



Special Topic: Place Exploration

**How is The Dublin Story Slam Storytelling
Viewed and Understood by Both the Storyteller
and the Audience?**

Third Year Special Topic Research Project

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Storytelling is central to human understanding – it makes life liveable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other (Lewis 2011).

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Abstract

This study explores storytelling in contemporary society. This research examines how a contemporary fascination has been created through the desire for human connection. This study is on The Dublin Story Slam in the Sugar Club. A qualitative research approach was taken to collect data, consisting of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. This study explores how there has been a re-conceptualisation of storytelling within Irish contemporary society. This study explores how The Dublin Story Slam is viewed and understood by both the storyteller and listener. The research found that there has been movement away from fictional tales as there is now an invested interest in authentic, true stories. The Dublin Story Slam has created a unique place where people from different backgrounds come together to share and listen to stories. The significance of this research highlights the importance of the sharing experience of storytelling as it helps individuals make sense of the world, shape identities and creates a sense of belonging. The Dublin Story Slam is about having meaningful connections and this place offers a platform to allow individuals to define themselves through their stories, but also through the stories of others.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Joan Wink (2018:ix) discusses how “all we want is a story”. Storytelling creates a sense of community, enables individuals to see through the eyes of other people, and opens the individual to the claims of others (Greene 1996). Storytelling is an organic art, which acts as an antidotes against this increasingly computerised age. It is a living process which breaks down barriers among people as it acts as one of the most common and powerful forms of human connection. People think in story terms, make sense out of their experiences and challenges in story terms and place their lives in story terms (Klapproth 2004). Storytelling helps to motivate, enchant and understand, it imprints a picture on our minds. This research project will examine storytelling within the contemporary society through The Dublin Story Slam.

This study is set out to examine how The Dublin Story Slam is viewed and understood by both the storytellers and the listeners. Further sub-questions in this research set out to examine how The Dublin Story Slam creates a place for the storytellers and listeners, does it provide a third place, if the telling of stories impacts on identity for the storytellers and listeners, and has storytelling changed over time. Qualitative methods was the form of research used, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The key themes explored in this research include place, third place, identity and storytelling. The theme of place exploration formed the basis of the literature for this study.

This piece of research acknowledges that the Dublin Story Slam in the Sugar Club is primarily a place for storytelling, however this study goes further to examine the unique position of the storyteller and listener within this form of storytelling. This study will add to the body of literature already done, however, the significance of this research project to the

study of Sociology is demonstrated through the exploration of the importance of The Dublin Story Slam as a social place. This project examines how this shared experience of storytelling creates a sense of belonging, encourages social connections, and provides a welcoming, open and equal community.

Incorporated into this chapter is the sub-chapter of Setting the Scene, which will provide a general overview of The Dublin Story Slam. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature which formed the foundation of this study and provides an overview of what has been published within articles and books and other sources in relation to the themes of place, third place, identity and storytelling. In Chapter 3 an overview of the research methods used in this study are discussed including participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Following this, Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of the research findings. The final chapter is the Conclusion which will demonstrate an overview of the whole study.

1.1 Setting the Scene

The Dublin Story Slam is Dublin's only open-mic competitive storytelling night. The event started off as The Moth Story Slam in 2014, and having learned so much from working with one of the world's leading storytelling organisations, The Dublin Story Slam was born in May 2017. The Dublin Story Slam is a live, predominately unmediated event that invites anyone to come forward to tell a five to seven minute, autobiographical story based on the evening's theme (Sternier 2016). The storytellers compete for first place, which is determined by volunteer judges from the audience. However, The Dublin Story Slam is not about winning, it is a victory for anyone who manages to stand on stage in front of strangers and tell an entertaining story. There are only three rules: the stories must be true, it should somewhat relate to the theme, and participants cannot use notes or props to tell it (Sternier 2016).

The Dublin Story Slam is a place where ordinary people get to tell extraordinary stories. This organisation believes that storytelling makes the world a “smaller and less frightening place”, and that sometimes the bravest thing one can do is share a story from our lives with others (The Dublin Story Slam 2018). The stories told can be anything from despairing to joyful, from tragic to inspiring, it is up to the storyteller. The Dublin Story Slam (2018) believes in the power of storytelling, “the healing power, the bonding power and the lasting power”. Positioned in the Sugar Club, the room can be stunned into complete silence one moment and then erupt into laughter minutes later. There is a special interaction between the storyteller and the listener and this what makes The Dublin Story Slam such a unique place for stories.

The Dublin Story Slam draws inspiration from traditional Irish storytelling and captures the essence of how Ireland is truly a village country. There have been hundreds of stories shared on stage in The Dublin Story Slam but no two nights are ever the same. This organisation believe that everyone has a story to tell and have created a unique, intimate and often enlightening experience for all of those involved.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research project is based on the topic of place exploration, with a primary focus on how The Dublin Story Slam is viewed and understood. The aim of this literature review is to provide a general overview and understanding of the relevant material that has been written on the subject that is being explored. The discussion within this chapter will be based on the themes that formed the foundation for this research. The themes include place, third place, identity and storytelling. Each theme can be linked with one another, and offer an in-depth insight into the purpose of this study and its contribution to the study of sociology.

The relation of place and third place to place exploration is significant and thus, these themes are vital contributors to this research project. Storytelling has always been a fundamental aspect to Irish culture and remain a part of the Irish identity. The theme of identity is an essential theme and this review will explore how identity matters today. Storytelling is the final theme and will be examined as it provides the core foundation of The Dublin Story Slam.

2.2 Place

Thomas F. Gieryn (2000) expresses the importance of place and illustrates how place still matters, as it continues to persist as a constituent element of social life and historical change. Place does not act as just the setting or backdrop, but rather place is an “agentic player in the game” (Gieryn 2000:466). Benno Werlen argues that place is a force with detectable and independent effects on social life and individual well-being (Werlen 1993 in Gieryn 2000). Thomas F. Gieryn (2000) conceptualises place by distinguishing it into three features. The first is that of geographic location, which demonstrates that place is a specific point in the universe, enabling the distinction of one place to another, and of distance (Gieryn 2000:464).

The second feature is the material form which incorporates the physicality of place, and this can be manipulated by humans as “places are worked by people: we make places” (Gieryn 2000:465). Finally, place is also the investment with meaning and value, as places are “interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood and imagined” (Gieryn 2000:465).

Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) similarly argues that place encompasses the physical setting as well as human experience and interpretation. Place is not intrinsic to the physical surroundings itself, but resides in human interpretations of the setting, which are constructed through the experience with it. Thomas F. Gieryn (2000) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) both suggest that spaces become places as they are imbued with meaning through lived experiences. While space refers to the structural and geometrical qualities of a physical environment, place includes dimensions of lived experience, interaction and use of space (Hornecker 2005). Human beings ascribe meaning to a space based on their experiences, “what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place when we endow it with value” (Tuan 1977:6). It is the formation of emotional, sentimental bonds between people and the Sugar Club that brings together “the material formations on a geographic site and the meanings we invest in them” (Gieryn 2000:481).

Eva Hornecker (2005) argues that the importance of place is demonstrated through how the physicality of place supports and encourages individuals to identify with that place. This identification stems from how place mediates and saturates social life, it is intimately tied to our embodied experiences (Tuan 1977). It is through place where stories are lived out, where “people ascribe qualities to the material and social stuff gathered there” (Gieryn 2000:472). These qualities become the features with which place generates its structure and meaning, its symbolic codes, stories and narratives. Place represents a distinctive type of space that is defined by the lived experiences of people. Barbra Johnstone (1990:134) argues “places are

narrative constructions, and stories are suggested by places”. To know a place, means coming to know its stories, a place does not resonate until it has stories to tell (Johnstone 1990).

Bradley L. Garrett (2011) discusses how these individual interactions and connections with place occur in varying forms as the space, time and context will have changed. Thus, places are imbued with multiple layers of meaning, with each individual encounter with place adding “another layer in the history of the place” (Blakeslee 2009 in Garrett 2011:1052).

These layers of place withhold a recognition of the past, yet also develop in correlation with the contemporary reality. The place meanings and attachment, as products of shared behaviours and cultural processes, consistently add to the meaning and depth of a place.

Bradley L. Garrett (2011) expresses that it is this built history and the developed relationships individuals have formed with place that creates this multi-layered aspect.

Bridget Wessels (2006) conducted research which explored how a city is represented and interpreted. It is the continual interaction and multi-layered feature with place that forms a representation of a place. The identity and culture of a place is mediated through the physical structures belonging to it, but also the history inscribed through it. Bridget Wessels (2006) demonstrated that through the buildings, art and various materials throughout a city, the culture was represented. Within this culture, “multiple aesthetics” can mix together, representing the layers throughout time (Wessels 2006:6). The juxtaposition between features of place, such as old and new, incorporates the change which has been inscribed and negotiated within its material culture. Place does not just belong to one narrative, but rather a multitude. Place consists of a combination of the physical setting, and all of the various stories connected with it.

2.3 Third Place

The sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1989:i) developed the concept of the third place, which he defines as the “great, good places”. A third place is a public space beyond the first place of a private home, and the second place of a working environment which are inherent to everyday life (Oldenburg 1989). For Oldenburg (1989), while all three places are important for conviviality, a more homogenous and more selective sociability exists, is created or engendered in the first and second places. Third places are sociable yet neutral spaces outside of the workplace and home and are recognised by Oldenburg (1989) to contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and the greater community. According to Oldenburg (1989), third places are constructed when venues and participants exhibit certain social and environmental characteristics. This includes having a low profile, being accommodating, conversational and playful. A third place is where people relax in good company and do so on a regular basis, that has a home away from home feeling and which has easy access (Oldenburg 1989).

Third places are characterised in terms of sociability, as Oldenburg (2009:1) explains how we need third places to “construct the infrastructure of human relationships”. Elijah Anderson (2004:28) argues that the experiences of third places can be “profoundly humanising”, as people “have a chance to mix, observe one another and become better acquainted with people they otherwise seldom observe up close”. Third places function as spaces for informal and unorganised social interaction, providing a context for sociability, spontaneity, community building and emotional expressiveness (Jeffres et al. 2009). A sense of place and a sense of belonging is generated from the people who inhabit the place. One of the tenets of third places is that they encourage conversation and interaction, these places allow for community life to unfold. Third places create an environment that connects people, and provides these people with an opportunity to socialise in an environment where the social hierarchy has been

suspended. It is a “common meeting ground” for people of diverse backgrounds and experiences (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982: 275).

Clayton Jon Hawkins and Lee-Anne J. Ryan (2013) discuss Oldenburg’s conception of the third place in the context of festival spaces as third places. It is suggested the world has changed socially, and while Oldenburg (1989) admitted that third places were vanishing, Hawkins and Ryan (2013) argue that they are not vanishing, but rather they are evolving or being replaced. The essence of third places still exist, including the emphasis on accessibility, sociability, comfort and places where people can engage in activities, but now with a contemporary perspective. Festivals do not fit comfortably within Oldenburg’s criteria, such as within the accessibility criterion and low profile characteristic, however places such as these may become increasingly important as third places into the future (Hawkins and Ryan 2013). Places, such as festivals, can exhibit the features of third places through elucidating place-based ingredients that are often intangible. However, Hawkins and Ryan (2013) purpose that more appropriate criteria should now be regarded to third places within the context of contemporary society.

2.4 Identity

Richard Jenkins (2008) highlights the importance of identity and states how it can matter enormously as it affects real human experiences within everyday life. Jenkins (1996) describes identity as the human capacity to distinguish one individual from another. It is the understanding of “who we are and of who other people are” and reciprocally, other people’s understandings of themselves and of others (Jenkins 1996:5). Identity may refer to an individual’s own subjective sense of self, to personal classification markers that appear as important, both to oneself and others, and also to those markers that delineate group membership (Craib 1998). An identity is developed throughout the life course, and acts as a

multi-dimensional classification “of the human world and our place in it”, as individuals and as members of collectives (Jenkins 2008:5).

Ian Craib (1998) explained how it was once suggested that personal identities were fixated and unchanging. However, it is now understood that there is a constant questioning and reconstructing of the self-identity in a lifetime project (Craib 1998). Identities can change according to the situations that individuals find themselves in. In contemporary society, individuals are consistently constructing and revising “personal stories and so reconstructing our selves” (Craib 1998:2). Space is constructed to place through the lives, relations and actions occurring within it, however, one’s changing identity is greatly influenced by place (Davis 2018). The structures, interactions and expectations within place contribute to the prescription and development of identities. One’s identity is “under provisional construction”, and who we are is open to frequent change, influenced by our social surroundings (Macionis and Plummer 2008:211).

Identity serves as a crucial bridge in social life between human beings and wider cultures (Macionis and Plummer 2008). Steph Lawler (2008:2) explains that the notion of identity attaches to an apparent paradoxical combination of “sameness and difference”. Through one meaning, identity is about belonging. It is the sharing of common identities through the comparable feature one has with others. Identity highlights the quality of condition of being the same, of oneness and continuity (Lawler 2008). At the same time however, identity also refers to what differentiates you from others and incorporates individual uniqueness. Jeffrey Weeks (1991) describes this as he suggests identity is about one’s social relationships, their complex involvement with others. However, identity also provides a sense of personal location, and is the stable core to one’s individuality (Weeks 1991). Individuals mark their identity and sameness with some by highlighting their differences between themselves and

others (Macionis and Plummer 2008). One's identity is simultaneously shared and singular (Lawler 2008).

Dan P. McAdams and Kate McLean (2013) discuss the formation of identities through the concept of narrative identity. Human beings are "natural storytellers", people construct and share stories about themselves, detailing particular episodes and periods in their lives and what those experiences mean to them (McAdams and McLean 2013:233). According to McAdams and McLean (2013), narrative identity reconstructs the autobiographical past and imagines the future in such a way as to provide a person's life with some degree of unity, purpose and meaning. Out of the "episodic particulars of autobiographical memory", an individual may construct and internalise an evolving and integrative story of life (McAdams and McLean 2013:233). Narrative identity is the individual's internalised, evolving and integrative story of the self (McAdams 2008).

Narrative identity demonstrates the idea that people create an identity through constructing stories about their lives. The Dublin Story Slam provides a place to allow individuals to demonstrate and express this. As a storyteller, people convey to themselves and to the listeners who they are, how they came to be, and where they think their lives may be going in the future. Narrative identity is suggested to build slowly over time as people tell stories about their experiences to and with others. Over developmental times, selves create stories, which in turn create selves (McAdams and McLean 2013). Through repeated interactions with others, stories about personal experiences are "processed, edited, reinterpreted, retold, and subjected to range of subjective and discursive influences" (McAdams and McLean 2012:235). The storyteller gradually develops a broader and more integrative narrative identity. This is the very epitome of what The Dublin Story Slam is, not only does it provide for a demonstration of this narrative identity, it is also a developmental piece within the

formation of one's identity. The self comes to terms with society through narrative identity and The Dublin Story Slam creates a place for this.

2.5 Storytelling

Storytelling has been described as an instance of communicative verbal activity situated within social life (Klapproth 2004). It is an interactive art, which Richard Bauman (1977:8) describes as “a species of situated human communication, a way of speaking”. Storytelling incorporates a cognitive, social and communicative process in which people tell and share narratives (Klapproth 2004). Ellin Greene (1996) explains that human beings have an innate impulse to communicate their feelings, and experiences through storytelling. Stories are told to make sense of the world, as beliefs, desires and hopes are expressed through the act of storytelling. It is an endeavour to explain ourselves and to connect to and understand others (Ellin Greene 1996). However, storytelling has a unique representation of being “the oldest and the newest of the arts” (Ellin Greene 1996:1). Storytelling has continually fulfilled the same basic and individual needs, however the purpose and conditions of storytelling have changed throughout centuries and cultures (Ellin Greene 1996). This evolution can be seen within the deep Irish connection to the art of storytelling.

Deirdre Englehart (2011) discusses the importance of storytelling within Irish history and culture. Its significance and the interaction between the storyteller and the listener became so prominent that storytelling became an “honoured profession throughout Ireland's history” (Englehart 2011:409). Ellin Greene (1996:3) recounts how there was a school of storytelling in Ireland, with master storytellers “elevated to positions of great power.” There was ownership over certain stories, with others not being able to recount stories without granted permission (Greene 1996). The stories were recited orally and written down, with the traditional form combining a vast collection of characteristics and themes including the Irish

social context, religion and magical creatures (Englehart 2011). Storytelling was looked upon as a way of “teaching social and moral values”, with the storyteller earning a role of genealogist, historian, entertainer and keeper of the culture (Greene 1996:2).

Deirdre Englehart (2011) explains that the enhancement of Irish storytelling was in part due to the appeal it had with many different audiences. The stories created a magical element which was unique to this art form, and also contained a certain simplicity that allowed it to become so accessible. While withholding this mystical element, Englehart (2011) also explains how the stories were designed around the human experience. This storytelling offered an inside view for a broad range of themes and culture and provides a “wide landscape of allusions”, and thus attracted a wide audience (Yolen 2000:15 in Englehart 2011:410). The adornment and power of traditional Irish storytelling was described to have “caught the very voice of the people, the very pulse of life” (Yeats 1986:xxii in Englehart 2011:410).

Clodagh Harvey (1992:7) looks upon this traditional form of Irish storytelling and notes its steady quietness throughout the years, explaining how it is no longer the “ubiquitous social phenomenon it once was”. The development of the printing press, the introduction of dance halls and public houses, and the popularity of radio and television were contributing factors effecting to the waning of traditional storytelling (Greene 1996; Harvey 1992). It was not the storytellers and their tales that were dying out, but rather the traditional contexts and audience for such storytelling (Harvey 1992). The telling of long, structurally complex tales had become associated with the past. Traditional storytellers now often only tell their tales to folklore collectors and other professionals interested in storytelling. However, Harvey (1992) concludes by explaining that the telling and learning of traditional narratives has decreased enormously, however, the general art of storytelling will remain. The process of narrating is a “universal form of behaviour” (Harvey 1992:78). Indeed the fundamentals of storytelling

have remained, and within recent times, there has been a certain revival of the art of storytelling.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of storytelling back into the Irish culture. Despite the traditional form declining, the central characteristics of storytelling were never suppressed (Sternier 2016). Joseph Daniel Sobol (2008) explains how contemporary storytelling has constructed itself as a compound of tradition-based performing art. There is now a storytelling audience longing for stories that “unite us with those we think we are, where we think we are from and allow us to explore and differentiate between the private terrains of experience and memory, and the collective geographies of culture and communication” (Heitkemper-Yates and Penjak 2016:vii). This most recent revival of storytelling is consumed more by people making sense of their experiences, claiming identities, and interacting with one another, by contrast to the oral rich tradition of entrancing audiences with traditional folk tales. While traditional storytelling was associated with public narratives, this contemporary form is absorbed with personal experiences (Sternier 2016). People of all ages are gravitating towards this new embarkment of storytelling and The Dublin Story Slam is providing the place for that within contemporary Irish society.

Catherine Jo Janssen (2012:74) explains that this form of storytelling attracts a group of story enthusiasts that “pay to attend public, amateur storytelling while hoping to be present for moments of peer wisdom in the course of a uniquely democratic entertainment.” The stories are autobiographical, rooted in contextualised individual experiences, with the stage open to anyone who wishes (Sternier 2016). Catherine Jo Janssen (2012) discusses that audiences attend and participate within this form of storytelling because there is an undisputed admiration for the revelation of individual truths. There is a high value placed on the discourse of the authentic self that allows for a “vast multiplicity in story tone and content” (Janssen 2012:74). The prominence is placed on the value of true experiences, rather than the

storyteller's artistic calibre (Sterner 2016). Brittanie L. Sterner (2016:277) demonstrates that the event is an intimate, diverse, community experience, one where people wished to return to "again and again".

This contemporary form of storytelling is not only a way of communicating and sharing to others about experiences in your life, but rather it is also the means by which identities are fashioned. Brett Smith and Andrew Sparkes (2008:5) discuss how this contemporary form of storytelling impacts on identity as "our lives are stories and identity is narratively constructed". Identities are complicated narrative constructions consisting of a continual interaction of the many stories, and fragments of stories, that are created around the things that appear most important about a person's life over time (Nelson 2001 in Smith and Sparkes 2008). Storytelling provides this presenting and sharing of one's narrative identity. The Dublin Story Slam offers a unique storytelling experience that is inclusive, interactive and demonstrates the Irish love for storytelling. It is not a replacement, but rather a re-imagining of the rich traditional form of storytelling that Ireland continues to hold so dearly.

2.6 Conclusion

The aim of this literature review was to provide a general overview of the material that has been written in relation to the themes of place, third place, identity and storytelling. This literature has provided an emblematic understanding of the importance of place and third place within our lives. When examining this case study, it has now become evident that the Sugar Club venue significantly impacts The Dublin Story Slam event through its physical components. The physical setting harmonises with the human experience creating place. The examination of third place revealed the importance of a place such as this. The Sugar Club provides a location away from the first and second place and facilitates social interaction for people of diverse backgrounds and experiences (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982).

The Dublin Story Slam provides a podium for narrative identity and highlights its importance within contemporary times. Human beings are “natural storytellers” (McAdams and McLean 2013: 233) and The Dublin Story Slam provides a place that highlights this. This literature review discussed the changes within storytelling in Ireland over time. The Dublin Story Slam have presented a contemporary form, however the embedded aspects of traditional storytelling continue to shine through today. Storytelling has, and remains to be, a way to make sense of the world and connect to others (Ellin Greene 1996). Each of the themes identified provided the foundation for this research and the basis for the analysis of findings.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Statement of Research Question

For this research project, I conducted a study on “How The Dublin Story Slam storytelling in The Sugar Club, Dublin, is viewed and understood by both the storyteller and the listener.”

This research employed qualitative research methods for the collection of data, comprising of a series of semi-structured interviews and participant observation analysis. The themes explored in this study include place, third place, identity and storytelling. Sub-questions based on these themes were formulated, these questions are as follows:

- How does The Dublin Story Slam create a place for the storyteller and the listener?
- How is The Dublin Story Slam understood by the storyteller and the listener?
- Does The Dublin Story Slam act as a third place?
- Who are the storytellers and why did they develop this place?
- What are the interactions between the storyteller and the listener?
- How is the traditional form of Irish storytelling viewed today?
- Does The Dublin Story Slam create a contemporary form of Irish storytelling – how is this viewed?
- How does the telling of stories impact on identity for both the storyteller and the listener?

3.2 The Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research methods may be described as a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). It incorporates an array of strategies for the conducting of research that are aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world (Sandelowski 2001). This research approach requires the researcher to see the many varieties of the social life. This provides for

a deeper understanding of the subject's perspective (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). It involves the collection of a large quantity of data which can be gathered through a variety of sources including participant observation, case studies, interviews, visual images and focus groups. This gathering of data is required to understand the participant's lived experience within the wider context in which it is in. The researcher must invest time to observe keenly, question respondents strategically, and gather material systematically, with an emphasis on words rather than quantification, to allow for an in-depth understanding of the subject's perspective (Schutt 2018). This form of research was best suited for this study as it provided that potential to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of the context and the people of The Dublin Story Slam.

3.2.1 The Case Study Approach

The case study approach involves a contextualised description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, community, group or institution (Merriam 2002). The complexity and particular nature of the case study is looked upon as this provides a detailed and intensive analysis of the single case (Stake 1995; Bryman 2004). This research approach offers the potential to draw broad conclusions about societal trends and developments as it avoids the impossibilities of studying society as a whole (May 2011). According to Hamel (1993:38) it is the singularity of the case study that offers "a concentration of the global in the local". This form of qualitative analysis involves the careful and complete observation as it is a way of organising social data as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied (Goode and Hatt 1952). However, it must be understood that the case study cannot be generalised to all areas as the research gathered is specific to a certain context (Bryman 2004).

This research strategy is flexible in character as it provides a form of independence to the researcher as they can examine the case from an angle which they consider desirable or of significance (Kumar 2002). There is high potential at gaining valuable insight as the investigation carried out is in-depth. The research approach provides an opportunity to delve into the intricacies of the case, providing more detail and the potential to discover things that might not have become apparent within a wider study (Denscombe 2014). This research strategy focuses on understanding the “dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt 1989:534 in Denscombe 2014:55). Thus, the case study approach is well suited to this research as it will allow for the understanding of the detailed workings of the relationships and social processes within The Dublin Story Slam. This will provide an understanding of what occurs within this place, and why those matters occur.

3.2.2 Interviewing

Interviewing is a conversational practice in which knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee (Given 2008). Interviews yield rich insights into people’s experiences, opinions, attitudes and feelings (May 2011). It is a form of research that enhances the development of trust and provides in-depth qualitative information (O’Leary 2014). A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. This form of research is designed to have a number of questions prepared in advance. However, such prepared questions will be designed to be sufficiently open that subsequent questions will be improvised in a careful and theorised way (Wengraf 2001). This is to allow individuals respondents latitude and freedom to discuss what is of interest or importance about the topic to them (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2010). Thus, this study will employ this method as interviews allow respondents to answer more on their own terms than structured interviews permit, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over that of an unstructured interview (May 2011).

For the purpose of this research project I carried out a total of six interviews with individuals that have developed a relationship with The Dublin Story Slam. This included three storytellers and two listeners. The length of interviews ranged from forty minutes to an hour depending of the responses from the interviewees. The interviewees were asked a series of questions which were directly related to the main research question and sub-questions, in order to gain an in-depth and valuable understanding of the chosen research topic. The questions were prepared ahead of time and were designed to provide flexibility, as this allowed the exploration of the participant’s subjective meanings. All of the interviews took place in public spaces with the majority occurring in cafés. I ensured that the location was as accommodating and accessible to the interviewees as possible. These locations provided a relaxed environment, however I had to ensure the area would not be too loud as to distort the recording of the interviews and that the interviewees could hear comfortably.

3.2.3 Sources of Data

Respondent	Gender	Age	Storyteller/ Listener
A	Female	30+	Storyteller
B	Male	20+	Storyteller
C	Female	30+	Storyteller
D	Female	30+	Listener
E	Male	20+	Listener
F	Male	40+	Listener

G	Female	20+	Listener
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3.2.4 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a process of collecting systematic observations whilst being a part of the activities of the group that the researcher is studying (Kendall 2014). This is a form of ethnographic research that places the focal point of the examination within the meanings and knowledge produced by the social agents within the context of the area being researched.

This method consists of the researcher accessing the field in which they wish to participate, observing, documenting and trying to make sense of what is seen, heard and felt in the process (Burgess 1984). The researcher is required to develop the ability to attend to details and “seeing” as much as possible within the field of research (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011:81).

The participant observation was carried out during the live, open-mic storytelling night of The Dublin Story Slam. This entailed entering within the milieu of the subjects and experiencing their environment.

During this systematic method of data collection, I immersed myself within this storytelling society, worked through the complexities of social interactions and experienced their environment (O’Leary 2014). Participant observation analysis requires the researcher to become aware of their complete surroundings. In the field of research, field notes were recorded within a chronological order, along with a collection of all of the data that I believed would provide useful to the research question and themes I was concerned with. James Spradley (1980) discusses the multitude of features that researchers should take account of. These include the physical environment, such as the objects within the field, also the actors present and the feelings they express, and the actions, activities and events carried out by these individuals (Spradley 1980:78). Thus, this involved recording copious amounts of

information to enable an understanding of the social and cultural scene in which this analysis was taking place.

As the researcher, there was an endeavour to blend in and adopt the style and social of those around and thus become a member of the audience, gathering as much detail as possible. This method has an overt and covert aspect to it which provided a versatility (Scott 2002). I decided not to carry out overt participation which often involved the use of formal recording as this had a possibility of being obtrusive. Thus, I chose covert participation which provided the opportunity to carry out note-taking generally within a private or secluded area within the venue and to anonymise individuals within the research data (Scott 2002:45). A possible negative within participant observation includes that it can be quite time-consuming as the researcher must gather a large amount of meaningful data and comparisons from often vast amounts of field notes (Andersen and Taylor 2006).

However, participant observation was the pre-eminent method to obtain the most valid and vivid picture to my research questions. It allowed for the gathering of data within the naturalistic setting, observing in the most undisturbed manner as possible (Kirby et al. 2000). It is a method that combines subjective knowledge “gained through personal involvement” and objective knowledge, which is acquired through a rigorous collection of data (Andersen and Taylor 2006:37). Within this research, this method held a slight seniority, as the subjective aspect provided a dimension of information that is “completely lacking in survey data and similar techniques” (Andersen and Taylor 2006:37). The burden which may come with the managing of rich and often subjective raw material is outweighed by the potency it adds to the interpretations of human interaction. Thus, ultimately this method allows for an understanding of the wider context and an insight into the meanings of the activities and interactions that occur within place.

3.3 Analysis of Data

Figure 3.1: An outline of the steps taken in this qualitative research project

Initial readings surrounding the topic of inquiry (place exploration)



Developing an idea, research question, hypothesis. Formation of general research question and initial theoretical framework (this includes theories, literature surrounding the area of inquiry etc.)



Collection of relevant data – interviewing, participant observation, photographic representation, documentary analysis, etc. Finalising Literature review.



Interpretation of data / analysis of data



Conceptual and theoretical framework



Tighter specification of the research question

Write up findings/conclusions

(Figure adapted from Bryman: 2004: 269).

3.4 Ethics

Ethics is concerned with the attempt to formulate codes and principles of moral behaviour (May 2011). Throughout the complete research process, ethical consideration will inform reasons of action in conduct, and is employed to protect participants and the integrity of inquiry. John Barnes (1979:16) defines ethical decisions as “not in terms of expediency or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong”. The research is carried out in a way which is not advantageous to the researcher, but rather the concern is what is right or just in regard to the participants in the research and the role of the research in society (May 2011). For this research project I ensured to become fully aware and familiar with the National University of Maynooth (2010) and the Sociological Association of Ireland (2018) ethical guidelines. The primacy of the research was ensured to surround respecting the rights, dignity and privacy of the participants and understanding that this obligation supersedes the objective of receiving information (Benson 2018).

Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2004:219) write how there are three main issues within ethical research, which are codes of consent, confidentiality and trust. In terms of consent, the research subjects have the right to know they are being researched and the right to withdraw any time (Seale et al. 2004). I ensured to outline my research project to those involved in participant observation and to each interviewee. I explained to them of their participation in the project and that as their participation was voluntary, they may refuse to take part, answer certain questions or stop the interview at any time, and that they may also withdraw from the project any time until the work is complete. The interviewees were then requested to sign a consent form.

In regard to confidentiality, I ensured to understand the principles of privacy and respect for autonomy, and I protected the identity of the participants. This form of research investigates

detailed accounts of social life and thus I had to be fully responsible in protecting the gathered data (National University of Ireland Maynooth 2010). As the Story Slam event holds over three hundred people, I encountered a lot of individuals, however I tried to keep the field notes completely anonymised and confidential. Finally, trust refers to the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Seale et al. 2004). Before each interview took place I fully introduced myself and explained what the interviews would entail in order to ensure the participant was informed and comfortable with taking part. All of the participants were comfortable and had trust within the purpose of this project.

3.5 Issues of Positionality

The researcher's location within the research context is vitally important as understanding one's location is central to most research endeavours (Kirby, Greaves and Reid 2006). The researcher must employ a reflexive mind throughout the entire research process. I understood that there was an obligation as a social researcher to be as objective as possible and to have a consideration of my own social, cultural and political values when in the context of the study (Bryman 2004). I became aware of The Dublin Story Slam when I heard a student completed her research project on the Trophy art installation of the tiny tents. Within each tent, there would be a storyteller which would tell you about a moment in their lives that fundamentally changed them. I have always loved hearing true, personal stories, I hadn't realised Dublin catered for anything like this. Once I realised that this could be a premise for my research project, through researching on Google, I discovered The Dublin Story Slam.

In recent years I have become so fascinated with perspectives, the difference of understandings and reasonings from one person to the next, the context of people's lives, individual's personal stories. Thus, I quickly fell in love with The Dublin Story Slam as it bundles up all of this, but within a contemporary setting. I approached this event with an open mind and reflected on the

consequence of the methods, biases and values I had as a researcher. I ensured to separate the deep interest I had with the storytelling night and any pre-conceived ideologies to the side and solely focused on the research project.

Chapter 4: Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore how The Dublin Story Slam is viewed and understood by both the storyteller and the audience. This chapter will draw out and discuss the literature that was examined in Chapter Two, highlighting how the findings contribute to this knowledge base. By connecting the information gathered from the semi-structured interviews and participant observation analysis with the sociological literature, the aim of this findings chapter is to deepen and broaden the understanding of the particular phenomenon which is being researched. This will be conducted under the thematic headings of place, third place, identity and storytelling.

4.2 Place

In the literature review in Chapter Two, Thomas F. Gieryn (2000:466) illustrated the importance of place and explained that place acts as an “agentic player” within social life and historical change. Gieryn’s (2000) conceptualisation of place incorporates the essential union of the geographic location and the human interactional aspect of place. Similarly Yi-Fu Tuan (1997) discusses that place incorporates the physical surroundings as well as the human experience and interpretation. The findings of this study discovered that the Sugar Club, the venue that withholds the event of The Dublin Story Slam, represents this understanding of place.

This place gets sold out every month, and quickly too, you think they would move to a bigger venue. But nah, they don’t because this place is perfect for The Story Slam. This is such a lovely, warm and intimate space. When you’re telling a story you can see the faces of the audience. I can see when they’re laughing or getting teary eyed. The Sugar Club honestly goes hand in hand with storytelling (Respondent B 2019).

It’s a small venue which is what you need for storytelling. We may not be gathered around a fire like the olden times but the layout of the place is so intimate, that’s what

you need for an event like this. We're all put together as one like (Respondent E 2019).

The above quotes echo Gieryn's (2000) and Tuan's (1977) understanding of place and correlate similarly with the findings from the participant observation. As you enter The Sugar Club there is an immediate sense of warmth from the red lights beaming across the room, the surrounding wooden panelled walls, wooden floor and deep red plush velvet banquettes. This all combines for a comforting atmosphere which is harmonious for this intimate form of storytelling. There was one large section of seating that was all interconnected and almost stream like. The audience was not divided by stairs or railings, or placed in separate sections of the room. Instead, the seating was two steps away from the stage and stretched back, and yet was close enough that if you were in the last row you could see the whites of the storyteller's eyes perfectly. Everybody was together. As Eva Hornecker (2005) explained, the importance of place is demonstrated through how the physical aspects supports the human identification with that place. It was this layout of the venue that became important and imbued with meaning because of the interactional art of storytelling that was occurring within it (Tuan 1977).

Barbra Johnstone (1990:134) discussed how "places are narrative constructions, and stories are suggested by places". The Sugar Club indeed represents this through the memories people have created within this venue.

I'm only a listener, but maybe it's because you hear other people telling stories on stage so wonderfully and that this enters into everyone in the room or something, but the conversations I've had on these nights have been some of the best I've ever had. Everyone suddenly becomes open and shares amazing stories with each other. It's gas, as soon as you step in the door to the Sugar Club, it's as if everyone is suddenly friends. You talk to complete strangers at the bar, in the bathroom, those sitting next to you, with such ease. It's definitely a place for talking, face to face communication and sharing (Respondent D 2019).

This finding also correlates with Gieryn's (2000:465) understanding that "places are worked by people: we make places". It is the interactions that people are having with one another that make this such a special night. However, it is also through the stories told in the Sugar Club that Johnstone's (1990) construction of place becomes evident. The stories shared on stage demonstrated that it is indeed through place where stories are created and lived out. The place within which the narrative was formed always contributed as a vital piece to the arc and significance of the story. One story I heard was based in a car, another in an Xtra-Vision video shop, and many other stories transpired throughout a combination of places. It was the stories created within these locations that generated meaning and significance to the place. As Johnstone (1990) explains, a place does not resonate until it has stories to tell.

The identity and culture of a place is mediated through the history inscribed throughout it (Wessels 2006). The Sugar Club originally opened in 1963 as the Irish Film Theatre, however it then closed its doors in 1985. It was fourteen years later that the same space would be re-opened in 1999 (Berman and Wallace 2014). However, this restoration marked a new identity and function as the venue now became the home for music, art and culture in Dublin. The Sugar Club withheld the irreplaceable Burmese Teak panels that pour over the walls of the auditorium, but also installed a state-of-the-art digital projector (The Dublin Sugar Club 2018).

The Sugar Club is a venue that relies on nostalgia for an immersive experience, yet it also withholds modernistic features. This is in line with Wessels' (2006:6) demonstration that places contain "multiple aesthetics" that mix together to represent the layers throughout time. Garrett (2011) correspondingly explains that places are imbued with multiple layers of meaning, and with each acculturation the Sugar Club experienced "another layer in the history of the place" was created (Blakeslee 2009 in Garrett 2011:1052). The Sugar Club

venue, and the stories told within it, emulate that places do not just belong to one narrative, but rather a multitude.

4.3 Third Place

The Dublin Story Slam indeed fits into Ray Oldenburg's (1989) conceptualisation of the third place as it acts beyond, the inherent to everyday life, of the first and second place. As outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2, Oldenburg (1989) identified the third place as a place that is sociable and that contributes to the wellbeing of individual's.

The Story Slam for me is just about being out with my friends and listening to stories. You know regardless of whether I tell one or not, it's just a really, really lovely night. I've used it as a way to catch up with friends that I haven't seen in ages. I mean the tickets aren't expensive and I know it's a thing that a lot of my friends would be in to, so if I haven't seen someone in ages I'll suggest well okay lets go to this and then enjoy the show together, it's great (Respondent C 2019).

This finding became a consistent message as the interviewees consistently spoke of how The Dublin Story Slam provided an informal meeting spot between friends. Oldenburg (1989) discussed that conversation was a main characteristic within a third place, and The Dublin Story Slam provides a prime area to allow people to get together and interact. Oldenburg and Brissett (1982:280) also explain that third places serve as a mean of "keeping in touch with reality" through intimate personal ties outside the home and workplace. The Dublin Story Slam provides a place that constructs the infrastructure of human relationships.

Myself and three of my friends go as often as we can. It can be really hard to find a time and place that suits us all, especially with work and college, but we really do try to set time aside for this, for us. It's a really great way to reconnect with those friends and just touch base with the normal world when at times you can get so caught up with work, family and college (Respondent D 2019).

Another characteristic of the Dublin Story Slam which identifies as a third place is how there are regular storytellers and listeners. The attendees find that The Dublin Story Slam is a place

to relax in good company and contains the home away from home feel that Oldenburg (1989) discusses, and thus they repeatedly come back.

Honestly this place is quietly addictive. After going once, I immediately wanted to know when the next one is on (Respondent F 2019).

As soon as you've been to one, you've caught the bug. I've been to roughly the last five, and my friends and I don't plan on stopping anytime soon (Respondent B 2019).

What is evident here through participant observation is that The Dublin Story Slam is a third places which caters for community life to unfold. When first arriving at The Sugar Club, there was a queue stretching all the way down Lesson Street. Looking amongst this crowd, a sea of diversity could be viewed. As Oldenburg and Brissett (1982:275) comment, a third place is a “common meeting ground” for people of diverse backgrounds and experiences. Those in the queue ranged from students to elders, there was groups of excitable friends, a few couples and also singletons. There seemed to be a complete breakdown of the barriers that usually crop up amongst late-night events. While often events may be heavily gendered to one side, or perhaps more particular to a certain socio-economic background, that was clearly not the case at The Dublin Story Slam. Respondent A discussed how she was part of group called sanctuary runners which enables people to run alongside, and in solidarity with, individuals from Direct Provision. Respondent A brought this group to the storytelling event and into this inclusive community of The Dublin Story Slam. Anyone and everyone is invited, and they are all very much welcomed.

The Story Slam is a place where no matter who you are or where you've come from or what you've done, everyone comes together to share and listen to stories about what makes us so different, yet also so alike (Respondent F 2019).

A common theme that arose within each interview was this aspect of community. The sharing of stories in this authentic, brave, and yet somewhat vulnerable space, connecting individuals in such a unique way.

To me, it came across as a safe place for people to share their stories for healing. The content that is being told, being a part of the audience, makes you feel like you are a part of something special. You know it's a group of people who want to be there and want to hear your story. I think there's always going to be a sense of closeness when an individual opens up (Respondent E 2019).

The openness, regularity and complete acceptance that is felt within The Dublin Story Slam resonates with those that encounter this unique event. As Dublin city grows in numbers and you begin to feel a little smaller, The Dublin Story Slam brings you back on solid ground and reminds you that you are not alone and that you are part of a community.

I would almost say it was a crutch for me in this city. In something that I knew was coming up on a month to month basis. Coming back to Ireland I wanted to have a community, and I wanted to have a connection and I didn't know quite how to do that. For me, it was to make it in this life and in this city, which is a big place and you can get swallowed up by it...It is the community and the connection. You know you are going to walk in there every Tuesday and you are going to be included (Respondent A 2019).

4.4 Identity

Richard Jenkins (2008) explained how identity can matter enormously as it affects real human experiences within everyday life. Identity is the human capacity to distinguish one individual from another and yet it also delineates the belonging to a wider community (Jenkins 2008). Through examining the findings, it became evident that The Dublin Story Slam facilitated this paradoxical state of identity. Storyteller respondents discussed how they had been noticed on the streets from a particular story they had shared. However, within this welcomed recognition, the wider communal feature of The Dublin Story Slam was transparent. It is also within the stories being shared that this transparency of sameness and

difference rings through. While each story told is unique to the individual sharing it, the emotions and wider societal context within the story is inherently universal.

When I'm trying to form the story I want to tell, you look for the ways your experiences might resonate with those listening. That's why I tell stories really. It's autobiographical, this is my authentic and unique story that happened to me and you weren't there. But yet, you can feel connected and recognise yourself within my story (Respondent B 2019).

Look as fucking cheesy as this sounds, we're all the same right? We're all humans. Everyone feels that when they go through something that 'oh my gosh I am the only one ever who has experienced this, no one understands me', woe is me. Then you go here and you hear all these different stories and you're like well fuck me, I guess I'm not alone and I'm not the only one. That is a really good feeling. It makes you realise that someone else has felt the exact same thing that you have and that no, you're not weird or odd, you're fucking human. There's not too many places that can do that like the Story Slam does (Respondent G 2019).

This finding demonstrates that the events, opinions and experiences shared within The Dublin Story Slam are reciprocal and serve as a bridge between human beings. One's identity is simultaneously shared and singular (Lawler 2008). In the literature review Ian Craib (1998) discussed on identities are "under provisional construction" and Respondent A accentuated this point. Identities are indeed open to frequent change. Respondent A discussed how the stories that she shares are indeed part of who she is. Yet, this sharing of the story in The Dublin Story Slam provides a place to package that moment in their life off and move forward. Individuals are consistently constructing a revising their personal stories and so "reconstructing" themselves (Craib 1998:2).

Dan P. McAdams and Kate McLean (2013:233) discuss how individuals construct and share stories about themselves through narrative identity, and explain that human beings are "natural storytellers". Narrative identity is the individual's internalised, evolving and integrative story of the self and The Dublin Story Slam provides a place to showcase this. Narrative identity is the very epitome of what The Dublin Story Slam is as the storytellers

share memories about particular episodes in their lives and what those experiences mean to them. Through participant observation I became an audience member, and through listening to the stories, the different beliefs, values and experiences, resonated within me and helped shape my identity in parts. As you listen, not only are you receiving a window into the storytellers identity, but they are also opening a window within you and shaping your identity. You craft your identity as you listen to other's perspectives, it opens you up to ideas and understandings that you may have never comprehended before.

People desire authenticity and honesty and when you go with something that is personal to you, that's what the audience connects with. If it means something to you then it will mean something to them (Respondent C 2019).

Creating and sharing stories is way to both craft and interpret an individual's emerging identity. However, it is also the listening to stories that help audience members co-create and manifest their identities. Narrative identity help people make sense out of their lives. In Patrick J. Lewis' (2011:505) words "without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other".

4.5 Storytelling

Danièle Klapproth (2004) described storytelling as an instance of communicative verbal activity situated within social life. The Dublin Story Slam provides a place that showcases this country's unique storytelling prowess, encouraging people of every age and walk of life to get up and share a little piece of their life's story on stage (Carton 2018). Greene (1996) and Englehart (2011) discussed the significance of storytelling in Ireland, as it is one of the oldest cultural traditions in this country. The Dublin Story Slam certainly draws inspiration from the traditional form. However, The Dublin Story Slam has emerged as a contemporary form of storytelling with alternative and additional features contrasting to the traditional art. Within this contemporary form, the fundamentals of storytelling, that were present in the traditional form, remain grounded within this art.

The feeling of being gripped by a story is just fantastic, that has never changed (Respondent F 2019).

We still experience that human connection that comes from the simple act of listening to another person's story (Respondent E 2019).

Storytelling was, and still is, a method of expanding creatively and increasing a sense of community and belonging. However, many of the characteristics that were once prominent within traditional storytelling are not to be seen within this live event format. Today, it is accepted that everyone can do it, everyone has a story to tell. As I looked amongst the queue entering the Sugar Club, it was those very people that would be the stars of the show. This is in contrast to the past when storytellers were “elevated to positions of great power” (Greene 1996:3). Traditional stories predominately contained a teaching and moral element, and it was based on fictional tales (Englehart 2011). By contrast, The Dublin Story Slam calls for true, personal stories and holds no boundaries to the meaning of that story.

The one thing I would say, and the reason probably that the Story Slam attracts me so much more is, and I don't know if this is a generational thing or what, but I'm always much more interested when people tell me about their own lives... but in a way I think with the older Irish stories, sometimes they are a bit like a lesson of why you should live your life on the straight and narrow (Respondent A 2019).

Traditional storytelling began to heavily wane as technology, television and more modern forms of communication and entertainment emerged (Harvey 1992). The Dublin Story Slam offers a form of revival of storytelling by allowing great stories to be told in public.

What a treat that the art is being received in a modern, laid back setting (Respondent E 2019).

Storytelling is a core element of history, it was a dying art and the Story Slam is striving to keep it alive, and I think it's very important that we do (Respondent F 2019).

The mediums have changed and storytelling now, through The Dublin Story Slam, corresponds to what Sterner (2016) understands as the contemporary form; storytelling that is absorbed with personal experiences. Sterner (2016) illustrated that storytelling was now autobiographical, rooted in contextualised individual experiences, with the stage open to anyone who wishes and this is the very epitome of what The Dublin Story Slam is. A high value is placed on the authentic self. The event is indeed intimate, diverse, a community experience and one where people wish to return to again and again. The Dublin Story Slam have truly captured the essence of the beauty of storytelling.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the significant findings that emerged throughout this study on The Dublin Story Slam. The combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews provided insightful and valuable information for this research. It became clear from observing The Dublin Story Slam event first hand and from interviewing both storytellers and listeners, that this event is truly cherished amongst all that have come in contact with it. Through examining the Sugar Club the importance of place within people's lives became evident. The Sugar Club's physical attributes including the stage and the seating, harmonise with the storytelling event that is taking place within it. However, it is the connection between these physical aspects and the human experiences that have occurred within the Sugar Club that has transformed it into place.

The Sugar Club provides a comfortable venue which encourages social connections and interaction. Individuals feel safe, secure and equal here, with a desire to return to The Dublin Story Slam storytelling night. Respondents felt this event provided a welcoming, friendly environment that allows for a blend of people, no matter who they are and it is these contributors that make this a third place (Oldenburg 1989). An individual's identity reveals

their beliefs, values and experiences (Jenkins 2014). The stories told at this event reveal that identities are constantly changing, and although identities represent our individual uniqueness, it also signifies our part within a wider community. Narrative identity refers to an individual's internalised, evolving and integrative story of the self (McAdams 2008). The Dublin Story Slam provides a setting which allows these narrative identities to be shared with one another. This sharing of narratives helps individuals make sense of the world and form their own identities through the exposure of new perspectives.

Storytelling truly provided the foundation of this research project. The findings reveal that storytelling is an evolving art that has continually helped people make meaning out of their lives. The Dublin Story Slam highlight how the self comes to term through storytelling. This event showcases honest stories, told right from the heart, and it is this which creates the connection between the storyteller and audience. As individuals, we define ourselves through our stories, but also through the stories of others. As the world continues to become dominated by technology, The Dublin Story Slam offers a refuge and a place for face to face social interaction, without the while glow of a phone screen lighting up the room. The Dublin Story Slam is situated within this change of Irish storytelling. However, it has been welcomed and cherished by both the storytellers and listeners beyond belief.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Dublin Story Slam in the Sugar Club has strongly illustrated that place still matters as it continues to persist as a constituent element of social life and historical change. Thomas F. Gieryn (2000) expressed how important place is and through the examination of this event, this has become evident. The basis of this research was place exploration and this enabled a social understanding of people's experiences, perspectives and meanings of place.

In Chapter One, the objectives of this study were outlined, along with a setting the scene section to briefly illustrate the basis of what The Dublin Story Slam is. Chapter Two provided the literature review which explored the themes of place, third place, identity and storytelling. Each of these themes played a significant role in forming the basis of this research. Chapter Three outlined that qualitative research methods would be used. The use of participant observation and semi-structured interviews provided an avenue to capture insightful and in-depth information concerning the research objective.

In Chapter Four, the findings were discussed and analysed in line with the chosen themes. The findings that were gathered within this study emphasise the importance of this research and its contribution to the study of Sociology. The findings illustrated the importance of place through the exploration of the Sugar Club. The Dublin Story Slam is withheld in the Sugar Club, and there is no other venue that would be more suited. The physical attributes around the room are harmonious with the activities that occur within this storytelling event. The material form of the Sugar Club has created an intimate and comforting atmosphere which strongly facilitates the live storytelling and promotes social interaction. It is this unity of the physical environment and the formation of emotional, sentimental bonds between people which endow place with value (Tuan 1977). The multiple aesthetics within the Sugar Club incorporate the individual interactions and connections that individuals have had with this

venue throughout various forms of time and context. This adds multiple layers of meaning to place and adds to its identity and culture, the Sugar represents that place does not belong to just one narrative, but rather a multitude (Gieryn 2000; Wessels 2006).

The findings also discussed how third places function as spaces for sociability, interaction and community, and The Dublin Story Slam emulates this. This event provides a comfortable space where everyone feels safe and secure as if they were in their own home, conversation is important and everyone is equal. The Dublin Story Slam is a third place that facilitates opportunities for meeting with a mix of people to build social connections and networks.

Within the findings, it became evident that The Dublin Story Slam created a unique community that has become increasingly important to those attending. This is truly a third place as it is welcoming, friendly and allows for a blend of people, no matter their status.

Identity is about belonging, and this research demonstrated that The Dublin Story Slam provides a place for one's identity to be expressed. Storytelling is about the sharing of common identities through the comparable features that one has with others, while also expressing the storytellers uniqueness. Storytelling incorporates how identities are a representation of both "sameness and difference" (Lawler 2008:2). Individuals' identities are constantly shifting and storytelling is how we make sense of this. By taking the disparate pieces of our lives and placing them together within a narrative, we create a unified whole that allows us to understand our lives a little more coherently. As Timothy San Pedro (2015:135) echoed "our stories are never isolated from the world and the world is never isolated from us".

The findings magnified the importance of storytelling within our lives. Stories are told to make sense of the world, as beliefs, desires and hopes are expressed through the act of storytelling (Greene 1996). Traditional Irish storytelling has declined throughout the years,

however The Dublin Story Slam has offered a form of revival of Irish storytelling. While the contextual aspects of traditional story have changed, the fundamentals of storytelling have remained. Storytelling brings communities together though the crave of human connection and it remains a primary form of communication. However, by contrast to previous times, the prominence is now placed on the value of true experiences, with the listener's seeking an authentic version of the storyteller. The Dublin Story Slam captures the village essence of this country. Storytelling has always held a particular prominence in Ireland and The Dublin Story Slam is reminding us all that the art of telling a good story is practically in our blood.

Further research on this study could explore the future of Irish storytelling as we enter an increasingly digital age, will this hinder the gathering and telling of stories or heighten people's desire for human connection. It would also be interesting to examine the possible different perspectives of storytelling between different generations, is there a craving for the traditional form or is this contemporary revival preferred. As this is currently the only event of its kind in Dublin, due to its increasing popularity it will be interesting to see if more live, true, personal storytelling events crop up. The Dublin Story Slam is a place for the voiceless to find their voice and for us all to embrace the idea that there's a story in us all worth sharing.

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Appendix A

Participant Identification Number:

CONSENT FORM

Examining how The Dublin Story Slam in the Sugar Club is viewed and understood by both the listener and the storyteller.

Name of Researcher: Laoise Brophy

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [insert date] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that my name will not appear in the final project.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix B

Consent Form Information Sheet

[Date]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my Research Project for my Special Topics BA Project at Maynooth University. My research is designed to explore how The Dublin Story Slam is viewed and understood by both the listeners and the storytellers. The themes that I will be covering include place, third place, identity and storytelling.

This interview will take up to one hour and with your permission I would like to tape record the conversation. A copy of the interview transcript will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to hear it.

All of the interview information will be kept confidential. I will store the tapes/notes of our conversation safely. Your identity will be kept confidential and I will use a code number/pseudonym to identify your interview data. Neither your name or private information will appear in the final research project.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me.

Appendix C

Transcript of Interview April 16th 2019.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about yourself and how you discovered The Dublin Story Slam?

Respondent: I am **name*, and I'm from Ireland, but I had moved away to the UK for six years. I had never really, in terms of storytelling, ever really been on stage, or had done anything like that before. But I would say, through a 'life misadventure', I ended up in this enormous house share, kind of almost sitcom-esk situation in the last two years of being in the UK. And so we would always be kind of trying to kind of entertain each other and people who didn't know each other at all, and so trying to get that common bond, and also summarising our lives in ways that I hadn't with lots of friends that I had known for so long, you know what I mean? So the other thing is that one of my friends there had been involved in improv comedy, and so he had said would you go to a workshop class and so I went, but I was too nervous ever to perform at it. And so I guess, fast forward when I came to Dublin, and literally it was someone I had known for eight years ago through college I bumped into, I was feeling a bit lonely trying to find my way, and he said come along to this open mic night. And then in the interval I thought 'oh my god I might have a story here'.

Interviewer: So you told a story the first time you went?

Respondent: On the first time. So I kinda dared myself to do it, because I was so annoyed that I had been too scared to ever do the improv that I thought okay, do you know I will actually, and ya know I don't know anyone here, its grand, and so yes. And my name was the last picked out on that night. So it was a story, if I'm honest, it was about, to summarise em how I accidentally, again as a thing of empowerment, got a tattoo of a camper van on my side and accidentally hadn't gotten anyone to look over it and it accidentally looked like a storm trooper. So that was literally the crux of the story. But anyway, I told that story, but the amount of confidence I got from just being on the stage and telling that story, and also it was about telling a story where I had come out of a difficult place and moment, not that exciting it was just a break up, but you know in the moment it feels life destroying, and it was amazing to me, not alone being on stage and having such a receptive audience, so never told a story

anywhere other than in the Sugar Club, and the other thing of afterwards thinking ‘wow I kind of packaged off that moment in my life and now it is just a story.

Interviewer: It kind of solidified it, finalised it?

Respondent: Yeah it solidified it, finalised it and othersised it, it kind of separated it from myself, people found it entertaining and now I can just put that down, close the book. And so I would say over the following year, when topics came up I was like ‘oh could I tell a story’, and so I told three or four other ones since. And then one of the last ones I won and got into the final competition. So the first time I told a story incredible, second one, I again, was doing it not necessarily so much as ‘oh my gosh I want to win, I want to get the reaction’, and over the next three or four and now certainly since, I don’t tell stories so much because I kind of feel I kind of think about it less of a confidence thing for myself, could I tell a story, and I’m like is this the right time in this story to tell it, or is this actually going to appeal to an audience, or do I have the right, cause one of the things I do, is if there is, in particular I worked a lot on the story I did in the abbey, because I knew what I wanted to say but it’s a long old thing to cram in and I had to, one of the things I really enjoy is when I think of a turn of phrase and I know that the audience will like it. Do you know what I mean? And not just that the audience will like it but that it summarises, you have to have a turn of phrase to summarise things fast to make it a story worth telling, if that makes sense to you.

Interviewer: Do you find that there is an interaction with the audience, and if so, do you find that important to storytelling?

Respondent: It’s interesting, when I try to think, I try to imagine would the story be interesting first of all. But if I’m honest, like that story in the Abbey, I had really worked on it and was like this is talking about quite a difficult moment in my life and then you know the bizarre details in it, but funny when I was practising it I never imagined they’d find it fun. Truly. I really didn’t. So I was literally like, I was really concerned when I tell a story I have too much details to pack in and I’m so concerned with jamming it all in that I actually probably don’t focus quite so much on the reaction. And the other thing, and this is fantastic, cause after I did the first storytelling I was like ‘my god am I good at this or what’, and I tried stand up and interestingly I didn’t enjoy it at all. because, and the difference is, and it’s the beauty of storytelling, is that you don’t have to get validation of a noise from the audience for it to be a story that really resonates, and I know that from being in the audience. And when I went to do stand up, it felt like kind of the fast part of the storytelling but without the bit that

makes you think about it for weeks and months afterwards. So the laughs are lovely when they come, but I actually feel if I get to the end of the arch and I'm able to tell them one of the main things, the reason, I mean I try to always finish with the reason why I would even tell the story in the first place, and if I get to there it's a win-win. And that's what I love about it, it is a slow burner of a thing, and you don't need, and even as an audience member of stand up, you get a bit tired because you actually feel like you have to deliver a laugh to give them the self-confidence, whereas that's not the case at all with storytelling.

Interviewer: Yes so as you were saying you found The Story Slam through a mutual friend?

Respondent: It was actually, hilariously, an ex-boyfriend who gifted me his old friend and then we all kind of went almost every month, and three of four of us have stood up and told a story now. The last time that I went, I went with people that were living in Direct Provision, so I'm a group called sanctuary runners, where we run with them on a Saturday morning as a group of people in park runs, but I got in touch with **the producer of the show* and I said 'by any chance', and he was immediately receptive because he doesn't want it not just to be a really small, homogenised group of people talking, he wants to broaden it. And interestingly, there was a moment, there was a time where there was several people who were visually impaired and told fantastic stories and they came as a group together, and he is definitely open to doing a workshop open to people living in Direct Provision. And we ended up being judges on the night, it was fantastic. But one of them actually, because they were a little bit like 'what's this, what's going on' and at the interval she was like 'oh my god I want to tell a story', and she couldn't because we were the judges and it was not going to be impartial. But interestingly one of them has the job, because as you know as an asylum seeker you can't take much work, and amnesty international give him money to kind of tell a really traumatic part of his story and he actually told me that over six months he might do it twice a week, and gets like €100-150 from amnesty, and he actually said he has stopped now because it is so heavy for him to relive the aspects of being an asylum seeker, aspects of the hard thing, even though its money that he's like I've never been in Ireland as well off, but at the same time, felt so low. And interestingly, and that was the thing I mentioned to **the producer of the show*, and it is a really good thing about the storytelling, is that there are people who are really emotionally open, but very rarely is it right in the moment of them being in that difficult scenario and the thing that I really like, that when we brought the people from Direct Provision there, that they understood that it didn't have to be 'here is the guts of me', you know? And actually this is just an interesting thing that happened to me x amount of years

ago, it doesn't define me and it maybe has nothing to do with my life right now and I think that maybe some of them really liked about it, you know what I mean. That you have to be protective about yourself if you're telling a story. You can't be really in it, I think, because it can be too much, you know?

Interviewer: How long have you been coming to The Dublin Story Slam?

Respondent: It has been since January 2017, so two and a bit years. And so I was lucky enough, best prize ever for winning the thing in the Abbey was the four tickets for the following year, every month. So I just feel like I have gotten such a treat every month of going, and even if I just go as an audience member, it likes make me think of things about my life afterwards, or like oh my god if this topic would come up I would love to tell that story. I just can't say enough about it.

Interviewer: What is it about storytelling at The Dublin Story Slam that made you want to get back up on stage and tell another story?

Respondent: After the first time, as I've said to you, thinking I do have another entertaining episode and if I think about it, could I fit it into the body of a story, does that make sense?

Interviewer: Like the challenge of it?

Respondent: Yes like the challenge of it, it was like a really fun game of wordplay, where you think about how you could construct a sentence or something, you think about what you want to say and how long you have to say it. Then also the owning it, of yourself, of being like, I genuinely would say I didn't, you kind of have to allow yourself to have a voice even with stuff you think is just a funny story. But it's not, it's never just a funny story is it? There's always more than one thing about it. So I would say, that, and also the building of confidence, and certainly ever since I have started telling the stories, when I am going through life and when there is a moment where you're like 'ahh' and you know, as everyone does, but I have particularly had it very exciting life over the past eighteen months, and when I'm in a moment I think my goodness this is going to a good story isn't it, or I must not forget this detail, not even of what's happening or how I'm feeling, and that must be a nice way to package and express what this moment feels like. So I would say, in a way it's actually really helped me live my life whether I go on the stage or not. Just creating and making it into a package, you know being able to kind of get a bit of distance from a scenario that you are finding either difficult or frustrating, and you know it's something like, again I play myself if

I'm cycling around the city I'm like god now I must remember that and if imagine if I was to say this or that, so yes I would say it is a little internal dialogue which is lovely.

Interviewer: There is a theme every month, but what makes you decide what story to tell? Is it completely based off the theme?

Respondent: Oh entirely off the theme, yes. I don't try to, in fact I would say I have maybe three or four stories now that I'm waiting for the theme to come up. And to be honest the way I am now, and this isn't necessarily just because I won, but because I've done it four times, I would like to do it justice. So if I would be waiting, I would say I would be less likely now to get up and off the cuff, I would much be more likely to say this is a theme, this is what I want to talk about, how can I put this together and have a week or so to be tootling around in my brain about it, internal jewellery, just making a bit of noises. But yes, totally the theme.

Interviewer: Does the fact that the stories shared must be true, personal stories have an impact on what you decide to share?

Respondent: Absolutely, as an audience member, but also as the teller, yes there is. I feel that what I love about the fact that its personal, is that it's your own perspective about something external that's happening, so you can describe anything you want. But I love being able to either out rightly say, or elude to, what you were thinking in that moment, and the audience responding to that. That's beautiful. Like that is really honestly beautifully, that where you think 'ah sure that was grand' and they're like 'oh my god' and you're like 'no you're absolutely right, that was fucking shocking', you know? So they kind of give you, that's what I think I really like, that's what I really really enjoy, they're response to your reaction or how you felt about something going on in your life, because it kind of releases the valve of that 'yeah this was something worth talking about', you know? Whereas sometimes in a moment you're in so much of your own head that just keep on flying on with life.

Interviewer: Apart from your first story, you were saying that when you develop a story you have it planned in advance?

Respondent: Yes, have the topic and try to work it out. I would say I definitely have a process. So I feel I have to give context, where I'm at, or why I would set myself into these bizarre scenarios. And then you have to, it sounds bizarre, but you kind of have to bring them on side, even at the start of the story, of why you are where you're at. Because I feel if you lose them, it's funny sometimes a turn of phrase that is not relatable they're a little bit like

‘uhh..’, you know how that sometimes happens? Even when you’re in the audience, and they’re like oh no I don’t get you now that you’ve said that, and then it alters your whole thing. So I try, when I’m practising, and a lot of that is checking yourself, having a bit of an ‘okay, not everyone is able to get this opportunity of something’, so maybe talk about how you’re aware of that. Like for example, I talked once about doing volunteering and how I went to a refugee camp but I talked about how I said ‘I like volunteering abroad’ and you know it turns out that boasting about voluntourism is not an aphrodisiac. I tried to show off to someone on a date and he was like what the f..get over yourself. But I said that sentence in order to say I’m aware that I decide that I will save the world in honeymoon destinations. Because if I was like ‘I save the world in Sri Lanka, what do you do?’, then people would be, rightly, wanting to be throwing potatoes at you. You know? So I do think that that’s example of how it’s not literally just about saying the thing. When I told they story that I told in the abbey, that I made sequin capes, and you know people are like that’s gas and cool and blah, but I did say, and it’s true, my mother thinks she despairs for humanity about the type of people that would purchase this off me. And I put that in because it’s true, but I also put it in for the people that are like ‘what the fuck is going on here’. So that’s why I put it in, even if it’s not my own perspective, it’s like ‘I hear what you might be thinking, someone else has said that to me, granted, hands up, it’s ridiculous’.

Interviewer: Do you find that going up on stage and sharing your stories has an impact on your identity?

Respondent: Did I share around that video that I won like nobody’s business? Yes. But no, I was proud of that story. But it does impact on my identity because of my confidence, my sense of self in the world, me sense that this is actually part of who I am. This little bit of a tale is part of who I am and I’m happy and proud that anyone might be passing on the street and might be like ‘oh that’s the girl with the stormtrooper camper van tattoo’. I’m like yeah, that’s another part of me, it’s not the whole of me. In a way actually, the fact that I could tell the right topic, a story about anything, it kind of discusses your, it makes it okay that you can be ten different things and that they can co-exist. And it’s not a big deal because ya know if you met someone now you could tell them this about yourself, if you met another person, you could tell another. None is more right or wrong. And I would say yes, we sometimes get so stuck in either what our job is, or what our position in the family or what country we one from and that is the really lovely thing about storytelling and about how I own it. Is like oh ill

just tell you this about myself, it's a really small, 5 minute thing, that I can tell you but I can go away and not be thinking like oh my god that's what defines me.

Interviewer: Do you feel that there is a community within The Dublin Story Slam?

Respondent: That's quite interesting that you say that. You kind of recognise the same people, and this is kind of funny, as a dentist some people have come in and been like 'you told that story' and I'll be like 'ahh I don't know what story it is'. And then the other thing is, two or three times, around time I've been in a bar or I've been in a bookshop and a guy has been like 'I think I've heard you tell a story'. So there is like a silent, little secret community, because it is such a cult, this thing. I was waiting for a taxi one night and a girl was like 'you told a story', but there's a quite thing about it. And similarly there's like four or five people around town that I'm like I heard a cool story about them. So you do, it turns the big city of Dublin into a little bit of a village.

Interviewer: Do you think the venue has an impact on this live storytelling experience? Is the Sugar Club the right place for The Dublin Story Slam?

Respondent: I think so. Again, I hadn't been on a stage before. I think it is very close, it's not difficult to get up on the stage, you don't feel like completely otherness. And also you walk from the audience and up to the stage, there's no backstage which I think is really important. And certainly I literally lost all body function before the Abbey. I was so nervous, **the producer of the show* found me before me thing, wondering around because it's a maze backstage, just looking for jelly beans for a sugar hit for before so I could big myself up. Oh I have never felt so unwell in my life with nervous. So there you don't get that daunting feeling in the Sugar Club. I think it's the perfect amount of people. Ya know? There's not too many, or too few. Also the kind of stepped upness about it, that everyone can see you. Yeah I think the fact that you can have a pizza and a drink, and that it's on a Tuesday. It's a midweek, lovely bit of you week.

Interviewer: What do you know about traditional storytelling?

Respondent: Now I don't know a lot about it, I would say that my mother, well her mother is from a very rural isolated place in Donegal. And that sense of family and community is so important to her and she is currently now finding stories from elderly relatives, she meets them and she's asking all the questions and she wants to know everything about her family tree and her community. And she wants to write stuff down about everything that people

from older generations have told her about their lived experience. The one thing I would say, and the reason probably that the Story Slam attracts me so much more is, and I don't know if this is a generational thing or what, but I'm always much more interested when people tell me about their own lives, rather than about people that you don't know. You know you can hear those 'and this is amazing' but there's an aspect of that, and I don't mean to dismiss it because it is good, but I think that it is almost gossipy, and it is also not your story to tell, and that's the beauty of this Story Slam. That you have ownership of your story, that you are not saying 'let me tell you about a gas thing that happened' and then with the audience, you feel more permitted to react because people are sharing their part of themselves. Whereas if they're telling you about something anecdotal, you're like am I laughing at this person or with this person and if this person was in the room how would they feel. But that's not to take from the ancient tradition. But there's an openness about it, and a vulnerability. Whereas I think that there is, and now I'm surmising this as my hot take on it, but in a way I think with the older Irish stories, sometimes they are a bit like a lesson of why you should live your life on the straight and narrow. Like sometimes, the moral of the story is when he came to no good because he did such and such and then he died. Whereas I feel there is a more positive aspect to this that might be more genuine.

Interviewer: What does The Dublin Story Slam mean to you?

Respondent: What it means is, when I started getting involved, as in when I started going along and hand in hand started telling some stories, it was a really important. I would almost say it was a crutch for me in this city. In something that I knew was coming up on a month to month basis. Coming back to Ireland I wanted to have a community, and I wanted to have a connection and I didn't know quite how to do that. For me, it was to make it in this life and this city, which is a big place and you can get swallowed up by it. So in a word it is the community and the connection. You know you are going to walk in there every Tuesday and you are going to be included and you are going to belong indeed in the small little ways that people read out, in being allowed to say a story, in just enjoying the night, it is just very very inclusive. And I was so pleased when the people in Direct Provision felt that inclusivity from the moment they got in.

Interviewer: What is your favourite aspect of The Dublin Story Slam?

Respondent: It's always when a story goes a way that you don't expect it. So an audience member. I would honestly genuinely say that probably, my absolute favourite is being there

as an audience member and taking it. There's a sense of achievement in having told a story, but it is so nerve wrecking at the time. It's a little bit like swimming in the sea, you know when you're like 'ahh am I going to do this', and you feel fantastic afterwards. In a way any time I go and tell a story, I can't fully enjoy the thing. Whereas it just feels like you have gobbled up such wonderful aspect of various stories that are like would make you laugh for the next day and the next week. That's would I would say. It's when a story is unexpected, and that everyone can do it. And that its completely new people, it's not just the same people, yawning on about their life, and that's why I have to be careful to.

Appendix D

Field Notes recorded on December 18th 2018.

The Dublin Story Slam was held within a small venue that if it wasn't for the contemporary artwork on the wall, you might miss it. The physical space and objects within were one of the first things noticed as you walked in. Once you entered the room there was an immediate sense of warmth and comfort from the red lights beaming across the room, surrounding wooden panelled walls, wooden floor and deep red plush velvet banquettes. There was one large section for seating. The audience was not divided by stairs or railing or placed at the other side of the room. Instead, the seating was two steps from the stage and the same width as the stage, and stretched back, all as one main seating area. Everybody was together. Those sitting in the back could still make eye contact with those on stage.

The main seating was a collection of booths, stools alongside wooden tables. It was positioned in such a way that a group of seven could sit together, but also a couple of two would be able to find their own nest of space. What I found particularly interesting was that the booths were interconnected almost stream like. I saw that this allowed for such ease for communication. As the seating was not divided up it encouraged converse and interaction with those in the row in front, all beside and even behind where you were sitting. By the time the show began, every seat in the room was taken. It was not squashed whatsoever, yet as everyone was seated it almost felt as if the audience was almost all part of one group.

Spread out across the room amongst the seating were small sheets of white paper. The storytelling theme of that night was home. The sheets of paper had a line written down of 'Tell us a time when home felt like heaven or hell'. The audience members were encouraged to interact with the event and share their own personal stories. These stories were kept anonymised and were all collected before the show began. The responses were later read aloud to the audience throughout the show and the host would discuss them and then correlate this story with one of his own, adding to the comedic aspect of this night. A member of the organisation went amongst the audience and picked three seemingly random groups and asked them would they like to be part of a judging panel. The role within this was coming up with a team name and then providing a rating, from 1-10, of each on the 9 storytellers after their performance. There was a couple, a group of old school friends and three elderly people that were elected.

After forty minutes from when the doors were opened the audience was told the storytelling night was to begin shortly. The space of time allowed since the doors had opened at seven p.m. allowed audience members to find comfort in their seating and the surrounding environment. People who did not know each other quickly interacted with one another. There was a smell of food and drinks in the air across the room. The tables amongst the seating almost invited audience members to enjoy food and drink while the storytelling took place. There was light background music and the evident sound of chat. As I looked around, there was not one individual who was not interacting with someone else. It was an unusual, but a very welcoming, sight to see no white glow of a phone screen. There was no distraction from technology to the interaction of the people in the room with one another. The scoreboard was on stage, the Christmas tinsel was around the microphone and the lights had dimmed, the event was about to begin.

The host began and introduced the show. He immediately interacted with the crowd by welcoming the regulars and introducing the Dublin Story Slam to the newcomers. He explains what the night will entail for all those who do not know. He with ease kept the audience engaged. A slight spotlight had shone, directed towards the microphone on stage as the storytellers were about to begin and the room light had been slightly darkened. However, despite this it seemed as if those on stage could still see and interact with the audience.

At the door of admission, the bought ticket was transferred for a raffle ticket with no extra cost. In between each of the stories that were told, the host picked one random raffle ticket and the chosen ticket received a prize. The prizes were all different and done in between each story. Prizes ranged from a show in the Abbey Theatre, a fifty-euro bakery voucher (the bakery was owned by a previous Story Slam storyteller), and locally produced clothing. This all highlighted the strong community aspect by The Dublin Story Slam. Along with the prizes from local business and offering slight promotion through professed adornment, they also stated how through the sell-out of tickets, they had raised over one thousand euro for the Dublin Simon Community.

While showing a consideration for the local community, there was always a clear integration of people from many different backgrounds, of all ages and from many different countries. There was a gender balance between men and women. The ages ranged from, this is a guesstimate, early twenties to mid-eighties from the storytellers, and similarly within the audience. There was a very wide age gap. There was a slight prominence of a guesstimate of

the age cohort of 30-40 from the audience. However, overall, there was a broad range of ages and thus demonstrated the welcoming and inclusivity. There was a wide variety from backgrounds also. There were storytellers from Spain, France and Kerry. From a man who grew up with no electricity, running water or even a radio, to a young woman living in attic of her aunts' home in Maynooth because of the housing crisis, to a man whose dog helped him beat his depression due to his disability, there was an overwhelming sense of variation and inclusiveness.

One aspect about the place I noted was a slight measure of inaccessibility. There was a man in a motorised wheelchair who was unable to make it up onto the stage. In relation to the physical attributes to the location, this was thus an issue, providing no way for him to get on stage, there was no ramp. However, this shed a light on the producers as they quickly adapted, along with the storyteller. They adjusted the spot lighting and the microphone became situated within a place where he was comfortable and able to access, and also that everyone in the room could see and hear him. Despite a fault within the building, it was the people that made sure the storytelling was not hindered in any way.

When the event was over and the on-stage storytelling had finished, rather than the usual thing of events where everyone jumps up as if competing for who can leave first, the majority of those in the room remained seated. After time had passed, they remained with their friends, family and acquaintances and interacted with one another. More drinks were bought, more food was eaten, and a real sense of community remained. The event was over, yet it wasn't. It is the community in which this place has created that allowed it to continue, despite the lights becoming brighter and the stage remaining empty, the storytelling continued. Not only was there interaction between those on stage and those within the audience. However, there was also a deep interaction within the audience itself, throughout the room there were clear meaningful interactions after the event concluded. This night was an evident showcase of how contemporary storytelling has taken form within Irish society and demonstrated the strong interaction composed by The Dublin Story Slam.