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10 Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Techniques for an Engaged Anthropological Pedagogy

"There is a certain embarrassment about being a storyteller in these times when stories are considered not quite as satisfying as statements and statements not quite as satisfying as statistics; but in the long run, a people is known, not by its statements or its statistics, but by the stories it tells."— Flannery O'Connor

10.1 Introduction

Digital storytelling represents an emerging praxis within the broader pedagogical toolkit. This is especially true for educators who embrace digital technologies, not as a panacea for some supposed 'crises' in the humanities and related disciplines, but as part of the "exceptional promise for the renewal of humanistic scholarship" (Burdick, Drucker, Lunenfeld, Presner, & Schapp, 2012, p. 7) made possible by these technologies. The successful integration of content, pedagogy, and technology requires a thoughtful approach to teaching and learning from both educator and student. This partnering aspect is crucial to developing engaged pedagogical approaches, which requires that we do more than simply insert computers into the space of the classroom. Such an approach is unsophisticated and accomplishes little to improve the overall quality of a student's experience. Achieving the true benefits of digital technologies for teaching and learning requires educators adopt a reflexive stance. Such a position acknowledges that we do not intuitively understand how to adapt new technologies to teaching, and vice versa (Robin, 2008). The creation of an engaged pedagogy incorporating digital storytelling is an experimental process, and the resulting freedom should be a source of joy, not anxiety.

This chapter describes my experimentation with digital storytelling as a research method and pedagogical tool. My approach views digital technologies as relating to both technique (e.g., scripting, video editing) and methodology (e.g., critical media literacy). This later aspect involves moving beyond the technical requirements for making digital videos and engaging with higher levels of thought, and helping students develop critical media literacy. While providing technical instruction is important, finding ways to critically engage with subject matter is often lacking in digital storytelling assignments (Hicks, 2006; Robin, 2008). My approach to these aspects has changed since I first utilized digital storytelling as a pedagogical device

in 2010. In the intervening years I routinely included digital storytelling assignments as part of my courses. This engagement has benefited from my scholarly use of digital storytelling and I situate digital storytelling alongside other forms of digital scholarship as part of a mixed methods approach to studying the past (González-Tennant, 2013). My experiments with these technologies are producing an ever-evolving approach to incorporating digital technologies into my teaching, research, and public outreach.

Digital storytelling offers a scalable approach for addressing some of the central concerns of engaged pedagogy. Digital storytelling assignments can be created for large survey classes (100+ students) or smaller seminar-style courses. While the nature of assessing assignments will change depending on the size and level of each course, the successful creation of an engaged pedagogy incorporating digital storytelling necessitates a thoughtful combination of method and theory. This is a fundamental tenet of engaged pedagogy and the following section outlines several approaches. I then describe my use of digital storytelling for research and teaching. The incorporation of digital technologies in my research supports digital storytelling in my courses. This speaks to a primary aspect of an engaged pedagogical approach; the honest, personalized, and politicized investigations of complex issues as a part of the classroom experience (hooks, 1994). I also discuss various approaches to assessing digital storytelling assignments.

10.2 Thoughts on Engaged Pedagogy and Anthropology

My exploration of digital storytelling is part of a conscious decision to explore new teaching strategies. This includes igniting student interest and connecting with them as intelligent actors. Engaged pedagogy supports these and other goals by addressing specific responsibilities of the educator and providing guidance related to critical thinking as a form of emancipatory practice. The works of critical and feminist education scholars such as Freire (1970, 2002) and hooks (1994, 2003, 2010) continue to inspire educators who seek ways to create an engaged classroom. Engaged pedagogy begins with the understanding that the traditional educational experience often produces a stifling environment inhibiting fruitful and enjoyable engagement with the material at hand. This "banking system of education" treats students as passive receivers of knowledge (Freire, 1970, p. 72; hooks, 1994, p.5). Such a view not only denies student agency, it is also deeply disrespectful of difference. Recognizing and altering the hierarchical classroom to engage with students as whole-persons faces considerable obstacles. The most powerful of which are the entrenched attitudes and expressions of power held by educators and university administrators. Unfortunately, many educators seem less interested in engaging their students and more "enthralled by the exercise of power and authority within their mini-kingdom, the classroom" (hooks, 1994, p. 17).

Engaged pedagogy is an exercise in liberation and I associate this as part of a broader movement in the social sciences to decolonize the scholarly mind and toolkit (Harrison, 1997; Smith, 1999). The emancipatory potential of engaged pedagogy centers on the willingness of the educator to embrace new teaching strategies which celebrate diversity. This includes the diversity of an increasingly multicultural classroom as well as individual difference. It also requires educators experiment with new assignments and assessment strategies. Understanding that teaching is a performative act represents a necessary step in realizing the goals of an engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994, p. 11). This realization motivates me to maintain a playful and open classroom, even as I talk about shameful aspects of US history such as race riots and lynching, a focus of much of my research (González-Tennant 2017). An open classroom requires active participation from both educator and student, and this develops only when unnecessary hierarchical posturing is actively addressed and eliminated. I attempt to accomplish this with an open discussion of the nature of higher education and challenge my students to recognize how the structure— not to mention spatial arrangement—of education seeks to reduce them to passive recipients. Challenging the status quo of the classroom is inherently a counter-hegemonic practice. While certainly a struggle, such emancipatory work need not be a negative enterprise. Recent works by hooks (2003, 2010) and Freire (2002) discuss the emotionally uplifting aspects at the heart of an engaged pedagogy. They agree that the delight educators feel from a successful teaching experience is something to cultivate. This can be accomplished by the educator leading the way in deconstructing the hierarchical classroom. A candid and open discussion of the modern classroom represents a powerful and reflexive strategy for accomplishing these goals. In my experience, having such a conversation at the beginning of the semester supports more active student involvement. Addressing and honestly attempting to dismantle hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and so forth supports a classroom environment where students feel empowered and are challenged to realize their full potential. In turn, this empowering perspective often (re)ignites student interest in both the course subject and the educational process.

Another central tenet of engaged pedagogy is the creation of personal connections between educator and student. In the modern classroom—flooded with paternalistic notions of *in loco parentis*—the ability to connect with students is overshadowed by the pressure to produce a politically neutral classroom. This naïve attempt at objectivity actually privileges certain perspectives (white/male/upper-class) and is essentially dishonest (hooks, 1994, pp. 35-41). Addressing this imbalance requires educators and students to listen to one another. This is a fundamentally different experience from the banking method of teaching described above. Other factors may limit our ability to connect with students, including the growth of classroom sizes and the expansion of general education requirements, which many students feel push them to unnecessarily enroll in courses outside of their chosen major. Instead of viewing these as challenges to overcome, an engaged pedagogy might

view them as opportunities waiting to be realized. Creating an engaged classroom does not require assignments critiquing the status quo or addressing large political and social issues. Assignments supporting an engaged pedagogy can be relatively innocuous. For instance, finding ways of connecting students from different majors with the disciplines of their general education courses supports this goal. The current system of higher education in the United States, often framed in terms of *disciplinary silos*, detracts from the holistic pursuit of knowledge and the development of student skills oriented towards the collection and evaluation of evidence. Digital storytelling assignments which focus on asking students to identify and examine their choice of major supports a serious exploration of the possibilities inherent to interdisciplinary approaches.

Unfortunately, the emotional component of an engaged pedagogy makes many educators uncomfortable. This discomfort has many possible causes; they include self-indulgence in networks of power and privilege, an unwillingness to challenge ourselves (as educators), a fear of appearing soft or not rigorous to our peers, or simply a lack of knowledge regarding possible alternatives. As educators, we must recognize the emotional aspects of teaching and embrace them as part of an engaged pedagogy. These same emotional strains are felt by our students, particularly in a social climate where acknowledging the politics of difference (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality) are discouraged through creeping notions of a post-racial present. Honestly engaging with the emotional aspects of teaching is the first step in understanding how the same issues affect our students. This requires a mix of "rage and love, without which there is no hope," engaged pedagogy is "meant as a defense of tolerance—not to be confused with connivance" (Freire, 2002, p. 4). In the modern, depoliticized classroom which many educators find themselves, the creation of an engaged pedagogy can feel like a radical position.

While I think many of the above comments will ring true with readers of this collection, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the potential difficulties relating to the creation of an engaged pedagogy. Educators who embrace imagination and passion and seek ways of confronting prejudice and various axes of inequality do so at some risk. The decision to creatively explore alternative strategies can be a risky one, particularly for younger academics like myself (Emihovich, 2005). The politicization of complex issues, increasingly seen as an ethical obligation for anthropologists (Angel-Ajani & Sanford, 2006) requires specific classroom approaches to ignite student interest. Overcoming the detachment many students feel towards social issues is difficult to accomplish. The use of digital storytelling, and particularly its focus on engaging individual perspectives and creativity, represents a powerful addition to an engaged pedagogical toolkit for anthropology.

Digital storytelling cogently addresses many of the central concerns of an engaged pedagogy. Igniting student interest in a subject is crucial, and digital storytelling is an important tool for accomplishing this goal. Digital storytelling also provides unique avenues supporting the thoughtful and honest connection

between educator and student, something increasingly difficult in the 21st century classroom. The new media nature of digital storytelling represents a post-industrial logic, a point I return to later. This aspect supports an emancipatory practice by supporting critical media literacy; students are able to explore on their own terms the decisions and practices involved in creating media. In my experience, accomplishing the various goals of an engaged pedagogy in regards to digital storytelling assignments also requires educators themselves to experiment with new methods of disseminating scholarship. This process of experimentation has become a key component of my research, a point I turn to after a brief introduction to digital storytelling.

10.3 An Introduction to Digital Storytelling

While an overview of digital storytelling is covered elsewhere in this volume, I think it is valuable to understand how each author conceptualizes this emerging practice. The following paragraphs present my own views on the development and importance of digital storytelling. This is followed by a brief overview of the ways I utilize digital storytelling as part of a mixed methods practice investigating the tragic history of Rosewood, Florida. I then reflect on the use of digital storytelling in the anthropology classroom.

Digital storytelling traces its roots to a series of workshops in Los Angeles during the early 1990s. These workshops proved so successful that a StoryCenter was created shortly thereafter and remains the national center for working with digital media to tell personal stories (Lambert, 2009, pp. 1-10). Indeed, the impulse to share personal lives continues to characterize digital storytelling and Lambert's (2009) book by the StoryCenter captures this spirit as well as outlining the components, themes, and methods for creating digital stories.

Lambert outlines nine types of stories conducive to digital representation (Lambert, 2009, pp. 24-27). The first group is character stories relating the experiences between people. Memorial stories share personal views on why certain events, people, and places are important to us. Adventure stories document travel experiences and personal exploration. Accomplishment stories relate the experiences of achieving a personal or communal goal. Place stories explore those spaces and landscapes that are particularly important to individuals and/or communities. Job stories discuss professions. Recovery stories reveal the struggles of overcoming a great challenge. Love stories explore romantic relationships between people. Discovery stories reveal personal realizations and their effects on people. A broader grouping of digital stories is offered by University of Houston's Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling Web site (http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/). This site groups digital stories into three major categories: personal stories, stories that inform, and stories that re-tell historical events (Robin, 2008, pp. 224-225).

In addition to discussing the varieties of stories people tell, Lambert goes on to discuss the specific methods storytellers employ when crafting digital stories. As the majority of digital storytelling projects center on one or a handful of individuals, and focus on bringing out the emotional aspect of personal experiences. Digital storytellers are encouraged to own their insights, find their voice, and use it to speak. As digital stories are often personal stories, the importance of confessing one's true feelings and opinions is paramount. Lambert stresses the importance of emotional content because it creates a more interesting story and reflects reality in more genuine ways.

In addition to the personal content, planning the actual structure of the story is highlighted. This includes clarifying the story's meaning by the use of storyboards and other traditional aspects of filmmaking. Lambert encourages the use of music, but warns against using copyrighted material; instead, he encourages digital storytellers to utilize copyright-free music and to always provide attributions for content created by others. The importance of mapping out a digital storytelling project's general timeline and script is encouraged, even for short pieces. As most digital stories range between five and twenty minutes, many neglect the importance of planning out a story from start to finish. The final consideration for digital storytellers is their method of delivering digital content. Will the video be presented online, at a public location, distributed via DVD?

My goal for adopting a digital storytelling approach as an emerging method to share historical research was motivated by numerous concerns. First, the major benefit digital storytelling has over traditional film/documentary making is cost. Digital stories can be created with little investment of time and resources. The primary equipment required can be broken down into three parts. The first consists of a laptop or desktop computer – the hardware component. The second involves an image and/or audio capture device. These typically take the form of camcorders and digital voice recorders. The final component is the software, programs for editing both video and audio content. Just a decade ago these three components could easily cost thousands, even tens-of-thousands of dollars. In the intervening years equipment and programs have dramatically dropped in price. Low-cost computers and video capture devices are increasingly available to people around the world. Indeed, modern mobile phones often have the required hardware and sharing capacities to quickly create and effectively share digital stories.

My second concern views the internet as a primary delivery method for sharing research. Using the internet to freely deliver content makes research immediately accessible to a broader audience. Also, using the internet eliminates the necessity of hard media such as DVDs, further reducing the cost of sharing research. A third goal for exploring digital storytelling grew out of a commitment to social justice education, and specifically the ways emerging digital technologies such as virtual world environments and digital storytelling can assist in the creation of a critical view of minority disenfranchisement in regards to American history (Gonzalez-Tennant 2013).

10.3.1 Digital Storytelling in Rosewood, Florida

The former site of Rosewood is located approximately nine miles from the Gulf of Mexico in Levy County, Florida (Figure 10.1). The town was settled during the late 1850s (Hawks, 1871, p. 57), and its name and initial economic vitality derived from the large stores of red cedar in the area (Dye, 1997, p. 29). By 1900 the majority of residents were African American and by 1920 the town had three churches, a black masonic hall, a black school, and a mix of house sizes (Jones, Rivers, Colburn, Dye, & Rogers, 1993, p. 23). The economic fortunes of Rosewood declined after the Cummer and Sons Lumber Company built a large sawmill in nearby Sumner around 1915. This was followed by the relocation of most businesses to Sumner by 1918. Although these developments challenged Rosewood's residents, the town continued to survive and grow (Jones, 1997, p. 194). This came to an abrupt end the first week of 1923.
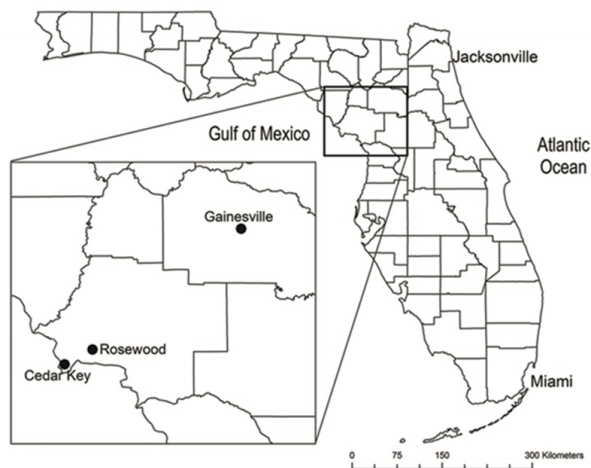

Figure 10.1: Location of Rosewood, Florida

What has become known as the Rosewood Race Riot was in fact a weeklong series of events. According to oral testimonies collected in the 1990s, the violence began following the accusation by Fannie Taylor, a white woman in Sumner, that a black man had attacked her. The general consensus today is that Taylor fabricated this assailant to hide the injuries she received during an altercation with her white lover. While Sumner residents believed her story, black witnesses stated the assailant was a white man with whom Taylor was having an affair (Jones et al., 1993, pp. 25-27).

Following the accusation, the sheriff was notified and a posse organized to track the assailant. Hounds led the group to nearby Rosewood, most likely following the scents of residents whose daily walks between the two towns provided an easy trail to

follow. The posse rapidly grew beyond the men initially deputized by the sheriff. The mob speculated on the assailant's identity. The consensus identified Jesse Hunter, a black man who had recently escaped from a local labor camp, as the possible assailant. Rumors suggested that Hunter had been in the company of Sam Carter, a longtime resident of the area and Rosewood's blacksmith (Jones et al., 1993, p. 30). While under considerable pressure, Carter admitted to giving Walker a ride in his wagon to the nearby town of Gulf Hammock. When the bloodhounds were unable to pick up the scent, and after Carter was unable to satisfy the mob's inquiries, his body was riddled with bullets and left on the road between Sumner and Rosewood. After Carter's murder, the posse approached other homes in Rosewood seeking more information. In the growing frenzy the posse nearly hanged several other residents. Hostilities then ceased for several days.

On January 4th a "party of citizens" went to investigate unconfirmed reports that a group of blacks had taken refuge in Rosewood (Jones et al., 1993, p. 38). What spurned these reports is unknown, but it is likely that some residents simply sought additional confrontation after the relatively anti-climactic events of Monday. The group targeted the Carrier household and two members of the mob attempted to break into the home (Jones et al., 1993, p. 40). The Carrier's opened fire and a pitched gun battle commenced.

The battle continued into the early hours of Friday, January 5th. Reports of wounded white men in Rosewood roused local whites, including members of the KKK from Gainesville, Florida. When whites left Friday morning to replenish ammunition, African Americans fled into the surrounding swamps. The white mob returned to Rosewood later that day and burned several homes and at least one church. They also reportedly found the bodies of Sylvester and Sarah Carrier in their home, victims of the previous night's gun battle (Jones et al., 1993, pp. 43-44). The mob also killed Lexie Gordon, an African American widow of approximately fifty, by shooting her in the back as she fled her burning home (Jones et al., 1993, pp. 44-45). The death toll now included four African Americans and two Euro-Americans (who died from injuries received during the previous night's fight). The seventh death occurred later that day when whites shot Mingo Williams in the head as they drove through nearby Bronson on their way to Rosewood.

A train run by two brothers came through Rosewood at 4am on Saturday, January 6th. It stopped at several towns along the way including Rosewood, Wylly, and Otter Creek to rescue frightened African Americans. Only women and children where allowed on the train, which took survivors to Archer and Gainesville where descendants remain to this day (Jones et al., 1993, p. 61). That Saturday, James Carrier briefly returned and was apprehended by whites. He became the eighth death when the mob lynched him near the fresh graves of his mother and brother (Jones et al., 1993, pp. 50-51). On Sunday, the mob returned to Rosewood and burned every remaining African American building (Figure 10.2).

Figure 10.2: Ruins of House near Rosewood, from January 20 1923 Literary Digest

My scholarly use of digital storytelling concentrates on several interrelated goals. I addressed these goals with the construction of a 26-minute digital story exploring the history of Rosewood's community (available online at www.virtualrosewood. com). This digital video is titled *Remembering Rosewood* and provides a transparent overview of my research questions and methods. I describe my mixed methods approach integrating oral history, documentary evidence, geographic information systems (GIS), historical archaeology, and heritage visualization to represent Rosewood as a dynamic community instead of a single event[35]. Approximately half of the digital story shares the life stories of two survivors, Robie Mortin and Mary Hall Daniels. These two women were both present in Rosewood during the events of 1923, Mortin was eight and Daniels was three. A particularly touching moment in the digital story occurs when Mortin describes meeting her father for the first time following the riot. She describes how her father quickly recognized how the accusation of rape and subsequent attacks on Rosewood might turn into large scale violence. He sent Robie to nearby Williston with her sister. After hearing about the destruction of Rosewood several days later, and not being able to meet up with their father, the two girls assumed he had been killed. They worked as migrant laborers in Florida citrus fields and over several months made their way to Riviera Beach, north of Miami. Mortin (Figure 10.3) shares what happened one morning when she went to a newly constructed church several months after moving to Riviera Beach:

> There was a ditch that separated Riviera Beach from the black neighborhood. There was a bridge across it, and there was a Hearst Chapel AME Church there. They had built that church right on our side of the ditch. So, we, my sister and I, went to church, and would you believe our daddy was there, and we didn't know where he was, hadn't seen him in months. We didn't even know he was still alive, and there he was in the front of that church (Interview with Robie Mortin and Author, 2009).

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35 In addition to the 26-minute digital documentary, visitors to www.virtualrosewod.com can also explore a virtual reconstruction of Rosewood as it existed in late 1922.

Figure 10.3: Still of Robie Mortin from *Remembering Rosewood*, interviewed by author in 2009

The ability of digital storytelling to share touching moments like these with my students represents an important intersection for engaged pedagogy. Students immediately realize how scholars can engage with complex and emotional histories in sensitive ways. This avoids the depoliticization which so often haunts the modern classroom. Mortin's words, delivered in her soft, ninety-four-year-old voice, touches viewers in an unmistakable way. The emotional impact of her brief story demonstrates the trials, and in this one example happy surprises, which make a life scared by trauma bearable.

10.4 Assigning and Assessing Digital Storytelling for the Anthropological Classroom

My exploration of digital storytelling in the classroom began with a *General Anthropology* course I taught at the University of Florida in the autumn semester of 2010. This was a large survey course with 120 students. I approached this assignment by dedicating an entire class to discussing digital storytelling. This included a presentation and student handout describing various types of digital stories, a summary of Lambert's seven steps of digital storytelling, a brief discussion of technology, and useful online resources for copyright-free images, music, and sounds. The presentation included brief introductions to platform specific video and sound editing software. The presentation ended with a showing of my *Remembering Rosewood* video as an example of digital storytelling.

I gave students the choice of working alone or in groups of three or less. The assignment stipulated that each video be between five and ten minutes in length. The videos had to address one of two questions: what is your favorite aspect of

anthropology, or how do you see anthropology intersecting other disciplines? As a general education course at the University of Florida, typically 50% or less of the students are anthropology majors and minors. I designed these questions to better understand how my students responded to the course content. Initially, my goals for digital storytelling focused on the creation of a creative assignment allowing me to gauge my course content and what aspects of an introductory, four-field anthropology course ignited student interest. Given the relative freedom of designing their own message in regards to anthropology, what would students choose to represent as key ideas and sentiments of the discipline? I also shared my hopes with students regarding the assignment and its ability to invert the usual hierarchy of learning in a lecture-based class.

The assignment was discussed at various points throughout the semester, and specific deliverables required at regular intervals. This included a one-page outline and a time-table. The relatively small number of related assignments in my early explorations of digital storytelling reflects the large size of my classes (100+ students per course each semester). I emphasized the importance of the story above the technology and regularly reminded students that their grades were not based on technical proficiency. Creating a digital storytelling assignment for a large lecture course required a flexible approach to grading. Initially, I scored assignments as essays. I assessed them on clarity of purpose and point of view, pacing and voice, appropriate use of media, economy of composition, and appropriate use of grammar and language.

My initial exploration of digital storytelling resulted in 94 separate videos, available online at www.youtube.com/AnthroDigitalStories. Many of the videos show students in private settings – their homes and dormitories – speaking to the camera in a confessional manner. I was drawn into their videos by their posture and quiet speaking style. I wondered if this was simply reproducing the style of a video diary common to reality TV programs, or if this pointed to a deeper pedagogical possibility. For some, this represented the path of least resistance as it required less effort and planning than other approaches. For others, this provided me with an opportunity to learn more about my students and their opinions on my class, their chosen majors, and how these things integrate into the larger experiences associated with college life today. Determining which confessional style videos were of the former type is easy. It is immediately clear when students failed to plan their videos. For instance, some of the longest videos submitted by students conform to this confessional style, but are recorded in one sitting and without any editing. These students typically failed to address the other parts of the assignment, which was also reflected in the supporting deliverables (e.g., time table) as well as the overall quality of the videos.

I interpret the unexpected confessional nature of many of the videos as speaking directly to the goals of an engaged pedagogy. Students revealed personal perspectives rarely shared in a traditional classroom environment. This is particularly the case in large survey and introductory courses where classroom discussion is difficult to

initiate and sustain due to the number of students. These videos demonstrate the ability of digital storytelling to bridge the chasm which typically separates educators and students. Digital storytelling also inverted the usual hierarchy of learning by giving students the opportunity to expand the scope of the course, to reflect critically on the assigned readings and lectures, and to teach the instructor and other students about students' first-hand experiences of complex issues such as discrimination and non-(hetero)normative lifestyles.

These videos often revealed hidden aspects of student lives, their hopes and desires, their personal connections with anthropology, and their hidden assumptions. The videos ranged between thoughtful and revealing treatments of anthropology to half-hearted attempts to hastily produce a video satisfying some students' uncritical belief about what I wanted from them. I interpret the thoughtful treatments as partially reflecting my own commitment to teaching a four-field anthropology and demonstrating its increasing importance in today's world. I see these responses as supporting the idea that anthropology's perspectives and methods can speak to a generation disillusioned with traditional forms of scholarship and education. I view the half-hearted attempts in one of two ways. The first set corresponds to the subset of students who simply fail to take adequate time or care to complete their assignments. The second set corresponds to those students who remained uncomfortable with visually expressing their opinion in the format of a digital video. In recent years, I have attempted to address this by expanding these kinds of assignments to include the creation of graphic novels/comics, photography essays, and even abstract paintings. Regardless of the assignment, there is always a subset of students who fail to take the assignment seriously, but my experiences remain positive and the majority of students appreciate the extra freedom in expressing themselves.

Formal methods of assessing digital storytelling assignments have been created by other educators. They all agree on the necessity of a rubric. One well-known example is the University of Houston's sample rubric (http://digitalstorytelling. coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=24). I believe this ten-point rubric is particularly useful for educators who are not personally involved in digital storytelling as part of their research. This rubric helps students understand how the digital storytelling project differs from a conventional term paper and gives them a framework for considering the possibilities. I initially took a highly subjective approach to grading digital storytelling, often delighting in my students' work as much as they clearly did while creating it.

I continue to utilize digital storytelling assignments in my courses, and have adapted my approach to smaller classroom sizes. This includes integrating digital storytelling as part of a semester project alongside other deliverables such as timetables, scripts, and formal papers describing the project and stating how the video satisfies the assignment. These additional assignments allow me to better track a student or group's progress through a semester. The paper supports a more traditional form of assessment. I have found this necessary as mainstream "education

currently doesn't encourage, and rarely requires, students to produce schoolwork in 'new media' formats such as digital stories" (Ohler, 2008, p. 62). I agree with Ohler that this stems from the fact that most educators are not comfortable creating or assessing new media artifacts. I would add that the maintenance of a hierarchical learning environment also plays a role in the resistance many educators have for this type of work, even as they celebrate interdisciplinary scholarship in their classrooms. I have found Ohler's approach (2008, pp. 65-67) to assessing digital storytelling particularly helpful. Instead of a standard rubric, he proposes nine considerations that provide a rough guide as well as specific deliverables/artifacts that can be assessed by educators.

The first involves setting clear goals. This step is familiar to educators and we would not assign papers or other work without clear goals (e.g., page length, reference style, number of citations). The same holds true for digital storytelling assignments. The second point focuses on the story and the student's ability to present an orderly narrative. This involves students creating videos that draw on additional sources to support their assertions. I discuss various ways students can bring traditional forms of scholarship into their digital storytelling projects, including the referencing of texts and incorporation of other media objects. Ohler (2008) stresses the importance of assessing all artifacts created as part of a digital storytelling project. This allows educators to understand the general process of content creation and understanding. Assessing student planning also supports the need to assign and assess multiple artifacts. The next two considerations assess grammar and the presentation of content. Educators should discuss with their students appropriate ways of using media to support their assertions. Asking students to critically engage with content in their assignments represents an aspect of digital storytelling that is similar to traditional artifacts such as essays.

Since many digital storytelling assignments involve group work, determining methods for assessing shared responsibilities and effective use of resources is a vital component. I accomplish this by having a mix of group and individual assignments. The timetable and script are good group artifacts. Individual essays discussing the project and assessing the overall quality of the video allows me to identify which students invested greater effort and thought. I typically accord the individual paper a large percentage of the overall project's grade, 50% percent or more. I have also found that including "a performance or publication venue at the outset" improves the overall quality of student work (Ohler, 2008, p. 66). Setting time aside in class to show the videos addresses this aspect of assessment and supports peer review of the videos. This addresses Ohler's final point of including some form of self-assessment at the conclusion of the project.

Incorporating these considerations into my own digital storytelling assignments supports an expanded experimental engagement with alternative assignments. In addition to regularly assigning digital storytelling projects, I have experimented with other forms of self-expression. In a recent *Anthropology of Religion* course I

allowed students to draw on any form of expressive culture as part of a final research project. Students enthusiastically responded with artifacts that further challenged my ability to assess their work. This included the production of abstract paintings by one student as part of her project on vampire folklore from Eastern Europe as well as photo essays examining the role religion plays in addressing personal loss. These assignments further pushed me as an educator and I sought out colleagues in the fine arts programs to get advice on assessing these new (to me) forms of expressive culture. I have also replaced digital storytelling assignments with graphic novels in my freshman seminar on zombies. My previous experiences with digital storytelling—requiring multiple deliverables—proved equally useful for these types of student project.

10.5 Discussion

Lev Manovich, in his seminal work *The Language of New Media*, not only provides us with the most concise definition of the term new media, but also presents five characteristics useful in conceptualizing the use of digital storytelling for engaged pedagogy. New media is the "translation of all existing media into numerical data accessible through computers" (Manovich, 2001, p. 20). This includes the translation of analog materials (e.g., photographs, movies, records) into digital formats as well as the creation of fully digital artifacts like digital images and 3D models. New media is what happens when media and computer technologies meet.

"All new media objects… are composed of digital code" (Manovich, 2001, p. 27) represents the first characteristic, and while modern media such as film follow an industrial logic (large scale production studies, expensive equipment costs, necessity of labors), new media provides us with a post-industrial method, one not regulated by mass standardization. This aspect of new media means its potential as an emancipatory form is literally hardwired into its very structure. The technical and equipment aspects of digital storytelling, made widely available through modern manufacturing, should not be confused with the logic underlying their use. Traditional media (e.g., film) is organized like a factory and the physical objects associated with these technologies require standardization to function. Standardization has resulted in a restricted set of values and expressive modes in Hollywood, and the entertainment industry in general. These modes are driven by both mass standardization and corporate funding streams. In contrast, new media expresses a post-industrial logic by highlighting "individual customization, rather than mass standardization" (Manovich, 2001, p. 29). Although the individual components may be produced in factory, the wider potentials of self-expression which exist with digital technologies allows for a wider range of expressive modes not available/accepted by mass media.

Secondly, new media is modular; parts can be deleted, re-arranged, and added without destroying the original. This invites experimentation and exploration. This feature is easily coupled with pedagogical interests related to teaching media literacy.

A third aspect involves automation, and this is particularly important for sharing digital storytelling artifacts via websites like YouTube and Vimeo. The most common form of automation is the creation of programs to access information, and while Manovich focuses on the proliferation of access agents (e.g., Google) for sorting through the bewildering amounts of information now available online, without automated access, our ability to share digital stories would be limited to hard media such as DVDs.

The fourth characteristic centers on the variability of new media objects. This flexibility is useful for digital storytelling and allows users to present alternative and even contrasting perspectives side by side. This addresses the hierarchical classroom and its desire to produce one authoritative view of a subject. Engaged pedagogy recognizes the value of different perspectives and respects how standpoint influences multiple engagements with a topic, all potentially as true and valid as one another. This aspect also supports the creation of a variety of interfaces with the same content. The same content can now be delivered via traditional formats like television or via interactive websites.

The final characteristic of new media is cultural transcoding. This involves the interaction between cultural ideas and new computer methods. At present, this is dominated through analogy with traditional media: the printed page becomes a webpage, cinema becomes online video (edited and navigated based on analog concepts like fast forward), the human computer interaction of fingers on keyboard become fully immersive virtual reality. In regards to digital storytelling, this satisfies the engaged pedagogical impulse to respect difference. Students are less constrained than in traditional assignments and their unique, culturally-informed experiences can be positioned side-by-side and equally valued. As with the birth of any new technology, we can only begin to hypothesize about the range of potential applications. The term "transcode" means to translate, and how educators and students translate traditional assignments into these new formats, and the reciprocal effect on our practice as educators is only beginning.

The unnecessary hierarchical posturing associated with traditional education is one of the first things jettisoned by thinkers exploring an engaged pedagogical practice. The traditional classroom setting, disciplined through centuries of tradition represents a socializing spatial arrangement subjugating student knowledge and experience to that of the educator. A critical approach to engaged pedagogy simultaneously recognizes the professor's unique knowledge while respecting the ability of students to contribute important insights. This perspective also acknowledges the unique value offered by the lived experiences of students from underrepresented groups; particularly in regards to race, nationality, sexuality, age, and so forth.

My ongoing exploration of digital storytelling intentionally intersects many of engaged pedagogy's central tenets. This begins with a sincere engagement on my part with the technologies and techniques of digital storytelling as part of my research. The alternative format of digital storytelling, coupled with traditional assignments (e.g., individual essays), helps to ignite student interest and invert the traditional hierarchy of the classroom. These types of assignments invite students to become active producers of content and responsible viewers of work produced by their peers. The emancipatory potential of new media supports these goals as well. The creative exploration of new media invites students to participate in the educational experience in more active ways. This also provides a bridge allowing educators and students to connect in ways that are increasingly difficult in today's classroom.

Digital storytelling also addresses other aspects of 21st century education. The exploration and creation of digital media artifacts represents a crucial aspect of developing critical media literacy. This form of literacy seeks to expand "the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepen the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 4). Specific methods for accomplishing these goals include understanding how media is generated and engaging with the work of others in critical ways. Digital storytelling can support these goals by exposing students to the intentional choices that are made while fashioning a news report, documentary, or popular television show. Dedicating portions of class to viewing the results of digital storytelling assignments allows students to question these decisions and recognize how their own biases influence their representational decisions in unforeseen ways.

I see digital storytelling as a core pedagogical component regarding the recent rush to embrace digital humanities among many scholars, academic institutions, and funding agencies. Unfortunately, what is often less clear in this exploration is the reciprocal relationship between the digital humanities and pedagogy (Brier, 2012, pp. 390-391). Digital storytelling offers a powerful suite of methods for engaged pedagogy in the college classroom. The preceding pages offer one possibility for addressing the pedagogical deficit within the digital humanities. I believe the sincere impulse to make new media meaningful for current and future generations is centrally important to education, particularly in the present moment. It is "highly irresponsible in the face of saturation by the Internet and media culture to ignore these forms of socialization and education" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 4). Digital storytelling represents a powerful form of self-expression addressing the central concerns of an engaged pedagogy while simultaneously teaching students to create and critically evaluate new media artifacts in their daily lives.

10.6 Conclusion

My experimentation with digital storytelling began as an outgrowth of my interest in engaged pedagogy. The scalable nature of digital storytelling allows me to tailor assignments to different class sizes, student levels, and course content. I have found digital storytelling to be a powerful form of engaged pedagogy allowing me to invert the traditional hierarchical nature of the college classroom and connect with my students as active and intelligent participants. The ability of my students to share personal experiences that are unavailable to me represents a core methodology for bridging the divide between educator and student. This divide is the result of centuries of tradition and overcoming it requires specific and dedicated effort. Digital storytelling represents a powerful bridge allowing me to access student perspectives and knowledge(s) in sensitive and active ways. This also supports active learning and provides students with the skills and peer feedback necessary for understanding the constructed aspect of media. The 21st century's reliance on distributed networks of communication technologies is neither malignant nor benign. It poses the same problems and possibilities of traditional media, and I believe teaching digital storytelling represents a central methodology for supporting a critical engagement with new media.

In many ways, new media offers a new set of tools, ones not found in the master's house (Lourde, 1984, pp. 110-113) and therefore potentially very liberating, a constellation of approaches and technologies not regulated by gatekeepers and tradition—although certainly in dialogue with them. Obvious and sizable obstacles to full participation in new media include the manifestation of a digital divide as well as the (re)inscription of negative identity politics within virtual spaces (Nakamura, 2008). Just as the printing press was utilized in the past to democratize knowledge, so too can we teach ourselves to draw on new media methodologies for a similar purpose. Only time will tell if this optimistic viewpoint will produce transformative fruit or if mass standardization will reassert itself. I choose to remain hopeful, because the alternative deprives our students of potentially liberating educational possibilities.

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