

# Observing the observers: Using digital storytelling for organisational development concerning 'Critical Whiteness'

Ethics Review ID: ER6351006

**Workflow Status:** Approved with Advisory Comments

**Type of Ethics Review Template:** All other research with human participants

## Primary Researcher / Principal Investigator

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Elizabeth Austen  
(Student Engagement Evaluation and Research)

**Converis Project Application::**

**Q1. Is this project:** i) Staff research

## Other SHU Investigator

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Stella Jones-Devitt  
(Centre for Health and Social Care Research)

**Q4. Proposed Start Date of Data Collection:** 19/03/2018

**Q5. Proposed End Date of Data Collection :** 31/07/2018

**Q6. Will the research involve any of the following:**

- i) Participants under 5 years old: No
- ii) Pregnant women: No
- iii) 5000 or more participants: No
- iv) Research being conducted in an overseas country: No

**Q7. If overseas, specify location:**

**Q8. Is the research externally funded?:** Yes

**Funder Name::**

Leadership Foundation in Higher Education

**Q9. Will the research be conducted with partners and subcontractors?:** No

**Q10. Does the research involve one or more of the following?**

- i. Patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care: No
- ii. Relatives/carers of patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care: No
- iii. Access to data, organs, or other bodily material of past or present NHS patients: No
- iv. Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients: No
- v. The recently dead in NHS premises: No
- vi. Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to their incapacity even if the project is not health related: No
- vii. Prisoners or others within the criminal justice system recruited for health-related research: No

viii. **Prisoners or others within the criminal justice system recruited for non-health-related research:**

No

ix. **Police, court officials or others within the criminal justice system:** No

**Q11. Category of academic discipline:** Social Sciences

**Q12. Methodology:** Qualitative

## **P2 - Project Outline**

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**Q1. General overview of study:** The Directorate of Student Engagement, Evaluation and Research (STEER) at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) are conducting research which is funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) Small Development Grant. We are looking to explore the utility of digital storytelling as a method for promoting positive behavioural and cultural change. We have chosen the topic of 'Critical Whiteness' to test this approach. Participants will be asked to take part in a focus group in which they will observe a 2 minute digital story (video) which reflects a research journey to action organisational change to address the notion of Critical Whiteness. They will be asked to discuss the story with others from their Faculty. They will then be invited to attend a 1 hour workshop (scheduled directly after the focus group) to learn the process of digital storytelling using Adobe Spark software (free and accessible). They will also learn how digital stories are being used within higher education, including in the curriculum and to capture student voice. They will be supported to create their own story which reflects their view of Critical Whiteness and experiences of institutional culture. The researcher will undertake an analysis of these narratives and triangulate the insights with data from the focus groups. With consent, appropriate digital stories will be available as outputs from this project.

**Q2. Background to the study and scientific rationale (if you have already written a research proposal, e.g. for a funder, you can upload that instead of completing this section):** Since the 1990s, the use of digital storytelling (DST) has steadily increased, in an attempt to combine different ways of storytelling with the emergence of new digital media tools. The traditional roots of DST can be traced back to the University of California at Berkley's Centre for Digital Storytelling, founded in 1993 by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and other artists in the San Francisco region (McLellan, 2006). Its aim is to provide a novel platform to empower and give voice to individuals or groups who are often overlooked in mainstream culture (Clarke & Adam, 2010). In its traditional form and core function, digital storytelling refers to the process of developing personal narratives based on certain life experiences. Those stories are supported by a combination of text, audio recordings, images, music and animations to create short films with a duration of typically 2 to 5 minutes (Benick, 2012; Davis, 2011). Due to the great variety and different applications, DST exists in numerous different formats, from multimedia online videos to image-only stories, podcasts or blogs entries, all of which contain some form of narrative produced and shared digitally (Clarke & Adam, 2010; Nilsson, 2008). Consequently, it has been adapted in various academic and non-academic fields, such as as an educational tool, a research method, a therapeutic medium or to increase community engagement (Clarke & Adam, 2010). Within Higher Education (HE) specifically, DST is generally regarded as highly beneficial in terms of enhancing teaching and student learning in a variety of fields within the university setting (Benick, 2012). DST is also being used by researchers as a way of promoting research findings. Less is known about the utility of digital storytelling for motivating positive cultural and behavioural change within organisations. The focus will be Critical Whiteness and conversations about privilege within Higher Education providers. Previous research by this team (Austen et al 2017 and Jones-Devitt et al 2017) concluded that the absence of critical whiteness discussions may be creating a barrier to addressing the BME attainment gap through curriculum change. Conversations regarding critical whiteness can be difficult due to the 'invisibility' of the concept (McIntosh, 1988) and we believe that approaches to address implicit bias often focus on individual rather than organisational responsibility for change. Thus critical whiteness is an important but often overlooked area of positive cultural and behavioural change within organisations. The initial digital story has already been produced and can be viewed by clicking <https://spark.adobe.com/video/xJikbNAacf2hl> .

**Upload:**



Proposal\_Digital Storytelling and  
OD\_FINAL\_SUBMITTED.docx

**Q3. Is your topic of a sensitive/contentious nature or could your funder be considered controversial?:** No

**Q4. Are you likely to be generating potentially security-sensitive data that might need particularly secure storage?:** No

**Q5. Has the scientific/scholarly basis of this research been approved, for example by Research Degrees Sub-committee or an external funding body?:** NA e.g. there is no relevant committee governing this work

**Q6. Main research questions:** How can digital storytelling be used for organisational development? How can conversations concerning 'Critical Whiteness' in HE be mediated by digital storytelling?

**Q7. Summary of methods including proposed data analyses:** A series of focus groups (max 10 participants in each) will be facilitated with four subject specific samples comprised of staff members from each Faculty within Sheffield Hallam University. Each focus group will observe a 2 minute digital story which reflects a research journey to action organisational change to address the notion of Critical Whiteness. Participants will be asked to discuss the story and relevance to their disciplinary context. Each of the 4 focus groups will be audio recorded and analysed thematically using grounded theory. . Participants will be invited to stay to attend a follow up workshop to learn the process of digital storytelling using Adobe Spark (free and accessible) software. Participants will be supported to create their own story which reflects their view of Critical Whiteness and their experiences of institutional culture Consent, including the intended use and place of publication, will be sought for all outputs used in this project. The data from the focus groups, and an analysis of the narrative of participants' digital stories, will be analysed and reported thematically.

### **P3 - Research with Human Participants**

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**Q1. Does the research involve human participants?:** Yes

**Q2. Will any of the participants be vulnerable?:** No

**Q3. Is this a clinical trial?:** No

**If yes, will the placebo group receive a treatment plan after the study? If N/A tick no.:** No

**Q4. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?:** No

**Q5. Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?:** No

**Q6. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?:** No

**Q7. Will the study involve prolonged testing (activities likely to increase the risk of repetitive strain injury)?:** No

**Q8. Is there any reasonable and foreseeable risk of physical or emotional harm to any of the participants?:** No

**Q9. Will anyone be taking part without giving their informed consent?:** No

**Q10. Is it covert research?:** No

**Q11. Will the research output allow identification of any individual who has not given their express consent to be identified?:** No

**Q12. Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (300 - 750):** All participants will be anonymised in any reporting. The digital stories will not contain the name of the storyteller, although the institution may be identifiable, and will be named through research reporting processes. Participants will be fully trained in their session to consider the boundaries of their stories and the implications of including information which can identify themselves or others. Data will be processed on encrypted hardware in accordance to University protocols. Data will be stored on the Q drive whilst live with restricted access to the members of the research team. Long term storage of the data will be in line with the SHU Data Management Policy. Once the data has been collected and analysed, LFHE (as project sponsors) will govern publication and dissemination and will have ownership of the work created (attributed to the research team). The raw data will be kept for 10 years (in line with SHU Data Management Policy) on completion of the report.

### **P4 - Research in Organisations**

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**Q1. Will the research involve working with an external organisation or using data/material from an external organisation?:** No

**Q2. Do you have granted access to conduct the research?:** Yes

### **P5 - Research with Products and Artefacts**

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**Q1. Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?:** No

## **P6 - Human Participants - Extended**

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**Q1. Describe the arrangements for recruiting, selecting/sampling and briefing potential participants.:**

A series of focus groups (max 10 participants in each) will be facilitated with four subject specific samples comprised of staff members from each Faculty within Sheffield Hallam University. The researchers will use their key contacts (convenience sample) in each Faculty to act as facilitators for a snowball sample. Mailing lists from previous events on the topic of the BAME attainment gap (run by STEER) will also be utilised. The only sampling criteria is that participants are employed by Sheffield Hallam University and can identify with one of the four faculties. There are no restrictions on this sample in terms of type of employment and the final focus group membership does not claim to be representative of all employees. This is an open call for participation as we make no assumptions about who would choose to participate or what their reasons for doing so might be.

**Q2. Indicate the activities participants will be involved in.:** Image mediated focus group - participants watch a digital story (2 mins) and discuss Digital storytelling workshop - participants learn storytelling techniques include the use of Adobe Spark software and begin to create their own story. Creation of participant digital stories - these are completed by the participants in their own time and sent to the researchers by a set deadline

**Q3. What is the potential for participants to benefit from participation in the research?:** Focus groups - Participants will be given the opportunity to engage in discussions about a challenging area of institutional culture. They will have the opportunity to learn from the Critical Whiteness digital story and challenge their own practices and contribute to a raised awareness within the institution. Digital stories - Participants will directly benefit by being invited to attend a follow up workshop to learn the process of digital storytelling using Adobe Spark (free and accessible) software. Participants will be supported to create their own story which reflects their view of Critical Whiteness and their experiences of institutional culture. The evidence base suggests that DST has benefits as a tool within and beyond the curriculum and students may benefit when taught by the participants at a later date.

**Q4. Describe any possible negative consequences of participation in the research along with the ways in which these consequences will be limited:** Focus groups - The focus group discussions will generate difficult conversations about race and ethnicity and the organisational culture of the university. The data collection process may uncover, through personal disclosures, issues of staff dissatisfaction or grievances and may therefore impact negatively on personal wellbeing. The researcher will stress confidentiality within the research process, but will signpost staff to services that can provide help. For example, in order to respond to this risk, the research team have experience in Faculty teaching and managerial roles and are also experienced interviewers. The researchers will have knowledge of HR process and will be able to effectively signpost to the appropriate resources needed to ensure staff wellbeing. We will clearly outline the context of the study, and our role within it, and in the institution. We will also seek to minimise risk through a thorough brief and de-briefing conversations including of consent and withdrawal pre and post data collection. Digital stories - The lead researcher has been formally trained by JISC to teach others how to create digital stories. The workshop training will include discussions about the impact of storytelling on the participants and any others implicated in the story. The risks to institutional reputation will be at the forefront of these considerations. The researchers need to facilitate authentic digital stories within this context. The balance between authentic storytelling as research data and publically available reporting will be carefully managed. The researcher reserve the right to withhold from the public domain any participant digital stories which are likely to damage institutional reputation. This data will be used for research purposes only and analysed thematically and anonymously.

**Q5. Describe the arrangements for obtaining participants' consent.:**

- Focus groups and workshop - information and consent forms will be sent out in advance (when scheduling), and will be handed out again in hard copy at the start of the focus groups. Consent will be outlined at the beginning and the end of the focus group to ensure the participants are happy to proceed, and once the data had been collected, that they are happy for their responses to be used. Participants must consent to the discussion being confidential.
- Digital stories - for those that produce their own digital stories, written consent will be secured for these stories to be analysed, shared with LFHE, and used as needed, as example output from the research on institutional and external webpages. These stories will not contain the name of the storyteller, although the institution will be named through research reporting processes. Participants will be fully trained in their

session to consider the boundaries of their stories and the implications of including information which can identify themselves or others.

**Q6. Describe how participants will be made aware of their right to withdraw from the research.:** Focus groups/workshop - The right to withdraw up to two weeks after the focus group (and during the focus group) will be made clear on the information sheet and during discussions of consent. Digital stories - - The right to withdraw up to two weeks after the completion of the digital story (and during) will be made clear on the information sheet and during discussions of consent. Participants will be informed that they can withdraw their stories from the published sources at ANY time by contacting the researchers.

**Q7. If your project requires that you work with vulnerable participants describe how you will implement safeguarding procedures during data collection:** n/a

**Q8. If Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are required, please supply details:** n/a

**Q9. Describe the arrangements for debriefing the participants.:** At the end of the focus groups, participants will be signposted to services to consult in case they wish to receive more support. They will also be informed about report writing and publication. Pre and post data collection consent and withdrawal techniques will be used to ensure the participants are certain they would like their data and their digital stories included in this study.

**Q10. Describe the arrangements for ensuring participant confidentiality. This should include details of:** Focus group discussion will be confidential within the parameters of the focus group and this will be stressed to participants and included on the consent form. The participants will be able to discuss the content of the Critical Whiteness digital story outside the focus group as this story is already in the public domain.

**Q11. Are there any conflicts of interest in you undertaking this research?:** The 2 researchers are part of the Directorate of Student Engagement, Evaluation and Research at SHU. It is within our strategic priorities to investigate the evidence base for organisational change. We strive to operate in total transparency, and as researchers we adopt the values of ethnographic research which would aim to see the organisation from the point of view of those under investigation, rather than to confirm any institutional preconceptions. However, we note the importance of reflexivity and the impact of our own context on our investigation.

**Q12. What are the expected outcomes, impacts and benefits of the research?:** The data from the focus groups, and an analysis of the participants' digital stories, will be examined to look for key themes. These research findings will be presented as an additional researcher digital story, mirroring the format used within the methodology, and will emerge as a Practice Guide for others wishing to mediate conversations about Critical Whiteness. Extracts from the data (narrated by others) will be used to illuminate key points of the story. The utility of digital storytelling is also tested as a means of collecting data (participant stories) and as an innovative way of sharing evidence and expertise (researcher stories). Fundamentally, digital storytelling is also explored as an intervention for mediating difficult conversations about positive cultural and behavioural change. The Practice Guide (digital output) will offer support and guidance for how this technique can be replicated across the sector. This digital resource facilitates knowledge sharing in a 'digestible and practical' manner (Fade et al, 2017). This development work builds on research presented at the ECU Annual Conference and provides an organisational development focus for institutional equality and diversity objectives, including the Race Equality Charter.

**Q13. Please give details of any plans for dissemination of the results of the research.:** The funder requires a 2 page executive summary of the findings along with a digital practice guide, which will be hosted on their website. We will offer appropriate participant digital stories (with full consent) as exemplars. We will also host the output of this research on our STEER blog. The evidence from this research will also contribute to a growing body of evidence which highlights the utility of DST with HE settings. Whilst the findings will belong to the funder, we propose that further publications of the method and future utility will be actioned.

## **P7 - Health and Safety Risk Assessment**

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**Q1. Will the proposed data collection take place only on campus?**

: Yes

**Q2. Are there any potential risks to your health and wellbeing associated with either (a) the venue where the research will take place and/or (b) the research topic itself?:** None that I am aware of

**Q3. Will there be any potential health and safety risks for participants (e.g. lab studies)? If so a Health and Safety Risk Assessment should be uploaded to P8.:** No

**Q4. Where else will the data collection take place? (Tick as many venues as apply) Researcher's Residence:** false

**Participant's Residence:** false

**Education Establishment:** false

**Other e.g. business/voluntary organisation, public venue:** false

**Outside UK:** false

**Q5. How will you travel to and from the data collection venue?:** Public Transport

**Q6. Please outline how you will ensure your personal safety when travelling to and from the data collection venue.:** The research will be conducted in our place of work and the SHU policy on health and safety will be adhered to.

**Q8. How will you ensure your own personal safety whilst at the research venue, including on campus?:** The research will be conducted in our place of work and the SHU policy on health and safety will be adhered to.

## P8 - Attachments

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**Are you uploading any recruitment materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)?:** Non Applicable

**Are you uploading a participant information sheet?:** Yes

**Are you uploading a participant consent form?:** Yes

**Are you uploading details of measures to be used (e.g. questionnaires, etc.)?:** Non Applicable

**Are you uploading an outline interview schedule/focus group schedule?:** Non Applicable

**Are you uploading debriefing materials?:** Non Applicable

**Are you uploading a Risk Assessment Form?:** Non Applicable

**Are you uploading a Serious Adverse Events Assessment (required for Clinical Trials and Interventions)?:** Non Applicable

**Are you uploading a Data Management Plan?:** Non Applicable

**Upload:**



Interview Participant Briefing Sheet and Consent Form LFHE.docx

## P9 - Adherence to SHU Policy and Procedures

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**Primary Researcher / PI Sign-off:**

**I can confirm that I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures:** true

**I can confirm that I agree to abide by its principles:** true

**Date of PI Sign-off:** 14/03/2018

## P10 - Review

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**Comments collated by Lead Reviewer (Or FREC if escalated):** Advisory comments: Part 6, Question 6: withdrawal from online sources - need to specify that you can only withdraw from YOUR online platforms (you have no control if they go elsewhere online, and cant directly control them if they are on your funders' site).[Also on information sheet] Information sheet: in the section on risks, be more specific on withdrawing if distressed - i.e. withdraw DURING the focus group/digital story production process at any time, after completion, within 2 weeks (just for clarity) Consent form - give a line space after 4b to make it easier to read. on P6 (Human Participation Extended), Q4 and Q9 refer to 'services that can provide help' and 'appropriate resources'. Please give examples of these. (They are actually specified on the Participant Consent Form already). Q12 'looks' should be 'look'.

**Final Decision to be completed by Lead Reviewer (or FREC if escalated):** Approved with advisory comments

**Date of Final Decision:** 05/04/2018