

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Everyone Has A Story

INSIGHTS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY



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"People make the world move. Like we make the entire world move. And like a lot of times we feel powerless, but the pandemic showed me that when everybody stopped, the world stopped. They cannot do a thing without us."

A COVID-19 hospitality worker

"A baggage that you carry, and I have like four bags that I carry, and I wish I could dump them, but they're a part of me, so I can't."

A mother dealing with various health challenges

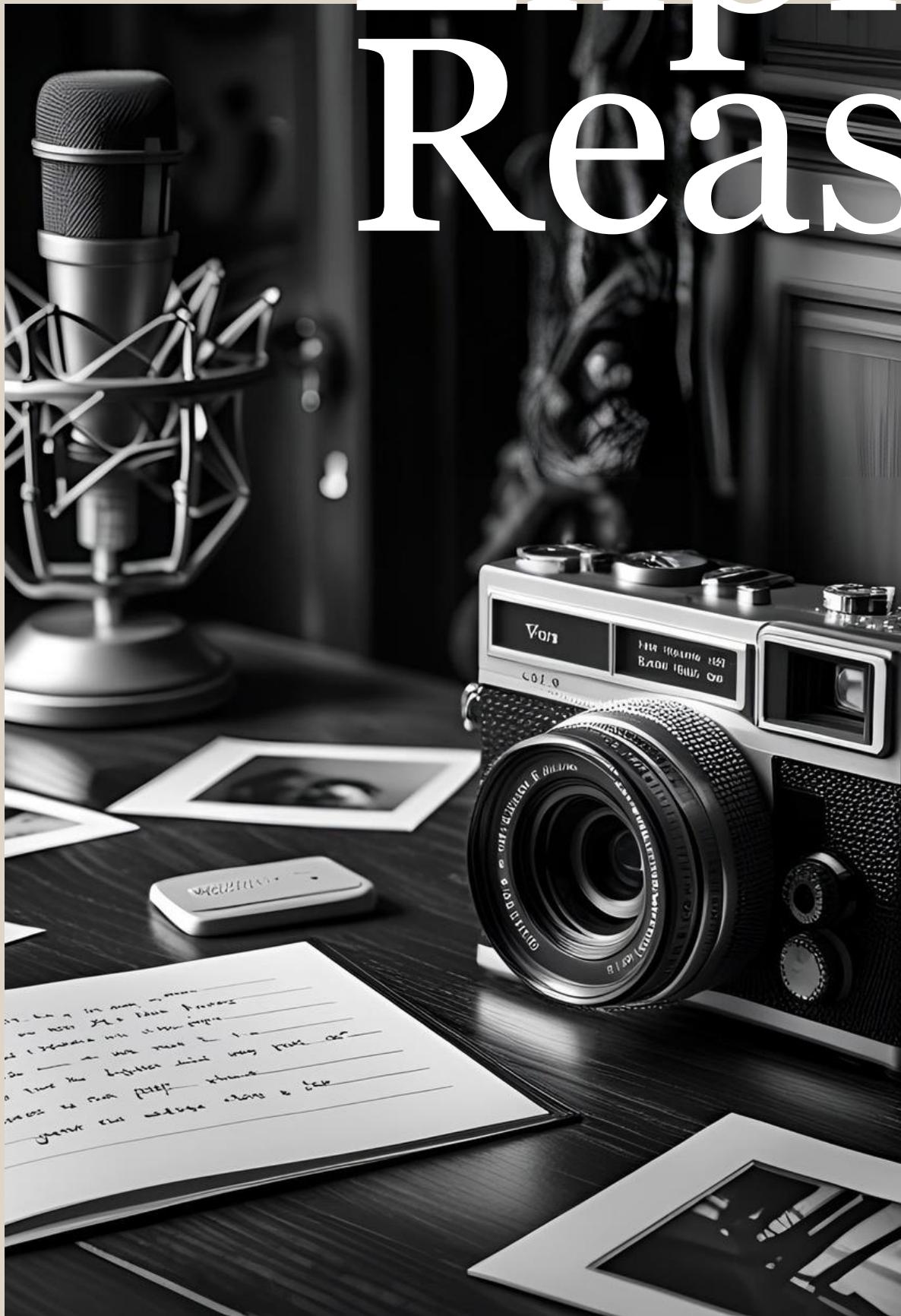
THE PROBLEM/GAP

Digital storytelling research focuses on audience impact.

Missing: What happens to the storytellers themselves?



Exploratory Reasoning



1. How does storytelling transform thinking?
2. How does creating stories build agency?
3. How does storytelling lead to action?

Why This Matters

- Educational implications
- Therapeutic potential
- Empowerment for vulnerable voices



Transformational Learning Theory (TLT)

Explores learners critically examine and transform their fundamental assumptions when confronted with experiences that challenge their existing worldview (**Mezirow**).

1

Narrative Theory (NT)

Examines how individuals construct meaning and identity through creating, sharing, and interpreting personal and cultural stories (**Bruner, Polkinghorne, Todorov**).

2

Empowerment Theory (ET)

Examines how individuals develop psychological empowerment through gaining perceived control, critical awareness, and skills to participate in community change (**Zimmerman**).

3

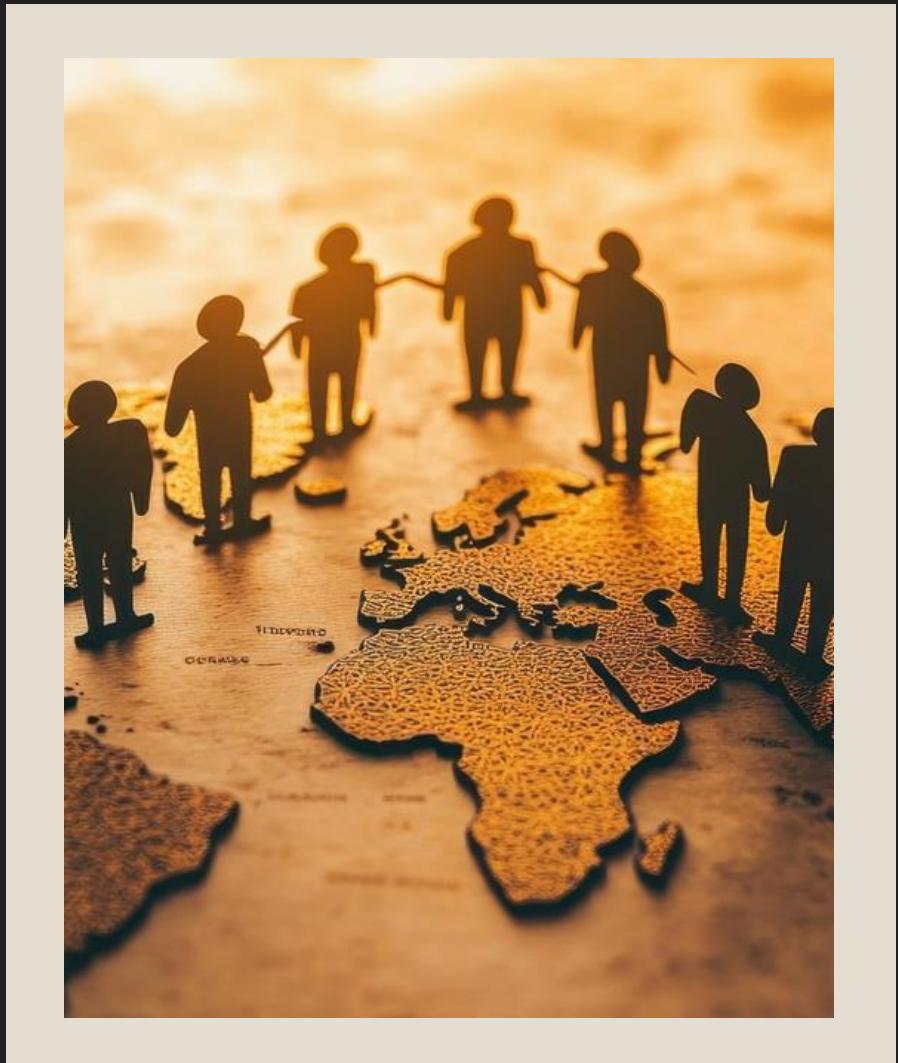
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theorethical Framework

Sub-themes per Theory for 3x3 Framework

Critical Reflection - Transformative Learning Theory (TLT): Deep examination of personal values, biases, and assumptions through self-reflection and meaningful dialogue. Includes questioning 'why did I believe that?' and examining what shaped thinking patterns.	New Perspective - Transformative Learning Theory (TLT): The emergence and application of transformed thinking, including new ways of understanding others, implementing change, developing empathy, ethical reasoning, and negotiating new roles and relationships over time.	Weaving Coherence - Narrative Identity & Re-storying (NT): Creating logical, coherent narratives that construct identity and make sense of life events over time. How the storyteller organizes their experiences into a meaningful sequence.	Site of Healing - Narrative Identity & Re-storying (NT): Rewriting or retelling one's story in a new way—often a healing or clarifying process for making sense of the past, processing trauma, and expressing previously unspoken experiences.	Resilient Future - Narrative Identity & Re-storying (NT): Who is telling the story, how, and why? Developing empowered narrative voice from positions of power, vulnerability, or hindsight that can navigate complexity and respond to feedback from others.	Voice/Agency (ET): Finding voice. The storyteller is actively owning their story and choices. The person sees themselves as someone who acts, reflects confidence and self-worth.	Narrative Control (ET): Beliefs in ability to succeed and skill development fits with taking control of one's future through purposeful planning and skill building.	Public Action (ET): Moving from personal empowerment to influencing others directly matches community engagement and systemic change.
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- Nine (9) digital stories
- **Diverse sources:** StoryCorps, Patient Voices, Library of Congress COVID-19 Project, Indian Health Services
- Purposed sampling
- **Duration:** 3 min - 60 min (audio, video, written)



Methods Overview

Meet the Storytellers



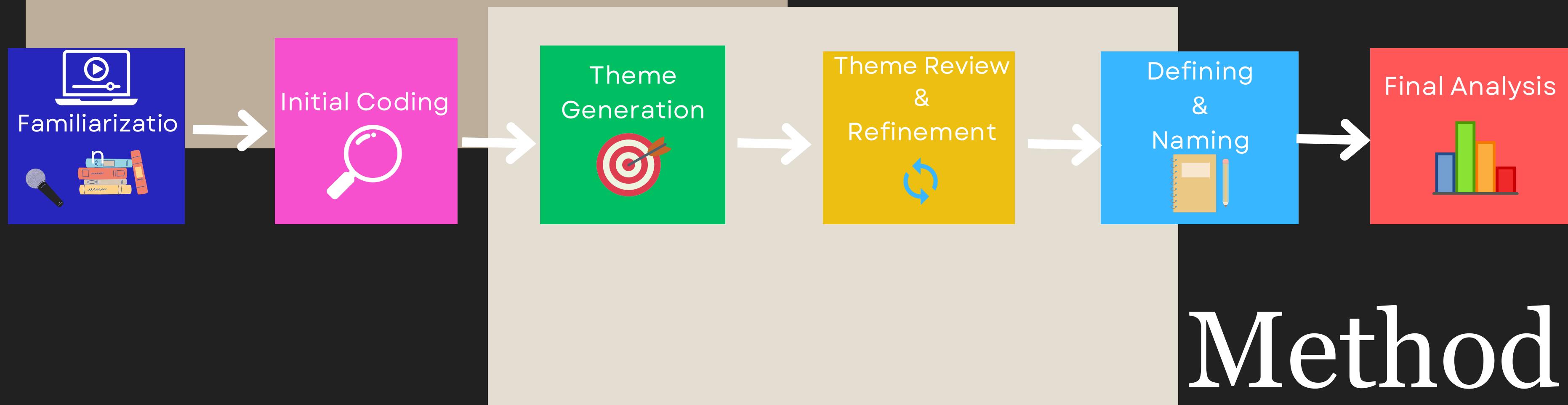
Gender: 7 Females; 2 males

Ages: 20s - 60s (approx.)

Ethnicity: Colombian, Caucasian, Native American, African American, Mexican American

Range of experiences: Chronic illness, Drug Addiction, Post-partum Depression, Homelessness, Cultural Identity, Divorce, Unemployment, Community organization, Sexual Identity, Social Justice and Activism, Caregiving, and Empathy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process



Method
Overview

Transformational Learning	Narrative Identity	Empowerment
<i>"I realized my illness wasn't my fault"</i>	<i>"Telling my story helped me make sense of it all"</i>	<i>"Now I have a voice - people listen"</i>
Disorienting Dilemma	Weaving Coherence	Finding Voice
Health crises trigger reflection	Organizing fragmented experiences	Developing confidence & self-worth
Critical Reflection	Site of Healing	Narrative Control
Deep examination of beliefs	Emotional processing through story	Taking ownership of personal narrative
New Perspective	Resilient Future	Public Action
Transformed understanding	Forward-looking empowered identity	Supporting others, systemic change

Key Findings

Transformational Learning

- From isolation → Connection

Participants moved from powerlessness and isolation to agency and community

Narrative Identity

- Cultural Identity integration

Stories integrated personal/cultural heritage with a healing journey

Empowerment

- Multimedia Engagement

The active creation process deepened reflective practice and transformation.

Cross-Cutting Themes

For Educators:

- DST is a transformative pedagogy, not just digital literacy.
- Focus on the creator's journey, not just the final product.
- Scaffold reflection and meaning-making throughout the process.

For Practitioners:

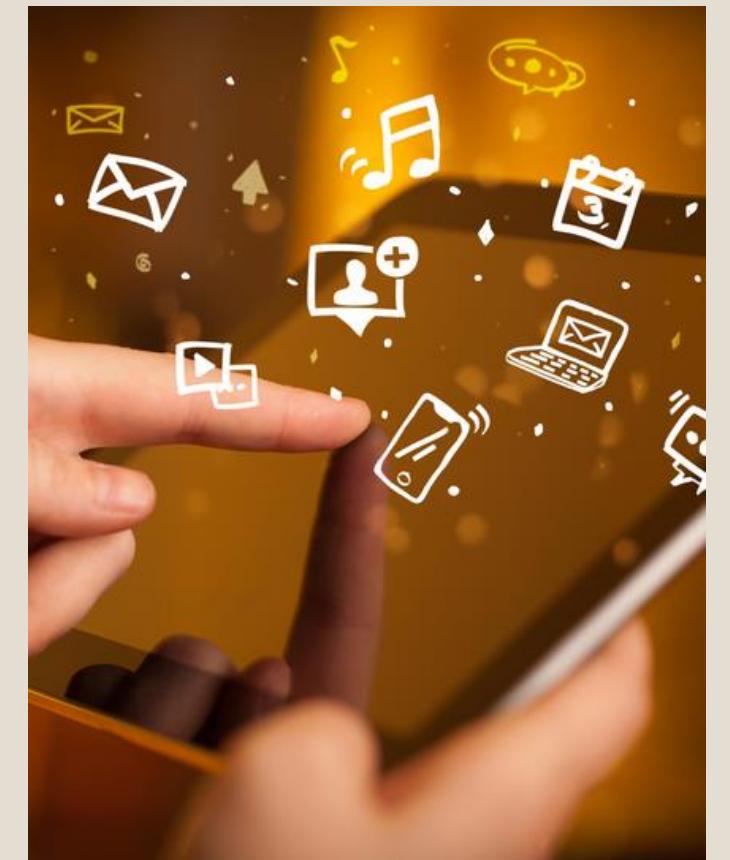
- DST as a therapeutic intervention for trauma, identity, and empowerment work.
- Consider cultural identity as integral to healing narratives.
- Creative expressions using active ingredients in transformation (e.g. multimedia).

So What?

Implications

- Mechanism research needed
- Context variations to explore
- Scaling considerations
 - The market is growing 9.87% annually, reaching \$268M by 2028.

Source: <https://www.technavio.com/report/digital-storytelling-courses-market-industry-analysis>



Future Directions

THANK YOU!

Questions?