CHAPTER 3

Threshold Concepts in Digital Storytelling: Naming What We Know About Storywork

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Introduction

“If it looks like a duck and sounds like a duck, then it’s a duck.” As former Texans (if such a thing is possible), we basically agree that this statement is one of the things wrong with Texas. Sometimes things look and sound like ducks but are not ducks. Sometimes things are ducks that neither look nor sound like them. And a lot of the time what matters most isn’t whether the thing is a duck but whether it has an essential “duckness,” if you will: a quality of swimming or waddling or brooding or deliciousness that especially intrigues or delights us.

And so it goes with digital storytelling.

Or at least that is what we hope to explore in this chapter. With more than 20 years each using participatory media pedagogies in and beyond college classrooms, we find ourselves (as will many of our co-contributors in this volume) observing what digital storytelling has become and considering what, in essence, it distinctively retains and can more deeply be.

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Consider this: two videos of similar quality in terms of format, topic, and style; each three minutes long, telling a first-person story through voiceover narration and a sequence of images. Both done as academic homework assignments. One was produced through a process of guided critical reflection, story-sharing, and collaborative making; the other was assembled in a rush to meet a deadline—the student read the assignment, was skillful enough as a writer and video editor to compose a nice project on her own, and completed the whole thing in a few hours—the same as she might crank out any other homework task. Are both projects digital stories? Yes. Are both projects examples of digital storytelling? Yes and no. If we consider digital storytelling a genre, and if we define genre simply as a recognizable literary format, then yes both students did the work of digital storytelling. And if we consider digital storytelling a tool for pedagogy we may come to a similar conclusion: in both cases, the instructor assigned digital storytelling to achieve a set of learning objectives. But if you are reading this chapter, you have likely concluded that digital storytelling—as a genre and as a pedagogy—is more than the homeworking of reflective videos. The task of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) is to help us acquire a more sensitive understanding of the principles and practices that make digital storytelling a potentially transformative educational experience—principles and practices of storywork that may not always conform to the kinds of projects typically viewed as digital stories. Indeed, such storywork need not be digital at all.

What's in a Name? Digital Storytelling as Genre and Pedagogy

As we collaborate with SOTL researchers worldwide to understand how digital storytelling works, it is helpful to clarify our terms. For years, some pedagogical scholars foregrounded digital storytelling as a way to teach and practice media literacy in relationship to dominant media institutions and representations. In 1998, for example, Kathleen Tyner argued for the relevance of digital storytelling and other participatory media practices:

> The central objective for the study of media representation as a cognitive approach to media production is that of voice. Voice is a concept that transcends the vagaries of the image or even the politics of identity. Specifically, media production gives voice to students who are otherwise silenced in their schools and communities. It allows students to represent their experiences

> and their communities as cultural insiders, instead of the incessant misrepresentation of them by media producers outside their communities. (p. 185)

This emphasis on voice, on democratization of media production, was contrasted with an emphasis on a creative genre, an arts practice, within the developing range of arts practices made possible by broad access to information technologies. Several of us as early proponents and practitioners of the work (including Dana Atchley, Daniel Meadows, Pedro Meyer, Abbe Don) saw the digital short film as a new genre, as "sonnets from the people" as Daniel Meadows described it (Kidd 2005, pp. 66–85). Still others, particularly in the academic realm, wanted to contextualize the work within the broad ecology of media production and consumption (including the original Queenstown University of Technology group of John Hartley, Helen Klaebe, Jean Burgess, Kelly McWilliam, and Kristina Spurgeon; Norway's Knut Lundby and Grete Jamissen; and more recent scholars Pip Hardy, Bryan Alexander, Nancy Thumim, Mark Dunford, and Tricia Jenkins), situating the various models growing out of the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) methods as an encompassing genre.

As a genre, we would argue that digital storytelling is better understood through the lens of theorists like Carolyn Miller who assert that genres in all media, old and new, develop as situated forms of social action. Miller was concerned with the formulation of genre as a social construction motivated by the pressing understandings and needs, the exigencies, of both audience and speaker. In what became a seminal essay for the public turn in college writing, Miller argued that exigencies are "a form of social knowledge—a mutual construing of objects, events, interests, and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objectified social need" (1984, p. 157). Genres arise from recurrent rhetorical situations (p. 159). In other words, whether we are examining a haiku or a business memo or an Instagram selfie, the familiar format, style, and content evolved from a repeated need to communicate in that particular way to or with a particular audience. So a business memo looks and functions as it does because that method has proven effective for many years within that environment. And its kindred genre, the email message, looks a lot like a memo (even retaining rhetorical remnants like "cc:" for "carbon copy") because busy professionals still find it effective to communicate in de facto memos.

Likewise, digital storytelling arose as a genre because participatory media needed to happen. Everyday people—whose lives were increasingly

influenced by media—needed to see their own stories on screens; they needed to see their points of view broadcast along with everyone else's. They needed the opportunity to compose and communicate and replicate and challenge the stories told to and about them through videos and other media—only in this way can social media be inclusive in fact and not just in name. Tweets, blogs, and digital stories are kindred genres performing personal and public expression and connection.

Around the same time that participatory media/community arts activists were devising ways to make multimedia composing more accessible to ordinary people, researchers of teaching and learning were experimenting with ways to incorporate mass media into college communication classes—and they were debating the extent to which ideology and social criticism were essential to academic writing instruction, given its status as a gateway to educated citizenship (see, e.g., McComiskey 2002). Multimedia social–epistemic rhetoric pedagogies arose whereby scholars such as James Berlin built upon Marshal McLuhan and Paolo Freire to argue that responsible pedagogy must train college students to critique media from the inside out—as makers of television scripts and video recordings, for example—because their full citizenship in a global society depends on their ability to master the media that most influence their lives (Berlin 1996, pp. 123–56). A key principle of social–epistemic rhetoric is that knowledge itself exists as a dialectic between the individual, a community, and their material conditions—educators who assign new media projects are potentially engaging students in digital genres not only to build their digital literacy skills but also to immerse them in a process of interdependent, interactive meaning-making. The digital-storytelling-as-social-activism movement, with its public workshops and educational programming, coinciding with the increasing accessibility of digital media, gave teachers the training, tools, models, and communities of practice needed to realistically assign digital storytelling projects that foster critical digital literacy, civic literacy, and greater self-awareness.

In this regard, digital storytelling is a pedagogical tool, yes, but it is also pedagogy—not just a *tool* for pedagogy. And pedagogy itself is not merely a method of teaching; it is a considered perspective on what teaching and learning can be. To adapt a definition by Nancy Myers, we view pedagogy as

> an ethical philosophy of teaching that accounts for the complex matrix of people, knowledge, and practice within the immediacy of each [encounter] …. [T]he regular, connected and articulated choices made from within a realm

> of possibilities and then acted on. Historically, it accounts for the goals of the institution and to some extent society: it manifests in the goals of the individual teacher [facilitator], which may include an agenda to help students [storytellers] learn to critique both the institution and society; and it makes room for the goals of the individual students. (Tate et al. 2013, p. 3)

As we proceed through this reflection on the pedagogical ethos of digital storytelling, we are intentionally foregrounding the approach that evolved through CDS because of its broad influence on academic adaptations of digital storytelling (as documented by, e.g., Alexander 2011; Hull and Katz 2006; Gregori-Signes and Brigido-Corachan 2014; Jamissen and Skou 2010; Lambert 2013) and because, of course, it is the narrative we know best.

The CDS approach to digital storytelling was informed by the traditions of community arts and community-based media practices representing a half-century of social activist, grassroots arts making. The concepts and pedagogical perspectives of these practitioners were aligned with critical pedagogy/liberationist educational practices. A central aspect of these perspectives was *conciencization*, the ability of the learner/storyteller to grasp their own metacognitive process within the context of their social situation (Freire 1970). This underscores why digital storytelling has always been, at heart, an approach that is potentially transformative rather than narrowly instrumental. Granted, teaching someone the basic skills of making a video from scratch can be an empowering and perhaps transformative lesson, but that functional literacy is opening a door to a much richer array of literate practices and interactions. Digital storytelling has been an especially good fit for service-learning educators because of its kindred heritage in experiential and liberatory pedagogies and its shared commitment to transformative learning principles such as critical reflection, collaboration, and reciprocal exchanges of expertise between participants (Eyler and Giles 1999; Hessler and Taggart 2004; Hull 2003).

Treating digital storytelling as both individual and social transformation helps to situate the practice appropriately. As Jack Mezirow established in his arguments on transformative processes in education, students' deep learning emerges from an epistemological shift in their frame of reference (1997). When practiced as a transformative rather than summative process, digital storytelling helps storytellers look at events or issues through the lens of personal experience, but then also to look at the way they are looking, on how they are working toward a process of discovery.

How does this self-reflexivity happen? How can we facilitate learning in a way more likely to give storytellers a transformative experience? This chapter is our initial attempt to clarify and articulate the ways expert facilitators approach digital storytelling as a potential transformative learning experience—to name what we know—or what we believe to be true—about the principles and practices of storywork. The book that inspired this essay, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* makes 37 assertions that serve as threshold concepts within that discipline, "foundational assumptions that inform student learning across time," such as: "Writing Enacts and Creates Identities and Ideologies" and "All Writers Have More to Learn" (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015). Our present ambition is more modest: to offer a set of assertions that we believe are ripe for further discussion within the digital storytelling community of practice. While we note that the work of digital storytelling, especially when done within first-year seminars, is sometimes viewed as a subspecialty of writing studies—and therefore arguably subject to the same threshold concepts as that discipline—we approach digital storytelling as yet another hippogriff, a category of rhetorical, aesthetic, social, and cultural studies that is more complex (and more magical) when viewed in terms of what it can afford the imaginative narrator. Given the diversity of the contexts and curricula where digital storytelling is taught, we believe that threshold concepts can give us some of the language needed to talk in more precise ways about the epistemological, metacognitive, and pedagogical dimensions of digital storytelling.

Threshold Concepts, Once Over Lightly

Over the last decade, the study of threshold concepts has become an international movement in the SOTL. The work began as part of a UK-based study of undergraduate learning environments by the Higher Education Academy, paying special attention to ways that students get stuck trying to understand complex topics within their disciplines. In their analysis of Economics students, Meyer and Land observed a pattern in the ways students worked through "troublesome knowledge"—ideas they might learn superficially to pass a test but never fully understand, partly because the ideas themselves demand a radically different way of viewing the world, or themselves, or how things appear to function in

everyday life (Meyer and Land 2006; Meyer et al. 2010). An example is the term "depreciation"—an idea that makes sense to economists but is experienced by ordinary consumers as a frustrating rationale for why a new car loses 10 percent of its value the moment you drive it off the dealer's lot. Understanding depreciation means understanding how an array of financial, psychological, environmental, and cultural factors can make something measurably less valuable even if the thing itself hasn't actually changed. It's a conceptual gateway essential for thinking like an economist. Every craft and academic discipline has such concepts; they are ideas to master as well as critical perspectives on the kinds of problem-solving done in and beyond the studio or classroom.

Scholars compiling threshold concepts often present them as key terms like "depreciation" above; other times, the concepts may take the form of assertions, such as "Writing is a social and rhetorical activity" (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 2015). As Chris Anson notes, when a threshold concept is phrased as an assertion, it becomes less of a buzzword and more of a heuristic, an invitation to discussion among reflective practitioners (2015). In this spirit, we composed our initial set of threshold concepts as assertions worthy of further reflection and dialogue at and beyond our wiki: dsconcepts.wikispaces.com.

Threshold Concepts of [Digital] Storywork

According to Meyer and Land (2006, pp. 7–8), a threshold concept in any field of endeavor will be:

- Transformative: once understood, its potential effect is a significant shift in the student's perception of the subject.
- Probably irreversible: this change of perspective is unlikely to be forgotten.
- Integrative: it exposes the previously hidden interrelatedness of something.
- Possibly often (though not necessarily always) bounded in that any conceptual space will have terminal frontiers, bordering with thresholds into new conceptual areas.
- Potentially (though not necessarily) troublesome: because they seem counterintuitive, butting up against the student's current ways of knowing—ritual knowledge, tacit knowledge, and so on.

We are especially interested in concepts which may on the surface seem self-evident, but from a critical perspective become a more nuanced set of core assumptions that permeate storywork. In the next section, we briefly introduce eight potential threshold concepts, landing on one that undergirds the rest: every story matters.

Concept 1: Intimacy and Safety Inform Narrative

As digital storytelling methods grew from their community arts and technology literacy origins, both practitioners and researchers around the world began to see potential applications for healing and personal growth (see, e.g., Bailey 2011; Goodman and Newman 2014; Haigh and Hardy 2011; Jamissen and Haug 2014). Personal narratives that disclose intimate or painful details may be viewed as inappropriate for some contexts and cultures; however, when responsibly scaffolded, storytelling can foster a level of supportiveness and mutual respect that brings people together in ways that are fundamental to our humanity. As many experienced practitioners can attest, it matters little if you ask people to tell you a story about a subject from a safe distance, for if they sense the opportunity to explore unconsidered, or unprocessed, life experience, at least one person in ten will choose to disclose something that carries great emotional weight. The troublesome aspect of this concept is that a willingness to "look at the dragon" of one's experience is precisely what leads to a potential transformation—for the storyteller and for the perceived quality of the final story.

Concept 2: Collaborative Making Is a Means of Communication and Communion

Digital storytelling was conceived as a group dynamic informed by skillful facilitation. While many software designers, educators, and other professionals continue to experiment with ways to scale the method as a "do-it-yourself" activity, the stories arising from these methods miss an important dimension of the process and may hold less power for the storyteller and intended audience. The emphasis on a group dynamic in the classroom or workshop, the story circle, the joint tutorial process, the encouragement of participants assisting each other through the process, and the final screening, is precisely what makes the experience effective for participants. Participant storytellers recognize one another as peers as they

move through a shared creative struggle and culminating experience. The collaborative environment not only allows for the stories' communicative power to be considered and improved, but for a deeper level of communion to take place. This is critical to the transformative change that many storytellers experience coming through a workshop or classroom implementation that distinguishes the practice from other forms of media and writing experiences.

Concept 3: Digital Storytelling Is a Form of Critical Literacy

This is the kind of statement that may seem obvious to facilitators, but not so obvious to people outside our community of practice who experience mostly the end product, the video, and reasonably conclude that we are foremost teaching a form of *functional* media literacy: the making of videos for social media. What makes the assertion a potential threshold concept is an understanding of the idea of *critical literacy*—an ability to deploy language to examine our ongoing development, to reveal the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world and act in it (Shor 1999)—and how the process of making and sharing digital stories about pivotal moments can foster that level of critical reflection.

The structure of the well-traveled Seven Steps introductory presentation by CDS/StoryCenter grew from framing the story process as a metacognitive event: having storytellers ask themselves not just "What is the story about?" but "Why does it matter right now?" often leads them to make objects of the feelings, memories, influences, ideas, and ideologies that they may or may not have considered prior to the storytelling experience. This critically reflective aspect of the storywork process is yet another component of the transformative potential of the practice.

Concept 4: Constraints Foster Creative Breakthroughs

Digital stories are constrained principally by word count—typically 250–375 words in the practice of CDS/StoryCenter and many other facilitators. This brevity has been critiqued as forcing a mold onto what might be comfortably approached as a more open-ended, participant-centered process of choices. The intuitive argument is that creative choice is expanded by an open-ended process. As many working artists have learned, open-ended choice is not freedom. Choice can be another kind

of tyranny, masquerading as opportunity. Constraints (in terms of time, visual artifacts, sound effects, or other elements) challenge the storyteller to become a more ingenious narrator, approaching more carefully the myriad possibilities of video as a creative genre, to unleash or invent a choice. As digital storytelling projects are often the first or early creative experiences in these toolsets for storytellers, the constraints allow for deeper exploration into a limited set of resources.

Concept 5: Multimodal Composition Is a Cognitive Activity

As has been argued about composing academic texts in multiple modalities or media (see, e.g., Brooke 2013; Fleckenstein 2010; Palmeri 2012), composing a digital story requires a complex series of decisions that access multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983), multiple strategies for engaging and interpreting knowledge about oneself and the world. Multimodal composition invites participant storytellers to lean into the unique strengths of their cognition processes. Some people compose in visual sequence to inform their auditory process of narration, while others attach significance and think through the mood of a piece of background music before considering the focus and emphasis of the text and images. The interrelationship of the layers of meaning becomes itself a cognitive process that considers the minute choices moment to moment, as well as the overall feel/impact of the entire work. Film as a communicative genre has its own 100-year discourse about the innumerable ways in which the filmmaker makes choices in design; digital storytelling allows for us now to explore how those lessons can be part of a much broader compositional opportunity for student novices and for the public.

Concept 6: Choices in Design Aesthetics Inform and Are Informed by Literacies, Culture, and Ideology

Some theorists and practitioners in digital storytelling have labored to define aesthetic success in the design of a digital story, in the practical service of rubric-based assessment or for other purposes. While we appreciate (and continue to develop) ways to integrate formative and summative assessment into academically assigned storywork, we are compelled to observe that these attempts usually lead one to learn just as much about who is doing the assessment, and what they are signifying about themselves or their institutional context.

From our perspective, digital storytelling shares with the community arts movement the understanding that aesthetics are fluid constructions that reflect the literacies, culture, and ideological assumptions of those doing a critique. What constitutes cliché and what constitutes aesthetic originality are assessed in light of the storyteller's own exposure to works of art, experience with art making, familiarity with the dynamics of critical assessment, and of course their culturally or ideologically bounded perspectives. Critical self-awareness about what one is indicating about oneself through an artistic choice is itself a highly developed literacy. In many contexts, the facilitator is of a different culture, ideological perspective, and literacy level than her students. Where graded assessments are required for digital stories, we recommend co-constructing a rubric or metric of success alongside students, holding their design perspectives and your own as part of the process, and using this process as an inroad to discussing what aesthetics mean and how diversely they may matter.

Concept 7: Listening Is an Ethic and a Craft

Listening is an activity that considerate people believe they are already doing thoughtfully and fairly—particularly when engaged in a course or workshop that fosters (or strives for) the kind of democratic environment described above. The instructor herself may believe that by virtue of the fact students are sitting in a circle sharing stories, or responding to one another on a discussion board, she is automatically fostering attentive listening. But listening requires self-discipline and self-awareness.

Scholars of transformative learning have documented a taxonomy of listening that is helpful for explaining why listening is more than meets the ear. Extending communication studies by Peter Senge and others, Otto Scharmer notes four main types of listening: (1) downloading (listening for confirmations of what you already expect or believe); (2) factual listening (noting new and novel information that compares or contrasts with what you believe you know); (3) empathic listening (concentrating on aspects of the speaker's story to which you can emotionally connect, and in that way making the other person's story align with your own); and (4) generative listening (seeking to understand what the speaker is trying to say, to know his or her story at a deeper level, often by attending to body language or other cues that transcend the information being spoken) (Scharmer 2009).

In storywork, generative listening is essential for a co-creative experience, for everyone's story to be heard. When we speak of "deep listening," we are speaking about the interplay of someone working out an idea before an audience, and how that audience demonstrably holds that idea, works through it, and provides insightful commentary and reflection on the idea. The quality of listening is both somatic, in terms of attentiveness and body language, and as importantly, cognitive and metacognitive, in demonstrating how the speaker's words were absorbed, held, and thoroughly considered, before a response was made. Sometimes this is evinced by how accurately someone remembers certain phrases expressing a concept, and sometimes in how well they re-summarize the gist of the storyteller's meaning. Such listening takes practice, and a sincere conviction that every story matters.

Concept 8: Every Story Matters

This is our most radical assertion. Acknowledging that every story matters—in our classroom, in a public workshop, in a community literacy center—may seem sweetly self-evident. Inviting people from rival perspectives to compose and communicate their views is, after all, what engaged educators most consistently attempt to do, whether mentoring students as teaching artists or as city planners or as oral historians or as digital storytellers. But an interesting shift arises, particularly in higher education, when we frame story-sharing as a means of diversity training or intercultural inquiry: stories seem to become important because of who or what the teller represents—an unconventional point of view, a source of wisdom on a particular episode in history, a spokesperson for a marginalized community. Such encounters help us achieve important academic aims, such as giving students an opportunity to cultivate empathy and openness, for example (AAC&U 2015). But as the Museum of the Person's founder Karen Worcman reminds us, "Every person's story matters because every person matters," and not because of what the story may represent or how it might be used (Misorelli and Worcman 2016). Storyworkers may indeed become story curators, and some stories will connect with a particular purpose or audience more than others, but every person's narrative deserves equal care and consideration. The digital storytelling educator bears an extra responsibility to reinforce this principle among participants who may become storyworkers themselves.

Crossing the Threshold: Getting into Trouble

What are the consequences of believing—or acting upon, or teaching—those eight assertions about digital storywork? For starters, perhaps clarity of purpose. As we wrote our way through the initial list, we found our paragraphs evolving from a relatively conventional scholarly synthesis to a tone rather like a manifesto. We think this is a good thing. As we grappled with the transformative and troublesome dimensions of each threshold concept, we found, as we hope you will too, opportunities for critical reflection about our mission as educators.

We are committed to universal access to the production of a digital story as a human right. We view this as a core condition to a sense of agency in each individual in relationship to the larger social project. Like our colleagues in organizations like the Museum of the Person in Brazil, StoryCorps in the United States, and countless local, regional, and international organizations that emphasize the representation of ordinary people, we see a relationship between signifying every citizen with a story and creating the basis for healthy democracy.

In this sense, one's first digital story is a form of membership, a representation of your deeply considered insights and voice into a society greatly dominated by the screens of social media, film, and television. As Guillermo Gomez Peña once said in performance, "the existential question for us as citizens in the twenty-first century is TV or not TV." We realize the power of the moving image to validate experience, and we want everyone to share in the power of media publication, even if that publication only reaches the moment of being projected on a wall of a workshop.

This perspective is troubling because it suggests that, in the long run, any formal, or informal, ways that we segregate media producers from media consumers is unhealthy and counterproductive for society. In cultures that thoroughly accept media consumption as central to civic life, we are suggesting that citizens should feel empowered to speak back with their own stories, extending their experiences, memories, and perspectives into the media landscape. Put another way, we worry less about the "mediocrity" of the masses making media than the single voice being silenced—one by which a small or large transformation might be made possible.

For many, the decentralization of authority, both political and artistic, that comes from this process is implicitly troubling, and they would prefer to separate the social justice component of digital storytelling from

the more general educational concern. However, lacking the impulse to extend these literacies to every single person inevitably privileges those with aptitudes or proclivities in the technical toolsets, with strong and well-formed insights, with a flair for language and narrative construction. Creating environments where all those differences and capabilities are appreciated, but where none are overly privileged, becomes the distinct challenge for the educator.

In our conception of storywork, we start with encouraging the storytellers' sense of fundamental authority on their own personal experience. Even as they may be framing a subject, or addressing a broader issue, their starting point is how they understand their own awareness of the way the story works, where it currently works *upon them*, and where with group reflection and individual feedback, they would like to transform those understandings. Note that we can borrow the subject–object perspective via Kegan's integration of Piaget/Erickson in the field of psychology to suggest that these processes can be viewed as significant developmental epistemological shifts. *The story that has been telling you*, to which you have been subject, becomes *the story you can tell*, that which you can now make object (Kegan 1983, 1994). The process is both to listen deeply to the way in which the storyteller initially presents their concept and to encourage group and individual inquiry into the how and why of the storyteller's initial enthusiasm or reticence in telling that story.

While this may seem obvious as a condition of progressive educational practice, this perspective is, again, "troublesome" in scenarios where the professor or facilitator is perceived as the storytelling expert—particularly when that expert is assigning an academic grade for the story. If our pedagogy is rooted in the belief that every story matters, we must teach in a way that ensures students approach each step in the process as democratic and collaborative, not just for the sake of politeness but because the stories being shared have valuable insights for everyone in the room. This means that the story circle, for example, is not a generic form of peer review. The purpose of that sharing of story drafts is not just to get the story done, nor revised into a form that entertains or impresses the group, nor edited well enough to earn a decent grade; the purpose is to support the telling of the story and the listening to the story—which, in turn, may help participants to become more empathetic, attentive, and collaborative learners.

We understand that in an academic environment with larger class sizes and a curriculum distributed over many weeks it can be challenging to replicate the level of interpersonal care that we try to foster in small group

intensive workshop environments. But coaching students to serve as deputy co-facilitators and practicing the ritual of holding space and allocating minutes of silence, if needed, to help a storyteller think through and articulate an idea, are ways that we can begin to teach listening as a discipline and as a way to demonstrate mutual respect. Every comment, every decision about how we engage participants, every way that we organize and manage the production process, we are making sure participants are aware of their own creative choices, and power, in the situation.

Informed by this perspective, we have found that not only does the experience of the learning environment improve but so do the stories.

Those of us working as practitioners can easily look back at our last workshop or classroom experience and recognize the complexity of holding these concepts while simply trying to survive getting a group of stories to completion. The average classroom teacher, or community-based facilitator, much less the participant storytellers, is not constructing his or her efforts with a checklist of threshold concepts. But as scholars of teaching and learning, we can use these concepts to illuminate the ways in which transformative learning is constructed not just of methods and techniques but also of values, ethics, and social and self-awareness. We look forward to expanding this discussion with our colleagues and friends in the field.

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