the possibilities presented if the student video and her own video 'go viral' into a public space.

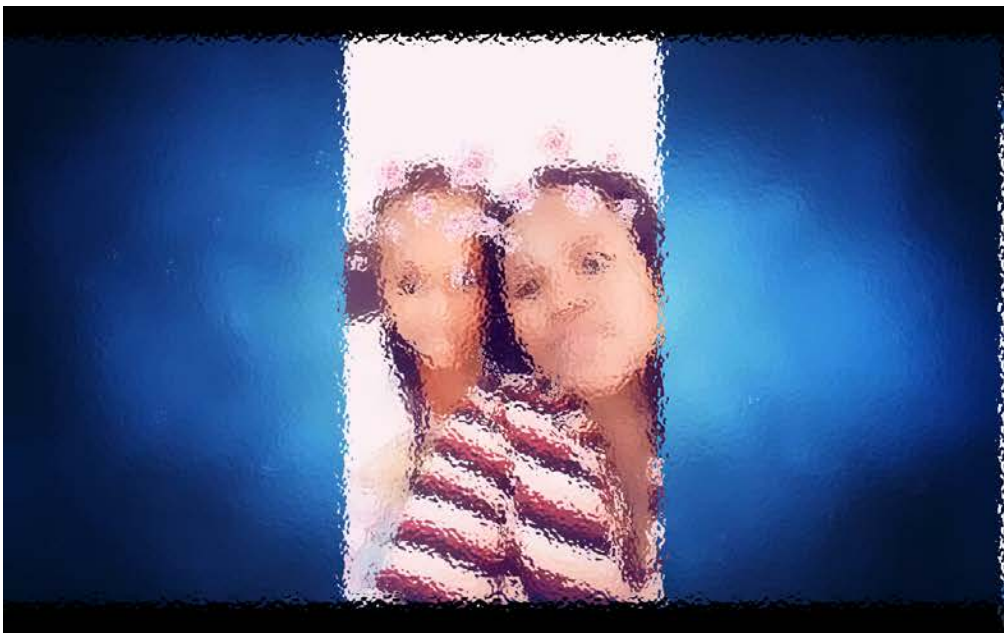
Organic analysis of Storyteller 2's use of the 'seven elements':

'Dramatic Moment':

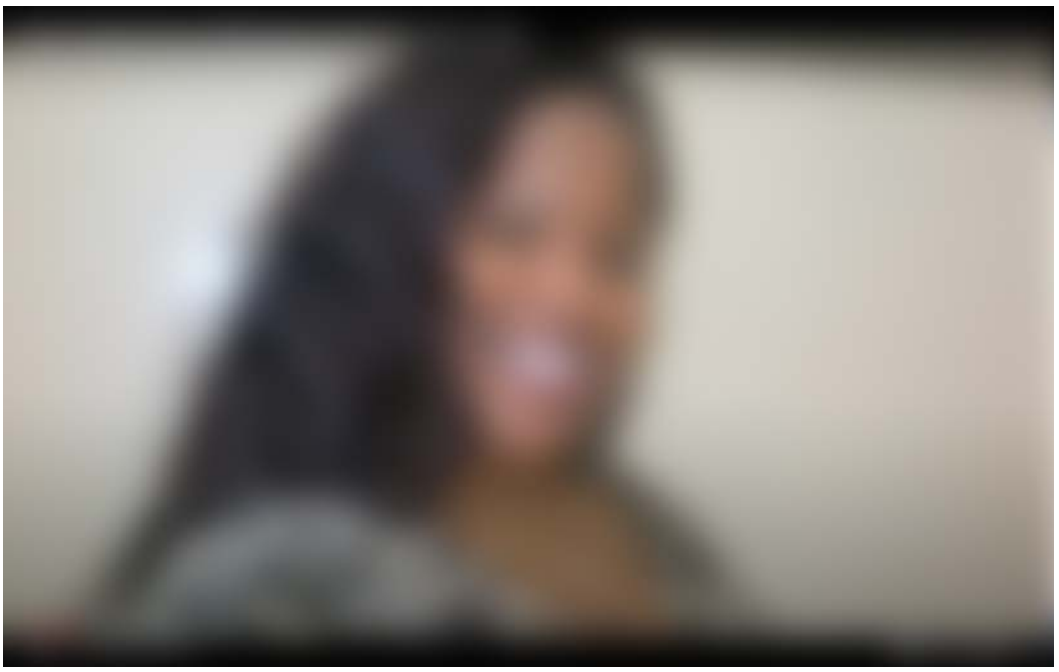
The first minute was especially impactful as the still images powerfully reinforced her narration which began with a subtle 'dramatic moment' and flowed easily through a brief 'who, how and what' description. Brief visual descriptors follow the accompanying text in the extract of Storyteller 2's story:

Storyteller 2:

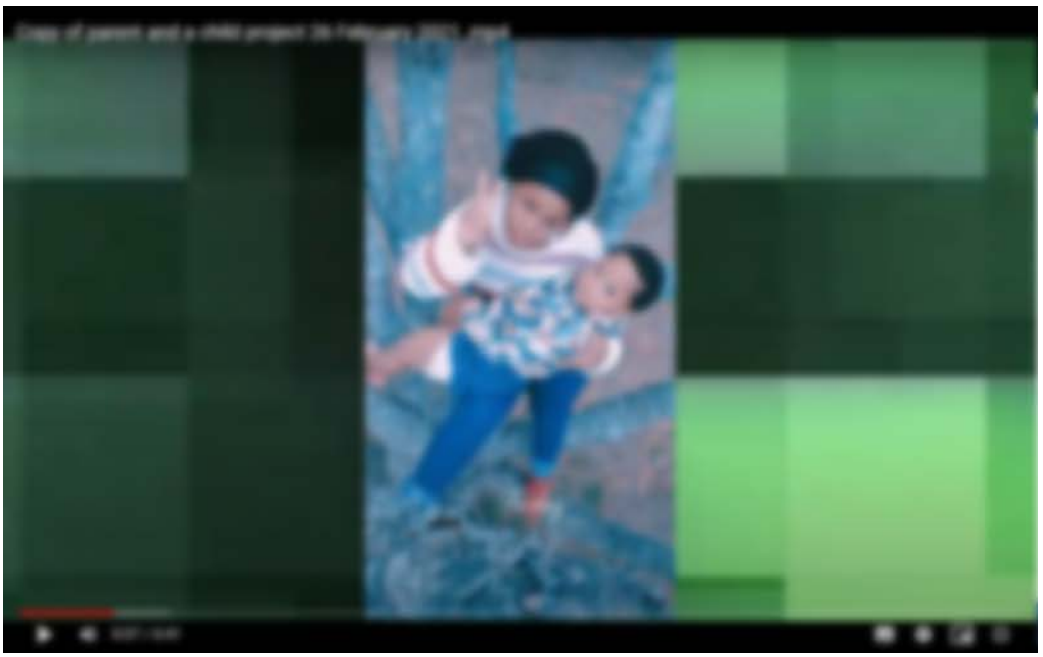
> 'It was not an easy journey for Zinzi and me. Bringing the books from SFL reading programme is something new to both of us. *[Two successive phone selfies show Storyteller 2 in the foreground with Zinzi and another child smiling and posing for the camera]*



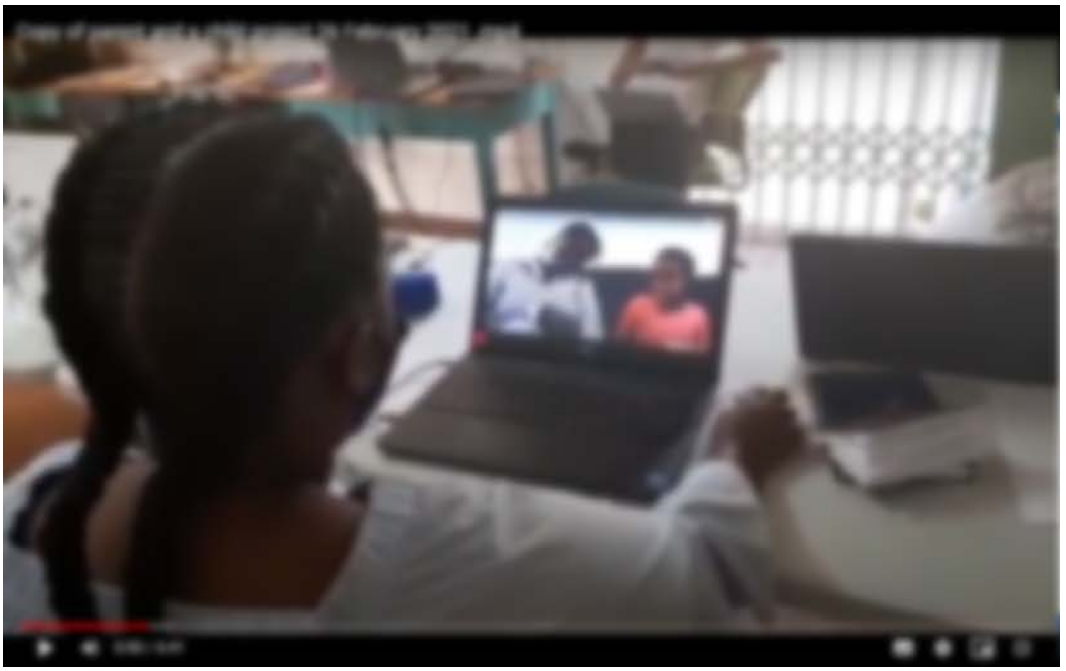
After supper I had to make her choose the story that I was reading for her. *[Medium wide shot phone pic of Zinzi baking cupcakes in Storyteller 2's kitchen followed by a medium close-up selfie of Storyteller 2 looking smart and smiling.]*



As I was reading to her, she showed interest in reading on her own. We would like to take turns on reading. That made her curious. She had lots of questions.'*[A series of older pictures of Zinzi edited over bright, animated graphic backgrounds]*



Cut to around five seconds of video footage I captured with my phone and subsequently shared with Storyteller 2: An over-the-shoulder shot of Storyteller 2 watching the video produced by students about her andZinzi's SFL programme experience.



The student video continues to play for about forty seconds, featuring six-year-old Zinzi narrating a prepared script about how she likes to read.

Cut back to original DST edit. Zinzi narrates:

‘The first day my mother brought me the SFL book, I was so excited. I was six years old. I was so happy when my mother said I was in YouTube. And so we watched the video together. The SFLbooks helped me with my pronunciations. Today I am good with my pronunciations.’ *[Phone pics of an olderZinzi sitting in the car, on the ground and smiling for the camera. The succeeding visuals are repeats of the images Storyteller 2 chose in the first minute. These repeat until Storyteller 2 finishes her narration.]*

Pic above with Storyteller 2 and Zinzi edited over words: ‘...we watched the video together.’

Storyteller 2 continues:
As she was reading, the curiosity of wanting to read on her own made her to want to assist me with everything I do around home. For example, the other day, I was about

> to make some cupcakes, and she asked me, 'if mummy I can make cupcakes for you, you will just show me' as while I was reading to her and the words then that she was struggling with. That showed me that children are learning in different ways and showed independency, that okay, if mummy was reading for me and then now I can do it on my own, you'll learn different things, you'll learn differently. I can see as a parent it's important to make time, you read with your child, that will show you lots of things. You will know the pictures that she likes. You will see she want to be curious and want to make her own drawings. She will want to make her own things while you are busy. [stills images from Storyteller 2's phone gallery repeat throughout this narration.]
>
> *Cuts to the student's video, which plays from beginning to end.*

Analysis of the 'seven elements':

'Point of view':

Storyteller 2 signalled her authorship by opening the narration and guiding the story to the point where she included her daughter Zinzi's reflective account in the middle. Including Zinzi was exciting for Storyteller 2 and was given momentum after they watched themselves in the students' YouTube video about their reading-for-meaning experience. Storyteller 2 told me that she chose this approach to provide evidence of the intervention's positive effect on Zinzi. The repetition of visuals reinforcing the close relationship between mother and daughter sets the stage for Zinzi's entry into the story.

'The gift of your voice':

Once Zinzi had completed her narration, Storyteller 2 recycled the images she had already used in the first minute. The absence of original images was a reminder of the efficacy of using visuals and audio together, as the weaker visuals distracted from Storyteller 2's voice, imparting a sense that her insights had lost some power. In her exit interview, Storyteller 2 commented that she did not have enough time to choose or shoot more images and had to complete her edit in a fragmented way when she could find the time during her work day. Storyteller 2 was surprised and frustrated by not finishing, stating: 'I was thinking that maybe three hours was enough for me to complete the video... I'm trying to figure out, why did I not finish it on time? And also the time is a problem. I don't want to lie' (Mhleli int. 2021). This insight by Storyteller 2 signifies the structured nature of her working life, which limits her freedom to include anything that is not 'essential' or 'value-adding'.

'The power of sound':

Storyteller 2 chose a single music track from a free library to underscore her narration. The synthesised strings ebbed and flowed warmly and softly, which lent a rich match of emotions to Storyteller 2's voice and words.

'Emotional connection':

The triad of visuals, voice and music effectively conveyed the vulnerability, pride and affection that characterised the bond between Storyteller 2 and Zinzi.

'Economy':

Storyteller 2's story was 6 minutes and forty seconds in duration, longer than usual for a personal digital story, because of the inclusion of the four-minute student insert. Storyteller 2 privileged the narration, with the images fulfilling a secondary function. Her script was written conversationally and included enough detail to keep the viewer engaged. Her anecdote about Zinzi asking to bake cupcakes exemplifies how she brought her story to life and made it relatable to other parents. Through her concise and selective descriptions, Storyteller 2 placed a high value on the benefit of Zinzi's experience.

'Pacing':

Storyteller 2 paced her story evenly, showing care in the duration of the still images alongside her narration. There were no dramatic pauses for effect or pacing changes. It felt to me that Storyteller 2 wanted to get her message across in a straightforward linear manner, punctuated by her vivid descriptions, the emotion in her voice and the inclusion of her daughter's narration.

b. Analysis of Storyteller 4's and Storyteller 3's stories

While I used the seven elements method as a lens to describe and interpret Storyteller 2's story, I adjusted the lens for the other stories to accommodate my research questions more thoroughly. Moreover, the homogeneity of the group enabled a circuitous flow of ideas and story-building of plots and themes similar to Storyteller 2's. It would not result in new knowledge if I were to analyse them similarly (Cresswell 2013). I, therefore, adopt a more critical approach in analysing the story themes for properties of epistemic (in)justice and how they were embedded and communicated. I provide a brief overview of each story and included data from exit interviews about the participants' reflections on their stories. I integrate the analysis from Storyteller 2's story with those of the other stories to achieve a

deeper understanding of the stories' role in revealing or featuring instances of epistemic (in)justice.

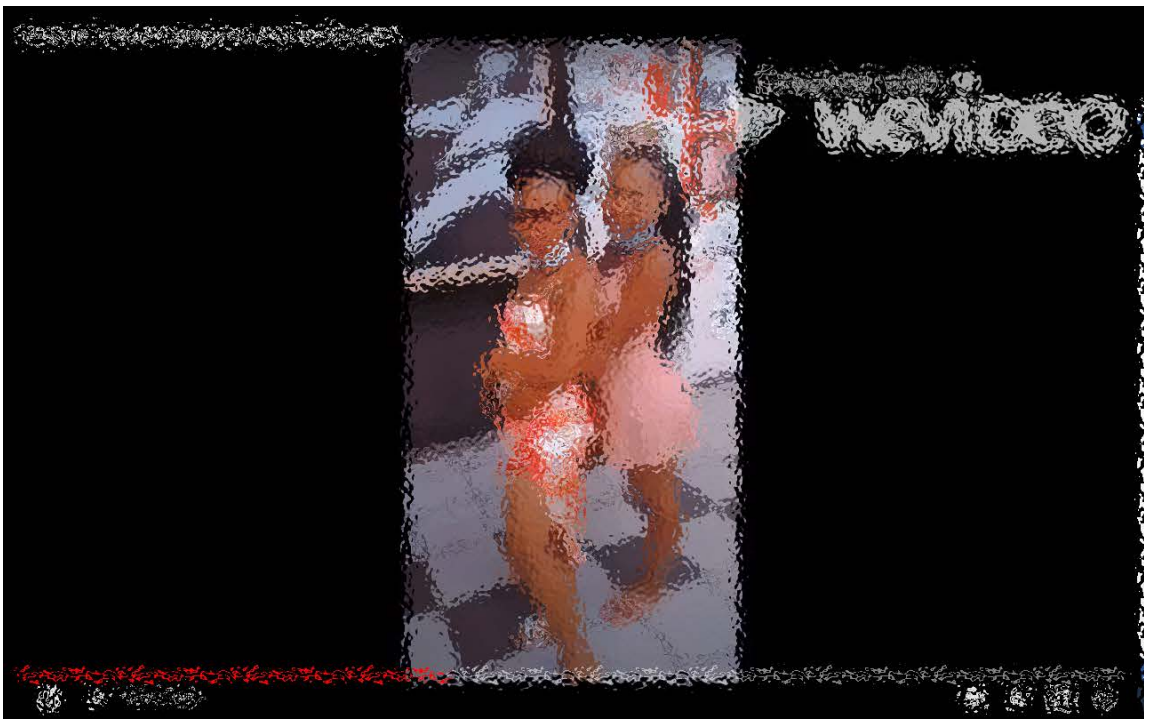
Storyteller 4's final story:

Storyteller 4 begins her video with a selfie video of her daughter speaking to her phone camera about how much she enjoyed the SFL reading programme. We hear Storyteller 4 start to narrate before her daughter's presentation has finished. She speaks in a very relaxed, low-key tone and describes the programme's benefits, such as being taught parenting skills in workshops and their children receiving homework assistance. Her voice contrasts with the rousing, victorious audio of Celine Dion singing 'It's All Coming Back to Me Now'. I interpreted the powerful soundtrack to represent a beautiful and empowering time in Storyteller 4's and her daughter's lives. However, it is tinged with sadness, and as Storyteller 4 tells us in her story (her dramatic moment), *'when it [the SFL reading programme] vanished, we were so frustrated and stressed.'*

Storyteller 4 had only a handful of still images from her phone of her daughter writing and of herself, which she looped. She used text boards to help tell her story in the place of visuals which did not fit properly onto the screen. The last part of her narration describing in detail the benefits of the programme ('helps our kids at school', increases their confidence' etc.) was supported with patchy use of visuals where the default animated background alternated with a black screen. Technically, Storyteller 4's video was poor by the guidebook standards, and she knew she needed to complete it. The image extracts below illustrate the inclusion of her daughter's testimony and the text boards.

Storyteller 4's daughter speaks to camera

Incomplete text board

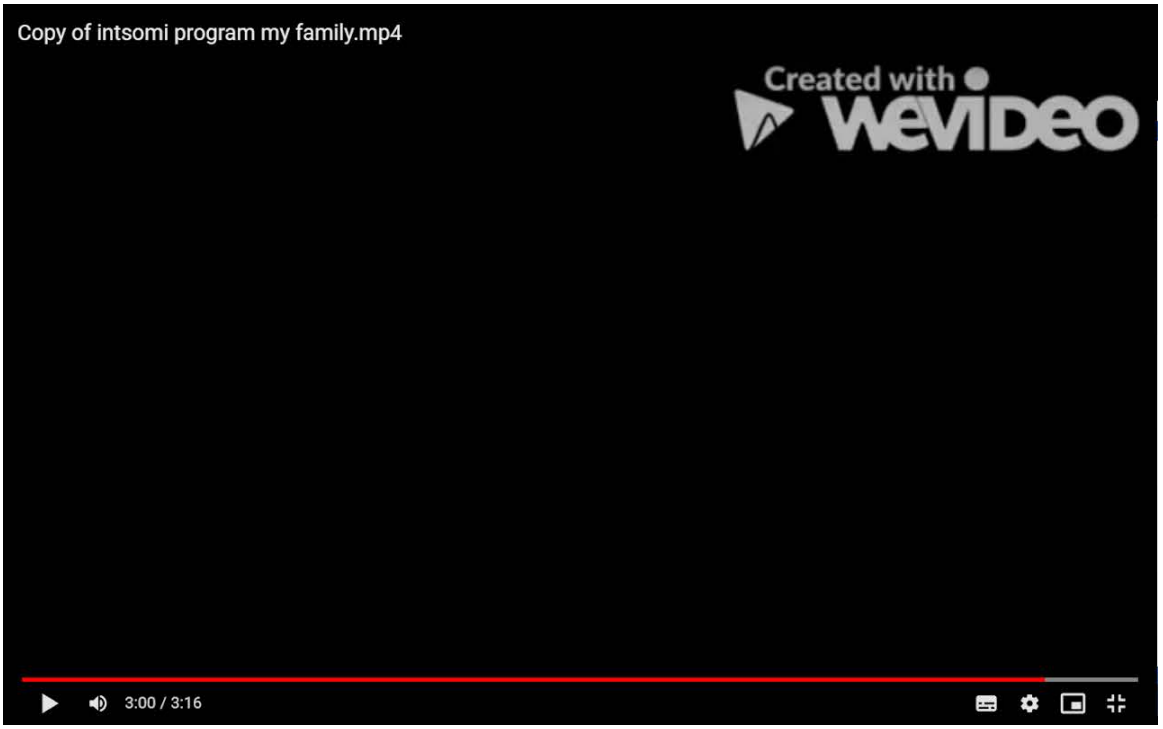


'Would be helped by the students.'

'But when it vanished we were so…' (no words)


Copy of intsomi program my family.mp4
Created with WeVideo
now that the program is kicking in again we are at ease
1:46 / 3:16


Copy of intsomi program my family.mp4
Created with WeVideo
my kids are very lucky because they are growing under my
2:22 / 3:16



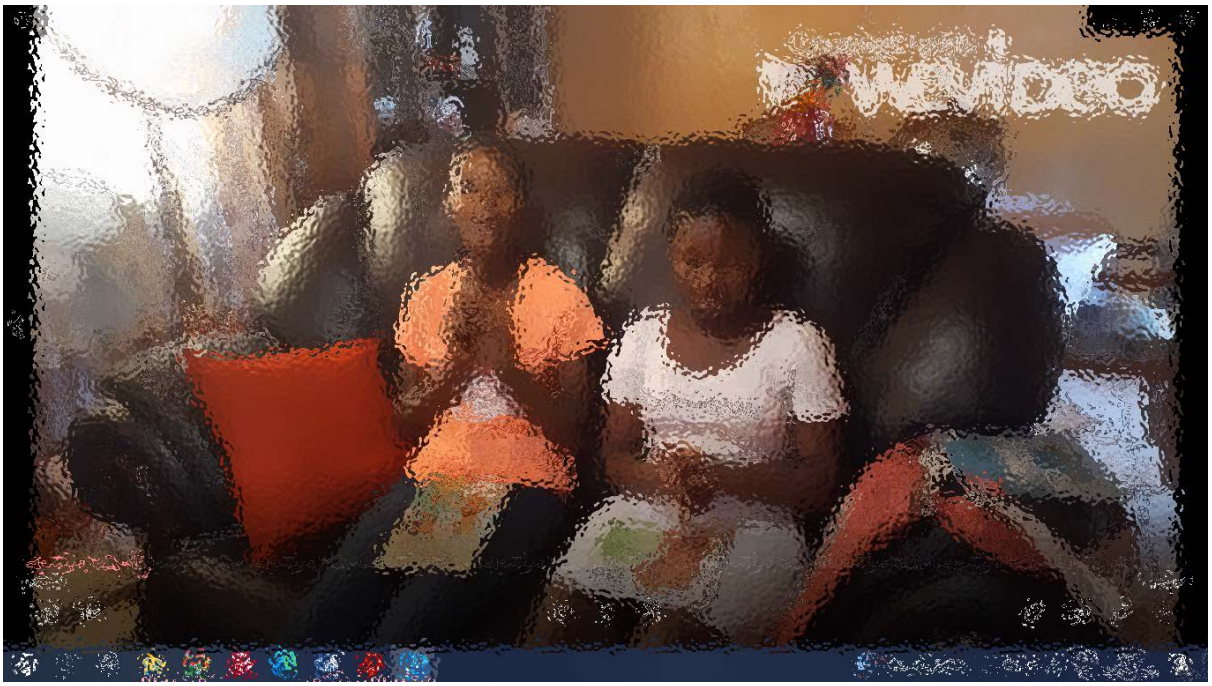
'So it a very nice and enjoyable thing…' (blank screen)

In her exit interview, Storyteller 4 suggested that her daughters help her finish her story because they are confident with technology. She pointed out that laptop access is a problem; she had had one, but it was destroyed in a fire at home. Reflecting on the seven elements, Storyteller 4 said she had particularly enjoyed participating in feedback sessions where she could focus on the 'point of view' element, which she first described as 'personification': 'I liked it. I love to see, okay, this one was in this mood…' (Storyteller 4 int. 2021). Responding to how much she felt the story represented her authentic self, she replied, 'Eighty per cent, because I wanted to take some [more] videos', saying her older daughter was 'shy' and afraid of being seen on YouTube. Despite telling her daughter it would be for 'only us', her daughter remained sceptical. Storyteller 4 was satisfied that her younger daughter contributed to the piece and said she would like to shoot more videos to complete the story.

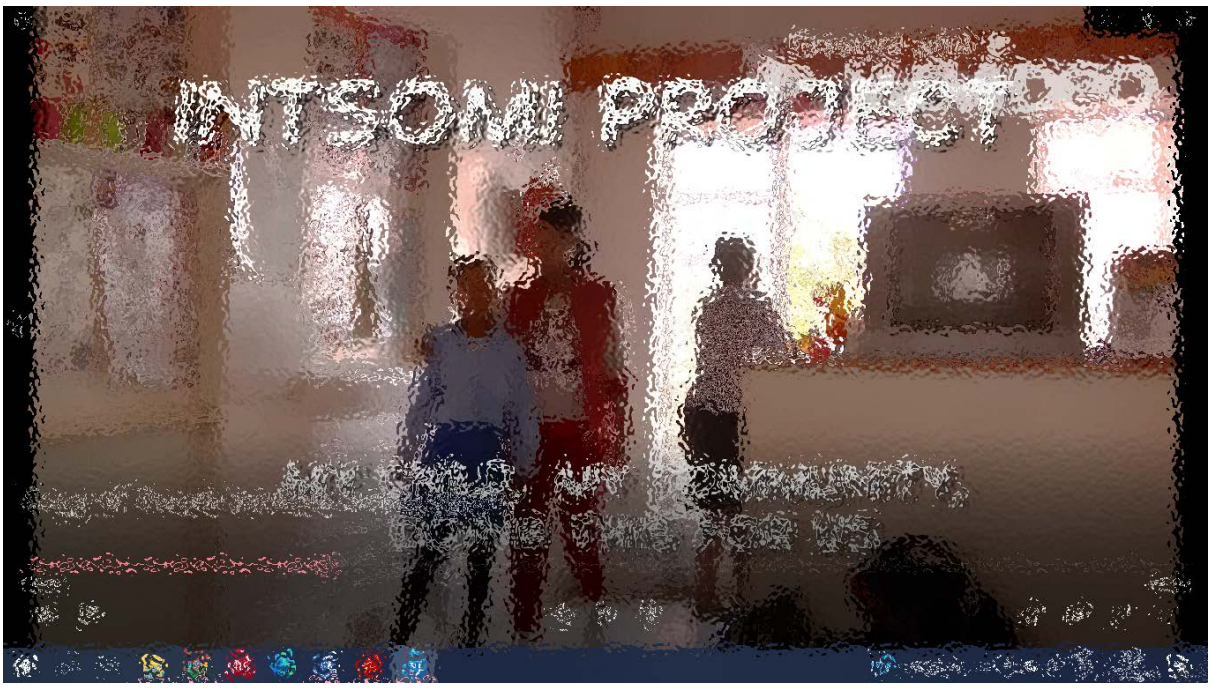
Storyteller 3's final story

Storyteller 3 completed her digital story in time for the co-facilitator to show it to potential worker parent recruits at a post-Covid re-launch of the SFL programme late in 2021. The co-facilitator had assisted Storyteller 3 in completing the edit. Storyteller 3's video was a short one-and-a-half-minute piece featuring her narration over visuals from the students'

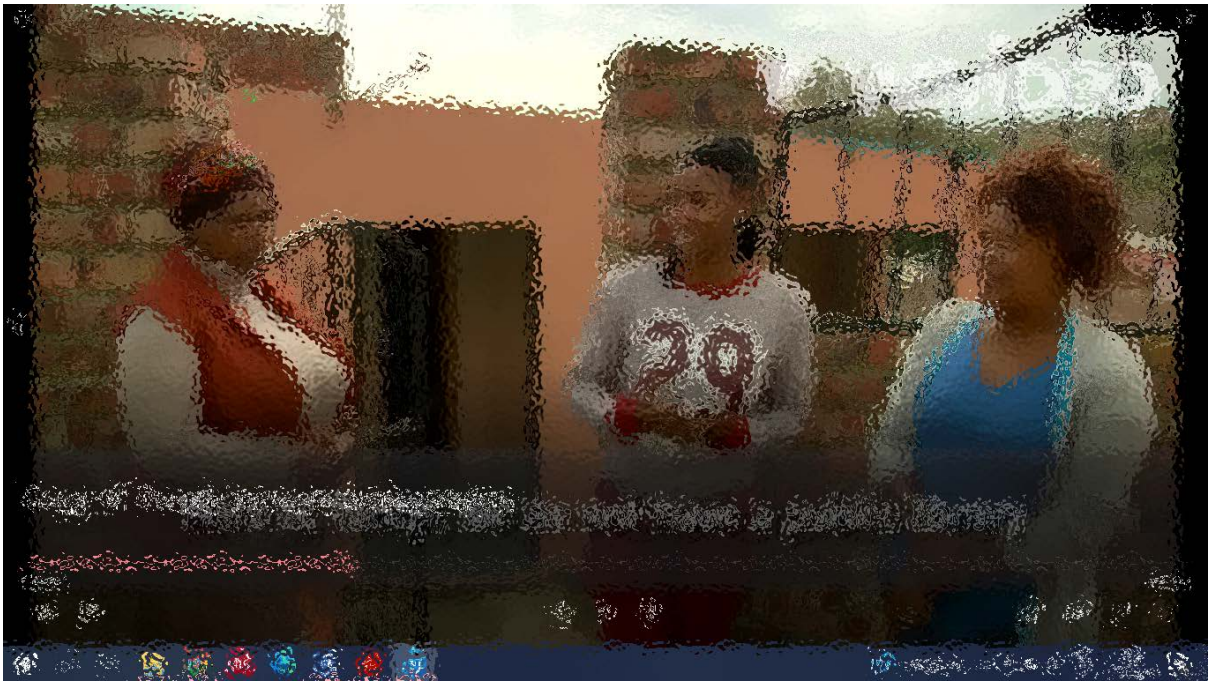
video that she incorporated. Storyteller 3's new visuals were short testimonies by her daughter and her daughter's friend to 'top and tail' the video. As Storyteller 2 and Storyteller 4 did, Storyteller 3 used her phone to record video footage reflecting confidently to the camera about how the programme helped them with their reading and homework when they were younger.



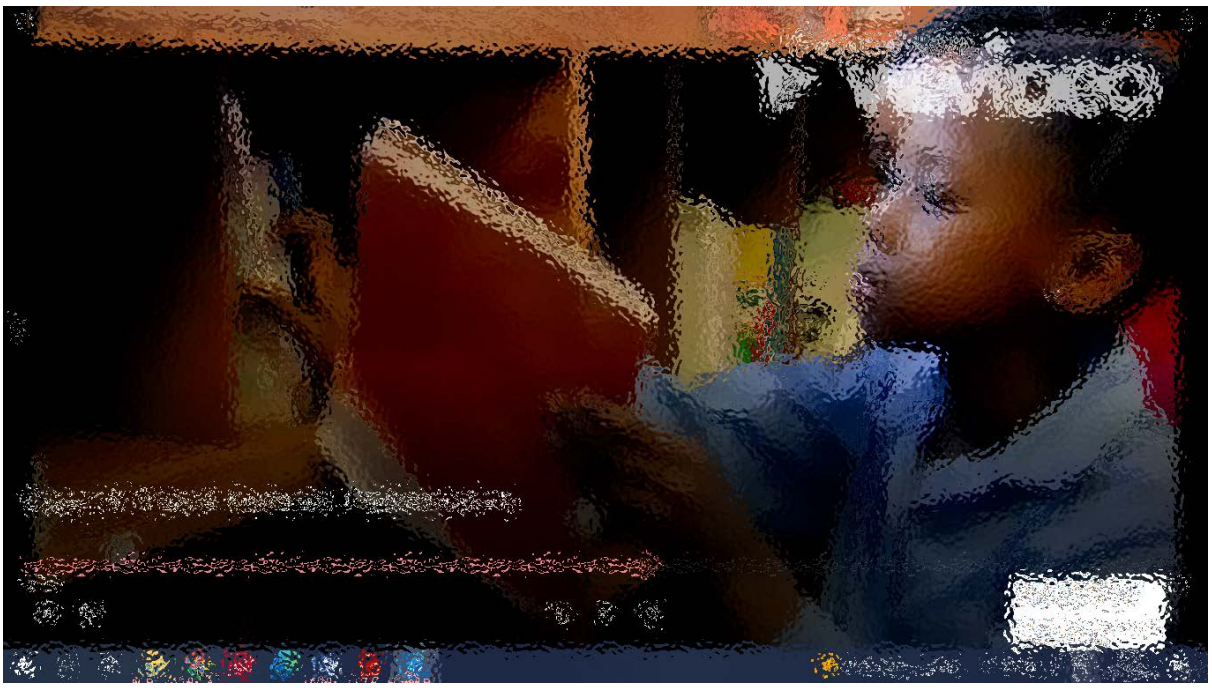
Storyteller 3 decided she would prefer to include snippets from the student video as she felt they perfectly captured what she was reflecting on. These points were that the SFL project enabled Storyteller 3 to easily access books from the University library to take home. The screen grab below shows that Storyteller 3 chose this video sequence to convey the bond between mother and daughter and to present a united front.



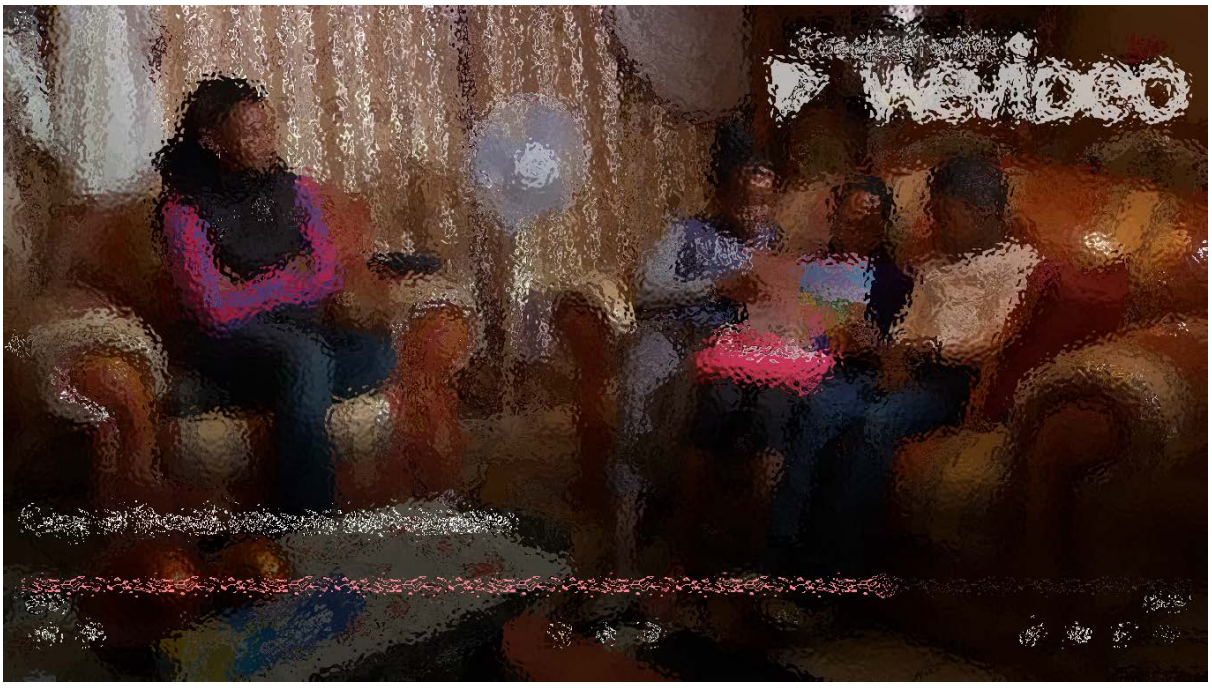
The screen grab below reveals that Storyteller 3 wanted to convey the importance of community, where she was actively telling other parents who had no access to books about the intervention.



The screen grab below represents the importance of instilling the joy of reading and the sense of agency in one's children. Storyteller 3 was filled with joy at seeing her child taking an interest in choosing books.



The screen grab below is a wide shot captured by a student television producer. Storyteller 3 selected this scene as the penultimate one to convey the secondary impact of reading-for-meaning with her child: she could happily observe her child sharing her love of stories with other children from the community.



Final viewing feedback:

Unfortunately, by the time the participants had completed their stories, they were unavailable for a final viewing. This was a source of frustration to me, and the participants conveyed regret they could not view their stories together. Combined with the erratic workshop attendance and Covid-induced difficulties during the data collection process, I considered whether the participants had lost interest in their stories. However, in their exit interviews, they stated they were too pressed for time and could ill afford to dedicate more time and energy to DST. I also considered the possibility that in virtue of their homogenous experience of the literacy intervention and DST, the participants may have felt they would not learn anything new from a final viewing.

2. Semi-structured interviews: making meaning in the first person

Given their poor workshop attendance and contactability around securing their final videos, I doubted the participants would be interested in a final exit interview. However, they all agreed quite promptly, except for Storyteller 1, who had been ill. I interviewed the participants individually in a face-to-face setting in semi-private workspaces. I paid careful attention to the questions I hoped would elicit responses regarding their authentic experience of DST in the hopes it would shed light on what I perceived to be a problem of participation. I found that the participants were enthused about the new digital skills they had acquired but did not reflect deeply on questions about how they felt DST could transform their lives[14].

Storyteller 2

Storyteller 2 was very enthusiastic about the skills she learnt. She detailed her workshop journey, starting with her initial trepidation and sense of not quite grasping the concept of the videos to her 'aha' moments of understanding. From a phenomenological perspective, Storyteller 2's reflections were intensely subjective, weighted with emotion. To describe her reflections phenomenologically, I would describe meanings she made (her subjective experience of reality) in the following ways:

She expressed a range of mental states through words such as 'confused', 'understood', 'I know' and spoke emotively to describe her experience. For instance, she often exclaimed in joy when describing what she did, such as introducing the method to her daughter, Zinzi, at home. The implicit meaning I interpreted from this, in the context of the

[14] I elaborate on the questions in Part 3 (6) where I provide a critical thematic analysis of selected data extracts.

broader discussion on parenting, was her joy at the bonding that this brought between Storyteller 2 and her daughter. She did not explicitly state that it was an extension of their literacy journey together. Yet, the hallmarks of their experience are similar to those of the reading-for-meaning experience documented by Storyteller 2.

In the extracted reflection from the post-workshop interview below, Storyteller 2 described herself as being mystified by the idea of what a digital story was and apprehensive about how she would create her own story. She first orientated me to her level of experience by stating that she was not '*deep into knowing the computer skills*…' but '*I know how to go to Facebook*', and was curious about how people on WhatsApp made multimedia invitations for birthdays or memorial services. Storyteller 2 relayed this narratively, using descriptive and conversational language, and in so doing, she foregrounded herself as a character who felt surprise, curiosity and apprehension: "*And I was wondering, I wonder how are they doing it? Maybe there's an app but for me now, oh my gosh, no! I actually…That's what, that's what I was so interested in. What is this digital story? What is happening?"*

In viewing the example videos at the start of the workshop, Storyteller 2 made emotional connections with two stories, especially: the academic introducing her child to her grandmother's stories and one about a woman who took the initiative to run a local soup kitchen. Storyteller 2 once again used descriptive language to describe her initial confusion about the stories, employing dramatic moments in her retelling for emphasis and to lead to the revelation of how it felt like a storm had settled once she had seen the videos and understood what I had meant when I first spoke of digital stories. Having arrived late, Storyteller 2 felt apprehensive about catching up:

> '…So so so nervous, but… And I was like, Okay, okay, I see what is happening. Okay. Now here in the kitchen., and also the lady with a grandmother. And then, as we were discussing on the group, I get to see it now with you! It makes sense.. This was like a storm settling now what we were talking about. I'm like, Okay, wow! Okay, what Storyteller 1 was saying about how she was praising that lady, that she was praising it clearly. And then her grandmother, it started to make sense to me because I was like, 'Okay, I am here.' It didn't make sense first, but now it makes sense. It came when I actually made my own mind, my own video.'

I asked Storyteller 2 whether the introduction to Lambert's **'**seven steps' (Lambert, 2013) made 'sense' to her. Storyteller 2 reflected that at first, she was 'not clear' but did grasp them the second time I talked through the steps. Notably, Storyteller 2 participated in the story circle feedback sessions where I asked the participants to each be responsible for listening out for one of the seven steps when first sharing their rough story notes. I have

noticed in previous workshops that it is putting the steps into practice in story circle feedback mode that participants begin to make sense of the steps. However, Storyteller 2 reflected that she was surprised at the fact she could not finish her video story in the space of three hours, remarking that she questioned her abilities: '*I'm asking, why did I not finish on time?...why does it take so bad?*' adding, '*Time is a problem, I'm not going to lie.*' This statement flags the epistemic justice marker of participatory parity: parity in fairness of the amount of time awarded to Storyteller 2 in her endeavour, through no fault of her own or mine, but through Covid-led restrictions which further squeezed the parents' resources of time and energy.

Storyteller 3:

Storyteller 3's experience of the DST workshops was broadly similar to the others. She conveyed her answers to questions about her DST experience less emotively than Storyteller 2 and Storyteller 1. This seemed congruent with her disposition whilst attending the workshops and could be because she did not spend as much time in the workshops as others. As noted in my observations on the workshop activities, the participants did not clearly communicate their reasons for being absent from workshops at those times. However, they spoke about instances of needing to stay at home as their child was sick (as was Storyteller 3's case).

Compared to Storyteller 2, Storyteller 3 did not narrativise her responses to my questions, preferring to provide decisive commentary that seemed more neutral than subjective. For instance when I asked Storyteller 3 the broad and phenomenological question, 'what do you think was the most important part of the DST process?', without hesitation, Storyteller 3 spoke decisively about the technical and narrative discoveries she made:

> **Storyteller 3:** I learned on a lot already that videos ne[15]. First thing that I learned was that I was just taking a video, not noticing that the camera must be in landscape [setting]. Yes. It's the first thing that I learned and also [when] shooting must focus. And then the third thing of when you do the videos, they must be a action or something that motivates others. Yes, yes. And also the story must have a start, an end and the middle. And the very important part of the story must be that thing of now you are ending, yes you coming to the end, so everyone can be aware that this is going to be the end.

Storyteller 1:

[15] 'Ne' is a colloquial Afrikaans word meaning 'not so?' (https://dsae.co.za/entry/n%C3%AA/e05118)

My experience working with Storyteller 1 was particularly frustrating yet interesting. During the workshops and story circle discussions, he was the most vociferous participant, taking to the technical production easily and enthusiastically. However, the final step of downloading and saving his story to a Google Drive folder seemed impossible. I engaged with Storyteller 1 many times over the phone and physically visited him at his place of work to assist with the process; however, he had trouble locating his story and, when he did find it, needed to finish it. He showed me his unfinished story on a work computer, and I asked him to download it and share it with me in its unfinished state. He seemed unable to send his story to the correct location, and as it was edited on WeVideo, it had to be exported – I could not save it on an external drive. I was puzzled about this and at the time it felt like Storyteller 1 was resisting this final step. I asked Storyteller 1 about his feelings on sharing the story with the University:

> **Jane:** [In addressing the University management] How would digital storytelling help you tell that story? And would it be useful to tell that story?
>
> **Storyteller 1:**
>
> Yeah, I think one of the things that will help me will be the visuals. Yeah, it will be the visuals because as I said before, I can't hide how I feel, I always tell as it is. Because I'm always…I don't want to look different to other people. I mean, like what we were talking about before, the importance of info towards our children and me as a parent, and also me as an SFL Advocate…So since we are doing this here at A., I think your University deserves to know, like okay, they've heard about the SFLproject and would want to know what has been happening. It will be like a feedback to them. Ja, it's quite easy. I can do that.

When I asked him why he had not yet completed and shared his story, Storyteller 1 pointed out that he had shared his new-found knowledge of the editing app on his phone with a colleague of his, saying: 'I told him how interesting it is to do this, and he wanted to make a video of his children.' Further prompting revealed Storyteller 1 had been absent from work which he identified as the reason for not following up with his friend about the video. When I asked what motivated Storyteller 1 to show his friend the editing app, he said: 'I believe when you are teaching someone something at the same time you are giving space for that thing to get stuck in you…Whenever I'm [reading my children storybooks], it always takes me …I'm learning at the same time.' I found this perspective interesting. Storyteller 1 could have replied that he wanted his friend to experience the benefit of the app (which I have no doubt is the case), but a deeper meaning invokes the particular definition of ubuntu of 'a person is a person through other people' (Ngondo & Klyueva 2022) as Storyteller 1 learns through the sharing of community resources and with community members. My

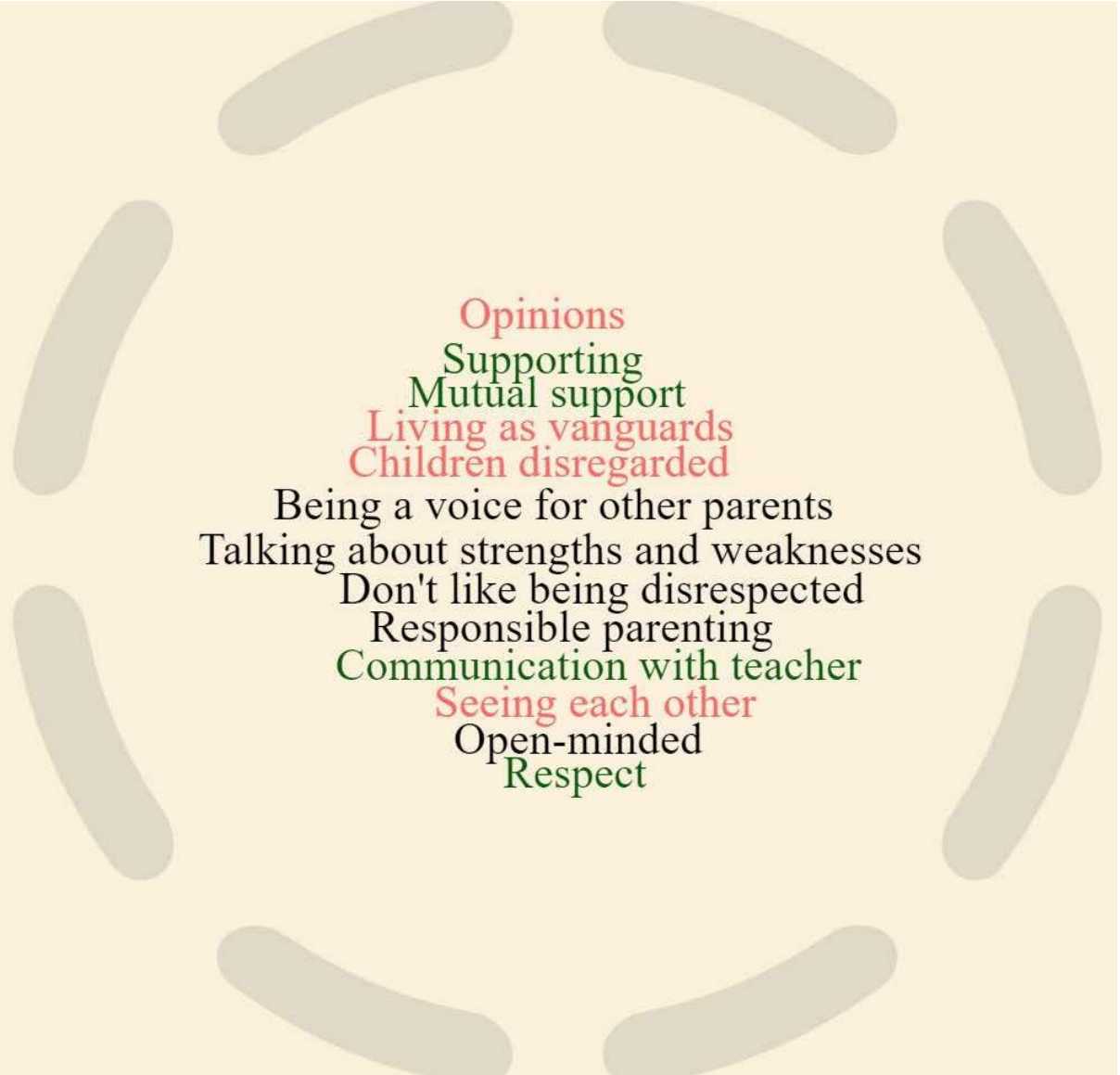
interpretation is that Storyteller 1's ontological and epistemological orientation is rooted in communitarianism, which shapes his communication practices.

The Western concept and practice of individualism informs DST in its focus on *personal* stories. However it also capacitates communitarian ways of being in the circular story-building activities akin to the tradition of oral storytelling in African cultures (DST Guidebook 2030). Storyteller 1 and the other participants produced personal digital stories that were forged through their single group narrative. Content in their final stories and from informal discussions coheres in terms of beneficial reading-for-meaning reflections and anecdotes.

3. Themes from story circle activities, informal discussions and final digital stories: discussion and analysis using the measurement matrix for epistemic (in)justice criteria and markers

The graphic below serves as a snapshot example of one data set of codes analysed for frequency from a discussion the participants had with the co-facilitator about difficulties faced by parents which might make recruiting new members to the programme challenging. I used the Provalis QDA Miner Lite software to code for particular epistemic (in)justice markers that I found emerging from story circle activities and discussions. I found it a helpful tool to affirm my developing sense of markers for epistemic (in)justice with regard to the participants' experiences of the programme. I used these codes and my interpretations described in the above sections to guide my thinking on themes.

Graphic with codes



Utilising Braun and Clarke's (2009) guide to qualitative thematic analysis, listed, described and analysed below are four themes that emerged from the coding process and descriptions. They stem from the parents' interpretations of their experiences as they reflected on them during story circle discussions and echo *FLP Researcher's* findings in her thesis:

Theme 1: a common narrative

Theme 2: new parenting powers

Theme 3: reframed views on children

Theme 4: reframed views on literacy

Theme 1: A common narrative

Group participatory dynamics affect ways in which groups engage with the task of creating stories (Vivienne 2016). The SFLAdvocates are homogenous in the sense they are all the University's working-class employees who had the same experience of the reading-for-meaning programme. However, as Shaw (2015) asserts, there are opportunities for 'within-group power imbalances' to occur, which, if unattended, privileges those who dominate discussions. However, the DST methodology allowed for equal participation through interactive and shared feedback processes. I had thus created a safe space for a homogenous group of people to engage with one another equitably. Shaw's (2015) idea that groups can mobilise resistance and leverage political power through a collective identity was an interesting possibility for my participants. The warm-up activities and the scripts reflect a sense of solidarity forged through the participants' collective experiences, relationships and group interaction. Their attitudes towards key issues such as parenting and education were expressed as one voice, a collective identity. I noted this with interest as many DST workshop groups had been heterogenous where facilitators worked to assist participants bridge their differences to create awareness of and imagine solutions for far-reaching social ills (Spurgeon et al 2014).

Theme 2: new parenting powers

The data is rich in references by the participants to their parenting journeys as SFLAdvocates. This is evident in how the discussions during the warm-up exercises and in the narrated scripts contained very explicit descriptions of the different parenting achievements. They shared how they felt when first approached by UCE (described in their narrations and discussed afterwards). Being approached was a natural starting point for their stories and set the emotional tone for the rest of the story, described in the 5-pointed star step of 'describe how you felt at the beginning of your story'. Storyteller 1, for instance, linked the initial feeling of surprise and slight apprehension at the first meeting to his evolved feelings of pride and joy in his parenting experience. Likewise, Storyteller 2's sense of wonder in her narration increased as she spoke of how other children would turn to her as their source of literary nourishment. By describing their joy and pride at welcoming other children into their homes to read to them, the participants are signalling their new status as empowered literacy agents who could contribute to the broader reading crisis. The topic of empowerment extended beyond the immediate purpose of creating digital stories to reveal their journeys and encourage other parents. In one discussion the participants lamented the

lack of access to books as libraries had closed during Covid and were concerned about their children's literacy and wellbeing. I was interested in whether the participants were experiencing a conscientisation around these matters; hence I asked the group whether they, as parents and Advocates, could think of a solution to the problem of books. After a long pause for thought, Storyteller 2 offered her thoughts. She stated they (all parents):

> 'We need to have a plan. I think for each year, or maybe at the end of the year, we brainstorm, and then every year, we update ideas; I think that will help. It's like every year we've got a different menu that can attract the departments.'

Storyteller 2's simile of the menu refers to her experience working for the University's catering department and reveals that she thinks laterally and creatively about solutions. The participants expanded on Storyteller 2's idea by adding their own remarks and suggestions, characteristic of dynamic DST story-building (Lambert 2013). The group successfully generated a solution to a problem afflicting their community. Their reflexive, self-determined process bears the hallmarks of the Freirean notion of conscientization (Plush 2016). An epistemic justice lens reveals an impulse to contribute epistemic resources to their communities.

Theme 3: reframed views on children

The impact of Bantu education literacy policies are seen in how Black South African parents continue to regard township schools as deficient (Banda 2010). As Prinsloo (2014) notes, Bantu education policies embedded notions of Black culture as inferior and such representations are continually reproduced in society today. One of the symptoms of the epistemic harm is that Black working-class parents do not feel entitled to make epistemic claims that could influence the way their children are taught, or situate themselves as co-educators of their children outside the classroom. It is perhaps not surprising that the SFLAdvocates, with their newfound parenting powers, were able to step into the breach and communicate to other parents about ways to claim back their parenting powers in this particular social arena. Through the intervention, the participants were supported in putting their children front and centre and, as story circle data suggests, strongly felt that they should continue in this manner. This data indicates a shift in attitude, a positive indicator for mounting a campaign for social change. The participants frequently described how they inserted themselves more confidently into their children's educational spaces and would like to see other parents doing the same.

Theme 4: Literacy has newfound importance

Coupled with the conscious shift in parenting their children is the participants' attitude towards literacy, which includes ideas of communitarianism expressed through anecdotes such as Storyteller 1's one about sharing his skills. This is an equally important step towards changing the poor literacy levels shown consistently in the PIRLS results. The participants continued to explore a culture of media literacy by utilising DST to communicate their thoughts, feelings and experiences. In so doing, the participants are further entrenching and expanding their concepts and experiences of literacy. Frequent mentions of children reading books and the selection of photographs showing their children reading books support this claim.

The table below captures the themes located in epistemic (in)justice criteria and markers. It reveals how DST has enabled articulations of epistemic justice for the participants.

Themes (characteristics in bold) situated in Epistemic Justice criteria of:

Knowledge/Access to literacy practices | Parity of participation | Correction of 'hidden injuries' through representations | Recognition of voice

Testimonial Evaluation:	*Hermeneutical Evaluation:*	*DST Evaluation:*
Participants had a **common narrative** about **joint new literacy and parenting** experiences. **Highlighted access to books and resources**. Student videos about them reinforced their credibility. Recognition of voice seen in comfort of writing scripts and co-learning recording techniques.	**Group narrative** on the **significance of reading for upward mobility of children** in their communities. Communicated how **parents are empowered** and why this is important in their socio-economic contexts. Parents told of past injuries of deficit of reading-for-meaning; bonding, empowered parenting.	Story Circle spaces created, with face-to-face boosting **access** to new DST literacy practice during Covid. Story circles activated discussions on themes, including a difficult topic. Learning DST production skills **enabled new knowledge**. Self, and group-assisted stories enabled agency to tell authentic stories.

		Conscientisation was enabled.

In Part Two, I introduce a ‘complication’ in the data that is incongruent with the themes of epistemic just thus far observed. In attempting to understand the nature of this ‘disruption’ to the narrative, I explore the significance of authenticity in DST and reflect on my situatedness as participant-observer to better understand the complex nature of our communicative dynamic.

Part two

Introduction:

In this section, I focus on the most challenging aspect of my research process. While Covid 19 complicated the data collection process by necessitating a change of format from Zoom to face-to-face, it served to make the participants' subaltern lived experiences in the University (and the wider society) more visible. The participants' status as low-wage, Black workers with little power, voice and status in a large institution was significant in shaping their approach to the DST project and provided an opportunity to utilise theories of C4SC and identity to explain their impacts. These impacts are framed as a disrupted narrative which I attempt to understand by problematising ideas of authenticity and my role as participant-observer. I bridge these interpretive accounts to the more critical realist explications of the data in Part 3.

Reflections on a disrupted narrative: using ideas of digitally networked identities to frame problems of participation and communication

5. Red flag: a problem of authenticity and coherence in the group narrative (where is the exit interview data in the stories?)

A factor that I needed to consider in understanding my participants' common narrative of positive parenting is Vivienne's opinion that while 'notions of authenticity, congruence and coherence are central to self-representation in digital stories' (2016), they can also be deeply 'problematic'. Vivienne explains that as social beings in a community, we instinctively aim to survive through the social, and as such, we are '…bound up in …reproducing a cogent…rendition of self' (2016). Viewed through this lens, I understood why the participants were greatly motivated to tell the same story of their experiences. However, as Vivienne argues, group storytellers risk being individually less authentic by needing an aligned and coherent narrative that represents the group. I believe that the participants, consciously or not, performed their individual narratives in agreement with the 'definition of the situation' (Vivienne 2016:64 citing Goffman 1959) '(i.e. we all agree we're in the same play').

FLP Researcher's findings encouraged Storyteller 3 and the UCE team to ask the SFL Advocates to assist them with re-starting the programme post-Covid by advising on and aiding the recruitment of new parents. I understood that UCE's intention was a conscious effort to acknowledge the SFL Advocates' agency and leadership potential in this regard. This consideration by UCE would seem congruent with the themes indicating positive experiences in parenting during the SFL Programme, expressed through the DST workshops. The DST and epistemic justice virtues of parity of participation and access to resources, among others, theoretically provided the conditions for authentic storytelling. One such resource was the 'five-pointed star' exercise, which elicited discussion around plot lines, characters and movement through their individual stories. Interestingly, as we began to discuss the question of 'why is it important to tell this story', the participants became less clear and enthusiastic. At first, they agreed that by telling and sharing their stories, other parents would be encouraged to experience similar benefits. However, the participants were hesitant when I asked how they felt about being the 'faces' of the new UCE campaign by showing their stories and sharing their knowledge and possibly other resources such as time and energy. I was surprised by their lack of enthusiasm: did they not wish to play an active role in driving social change, which C4SC theory suggested would be the next natural step?

The last step of the five-pointed star exercise for the participants involved reading aloud the first paragraph of their nascent scripts, with feedback from the group. While these story beginnings were imbued with positivity and hope, I endeavoured to further explore the bridge from their personal stories to the 'political', in their roles as Advocates. I asked again if they thought other parents would be interested in participating. The participants gradually revealed that their journey through the SFL programme had been disrupted by subsequent events, which they seemed hesitant to divulge. Storyteller 1 eventually revealed that when the SFL programme ended, the participants felt 'abandoned' by the University. He described that they were expecting to continue to work with UCE in an advocacy role; however, after one meeting poorly attended by worker parents, they expected further engagement by the SFL programme's coordinator. Storyteller 1 stated he had made several attempts to communicate with the coordinator but was 'ignored'. He felt frustrated and disappointed as other parent workers relied on him to provide information about the programme as they wished to partake. The participants were furthermore concerned that their children would miss out on the homework programme with student volunteers.

The conversation about feeling abandoned by the SFL programme coordinator was a pivotal moment in this particular story circle discussion. The sense of disappointment

permeated subsequent discussions, crystallising into a deconstruction of 'hope'. Storyteller 1 referred back to the 'hope' Storyteller 3 had conveyed in her paragraph from the five-pointed star. Storyteller 1 questioned, 'Do you really feel hope?' Storyteller 1 explained his misgivings by bridging to the workplace where he situated parent workers in conditions of strife and oppression. They were tired, overworked and denied opportunities for self-improvement. Storyteller 1's anecdote about his first-hand experience (inadvertently) echoed the seven elements we had been discussing. He relayed how he had set his heart on a career in human relations. He applied in good faith when an opportunity arose to study a course through the University's 'staff development structure'. He was determined to be more than a lower-grade worker for the rest of his life. However, despite his persistent attempts at applying, he was turned down. Adding insult to injury, his emails to the coordinator were ignored. The message he received from this experience was 'you are just a worker, don't think you can be more'. Storyteller 1's anecdote felt authentic, vivid and relatable to the participants, who enlarged on the topic with further examples of unhappy work colleagues. By not having information for other interested parents and their experiences of feeling disregarded, the participants felt their newfound status as literacy champions slipping away.

Ostensibly, their treatment at the hands of the University was the reason the participants were uncertain about their future role as advocates for the programme, and would prevent them from expressing their common narrative of empowered parenting beyond the story circle discussions and stories. In other words, while they kept their narrative intact at a semantic level, the latent truth was external events beyond their control had disrupted it. Resonant of earlier extracts portraying the participants as buffeted by fate, such as Storyteller 3's story about having her to leave the workshop to attend to her child's daycare centre's demand for his Birth Certificate, and their inability to leave work to finish their stories, the experience of feeling abandoned by the University illuminated their subaltern environment. They did not regard themselves capable of contesting their situation with UCE in the same way they did not feel able to challenge their children's teachers in an educational setting. This was a significant moment in our interaction as facilitator and participants. While I registered their disappointment, neither they nor I seemed capable of making further meaning out of their experience at that time. I regarded this as a hermeneutical gap and committed to working towards making sense of their situation by enabling further reflection on their part and non-judgemental conversation between us.

At this juncture, a reader might think it prudent for me to adopt a journalist approach and seek a 'right of reply' response from the University to address the information presented

to me by the participants. It is therefore important to re-state my approach of interpreting the participants' data as reflections and expressions of their experiences and identities and not as 'the truth'. Had I chosen to interview University management, I would be detracting from the premise that an epistemically virtuous hearer would not seek to discredit a speaker's testimony. While it cannot be argued that a journalist commits a testimonial epistemic injustice by seeking verification from other sources, including those in power - indeed such approaches can aid in revealing abuses of power - pursuing this approach was beyond the scope of my research. It would have necessitated an alternative theoretical framing around the goals of my research. My goals were to investigate how DST might reveal instances of epistemic (in)justices through a process of reflections by the participants. As such, my findings and recommendations are communicated through this lens and should not be interpreted by the reader as a presentation of fact. Moreover, the analysis is characterised by a narrative account of engaging with aspects of my positionality as a white, middle-class female researcher.

A reflexive facilitation moment

The injuries of Apartheid education practices, including the lack of access to literacy resources, had been an explicit theme throughout our interactions in the workshops. It was a foundational reason for the SFL intervention's existence that needed correcting and thus was openly discussed and acknowledged in the story circles. For instance, Storyteller 1 spoke fondly and proudly of his farmworker grandfather, who espoused discipline, self-respect and hard work despite never attending school. He used this anecdote to juxtapose the transformative benefits of the SFL programme for himself and his children decades later. The other participants' responses to his anecdote gave me the impression they still lived in the shadow of injustices experienced by their parents and grandparents. Much like McHugh's (2016) description of specific African communities living with the 'social heritage of slavery' as it has become 'one long memory', the SFL parents have jobs but continue to struggle with their heritage of structural oppression and disadvantage. The participants did not explicitly discuss or explain their daily struggles in the context of historical structural disadvantage. I reflected on possible reasons: it might indicate a hermeneutical epistemic injustice where the participants did not possess the 'language' with which to express their understanding of their collective situated historical disadvantage or they might have *chosen* not to, and Storyteller 1's SFL project revelation, albeit clearly communicated, was an *implicit* 'nod' to their broader everyday struggles.

I considered the possibilities described above with reference to my previous DST facilitation experiences. In past workshops, participants with structural disadvantages frequently shared heartfelt and sometimes deeply personal aspects of their lives, which yielded deep insights into their shared lived experiences in their socio-economic contexts. Some participants chose to remain anonymous when they felt strongly about publicly sharing their stories. I reflected on these issues with the co-facilitator. Storyteller 3's communications with the participants was similarly punctuated by long delays in responses, no responses and threads of conversations falling away. After the workshop in which the participants revealed their struggles at work, the co-facilitator and I discussed whether we should take a more editorially controlling, agenda-led approach that asked them to include these issues in their stories. We factored in that the participants could easily convey the significance of their socially constructed roles as parents and Advocates. It would be much more challenging for them to convey the importance of the oppressive elements of their daily struggles. Because of its affinity to ideas of original and unfiltered testimony through an epistemic justice lens, I chose to remain faithful to the idea of eliciting storied responses from the participants instead of inserting an editorial intervention. The elicited responses excluded narratives about their ongoing experience of structural disadvantage in the workplace. In light of that narrative's absence, I debated the following aspects of my method:

- If other participants could use DST to tell more profound truths, why were my participants seemingly unable to?
- Had I selected the 'wrong' participant group for my research?
- Should I view the narrative reflected in their stories as incomplete? If so, did that weaken my data and cast doubt on the validity of my research?

At this stage of my analysis, I questioned the capacity of the matrix I had designed to measure instances of epistemic (in)justice and C4SC theories in my data. The markers and criteria did not seem capable of eliciting deeper insights needed to understand and explain the problem of the increasingly evident narrative dissonance. The participants' feelings of disappointment at being abandoned by the SFL programme were significant, made more so by a possible hermeneutical gap that extended to my inability to discuss latent themes with the participants meaningfully. Equally puzzling was that the participants were unclear about their plans to communicate their stories to other parents and colleagues. In phenomenological interpretive terms, I perceived there was 'more to the story', and in critical realist terms, I proceeded to analyse the underlying structural problems already communicated by the

participants. In the following section, I provide an extract from Storyteller 1's exit interview to support my interpretation of how the SFL abandonment event did not feature in their stories. In so doing, I take a reflexive approach to my role as participant-observer and frame my interpretation in epistemic (in)justice terms of 'silencing' and 'smothering' (Dotson, 2012)

6. Problematising myself as a researcher and participant-observer

As I processed my data, I re-read the minutiae of the informal conversations in story circle sessions and found a comment by Storyteller 3 that aided my reflexive practice. After the participants had 'broken the ice' and revealed their true feelings about the end of the programme, they recalled how they felt about joining the DST project. Storyteller 3 said:

> 'I wondered why [FLP Researcher] was contacting me after such a long time. I initially thought, "why must I help another one? (researcher)"'.

Non-academic members of the University and the town's communities have previously expressed similar sentiments about their relationships with academic communities. For instance, through teacher and student conversations, I was aware of instances where some township children complained about a lack of reciprocity by students who sought their collaboration on journalism assignments. Researchers and students are often challenged to find new participants and collaborators. I factored Storyteller 3's scepticism into my reflexive analysis and regarded it as a marker of our divide in the workshops.

I had identified a lacuna in our mutual inability to describe the significance of the participants' experiences of injustice that they were unable to convey in their stories. For a participant-observer researcher involved in a reflexive thematic analysis of narrative, it was ironically fitting that I was experiencing my own dramatic moment in the 'story' of my findings. Having described and attempted to ascribe meaning to themes from story circle discussions, activities and final stories, I felt my interpretive process had stalled as I mulled over the submerged truths. It seemed to me that the non-linear process of interpreting the data yielded more questions than answers. Either my data fell short of the theoretical frameworks I was using to understand them, or my utilisation of theory was failing the data. The extract below from Braun and Clarke (2021) resonated strongly with what I was experiencing at this point in my data interpretation:

> 'Ho, Chiang, and Leung (2017) provide a vivid example of this process of 'dwelling with' data, and of 'continuously and rigorously reflect[ing] on their own taken for

> granted thinking' (p. 1760) when researching the experiences of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) working in Hong Kong, using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to TA. Ho documents his wondering about unspoken meaning behind the words spoken by participants, reflecting on his personal experiences of hiring FDHs and working as a junior nurse, imagining and questioning how he would feel in situations described and experienced by participants, following insights, looking for instances of similar or contrary language and experiences in the data, and pondering these.'

In Chapter 3 on methodology, I described approaches appropriate for researchers in my position as a White, female, educated researcher working in a Euro-Western research paradigm. Hall's (2014)'s suggestion that such researchers be mindful of binaries and work towards creating balances of power by being 'respectful', choosing 'face-to-face' engagements, being 'generous' and 'cautious' (Hall 2014) guided my interactions with the participants. This advice is closely aligned with McHugh's (2017) contextual descriptions of researchers working with 'communities of resistance' who have a 'social heritage of oppression'. At this juncture, I interpreted that my positionality as participant-observer was a factor in the politics of representation, and I should become increasingly reflexive henceforth. It was incumbent on me to acknowledge my subjective involvement in particular DST activities which might influence how I interpret them (for instance, having worked as a DST facilitator in the past, was I subconsciously invested in having my DST method succeed for the participants which might have the unintentional consequence of skewing my interpretation?) With this in mind I pursued a critical analysis to deeply explore implicit themes of power imbalances and prejudices indicated in the data to illuminate the participants' ontological orientation to the SFL programme and themselves as parent workers.

One of the pillars supporting my approach was pursuing the virtues of epistemic justice. Although I was an independent researcher (and hearer), the participants may have perceived me to represent the university, necessitating the need to remain reflexive about my positionality and cognisant of how any prejudices I held might influence my process. Accordingly, I reviewed the story circle discussion data and reflected on the significance of the participants' exclusion of their 'unjust' SFL experience in the final stories. I considered whether my positionality pre-determined the exclusion of an open discussion. Because of his willingness to explain the group's sense of abandonment, I asked Storyteller 1 in the exit interview whether he would consider making a separate story for UCE that addressed these issues. He replied:

> "…I think the University deserves to know, like okay, they've heard about the SFL project and would want to know what has been happening in the past few… It will be like a feedback to them."

I asked him how he would go about this, but his answers became vague, and I sensed that he was being careful of not committing to specific descriptions on record. Storyteller 1 had spoken to me at length before the official interview about non-work related problems that involved his ill health and other domestic issues. However, he would not be drawn on work-stress matters. This brought to mind what Fricker had said about the personal becoming the political in her discussion on epistemic injustice as a condition for political freedom (Fricker 2013). I reflected on what Storyteller 1 might think who and what I represented in our conversations about topics such as parenting and mental health: perhaps he was emboldened to speak in the presence of the group about their disappointment but was more 'risk-averse' in our individual discussions, perceiving me to be more 'institutionally powerful'. While trusting me enough to converse parent-to-parent about the stresses and strains of life, he did not wish to discuss his thoughts on politics at work explicitly.

I considered the possibility that Storyteller 1 was performing an act of epistemic smothering because he felt that expressing his true feelings and concerns to the University might be perceived as criticism by the University and, therefore, 'risky and unsafe' (Dotson 2011). Whilst I had previously observed UCE staff members engaging in epistemically virtuous terms with the participants, it was possible that Storyteller 1 might worry that he or the other participants could be further harmed if the story was viewed in digitally networked public spaces (Vivienne 2016). Consequently, while Storyteller 1 trusted me nominally, my association with UCE was an unspoken boundary line between us. The following section features a broader, richer selection of data extracts that contribute not only to my interpretation of Storyteller 1's communications and the participants' broader situated context of historical struggle.

Part three

Introduction:

In Part Three, I critically examine data extracts to provide an account of the participants' DST experiences in the context of their working lives. I further support my critical analysis by interrogating the efficacy of DST as a situated practice contextualised by unjust power relations. By examining particular characteristics of DST with an epistemic (in)justice lens, I explore the dissonance in the participants' narrative as expressed in their stories and approaches to their practice. Furthermore, by locating the participants' attitudes and behaviours as acts of resistance through a critical lens, and situating them as people who interact with the external reality of the historical conditions placed upon them, I understood the nature of these acts more incisively.

Using epistemic justice as a condition of political freedom to frame the participants' communications practices:

7. A critical thematic analysis of exit interviews with an epistemic justice framing

A phenomenological interpretation approach requires the researcher to distil the data into an 'essence' (Cresswell 2013). This approach to my data collection and analysis revealed the following:

- The family literacy project was significant to the participants and represented a beneficial, fulfilling and transformative moment in their lives, and they focused on this content in their stories.
- The participants felt DST empowered them to learn new multimedia literacy skills.
- A dissonance in how the participants felt demotivated by the [16]University's handling of the end of the project, although they agreed in principle that new

[16] In the context of the academic dissertation, the researcher chose a phenomenological and critical realist analysis approach, rather than a journalistic one. This choice aligns with the research's objectives, which focus on understanding epistemic issues and representations of voice through DST. The data is interpreted accordingly, with an emphasis on how the participants express their experiences rather than making factual claims. In summary, the author's research approach centres on phenomenology and critical realism, prioritising the participants' expressions of their experiences through DST. This approach was chosen deliberately, considering the nature of the research and the researcher's positionality.

worker parents would benefit from a resuscitated post-Covid programme. They did not include this content in their stories.

- A dissonance in attitudes towards the empowering experience of DST and the erratic and poor workshop attendance, and the seemingly unenthusiastic attitude toward completing their stories.
- A dissonance in the authenticity of the participation which may have resulted in a sense of obligation on the part of the participants to 'perform' a particular representation of themselves and their experiences (Vivienne 2016).

I have approached the data extracts not as factual claims, or the truth, but as expressions of their subjective positionalities, through the lens of epistemic (injustice). Thus the data from the semi-structured exit interviews below exhibit epistemic (in)justice markers and criteria derived from the matrix tool I designed to assist a critical approach as I cycled back through the data (Braun and Clarke 2021). I contextualise and briefly describe the extracts featuring participation problems, access to resources, etc. Thereafter in points 7 and 8, I offer a critical analysis of the data to explain the dissonant findings in the points in the above paragraph. The data extracts are characterised by open-ended conversations and mutual trust and are based on questions about their DST process designed to elicit reflexive and honest responses. I asked questions that might provide me with deep insights into structural disadvantages and other contextual factors. Such questions and spontaneous follow-up questions included:

- How did you find the three-day workshop approach? Can you describe the factors that made it difficult for you to attend a full workshop?
- Do you feel there was any resistance to participating? Describe what this was and why?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being extremely 'not representative' and 10 being 'extremely representative'), how would you rate your story in terms of how it represents the authentic you?
- Who do you feel the SFL project belongs to now? How do you feel about that? What would you suggest happens now?
- If you could speak to the institution (this is confidential and we won't use your name in the feedback), what would you say to them about opportunities and access to new knowledge, facilities and other resources?

Extracts from semi-structured interviews

i. E(in)J criteria: arbitrary discrimination based on educational and class status leads to denied access and parity of participation to epistemic resources. Context: I had asked Storyteller 4 why she had difficulty attending parts of the workshop. She replied that she had to prioritise writing her matric certificate because it was essential for her to progress at work. This gave rise to a conversation about the difficulties she and her colleagues had in attempting to apply for better positions:

> **Storyteller 4:** Because we really need to know what is the reason because sometimes you will see that they advertise a post and then you don't qualify because you do not have that kind of course [qualification], and then they end up advertising it externally. But if you had that [qualification], you know that experience…We would be like 'Oh! The new staff, they are coming in!' They already have a Grade 12, so let's say I do not have Grade 12, but I have ten to fifteen years working in this department – I have experience. That person comes in, and I have to teach that person the work. And that person gets a higher post than me.
> **Jane:** How does that make you feel?
> **S:** It really hurts. It really hurts. Yoh, I'm like, yoh!
> **J:** And do you not get recognised for that experience at all?
> **S:** Not at all. You know, sometimes, it's just that if you go to your line manager and she's like 'Yoh, this one, how could you come here and tell me to try and take it to this level?' Sometimes I'll feel like I can do better than that particular [new person with Grade 12] person. Let her try me. I will show her flames. But you can't. Because it will look like other way around, you see.

Storyteller 4 has received a testimonial deficit based on her schooling grades which are an arbitrary indicator of her ability to do the job given her experience. The harm is further entrenched through the indignity of having to teach the person with better school grades how to do the job. Storyteller 4 feels hurt and overlooked and expresses a desire to resist the injustice ('I will show her flames') but cannot because she believes the manager's prejudice against her will further undermine her credibility. Storyteller 2's testimony about access to epistemic resources such as short courses expands our understanding of workplace epistemic injustices:

> **Storyteller 2:** There was this supervision course that was online which everyone wanted to do, but some people are demotivated. Because they know that they (managers) will always be like, "No, no."

Storyteller 2's incredulity and confusion were palpable as she told the story of a fellow worker whose short course application was declined by a manager who inexplicably admitted other lower-grade workers. Storyteller 2 exclaimed: "How is that possible? It's not happening only to that lady". I asked Storyteller 2 what would happen if her colleague met

with a more senior manager to voice her concerns. Storyteller 2 provided further evidence of arbitrary discrimination: '... they'll be like: "This one has been clever now." …It's very tough, haibo, I don't know, maybe they scared that we might jump in that position and manage it very well'. Storyteller 4's and Storyteller 2's testimonies indicate instances of prejudicial testimonial deficits received by lower-ranking workers in a hierarchical workplace (Kwok 2020). Storyteller 2's suggestion that a senior manager felt threatened implies she has identified a pattern of oppressive and prejudicial behaviour in which managers from similar backgrounds cannot curb the impulse to protect their newfound power by undermining the credibility of others. These reflections resonate with other workplace theories of schadenfreude, the 'pleasure felt in response to another's misfortune' and 'tall poppy syndrome', where high achievers are cut down as an act of resistance (Dasborough & Harvey 2016).

ii. E(in)J criteria: Denied access to knowledge based on arbitrary social class discrimination. Context: Storyteller 3, who participated the least in the workshops, was generous with her time for an exit interview. The quietest during workshop discussions, Storyteller 3 spoke freely to me in a workers' team room with only her young child and a cleaner colleague present. She sometimes drew her colleague into our conversation when she needed to check her facts about work-related issues. Storyteller 3 was positive about learning DST skills but was not confident about publicly sharing her story.

> **Jane:** Do you feel like there's space for you to use your DST knowledge in this university with your colleagues?
> **Storyteller 3:** No, I can't explore to others because I don't have access. For example, sometimes I want to use a computer. I hurt, because I don't have a computer. I don't know how I can explain it because there is maybe a few people that want you to be successful. And the others, you will see that they will say to you, "You are just a cleaner, what's the use." For example, there was a course that was advertised, ne, then they said they only want grade six and above. So if you are a grade one up to grade five you won't benefit on that course."

In the extract above, it is clear that what is foremost on Storyteller 3's mind is the lack of access to resources and knowledge based on her worker status. That she communicates it to me is significant, because although I might represent the institution in her eyes, I had developed a trust relationship with Storyteller 3 and the others by deeply listening to them in the workshops. In our semi-structured interview, Storyteller 3's reflections centred on the politics of working at the University as a marginalised subaltern, citing oppressive and unfair

working conditions. She links from 'the personal' by expressing her belief that other parents would benefit from the literacy project and DST as she did, to the political (Vivienne 2016) as she answers the question: 'do you think it is important for working class parents to have parenting stories to share?':

> **Storyteller 3**: It's important. It is very important. But it also depends if you are interested or not. But if you are interested, it is not simple. The situation now with the University, it's not easy as before, we are not happy at work...Also that thing of maybe you want to go outside to the lawns as workers, sometimes getting stressed [from working inside the building], cleaning the buildings and then there is nothing else after that. We used to have fun. Maybe we go somewhere and relax ourselves or maybe there is a meeting with tea, but we don't do those anymore now.
> **Jane**: is it because of Covid, or why is this?
> **Storyteller 3:** I don't know why. And we don't know. And also we have [been] complaining about financial problems. We are stressed; we are stressed a lot.

By not being able explain why she and her colleagues have been marginalised, Storyteller 3 has made a 'semi-failed attempt to render an experience intelligible' because she does 'not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings' and cannot make sense of a 'significant area' of her 'social experience' (Fricker 2013). In other words, if her managers communicated openly with her and her colleagues as equals, Storyteller 3 would better understand why her freedoms are being curtailed, and attempt to remedy these acts. However worker staff supervisors are unlikely to adopt this approach given the external reality of an environment of labour rationalisation, cost-cutting and managerialism at the University.

iii. E(in)J *criteria: Denied parity of participation and exploitation through arbitrary discrimination based on social status*

Context: Workers fear losing their jobs if they challenge their superiors. Storyteller 4 spoke about a time when jobs were more secure before pay scales were reassigned to different worker grades. Grade 1 workers were classed as Grade 2 but received no rise in pay, and all the cleaners were Grade 2 workers, which 'we tried to fight because it is not fair.' Terrible working conditions in student residence bathrooms during the drought made it feel even less fair, as Storyteller 4 describes:

> **Storyteller 4:** Now there's always no water. We'll go around fetch water in the tanks. And we'll go and Storyteller 2 everything there you fStoryteller 2 and fStoryteller 2 and then clean after that. Sometimes it goes up and fell down in the flow. And you have to pick that up. And we're like, this is not supposed to be the grade for the

> cleaners. I wish there were cameras where they could see what to go through. But it is work. We want to be there. We want to put something on the table for our kids and family.

The fact Storyteller 4 wishes cameras could capture the conditions signifies she thinks her own testimony will be discredited. That she says they want to be there because it is work indicates she feels they have no power to change the status quo. What Storyteller 4 describes feels like an abusive relationship resonant of both a social and epistemic injustice.

Storyteller 1 was the only participant who did not explicitly criticise his working environment. However, whether he was *motivated to complete his story and to share or not share* was significant, given the seemingly contradictory data from the exit interviews. In his interview I asked Storyteller 1 whether he would consider using his story to make the University management aware of the issues the group has with them to fix the problems. Storyteller 1's responded: 'It will depend…if I'm given a few things to talk about then I'll have to brainstorm them…and choose my wording perfectly, then, ja,ja.' His wording reveals he is wary of this audience, so he exhibits partial agency ('if I'm given'). I asked him to clarify whether he believed his story would assist in aspects of work such as access to promotions opportunities:

> **Storyteller 1:** Yes. Because the last time I saw the importance of the digital storytelling, I think there are so many [reasons to use it]. Many people have different problems regarding their health, like someone cannot hear properly. But through digital storytelling, the visuals can say a lot and someone who is visually impaired. But the voices also can say a lot and that is one of the things that I like about it. I think it caters to almost everyone. If you can't see you can hear what he's talking about. If you can't hear it, you can see what is going on. Ja.

From the extract above it is evident that despite his unhappiness at work, Storyteller 1 regards his access to DST and the skills he has acquired as an epistemic resource. It might also aid fellow marginalised colleagues in understanding their structural disadvantages at work and function as a tool to communicate their concerns. I framed my reading of Storyteller 1's response in epistemic justice terms describing how marginalised people are equipped to make meaning of significant social events (Fricker 2007; Polhaus 2017; Alcoff 2017). Another example of epistemic injustice is recorded in Storyteller 3's interview, where some supervisors and managers deny workers participation in epistemic spaces. To illustrate her point, Storyteller 3 recalls her experience of feeling actively *blocked from knowing* why she was *prevented from applying* for a more senior role that was 'promised' to her.

Accordingly, Storyteller 3 felt unable to communicate intelligibly to her (more powerful) manager.

> **Storyteller 3:** …I don't want to lie, Jane. I was distressed, distressed. And we don't have – I don't know how to speak to them because I don't want to go to my manager and sit down and talk to her about how I feel. Because she said she can't do anything about it. …she promised, promised, promised, but empty promises.
> **Jane:** I wonder if she doesn't have any power herself?
> **Storyteller 3:** She's the one who had the power. When you are a manager, you are the one [with] the power of making things happen.

It appears to Storyteller 3, as with Storyteller 4 and Storyteller 2, that her manager, among others, is blocking her intellectual self-development pursuits. Medina's (2013) explanation might account for the manager's behaviour: '[when this happens there is] wilful resistance against the kinds of knowledge that threaten one's unfair privileges'. I was profoundly moved by what the participants revealed about the social and epistemic injustices they experienced daily at work. However, at the first hearing, I questioned the data's relevance to my specific research questions around DST. Braun and Clarke's (2021) views on reflexive thematic analysis as a 'flexible' tool for experiential and critical approaches to data interpretation guided me further. They describe the process thus:

> 'It is neither a quick nor an easy process. Time and space (with the data) help develop the nuanced analyses that reflexive TA can deliver, producing rich, complex, non-obvious themes that could never have been anticipated in advance of analysis.'

The University's abandonment of the SFLAdvocates was a symptom of a greater struggle. In the story circle dialogue about the event, the participants had implicitly raised a red flag to signal (as yet) unspoken themes of a broader complex set of structural injustices. In the exit interviews, the participants felt confident enough to divulge the extent of the injustices further. As I moved back and forth between the 'abandonment' topic and the exit interview revelations, it became evident that the overarching narrative of oppression was the lens through which the participants filtered their story content. The epistemic justice achieved through the literacy programme was not unassailable; it was time-bound and tenuous, governed by an institution capable of providing the conditions for epistemic justice on one hand and removing them on the other. My observation was informed by Fricker's descriptions of true political freedom requiring 'secured non-interference' from an institution; in other words, a commitment by a system to not arbitrarily provide and then remove conditions for freedom (Fricker 2013). If the participants felt oppressed, I understood their

reticence in acquiescing to represent the university further. After being disempowered and discredited, they felt epistemically harmed, and possibly no longer identified with or trusted the University's project aims.

The analysis in the following section attempts to analyse the epistemic (in)justices for a more nuanced understanding of their import in the context of the DST process.

8. Interpreting dissonance in representations of identity and authenticity in DST

The exit interviews with the Instomi Advocates provided the most actionable data to interpret the hermeneutical lacuna critically. Their shared experiences at the hands of supervisors and managers undermined their self-belief. Fricker's point that an epistemic injustice prevents a knower from becoming who they are (2007) raises the question of whether the participants remained confident in their Advocateial roles. Not only did they feel abused by the University and distrustful of its intentions for their expanded role in the SFL intervention, but the participants might also feel obligated to do the University's bidding because of their lower-grade status. Moreover, they were experiencing a diminished sense of agency. The evidence in exit interview data of structural epistemic injustices and oppression and their reticence in continuing with the SFL programme posed a dilemma. While the DST workshops were safe spaces to recall a happy and productive time of their lives reading-for-meaning with the children and realising the benefits, the participants' daily experiences were incongruent with this narrative, framed by epistemically and socially unjust working conditions.

C4SC theory on the importance of authenticity in DST assisted my interpretation of the incongruent narrative. What the participants would be required to say to deliver an authentic account of their experiences of structural/systemic injustice invoked questions of purpose and audience. DST facilitators emphasise developing a clear purpose to effect 'owning your insight' that encourages authentic storytelling. The purpose is derived through answering the five-pointed star question of 'why do I want to tell this story?' with the resulting corollary 'to whom am I telling this story?' If the participants' 'why' was answered by, for example, 'because I want the University to know that I felt abandoned, that it was wrong and that they should find a way to keep my older children in the programme' the intended audience would probably be UCE. If the 'why' was answered with 'I want to share my positive parenting stories with other worker parents to encourage them to do the same', or 'I want to use DST to reflect on my experiences of parenting with my peers in the story circle', the audiences would

be different. One would be parent workers with the option of directly sharing their videos with other workers from their phones or Innovation Hub laptops, and the other would be retained for the private group audience of the story circle. Below are examples of the five-pointed star exercises.

The data from the exit interviews highlighted their epistemic and ontological beliefs about certain elements: they spoke of being blocked from career progression and mocked by colleagues and supervisors for striving to do so, based on their socio-economic status; they are frustrated by and feel helpless against the power plays of the worker unions and they believe they are being physically exploited. Storyteller 3's distress at not knowing how to communicate with her manager is symptomatic of experiencing disrupted epistemic agency, which is 'very likely to cause self-doubt and loss of trust in one's intellectual capacities' Altanian and Kassar (2020). The contrasting SFL experience introduced and developed their belief that it would benefit working-class parents to not only become better parents by reading-for-meaning with their children but it would disrupt systemic injustice such as other worker parents would feel 'less tired and bored at work' (Storyteller 4 interview 2021). Importantly, through the digital storytelling process, the participants could reflect on and document their knowledge, which could be construed as an act of resistance.

My subjective phenomenological interpretation 'feels' that the participants enjoyed being away from their usual work. Moreover, their reflections conveyed a sense of poignancy: while they spoke enthusiastically and in positive terms about the intervention in their past, they also lamented that their children were no longer benefiting from the support programmes, such as the homework help provided by students. They could no longer partake in the programme for many reasons, and they felt safe in the story circles to express these thoughts. The participants, except Storyteller 1, reflected at length on the structural injustices in their exit interviews.

9. Evaluating DST as a situated practice in a politically charged hyper-local context

Given these findings, it was necessary to interrogate whether this DST process was fertile ground for the participants who felt they were being systemically oppressed to produce authentic stories they felt comfortable and positive about sharing. In his exit interview, Storyteller 1 cited challenging home circumstances and work problems as reasons for not completing his final story. Storyteller 1 showed me his incomplete edit on a university computer in the interview room and recalled how he shared this edit on his mobile phone

with another colleague at the beginning of the workshop. While Storyteller 1 could find uses for DST in the workplace, he seemed to be blocked from completing his own story. As I listened to Storyteller 1 describe his difficult home and personal challenges, I wondered whether his workplace challenges (which he did not express again in this interview) of being overlooked and disrespected limited his ability to finish his story. Storyteller 1 had foreshadowed these issues in his 'like and dislike' warm-up exercise. If he was feeling oppressed, he might not wish or have the capacity to represent himself as an empowered agent of literacy development. I was reminded of the story circle discussion in which Storyteller 1 questioned Storyteller 3's hopefulness about their situation (in general) improving. If he felt hopeless, it might be challenging for Storyteller 1 to produce an authentic story that sought to inspire others through its narrative of self-empowerment.

In contrast, Storyteller 2, Storyteller 4 and Storyteller 3's attitudes towards the usefulness of DST as a tool to represent their empowered parenting experiences felt less complicated. Storyteller 2 spoke in highly enthusiastic, emotional terms about learning to use the technology and Storyteller 4 and Storyteller 3, also conveyed a positive experience. However, their erratic workshop attendance, the initial scepticism about helping 'another [researcher]', and uncontactability were uncomfortable reminders that this DST workshop was not typical of participants who felt free to attend. Moreover, I observed an apparent dissonance between what the participants *said* they could do (e.g. share their videos), and what they actually (could) do. In his exit interview, Storyteller 1 *said* he would like to share his newfound skills and story to help other disadvantaged parents make more visible representations of themselves for promotions. However, by at times being uncontactable, not completing his video, and not talking about structural workplace oppression in his exit interview, Storyteller 1's behaviour and his words were at odds. I considered whether Storyteller 1's actions were a form of 'epistemic smothering' where he anticipates the 'negative consequence for testifying' as a 'result..of [his] marginalisation' (Lee 2021).

Storyteller 1's dissonant actions align with Vivienne's point about how the group pressure to tell a coherent story and represent themselves in particular ways can lead to inauthentic individual storytelling. Marginalised storytellers can default to 'conventional forms of self-presentation over inventive and idiosyncratic forms' (Vivienne 2016 citing Nelson & Hull 2008). If the group's narrative was structured around telling a linear, positive parenting experience, for Storyteller 1 to 'stick to the script', he did not have the flexibility to offer alternative (inventive or idiosyncratic) representations of his experience to accommodate his dissonant feelings. Vivienne's theory becomes increasingly relevant in light

of how DST facilitators can shape tropes of self-expression resulting in archetypal stories (Vivienne 2016). UCE's DST's adherence to Lambert's seven elements and other features inhere such archetypal storytelling. Not only was the group's narrative shaped through their shared experiences, but I had provided them with a model of storytelling that, while enabling authenticity, also followed archetypal modes, such as 'the journey' and 'my adventure', with a beginning, middle and end. A further factor weighing on Storyteller 1's mind could be the pressure of different audiences who expect, perceive and experience representations by certain groups differently (Vivienne 2016; Plush 2015). Accordingly, they influence the telling of stories. While the participants' ostensible audience was worker parents, they knew their stories might be viewed by University management.

With the attached filter of a second audience, the participants had even more reason to tell normative stories about their successes in parenting because including the injustice they felt at being abandoned would disable a 'happy ending'. An alternative way of dealing with the injustice as a dramatic moment might have been to turn it into a questioning of the future of the SFL programme; a hint that all is not well. In the story circle discussion after the five-pointed star exercise, in which the participants described the abandonment and other workplace injustices, I had suggested to Storyteller 1 that he consider including the negative experience in a way that spoke the truth but did not 'name names', or create two stories - one for 'truth-telling' in the safe space of the story circle, and another 'normative' one for other parents and management. He firmly chose to tell the 'normative' story, and their scripts included very mild references to a pause in the programme, with none about their feelings of disillusionment and disempowerment. This omission ensured new worker parents would focus on the benefits of the literacy intervention and strongly emphasised how it transformed the participants. Ironically, the abandonment they experienced and did not reflect upon in their stories induced a state of confusion and lack of confidence, eroding the transformative gains they made. In her exit interview, after an anecdote about being arbitrarily denied an opportunity to study further, Storyteller 2 addressed my question of whether she would make a different story for different audiences in future. She would tell other stories, but warned that she would need to tread carefully in a story for University management:

> **Storyteller 2**: For work-related, Jane, I would want to stay anonymous. It's (stutters) like I'll be putting like a black ink, but I'll be telling you a truth. Nothing but the truth, because this is what I'm experiencing.
> **Jane**: But do you feel like you can't say that?
> **Storyteller 2**: No, no. I want to stay anonymous. Because I know it would backfire.

Storyteller 2's assertion that she was too afraid to tell the University a different story is significant because it implies she does not feel free to contest her situation. If we use Fricker' (2013) terms, her situation equates to 'interference', and she does not feel secure enough to represent herself using available channels and forms of communication. Therefore, she is operating in an institutional environment that is not free from domination (unsecured non-domination), in which she does not trust the University to give her a fair and non prejudicial hearing (Fricker 2013). Despite the epistemic resource of DST (including the Innovation Hub) as a form and channel of communication, Storyteller 2's fear of an unjust reaction from the University overwhelms DST's value as a means of contesting the unjust conditions imposed upon her. If Storyteller 2 felt secure that the University would adopt the epistemic virtue of reciprocity towards her contestation (testimony in the form of a personal digital story), in participatory media practice terms, she would 'see like a citizen'. But because Storyteller 2 desired anonymity, she had no confidence that she and her ideas would be 'acknowledged by…the state' (Plush 2015 citing Wheeler 2011). Plush's paper on the struggle for marginalised communities using participatory video (PV) to be effectively heard provides a valuable framework for situating my participants' experiences of DST. While PV is a form of participatory action research with marginalised communities co-creating documentaries over some time, C4SC characteristics of representing themselves through participatory media to advocate for social change are similar to those of DST. Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice instantiated in an audience that threatens the freedom of others' abilities to contest their conditions resonates with Plush's ideas that storytellers, through representations, need audiences to recognise and respond to them. Like Fricker's description of a discredited knower who loses self-belief, the (PV) storyteller can work in similar ways:

> "...digital video technology can lead to a sense of alienation and seeing like a subject—when your ideas are erased or omitted from the film or the results you hope for fail to materialise" (Plush 2015 citing Wheeler 2011).

This was an interesting moment at the intersection of epistemic (in)justice and C4SC: Storyteller 2 may have practised epistemic smothering because she did not feel free to create and represent herself through a contesting story in fear of her person and ideas being disregarded, belittled, 'erased or omitted.' This describes a limitation of DST as a tool of transformation. However, because the participants did create videos that represented an aspect of their transformation as parents, it is possible to view them as the first episode of a longer story that lifts the lid on structural and systemic oppression in the workplace. In the 'Recommendations' section, I elaborate on the conditions required for DST to become a

'social process' for 'active listening' in institutional spaces (Plush 2015 citing Couldry 2010 and Dobson 2014 respectively).

10. Reframing dissonance as resistance: using theories of epistemic justice and resistance to explain the 'absent' narrative

In point 8, I explored how ideas of authenticity and lack of political freedom can act to rein in the transformational power of DST. These findings are symptomatic; to appreciate their implications, it is necessary to understand their complexities. Therefore, in this section, I attempt to use more nuanced ideas of epistemic (in)justice in correlation with a theory of 'everyday resistance' to support this framing.

The exit interview data analysis in point 6 locates the participants' testimonies within a complex matrix of injustices; solving one (through the literacy programme) does not necessarily translate into other solutions; indeed, it may serve to make more visible their present-day structures of inequality, making things more unbearable. They communicated their lived experiences in a way I could understand and engage with reflexively, to elicit their true feelings and knowledge of their experiences. To me, moments of unintelligibility simply underscored the epistemic hermeneutical injustice without diminishing the participants' credibility, such as Storyteller 3's lack of insight into why some managers arbitrarily and unaccountably blocked workers from accessing resources and privileges. By listening, engaging and suspending any judgement, I attempted to provide the participants with a form of epistemic justice, insofar as I am representative of institutional knowledge (albeit partially, with no real political power of management or permanent academic staff membership).

Although I did not interview management (beyond my scope), the participants' testimonies (as expressions of their positionality) described acts of epistemic injustice characterised by wilful ignorance (Medina 2017) and arbitrary distribution of epistemic resources away from the workers. I needed to understand the relational aspect between participants and management to explain its limiting effect on C4SC and the SFL programme more widely. As Storyteller 4 pointed out, workers are bored and tired; according to Storyteller 3, they may be too stressed and unhappy to be interested in interventions. These social experiences were surely an obstacle to future DST and SFL programme success. I use particular ideas of epistemic injustice to explore the relationship between the participants and management, followed by how the notion of 'everyday resistance' contributes to the epistemic justice framing.

Fractured epistemic trust:

'Fractured epistemic trust' (Hookway 2010) occurs when knowers are denied equal participation in epistemic life such as education, work and healthcare, and as the term suggests, erodes trust in relationships. If worker parents are too tired and stressed because of what they feel are unfair work practices to be interested in participating in the SFL programme in future, they are effectively being blocked from epistemic resources that might assist them in making sense of their sociality. Managers' roles include supporting their staff through development programmes, and should therefore agree with the notion that 'knowers must work together..[and] have a right to expect that knowers will work together to develop epistemic pursuits' (Pohlhaus 2017). However, through this lens, the managers have sometimes 'fractured' the 'epistemic trust' by subverting the tacit rule of supporting all staff equally. A self-perpetuating cycle has been created wherein marginalised communities cannot pursue epistemic resources and cannot communicate effectively about these. The fact that my participants had accessed epistemic resources through the SFL programme was, in this context, anomalous. Because they could find meaning in these epistemic pursuits, managers' discriminatory practices became all the more visible to them.

Compromised epistemic participation:

For epistemic participation to occur, marginalised groups need equal access to the means of production and various resources. Resources constitute but are not limited to enough time, appropriate technology and human capital support, such as participants' line managers at work. Participation might be thwarted by disruptions to the provision of these means. Access to participation is not in itself a whole set of criteria for epistemic justice to occur in such workshops, but it lays a foundation of good faith on the part of institutional power (Pohlhaus 2017). To better understand how these criteria function for my participants in the DST process, I thought of the analogy where a spouse seeks individual psychological counselling for relationship problems. The other spouse does not attend the therapy because they do not believe or are unaware of their partner's unhappiness. As such, their knowledge of the discussions is limited to a general sense of how unhappy their partner is. In the sessions, the partner seeking therapy may complain about the other, and the therapist's job is to equip that patient with skills, including coping and communication. Depending on the extent and nature of the non-patient partner's ability to listen and engage non-judgmentally, the partner in therapy may or may not successfully deploy the new coping and communication skills. In

such a power dynamic the partner who listens may choose to discredit the other who speaks about their problems, thereby preventing their partner from making themselves heard and understood.

It must be assumed that by permitting the participants to attend the workshops, the supervisors and line managers supported this venture; qualitative assessments of their attitudes, however, were unavailable. The co-facilitator and I witnessed the participants' testimonies of deep-seated unhappiness about their working conditions, and as facilitators, we equipped them with new multimedia storytelling skills designed to facilitate deep reflection and possible means to agitate for social change should that be their purpose (C4SC). While some theorists think marginalised knowers are underestimated as capable agents of change who can create 'epistemic friction' by using available epistemic resources to contest and draw attention to their oppression openly, (Medina 2017), the DST participants were unwilling to create such a visible narrative. This is because, like the spouse in therapy, there is no guarantee that their new coping and communicating skills can guarantee a receptive non-judgemental audience for their personal digital stories. If they are experiencing fractured epistemic trust, they will want to weigh the possible consequences of engaging the University through their stories.

An unwillingness by marginalised knowers to engage in an epistemic space can also be due to 'epistemic smothering', which arises from a lack of reciprocity by more powerful others (Medina 2017). If, for example, Storyteller 2 and Storyteller 1 anticipated a lack of reciprocity in the University audience that rendered them ignored or belittled due to their lower-grade worker status, they would hide narrative elements that challenged the dominant attitudes and behaviours of their superiors. Smothering is a form of self-silencing that can result from a knowers' loss of confidence and self-belief when they have received a credibility deficit (Fricker 2007), and of storytellers who feel too vulnerable sharing their stories outside of their trusted, more intimate audiences (Vivienne 2016). According to Medina (2013):

> "Silencing is one of the areas in which we cannot separate out communicative and epistemic agency: it is because of impoverished communicative dynamics without reciprocity and uptake that epistemic trust cannot be established and credibility is undermined; and when epistemic subjectivity and agency are seriously compromised…"

Reclaiming the narrative:

I find Medina's study of communicative dynamics informative in understanding the intersection of C4SC and epistemic injustice. Both inhere an audience, a speaker's point of view - and if we include Fricker's point on 'sensing' credibility through the humanness of testimony - an emotional connection. The participants were clear about their reasons for creating the 'normative' stories to show other parents. In a WhatsApp voice note sent to me after her exit interview, Storyteller 2 highlighted the theme of overcoming hardships to educate her daughter, and that she wants 'other parents to know and to see our journey because digital storytelling is a tool we can use to share with others. I also want countries like the UK and US to see how we can help to educate our children despite all our challenges.' Storyteller 4's impulse to share the video with her colleagues so that they were 'able to wish to be there and not just sit there at work and be tired,' is a C4SC characteristic of triggering social change through storytelling (Gubrium & Turner 2011). In theory, her video was a messaging tool created through personal testimony, the selection of images (although incomplete) and the significant inclusion of her daughter's piece-to-camera. These attributions strengthened Storyteller 4's testimony, and provided her daughter with her own epistemic credibility - something Storyteller 4 did not have as a young girl. Storyteller 4 believed sharing her message on social media could be a more powerful strategy than speaking to people at ad hoc intervals. However, in practice, Storyteller 4 appeared to lack interest in fixing the technical issues such as text running out of frame and black frames, and finding new images, and her video has not been shared from its location in a shared Google drive at UCE. Insofar as the participants affirmed and reflected their newfound knowledge and skills in their stories, they did not mobilise to complete their videos or use them as messaging tools by sending them to other parents. How UCE distributes the videos to target other parents depends on their recruitment strategy. We made it clear to the participants that the DST workshops were for them to reflect on and to share with other parents of their own accord.

These findings also represent the participants' new-found power to contribute to the SFL programme in a way no one else can. In utilising and applying the intervention's resources and then by testifying, the participants' voices are foregrounded. It is also possible that they addressed feeling abandoned by the programme administrators by retelling the positive experiences in their own way. By controlling the editorial process and the option to share or not share their stories, the participants can calibrate possible audience responses. Storyteller 4's brief mention of sadness when the SFL programme ended left room for ambiguous interpretation. The ambiguity could be a result of the dissonance in trying to

reconcile two different audiences in her communications: sadness could be interpreted as proof of a positive experience or it could be interpreted as a thickly veiled complaint, depending on who was watching. While Storyteller 4, Storyteller 3 and Storyteller 2 completed their stories, they conveyed that they wanted to alter and fix some of the images. The parents showed the videos to their children and only Storyteller 3's video was screened by UCE at a new SFL programme recruiting meeting. The programme's new coordinator, the research co-facilitator, observed a mild impact:

> "I think generally it helped, seeing that the participant was the focus of a video, and hearing someone talk from their child's perspective was picked up on. We didn't get too much response/discussion on the video without prompts, though. I reckon that was just because of the type of meeting it was, and the first one." (Storyteller 3 WhatsApp message, 2022).

While the co-facilitator and I offered assistance to the participants in completing their videos, they said their schedules blocked them. I wondered whether the act of not completing their videos was a (sub)conscious form of resistance whereby they sought to stabilise the power imbalance they felt at the hands of the institution ('we will not do their bidding'). I considered how the participants may have subconsciously attempted to activate a block as equal and opposite a force as those dealt to them by the University. By not being contactable, not attending regular workshops, and not completing their videos, they were embodying a form of resistance. I build on this idea in point 10.

Everyday resistance:

Thus far, I have situated my research in terms of how fractured epistemic trust can lead to compromised participation by marginalised communities in institutionalised spaces. Furthermore, given the indications of an ambiguous attitude towards their audience(s), I have suggested the participants may have subconsciously 'reclaimed the narrative' by inserting themselves as 'blocks' into the editorial and public sharing (sharing) processes by being hard to access (uncontactable and busy) and to some extent, disinterested. In lieu of de facto data from the participants affirming my suggestions, I acknowledge these ideas might misconstruct the participants' behaviour regarding DST. A phenomenological approach accommodates data's implicit properties such as what a researcher might regard as 'not said' or 'not acted upon', or an instantiation of the 'almost visible', that so-called 'elephant in the room'. Theorising 'the elephant' is my attempt to provide an epistemically just and critical

view of the nature of the participants' communicative dynamics in their structurally disadvantaged environment.

By being difficult to contact and communicate with, excluding a narrative about their disappointment in how the programme ended and contextualising it in terms of oppression at work, the participants might be enacting 'everyday resistance'(Vinthagen and Johansson, 2013). This form of resistance is characterised by the absence of a conscious motive and purpose. It manifests in acts not perceived as intentionally harmful or explicit such as an organised protest. It is harder to detect and understand because, unlike normative ideas of resistance, where it is easy to distinguish the oppressed from the oppressors, 'everyday' resistance has non-binary characteristics. Everyday resistance is characterised through interactions between power and resistance which are ''historically entangled with everyday power', ''intersectional and contextually'' based (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013: 31-32), such as "poaching, evasion or foot dragging''or "a millenial religion" subculture (2009: 5). Therefore it is possible for someone not regarded as marginalised to practise everyday resistance, as Vinthagen and Johansson (2009: 32) state: "Any subject might then be subaltern in one power relation, while superordinate in other power relations…".

For my analysis, the most significant features of everyday resistance are "hidden transcripts of anger", or the "weapons of the weak", which Vinthagen & Johansson (2009: 5) extrapolate from Scott's (1985) seminal ideas. Transcripts refer to the hidden messages that resisters do not disclose in open, "invariably quiet, disguised or anonymous in form" (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013: 6 citing Scott 1989: 37). Transcripts are often representations of identity, which is a useful lens to view the participants' approach to their stories. An intersectional study of women hotel workers was illuminating in terms of how differently the women communicated aspects of race, class, ethnicity, gender and nationality concerning unequal power structures at work (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013:32).)

For example, to some women being a migrant worker was helpful, to others it was a hindrance. Overall, the women considered that the combined effect of these aspects of their identities lessened their powers at work. The act of communicating these narratives about themselves is particularly relevant to my analysis: "... that women tend to *emphasise certain identities and downplay others is a narrative practice*" (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013:31-32).

The researchers interpreted that the women were practising a form of resistance by presenting only certain aspects of their identities, hence the term 'hidden transcripts'. It is possible the participants in my research included only particular aspects of their identities in their digital stories to make public. The idea of hidden transcripts to representations of

identity in digital storytelling practices reinforces Vivienne's observation that for a marginalised storyteller, it can be challenging to authentically convey a coherent identity (or story of self) in three minutes of video (Vivienne 2016:76). Vivienne suggests possible reasons for elisions in stories are to do with storytellers' inclinations to 'celebrate' the here and now and that "definitive statements of self tend to foreclose other possible future incarnations" and quoting Kaverney, (1999:149):

> "Often, to describe oneself is simply to describe a particular moment, to say who we were in a particular year. It is a matter of prudence not to burn bridges that we may, as individuals, find ourselves in need of sooner or later."

Vivienne's book 'Digital Identity and Everyday Activism' investigates how DST might aid those with vulnerable identities in bringing their voices into public networked spaces. While elisions of storytellers' identities are constitutive of the challenging nature of the creative process, the focus on telling the 'here and now' was interestingly in contrast to my participants' decisions to represent themselves only in ahistorical terms. Instead of celebrating their current parenting and literacy practices as literacy agents, they celebrated past events when they felt empowered as parents and literacy agents in their communities. It struck me that instead of using DST to engage in everyday activism, they instead engaged in everyday resistance. Seen through this lens, the participants' actions are not binary in nature, such that they embody traditional notions of openly resisting a unidimensional power (institution), but are characteristic of subaltern identities "embedded in complex overlapping social networks in which individuals simultaneously assume positions of domination and subordination" (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013:32 citing Gramsci 1997:32). In this way we can better understand the dissonance of producing a story that does not 'burn bridges' and participating in workshops in ad hoc ways. The participants interacted with power (insofar as The co-facilitator and I represented the institution) so as to resist it without causing themselves further harm. So understood, it is also likely that the participants were not consciously or deliberately resisting the DST experience, nor the facilitators. As the explicit data from discussions, the final stories and exit interviews suggests, the participants were courteous, friendly and accommodating.

In understanding and naming the 'elephant in the room', the addition of the everyday resistance lens enhances theories of epistemic justice because of similar epistemic orientations to analysing representations of identity, concerning resistance and power. Everyday resistance explains how instances of fractured epistemic trust and compromised participation in epistemic practices can translate into a form of action. By withholding aspects

of their identities, the participants are smothering their testimonies. Such self-silencing can thus be regarded as everyday resistance to ongoing structural oppression.

In Chapter 5, I summarise key findings of my research about understanding how DST can reveal instances of epistemic injustice and/or facilitate instances of epistemic justice. I discuss these in global terms of value and contribution to the field of study in these areas and use these as a guide for a set of recommendations the continued practice of DST at the University.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter concludes the research by summarising the key findings in relation to the study's aims and questions of how DST can facilitate reflections on epistemic (in)justices by the University worker parents. It incorporates the expanded research question and findings of how DST aided in drawing out and representing new instances of epistemic (in)justice. I discuss the potential of the findings to contribute to a better understanding of how epistemic (in)justice can assist in interrogating the efficacy of DST as a method for promoting conscientisation and social change. In addition I discuss the limitations of engaging in a participatory communications project situated in an institutional environment contextualised by historical structural inequality, and reflexively consider the role of facilitator and researcher. With lessons from the findings and limitations in mind, I offer recommendations for the University to consider in implementing DST programmes to close hermeneutical epistemic injustice gaps and create the conditions for 'just' storytelling practices for all its staff.

1. Summary of key findings

"Support may still be needed in terms of executing many of the ideas, but it would seem that the targets of change are becoming the agents of change" commented FLP Researcher about the SF LAdvocates' communications efforts around the SFL intervention are profound in the context of my research. The SFL Advocates had inculcated a culture of reading in their children and, in so doing, experienced newfound agency – to the point of appointing themselves as the programme's Advocates. Three years later, their ambitions around the project lay dormant in the grip of Covid-19 restrictions on social interactions. This was the ostensible and easily understood context in which the parents had engaged with me in the DST process to reflect on their literacy experience.

The research aimed to answer how DST might facilitate instances of epistemic justice and reveal those of epistemic injustices experienced by worker parents who had participated in the SFL family literacy project. *FLP Researcher's* findings echoed the participants' own observations that many benefits of the programme amounted to epistemic justice and were, therefore, suitable candidates for expressing such instances through the participatory media of

DST. As a narrative tool, DST processes are designed to facilitate 'reflection in action', allowing for authentic representations of identity. I aimed to test how the participants might utilise the story circle discussions and the digital stories in a way that revealed epistemic justice and injustice – in the sense of storied reflections of both conditions, and in the sense of accessing the means (the process, knowledge and technology) that DST afforded them to engage epistemically.

While we provided the resources for the participants to engage with DST, access to them in the beginning was poor because of pandemic restrictions placed on qualitative research processes. The face-to-face workshops that replaced the Zoom sessions resolved the communications difficulties associated with online formats, enabling a more genuine connection, with less risk of miscommunication, creating better conditions for interpretive research (Cresswell 2013).

Despite this deeper and more natural social engagement, the participants did not fully engage in the process in a way I had experienced with previous workshop participants from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. In these workshops (three non-consecutive days), the participants' attendance was erratic, they were often uncontactable and at times lacked enthusiasm. I had not anticipated this style of participation, and I was concerned that the data would not be robust enough to address my research aims. When the participants revealed their disappointment in being cut off from the SFL programme, and their despair at their working conditions, their mistreatment at the hands of the University was foregrounded. At this point in the workshops, it was not apparent that these injustices explained the participants' 'problematic' approach to the DST process; indeed, many participants engage with DST to reflect on and share their common experiences of oppression and attempt to create counter-narratives in their stories (Lambert 2010; Vivienne 2016; Gubrium & Turner 2012).

The participants spoke overtly about their working conditions in one story circle discussion and extrapolated on these in their exit interviews. Their anecdotes revealed working class injustices that included anecdotes of Storyteller 3 working long hours cleaning flooded bathroom floors, Storyteller 1 and Storyteller 2 being overlooked for promotions and short courses and Storyteller 4 experiencing the injustice of having to train someone with a matric certificate appointed ahead of her because she did not have one. Storyteller 4 was 'a knower' capable of teaching her daughter to read and 'a knower' of the job of the person appointed above her. But, her lack of formal academic qualifications meant she was not credited as a knower and was forced to train the incumbent. In this way, the university credits

the participants for their literacy achievements at one moment in time and discredits them the rest of the time at work through exploitative and epistemically unjust practices. It is, however, unclear to what extent the participants would make these experiences visible had we changed the theme and purpose of the participants' digital stories to one of reflecting on these injustices. The participants responded cautiously and apprehensively to the question of, '*if you could tell a different story to management, would you tell it and how would you tell it?'*, indicating they do not feel free to express their true opinions. During the workshop, we signalled our support to them should they wish to tell stories about disappointments and struggles at work. It was significant that they selected to portray only the golden moment of their recent past when they felt empowered as SFLAdvocates.

The participants' unwillingness to challenge the narrative of oppression (which in Fricker's (2013) terms equates with political interference) was simultaneously puzzling and fascinating, especially as we (facilitators) had engaged empathetically and assured the participants that they were not obliged to share their stories outside of the story circle. Theorising the 'elision' of data in their stories became entangled with critically interpreting the detailed accounts of oppression in the workplace. The workshop data, including the final stories, revealed the participants had experienced epistemic justice through their SFL intervention achievements. They had been provided with epistemic resources by the University to correct their lack of exposure to reading-for-meaning practices under Bantu education. They had engaged with these resources to upskill themselves and create a culture of reading in their homes and by extension, their communities. In so doing, they felt acknowledged and respected by their children and communities. When the programme ended, these epistemic justice gains were eroded by being 'abandoned', and the ongoing pernicious and arbitrary acts of epistemic injustice at work were made all the more visible and unbearable. The hermeneutical nature of the epistemic injustices is revealed in the data extracts where the participants cannot articulate an understanding of the significance of these pernicious injuries, expressing their confusion and lack of insight by saying they do 'not know why' managers are oppressing them and that they anticipate being ignored or belittled if they attempt to reason with them.

In attempting to clarify the participants' approach to DST, I determined that while stories of injustice were not reflected in the digital stories, the story circle discussions provided the participants a space to be heard. I was interested in why they did not want to extend their testimonies beyond the story circle, and in searching for a more robust theoretical fit, I consulted theories of resistance (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). Everyday

resistance theory suggests that hermeneutical gaps are not limited to communicative spaces between subaltern participants and their managers. Because subaltern relationships to power are fluid and intersectional in an institutional space the participants could extend these relations to other institutional spaces involving dynamic interaction between the university and participants. This implies that marginalised knowers who have fractured epistemic trust can transfer acts of epistemic smothering (Dotson 2011) beyond the immediate spaces of oppression.

Through a critical realist lens, the participants' accounts of their experiences describe working for a university that simultaneously oppresses (Author name and publication withheld) and liberates (through the reading solution) working-class staff . Their communication is that some supervisors and line managers continue to secure their privileges by mistreating their subordinates in ways that mirror the Freireian notion that the oppressed become the oppressors (Freire 1970). If the participants's epistemic trust in the University had been fractured (Medina 2013) because they were systematically denied access to epistemic resources such as career enhancement courses and access to computers, being belittled and mocked for being 'too clever', it follows that a hermeneutical epistemic gap exists between the institution and the participants (and by extension, other worker staff). In these circumstances, when UCE invited them to continue to represent the University as SFL Advocates, with the expectation that they would want to, it is to be anticipated that the participants would feel ambiguous about this proposition. Their lived experience of participating in the reading programme represented an empowering and uplifting time of their lives that, for a short while, obscured the systemic workplace exploitation. Once the reading programme ended, and they could no longer supply books to their children, they felt their subjection to social and epistemic injustice of exploitation and deprivation of epistemic resources more acutely. This deepened the hermeneutical epistemic injustice gap, rendering them incapable of intelligibly communicating their ambiguous feelings in our DST interactive communicative space. By not fully participating, and because of the narrative elisions of aspects of their everyday identities, the participants were subtly and almost imperceptibly challenging the DST process. They could be characterised as low-risk acts of resistance situated in dynamic, fluid and intersectional spaces of power relations (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). To achieve epistemic justice, Medina (2017) emphasises that institutions should pursue the virtue of reciprocity when engaging with marginalised voices. By withdrawing their participation, the participants were effectively withdrawing their reciprocity as an act of everyday resistance to the relationships' entanglements with

intersections of class, race and power. While they were engaged, friendly and cooperative in relating to the co-facilitator and me, they were possibly resisting their daily injustices by acting subtly and unconsciously to undermine the university's attempts to corral their ongoing support for the SFL programme. The DST participation process presented a low-profile, low-risk environment in which to resist the University. Regarding C4SC, their dissonant self-representations and compromised workshop participation diminished their capacity to communicate for social change as literacy and parenting 'everyday' activists (Vivienne 2016), prompting them instead to perform everyday resistance (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013).

2. Research limitations

Through lenses of epistemic injustice and resistance theory, the participants brought complex latent experiences of systemic social and epistemic injustices into the DST process that were only revealed through a critical analysis of dissonant data. Combined with the impact of Covid, the DST project was overdetermined by these external realities. However, by applying various theoretical frameworks through a critical realist lens, the findings contribute to an understanding of DST in contexts of institutional injustice. By accepting this finding, it is necessary to understand the limitations of conducting DST in such settings. The research design prevented facilitation external to the university environment. Only in retrospect, with an understanding of the nature of our interactions in which the participants may have perceived me as representative of the university, did I comprehend the impact on my research. To the participants, the co-facilitator and I were part of the establishment and in the sense of non-binary everyday resistance, represented the fluid nature of workplace oppression in which we could be simultaneously supportive and threatening. As fractured epistemic trust is systemic, it follows that University facilitators inhere the potential to instil further harm if we are not virtuous in our interactions. The participants did not feel truly free to represent their identities in ways that might contribute to social change.

3. Contributions and recommendations

Applying epistemic (in)justice theories in my research has deepened my understanding of DST practices in an institutional setting. Using this framework, I have observed that marginalised participants, who have been testimonially discredited, struggle to communicate

and ‘make meaning’ of their experiences in hermeneutically unjust spaces, expressing their fractured trust through compromised participation and digital stories that do not convey ‘the whole truth’. These expressions may be regarded as acts of everyday resistance to oppressive power structures. If DST is utilised as a tool for participants such as the SFL Advocates, it is necessary to acknowledge that these acts are expressions of resistance, and for the DST process to accommodate them in meaningful ways. It is important that participants do not experience further epistemic injustice by engaging in these interactive spaces. Therefore, I recommend that facilitators (independent or part of the institution) inhere virtues of epistemic justice to create conditions for what I term ‘just storytelling’.

Fricker’s (2013) explication of how institutions can improve conditions for epistemic justice is illuminating. I conclude my research by describing Fricker’s theories on how institutions can improve conditions for epistemic justice and facilitate DST for communicating for social change.

1. How institutions fail their communities

As Fricker (2013) states, institutions are not necessarily implicated in knowingly committing epistemic injustices. But if institutions are committed to ethical operations, it behoves them to critically review their practices and attitudes, particularly towards employees with subaltern socio-economic status. If these groups, such as the SFL Advocates, are involved in epistemic pursuits provided for by an institution, in which they gain knowledge in areas such as literacy, healthcare etc., the institution should, in turn, credit them as knowers. Part of the reason institutions/management fail to do this is that if they are large, not all departments commit to the same set of values and may even be at odds with one another (Fricker 2013). The University espouses values including ‘social justice and respect for each other’, ‘equity and redress’, ‘development and wellbeing’, and ‘advancing the public good’, which are underpinned ‘by the principles of ‘accountability and courage…we are answerable to each other’ (reference document anonymised). UCE enlivens many of these values by linking university constituents such as student volunteers to communities, some of whom are university members, like the parent workers. The success with which UCE or other like-minded entities can integrate with other departments to onboard them for engagement activities is not guaranteed. This is not to say that other departments have not incorporated similar values and virtues. It is possibly more so the reality that the University is a large institution with many parts varyingly accountable to the mission values described in the university’s institutional development plan. As such, using Fricker’s theory, if the University

is viewed as a whole system, despite its communications around values and principles of justness, there are likely to be parts that lack the resources (conceptual or practical) to hear and credit marginalised groups' testimonies of their social experiences.

One might assume that the University's leadership would agree with ideas of healing fractured epistemic trust based on the alignment with its stated core values and principles—the question of how this becomes the focus. Fricker (2017) argues that even when a hearer makes every reasonable effort to listen to a speaker without prejudice, the hearer may not have the concepts or shared understanding that would make it possible. The result is that "the cause of the injustice is structural – the background hermeneutical marginalisation – and so the injustice will tend to persist regardless of individual efforts". These efforts may help to chip away at prejudice, but will not enable reform of the more prominent social problem which is what is required for ensuring that "…new areas of hermeneutical marginalisation do not keep re-emerging with new patterns of unequal power" (Fricker 2017).

I make the case below for reasons the University should take these steps and how it should do so, referencing Fricker's argument about why institutions should actively pursue epistemic justice by considering the models she proposes. Her ideas are centred on achieving political freedom, defined as non-domination (Fricker 2013). To further contextualise Fricker's theory, drawing on other views of institutions' roles in epistemic exclusion seems appropriate. Dotson's analysis of how epistemic (in)justice functions systemically speaks to 'orders of change' (Pohlhaus 2017). In a nutshell, Dotson argues that power can't listen to marginalised groups because 'the epistemic system does not allow for it, thus demanding a revolution in the entire epistemic system that unmakes this problem' (Lindsay 2020). Fricker's models for institutions to achieve epistemic justice suggest an opportunity for a structural change.

2. Theoretical construct for the University to achieve epistemic justice regarding the SFL Advocates

As explicated in the chapter on epistemic (in)justice, Fricker argues for epistemic justice to be acknowledged as a condition of political freedom (Fricker 2013). For institutions to purport to uphold values of justness, in other words, where they do not dispense with liberty at will and practise true non-domination, they need to value ideals of contestation allowing employees/members to represent themselves in ways in which they are not discredited as knowers. Fricker suggests that only when institutions possess an inner ethos that can be

expressed as a broad virtue can they achieve epistemic injustice. This ethos must be expressed as a collective (Fricker 2013).

Fricker offers three models for institutions to consider.

i. A joint commitment model: this entails all parts of the institution committing to shared goals, intending to play their part, believing that others will too and for there to be a common awareness of these conditions among the groups. This allows for a joint uptake and commitment to a particular virtue. Fricker cited a university's promotions committee as an example, stating that it would require all individuals to always practise principles of fairness, equity and consistency in their judgements. This scenario is potentially unsustainable because it is susceptible to human failures. However, the system could be supported through a:

ii. Distributed model: where sub-bodies act for a central internal value system. Fricker's example of a university with an internal distribution of virtuous labour pertains to my research. She asks if the bodies of care (such as a counselling centre) operate in silos, can one attribute the virtues to the university as a whole? Fricker maintains that this scenario could be remedied through special training, where other centres can become invested in adopting and practising virtues of care (Fricker 2013). At the University, UCE applies the train-the-trainer principle in its scholarship engagement programmes, of which DST is one. In this instance, every time someone is trained as a facilitator, they, in turn, practise the art of listening and guiding their story circle participants to tell authentic stories as a means to address social ills. In such instances, institutions will most likely overcome hermeneutical injustice only with special training.

iii. Hybrid-summative model: this describes where many virtue-driven sub-bodies work towards their virtue independently and not through a joint commitment that characterises the first model. This model requires all parties to want just outcomes achieved for the right reasons. This would be the most virtuous model, relying on a holistic absorption of shared values which make a particular ethos discernible and easily attributable to an entire institution. Interestingly, Fricker provides the example of anonymisation as an action which could lead to a just and good outcome, but which, she says, constitutes 'real justice' (Fricker 2013) due to the likelihood that if known, the speaker would be unfairly treated. Therefore, Storyteller 2's request for anonymity suggests a hermeneutical epistemic injustice at play in

which Storyteller 2 fears certain 'powers that be' do not have the necessary virtuous resources to listen to her testimony without prejudice.

The adoption of any of these models by the University rests on whether or not it has internalised its virtues as an ethos, and if it has, in what ways, and by whom. It is impossible to ascertain an accurate depiction of this research project, as it would entail obtaining hundreds of interviews and answers to questionnaires utilising different research methodologies. Notwithstanding, I believe it is still possible to focus on one sub-body to explore how epistemic justice can be achieved for parent workers, albeit partially, using Fricker's 'distributed model'. The sub-body in question is UCE, which has internalised virtues of justice associated with scholarly principles and practices of community engagement. However, I argue that while it is the case that UCE's ethos is one of social justice, there is room to incorporate more specific criteria of epistemic justice to address hermeneutical epistemic justice gaps more broadly within the university itself. If UCE can locate instances of testimonial epistemic injustice and create deliberative spaces in which management and workers alike work towards creating resources that allow for mutual understanding of one another, it would be taking a step in the right direction.

2. Recommendation for UCE to achieve epistemic justice using DST:

UCE should be commended for its achievements in practising what it preaches: creating sustainable communities through equal exchanges of assets from all parties involved in community engagement scholarship and creating spaces and opportunities for epistemic pursuits, particularly for marginalised communities. Much like Fricker's idea of the need for institutionalised power to internalise virtues for real justice to occur, community engagement practitioners recognise the need for marginalised communities to internalise knowledges that will sustain them beyond their experiences of institution-driven projects, allowing for independent functioning with the ability to drive social change.

DST is an example of such a knowledge where its train-the-trainer model aims to provide practitioners and communities with the narrative multimedia skills requisite for authentic storytelling for the common good. That the DST workshops held during the DST multi-university pilot project were successful, by measurement of robust story circle discussions and the completion and sharing of digital stories, is not a guarantee that the method is always successful. My research project with the SFL Advocates proves the

fallibility of DST in that it is not a catchall for marginalised communities to express particular kinds of oppression. Like the woman who seeks advice from a psychologist but is not guaranteed to receive a fair hearing by her partner, my participants were asked to testify about their problems with the university in the university's presence. However, in Carmona's (2022) paper about foregrounding epistemic engagement as a necessary means to strive for testimonial justice, she highlights the importance of testimony, stating, '…when there is no manifest item to be judged, such as a piece of testimony, indetermination might be overwhelming.' Carmona reminds us of Fricker's assessment that a hearer is more likely to believe someone's testimony when they *feel* (through empathy) they are telling the truth, and this builds trust in a 'virtuous hearer', which creates a condition for the hearer to reflate the speaker's credibility (Carmona 2022). As explicated in the chapter on theory, Carmona extends this notion by including the need for epistemic engagement in which it is incumbent on the hearer to seek further evidence from the speaker that could lead to friction between the two parties. I regard this as 'positive friction' in that, as Carmona suggests, new insights could develop through disagreement and even ill feelings that aid the hearer in restoring the speaker's credibility.

It is necessary to clarify that Carmona's ideas are centred on explaining a testimonial void whereby a speaker judges a hearer as epistemically 'inapt' and withholds epistemic resources, such as testimony (Carmona 2022: 1322). She represents the speakers as non-marginalised credible knowers. However, I suggest that her ideas of the need for testimony and epistemic engagement could apply to a situation with the speakers and hearers in reverse order. In stating this, I am also considerate of Dotson's argument that marginalised speakers may choose to smother their testimonies as a result of systemic epistemic violence in which they fear further testimony will cause them additional harm. Between Fricker's suggestions of a virtuous approach, Dotson's radical re-ordering for social change and Carmona's argument for robust epistemic engagement, there is much to consider for an institution to achieve testimonial justice.

My recommendations below reflect my attempt at synthesising ideas drawn from my readings of the theories of achieving testimonial justice, communication for social change and my interpretations of the participants' experiences. They are aimed at UCE and DST participants but are written with broader systemic uptake in mind:

- University community engagement departments should continue to develop opportunities for University staff and community members to understand how contested spaces can become hermeneutically challenged through prejudicial

attitudes. This would entail examining values and virtues and include how instances of testimonial and hermeneutical epistemic injustice occur through arbitrary discrimination.

- Digital storytelling facilitators need to be inducted into a critical paradigm that informs them of the implications of power relation dynamics and be equipped to adjust storytelling techniques to accommodate marginalised participants in ways that enable them to express themselves in the least harmful ways.
- In parallel, efforts could be made to encourage worker staff managers, supervisors, and Human Relations personnel to participate in DST workshops to experience listening through storytelling and feedback loops that draw attention to implicit biases.
- A DST campaign could be launched whereby staff (academic, worker and administrative) engage with ideas of DST in relation to transformation and create personal digital stories that explore their own epistemic contributions or experiences of epistemic injustice.

The points above merely serve as a brief summation of the possible actions that could be taken and are inconclusive. I hope they serve as an epistemic resource over which epistemic agents can engage and debate. They feature aspects of Fricker's distributed model in which parts of their institutions can work towards a value-driven ethos; consideration is given to instances of testimonial smothering and its implications. Epistemic engagement is advocated to generate insights into prejudicial thinking, which aligns with Fricker's idea of a contested space in which everyone can enjoy the same political freedoms.

Finally, I return to the central question on which the research focussed: the potential relationship between digital storytelling and epistemic justice in the context of a literacy intervention. Initially, the research centred on eliciting the participants' reflections of their experiences of actively participating in the development of their children's literacy. I used digital storytelling as a widely endorsed C4SD tool for transformation to explore their reflections for instances of epistemic (in)justice. What emerged at the heart of this process was an unexpected 'twist in the tail' which shifted the narrative from one of empowerment and insight to another, quite different story: a feeling of institutional oppression which appeared to pervade the participants' lives. By attempting to understand the participants' reflections both phenomenologically and critically, it is evident that on one level, the

participants engaged with their newfound literacy to validate new, positive experiences. However, the structural injustices of the past that created education and literacy deficits continue to loom large over the daily lived experiences of the worker parents. Literacy interventions are not enough to address the hermeneutical gaps that exist through systemic power imbalances, such as those found in powerful institutional spaces. While digital storytelling is a form of literacy in itself, it is limited in its ability to address and challenge power through the telling of personal stories. However, stories need not be told once, and story circles can continue to shape ideas, build connections and set their tellers free if institutions can be persuaded to really listen.

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